

The Senedd Papers

#3

Good Food for all

An IWA discussion paper by Kevin Morgan

iwa

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#3

About us

The IWA is Wales' critical friend.

We aim to bring people together in a safe space, where ideas collide and solutions can be forged. Our role is to act as a catalyst to generate an intelligent debate about Wales' future.

We are an independent charity with a broad membership base. We discharge our mission by:

Generating ideas

- Providing a platform for innovative ideas to improve Wales.
- Bringing together experts and practitioners to critically examine evidence in key areas and to suggest improvements.

Discussing

- Providing a unique space to bring together the worlds of politics, business, public service, academia and the wider public.
- Testing and challenging ideas through a diverse range of activity across Wales.

Influencing

- Working with policy makers from across the spectrum to translate these ideas into practice

We are a small think tank. We cannot achieve our charitable mission alone. We need your help.

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Introduction to the Senedd Papers

Since I last wrote in the IWA's Senedd Papers series, we have had the Scottish Referendum, the St David's Day announcement from the Secretary of State, and a UK General Election.

The St David's Day announcement signified the shift in the balance of power between Westminster and the Assembly for which I have called.

In the Queen's speech last month, the new Government at Westminster committed to delivering this in full.

We will see a great change in the powers and responsibilities of Assembly Members at the Senedd in terms of scrutinising Welsh Government policy and legislation.

Furthermore, AMs will be scrutinising additional tax and borrowing powers by 2018 which are being devolved by the 2014 Government of Wales Act.

It means that the decisions taken in Cardiff Bay will have an even bigger impact on the lives of the people of Wales, and therefore it is more important than ever for the Welsh people to be fully engaged with the work of the National Assembly.

One of the objectives for the National Assembly for Wales's Commission during the Fourth Assembly is to increase engagement with the people of Wales

We aim to create an environment that encourages interest in the work of the Assembly and facilitates participation in the Assembly's roles of legislating, scrutiny and representation.

We can achieve this by engaging actively and widely, and ensure that the Assembly benefits to the full from this interaction.

An important part of that process is working with partner organisations to facilitate debate amongst wider civic society and that's why the National Assembly is supporting the Institute of Welsh Affairs with its Senedd Papers series.

The IWA plays an important role in Welsh civic life in terms of developing Wales's public policy landscape - and by anchoring this series of discussion papers to the seat of Welsh Governance, here in our iconic building, we are highlighting the central role that the

National Assembly plays in developing and scrutinising public policy in Wales.

The focus of this paper is on good and sustainable food. Welsh produce, at its best, is world class and the food sector is a cornerstone of the Welsh economy, particularly in rural areas. Ensuring that food production and supply chains are sustainable has been a central consideration when Assembly committees have considered agriculture, fisheries and land management. Through its scrutiny work, the Assembly will continue to press for better outcomes in this area.

I believe that the Senedd should be the focus of this kind of policy debate and I am pleased to welcome the IWA and to support the The Senedd Papers.

Dame Rosemary Butler AM

Presiding Officer of the National Assembly for Wales

IWA Foreword

Democratic devolution is still in its infancy; 16 years is a very short amount of time when it comes to building institutions and creating new political cultures. But while there's a case for patience as our system of Government develops, there's a more compelling case for challenging the system to improve by drawing attention to its shortcomings and providing constructive suggestions for improvements.

The IWA's third Senedd Paper uses the example of sustainable food to draw out familiar themes - a cross-cutting issue with cross-party support and a Government strategy committed to making Wales a leader, but a lack of follow through and rigorous execution of delivery has left us a very pale imitation of Scotland.

Kevin Morgan, Professor of Governance and Development at Cardiff University and an internationally-renowned expert on sustainable food, draws on multiple sources of evidence from the UK and Europe to restate a compelling case for action to ensure Good Food For All.

He places the issue of food at the nexus of a plethora of 'wicked' policy issues: obesity, climate change, austerity, and inequality. But through this thicket of complexities he offers some simple and evidence based policy solutions for Welsh manifesto writers to consider ahead of next May's Assembly elections.

He contrasts the generous subsidy Members of Parliament enjoy to eat the best food, and the funding diverted to run the Welsh Government's own canteens, with "the other end of the quality spectrum [where] we find a minority of schools, hospitals and care homes, where caterers feel obliged - for reasons of cost or mindset - to source from the cheapest ends of the food chain".

For part of his solution Kevin Morgan returns to one of his consistent themes as a public intellectual - the power of purchase. His interest in the opaque world of procurement has already led to reforms in the way the Welsh Government harnesses its own spending power to achieve better policy outcomes, but he believes there's more to be done in the area of food to unlock further advances.

He also contrasts the divergent paths Wales and Scotland have taken on sustainable food, not in terms of vision or ambition, but in terms of execution and delivery.

The constituent parts of *Good Food For All* stand not only as a moral plea, but a practical

route map towards better policy outcomes, and deserves to be widely read and debated.

My thanks to Kevin Morgan for his time in an absurdly busy schedule to write this Senedd Paper. And my sincere thanks once again to the Assembly Commission and the Presiding Officer, Dame Rosemary Butler, for their support for the Senedd Papers series.

Lee Waters

Director, Institute of Welsh Affairs

June 2015

1. The Quiet Revolution

A quiet revolution is underway in the UK and its aim is to make good food more readily available and affordable. The unassuming agents of this revolution come from all walks of life and collectively they constitute a rapidly growing social movement. They are *consumers* who are becoming ever more conscious of provenance - that is how and where their food is produced. They are *producers* who want to work with, rather than against, nature and her seasons. They are *campaigners* who want to reform the conventional food chain to render it more sustainable. They are *parents* who want to see better food served in school canteens. They are the *families* of patients who are shocked by the absence of wholesome food in hospitals. They are also ecologically-minded *entrepreneurs* who believe that a new food culture is beginning to emerge and they want to tap the commercial opportunities of a more discerning, quality-conscious market that fosters rather than frustrates health and wellbeing.

The significance of this good food movement has been obscured because the movement is conceived too narrowly in terms of a particular type of food - like local food, organic food or Fairtrade food - each of which is a small part of a bigger picture. The impact of the good food movement also needs to be better appreciated because, as well as the commercial impact, there is the growing political impact.

The *commercial* impact can be seen in the momentous changes that are being wrought in the conventional food industry, where products high in fat, sugar and salt are coming under assault from health-conscious consumers and citizen-led campaigns. A dramatic example of this trend can be seen in the decline of sugary drinks in the US market, the bellwether of new food trends, where Coca-Cola is under intense pressure to diversify into healthier beverages.

On the *political* front the impact is equally momentous, with a rapidly growing number of governments – at national, regional and local levels - adopting good food policies to promote a variety of causes, including health and wellbeing, social justice, ecological integrity and animal welfare. Cities have been in the forefront of the good food movement, driven by a new alliance between municipal activism and civil society engagement, and they have formed a good food coalition under the auspices of the *Sustainable Food Cities Network*, a cross-sector partnership of local public agencies, businesses and civil society organisations “to make healthy and sustainable food a defining characteristic of where they live” (www.sustainablefoodcities.org). Forty cities are currently attached to this good food network and their location is shown on the map.

Scotland is also in the vanguard of the good food movement following the launch of its *Good Food Nation* strategy last year (Scottish Government, 2014). The Scottish Government’s good food strategy aims to promote national identity, public health and

economic development, all of which was set out in the vision shown in **Box 1.1**:

Box 1.1: The Scottish Government’s Vision of a Good Food Nation

By 2025, people from every walk of life, will take pride and pleasure in the food served day by day in Scotland. An increase in Scottish food exports will attract overseas visitors and the quality of the food we serve will become one of the key reasons to travel to Scotland. Everyone will know what constitutes good food and why. All players in Scottish life – from schools to hospitals, retailers, restaurants and food manufacturers – will be committed to serving such food. Its ready availability will have contributed to improvements in children’s wellbeing and hence outcomes. Scottish suppliers will have developed their offering so that local increasingly equals fresh, healthy and environmentally sound. The most intractable dietary-related diseases will have begun to decline, as will the environmental impact locally and worldwide, of our food consumption. The food industry will be a thriving well-known feature of local and national economies, with each part of Scotland rightly proud of its culinary heritage, past and present.

Source: Scottish Government (2014)

Good food comes in many shapes and sizes and it will vary according to the cultural context. The definition of “good food” in this paper follows the plain and simple definition that features in the Scottish Government’s *Good Food Nation* strategy, namely “food which is both tasty to eat and nutritious, fresh and environmentally sustainable”.

Cities, regions and nations are all part of the quiet revolution that is helping to put good food on the political agenda for many different reasons. While the relief of hunger has the greatest claims on our ethical responsibilities, the good food movement cannot be reduced to a single issue because food, by its very nature, has a *multi-functional character*. In other words, we need to resist the temptation to reduce the meaning of “good food” to a narrow nutritional agenda because a purely needs-based perspective cannot possibly do justice to the kaleidoscopic character of our food and the multiple prisms – social, economic, political, ecological, cultural, physiological, psychological – through which food is viewed, valued and used in society. But whatever the prism, there is now a worldwide consensus that radical action is needed to fashion a healthier and more sustainable food system - for the sake of people and planet alike.

40 Sustainable Food Cities Network Members

Bath	Carlisle	Islington	Middlesbrough
Belfast	Cork	Kirklees	Newcastle
Birmingham	Durham	Lambeth	Oxford
Bournemouth	Edinburgh	Lancashire	Peterborough
Bradford	Exeter	Lancaster	Plymouth
Bridport	Glasgow	Leeds	Portsmouth
Brighton & Hove	Greater Manchester	Leicester	Sandwell
Bristol	Greenwich	Liverpool	Sheffield
Cambridge	Herefordshire	London	Stockport
Cardiff	Hull	Manchester	West Sussex

2. Sustainable Diets: A Societal Challenge

British consumers have been subjected to so many food crises – from Foot and Mouth in 2001 to the horsemeat scandal of 2013 – that the food industry may have lost its capacity to shock. But what is most shocking of all is that ill-health due to unhealthy diets is reckoned to be some *fifty* times greater than ill-health due to food-borne diseases, a finding that raises big questions about the nature of our food industry (Rayner, 2002). Food is often treated as a conventional business, no different to any other industrial sector according to the conventional wisdom. While food clearly is a business, it is a business like no other for one simple reason – we ingest its products and therefore it is vital to human health and wellbeing in a way that other industries are not and this is what gives food its unique status. In short, while agri-food firms need to make a profit like other firms, their products are increasingly required to meet *societal* tests other than profitability – especially as regards human health and ecological integrity, the core ingredients of a sustainable diet for people and planet alike (Garnett, 2014).

From the human health standpoint, the escalating costs of diet-related diseases are the most tangible signs that all is not well with our food system. Many chronic conditions – notably coronary heart disease, obesity, diabetes and certain cancers – are linked to poor diets and diet-related disease costs the NHS some £6 billion a year. On present trends the projected cost of obesity alone could escalate to £49.9 billion a year by 2050 according to the Foresight report, a sum that could threaten the very survival of the NHS as we know it (Foresight, 2007).

Of all the diet-related diseases, obesity attracts most public attention – partly because it is such a prevalent condition and partly because it contributes to other chronic illnesses, especially type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. As regards obesity, Wales appears to have the biggest challenge in the UK according to the recent Child Measurement Programme, which measured children attending reception class in 2013/14. Two disturbing trends stand out.

On the *spatial* front the prevalence of those overweight or obese children in reception year (26%) was significantly higher than that for England (23%). It was also significantly higher in Wales than in any English region, where the highest prevalence was 24%. On the *social* front there is a strong relationship between levels of obesity and deprivation – 13.5% of children in the most deprived areas were obese compared to 9.8% in the least deprived areas. The starkest spatial contrast within Wales was between Merthyr Tydfil, where of 1 in 6 children were obese, and the Vale of Glamorgan, where of 1 in 12 children were obese (Public Health Wales, 2015). These trends illustrate the well known *social gradient* in health inequalities – the lower your socio-economic status, the poorer your health is likely to be (Marmot, 2012).

Sustainable diets aim to promote the health of people and planet because it makes no sense to talk of one without the other. Globally, the food system is degrading the very environment

on which future food security depends: it contributes to 20-30% of anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions; it is the leading cause of deforestation, land use change and biodiversity loss; it accounts for 70% of human water use; and it is a major source of water pollution. While the whole food chain contributes to these problems, it is at the agricultural stage where the greatest impacts occur (Garnett, 2014).

There's a growing consensus about what constitutes a more sustainable diet. Drawing on international research, the evidence base suggests that sustainable diets – diets that are healthier for people and planet alike – involve a diverse range of tubers, whole grains, legumes and fruit and vegetables, with animal products consumed more sparingly (Garnett et al, 2014). This evidence base has been distilled into 8 key principles of a sustainable diet and these are shown in **Box 2.1** below.

Box 2.1: Principles of a Healthy and Sustainable Diet

- 1— Eat a varied balanced diet to maintain a healthy body weight
- 2— Eat more plant based foods, including at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day
- 3— Value your food – ask where it comes from and how it was produced
- 4— Choose fish sourced from sustainable stocks
- 5— Moderate your meat consumption and enjoy other sources of protein as well as meat
- 6— Include milk and dairy products in your diet and/or seek out plant based alternatives
- 7— Drink tap water
- 8— Eat fewer foods high in fat, sugar and salt

Source: Garnett and Strong (2014)

Knowing what constitutes a sustainable diet is one thing, but juggling a household budget in an age of austerity is an altogether different matter. Food spending patterns vary socially and spatially, with social class differences being the most notable differences. On average UK households purchased 6.1% less food in 2013 than in 2007 (when the financial crisis began) while spending 20% more. But households in the lowest income group spent 22% more on food in 2013 than in 2007, highlighting the fact that averages conceal more than they reveal. Equally significant class differences emerge when we look at what kinds of food are being purchased: generally speaking, low income households in the UK spend *more* than the average on food and drinks high in fat and sugar and *less* than the average on fruit and vegetables (Defra, 2014).

These social class differences in food consumption patterns mirror the social gradient of health inequalities that we encountered earlier - and the age of austerity is likely to exacerbate class disparities in diets, health and wellbeing because, in the view of a leading food poverty expert, “more and more families in the UK are unable to buy affordable, nutritious food” (Dowler, 2012).

What can be done to mitigate these inequalities and make good food more readily available and affordable?

The public health community in the UK has been valiantly addressing this question for many

years, fighting an uphill battle against a food industry that is far better resourced in terms of money and political influence. If powerful opponents were not enough to contend with, the public health community also faces two obstacles in its own ranks, namely: (i) its health message is predicated on the *information deficit* approach to social change and (ii) its target audience is addressed as *individuals* who make decisions on a purely rational basis.

The information deficit approach to social change is a highly dubious basis on which to promote healthier eating campaigns because the evidence suggests that consumers – including the poorest consumers – already know a great deal about what constitutes a healthy diet. The fact that they don't *act* on this knowledge is not because they lack information but because their social lives are shaped by deeply embedded practices, habits and routines that collectively constitute the dull compulsion of everyday life. Research across many disciplines – including behavioural economics, social psychology and sociology – has convincingly demonstrated that information deficits and rational individuals are far removed from the reality of how people think, act and change their behaviour.

Conventional public health messages are predicated on an individualistic approach to action and change and this has been dubbed the ABC paradigm in which A stands for *Attitude*, B for *Behaviour* and C for *Choice* (Shove, 2010). Researchers have argued that we need to jettison this ABC paradigm when we frame policies to promote public health or mitigate climate change. Appeals to individuals as consumers or citizens to change their attitudes and behaviour by making healthier or more sustainable choices about “lifestyle” is an approach that is doomed to failure because it fails to recognise the profound social and economic forces that conspire to maintain the status quo. The limitations of the ABC paradigm are perfectly illustrated in the perennial struggle to change our diets, a struggle in which the public health message is barely audible amidst the “noise” of the obesogenic environment, where junk food is not merely more readily *available* than healthier food, but it also appears *cheaper*.

In a path-breaking study of more and less healthy foods and beverages in the decade to 2012, public health researchers found that healthier products were consistently more expensive than less healthy products and the price gap was growing, a trend that is likely “to make healthier diets less affordable over time” (Jones et al, 2014).

Societal challenges like climate change, obesity and other diet-related illnesses will not be solved purely by government policy, however well designed and deployed. On the contrary, societal challenges of this magnitude require nothing less than a *societal* response because only new social movements – harnessing the public and private sectors in concert with an engaged civil society - have the power and reach to effect the structural changes that are needed to reform our obesogenic environments. Framing societal change in this wider social context will help public health messages to gain more traction and this, in turn, will be cause and consequence of genuine behaviour change because individuals are more likely to consider changing their habits and practices with their friends, families and communities, when they are part of something larger than themselves in other words.

One of the societal settings in which sustainable diets should be nurtured is through public sector catering in schools, hospitals, care homes, prisons and government offices, where the *public plate* could do so much more to champion the cause of good food for all by harnessing the power of purchase.

3. The Public Plate

What is most distinctive about public sector catering is that it caters for some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in society and this lowly social status helps to explain why the sector has been burdened with a Cinderella status for so many years. But the public sector catering service needs to be viewed and valued anew because the best index of a just (and sustainable) society is the way it treats its poorest and most vulnerable members, be they pupils, patients, pensioners or prisoners. In the UK the public sector spends some £2.5 billion a year on food and catering services, of which schools and hospitals are the largest categories by value. This budget ought to be deployed more strategically to render good food more readily available in public sector settings (Morgan and Morley, 2014).

The case for sustainable food procurement in the public sector was well made by Defra more than a decade ago, when it said:

*“If we are what we eat, then public sector food purchasers help shape the lives of millions of people. In hospitals, schools, prisons, and canteens... good food helps maintain good health, promote healing rates and improve concentration and behaviour. But **sustainable** food procurement isn't just about better nutrition. It's about where the food comes from, how it's produced and transported, and where it ends up. It's about food quality, safety and choice. Most of all, it's about defining **best value** in its broadest sense” (Defra, 2003).*

The quality of the public plate includes some of the best and the worst food in the country - depending on the institution in question. Without doubt the best food is served to our political leaders – to MPs and their staff in the House of Commons and to Ministers in the Welsh Government and their staff. As we can see from Box 3.1, the annual catering subsidy for the House of Commons ranged from £6.1 million in 2008/09 to £4.2 million in 2013/14 and these menus are as good as anything to be found our finest restaurants. Good food is also served in the Welsh Government's own canteens where the annual catering subsidy is shown in **Box 3.2** below.

Box 3.1: Annual Subsidy for House of Commons Catering Units

Year	Annual Subsidy (£m)
2008/09	6.1
2009/10	5.7
2010/11	5.8
2011/12	5.2
2012/13	4.7
2013/14	4.2

Source: House of Commons (2014). *Catering Services: Costs to the House of Commons*

Box 3.2: Annual Subsidy for Welsh Government Catering Units

Year	Annual Subsidy(£)
2010/11	261,975
2011/12	282,989
2012/13	405,909
2013/14	422,829

Source: WAQ67306: Year-on-year increases reflect the extended scope of the catering contract for 5 sites to 10 sites by 31 March 2012.

At the other end of the quality spectrum we find a minority of schools, hospitals and care homes, where caterers feel obliged - for reasons of cost or mindset - to source from the cheapest ends of the food chain. Fortunately, fewer and fewer public caterers feel obliged to forage in the cheapest ends of the spectrum because new food and nutritional standards in schools and hospitals have raised the quality bar of what can be served. Although the average standard of the British public plate has improved, there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that the quality of public food provisioning continues to vary to a degree that is totally unacceptable, especially in an age of austerity, when access to affordable good food is vital for public health and social justice.

The public food sector in Wales illustrates the potential of the public plate as well as the problem of variability, reflecting the uneven development of the public sector. Although we casually talk of “the public sector” as though it were some homogenous entity, in reality it consists of dozens of separate bodies, each of which has a different management culture and a different organisational capacity to its counterparts even in the same sub-sector. The sub-sectors of the Welsh public food system are shown in **Box 3.3**, from which we can see that Local Authorities and the NHS together account for 80% of public food expenditure, with the former accounting for 55% and the latter for a further 25% of the total.

Box 3.3: Total Food and Drink Purchases by Organisation Type

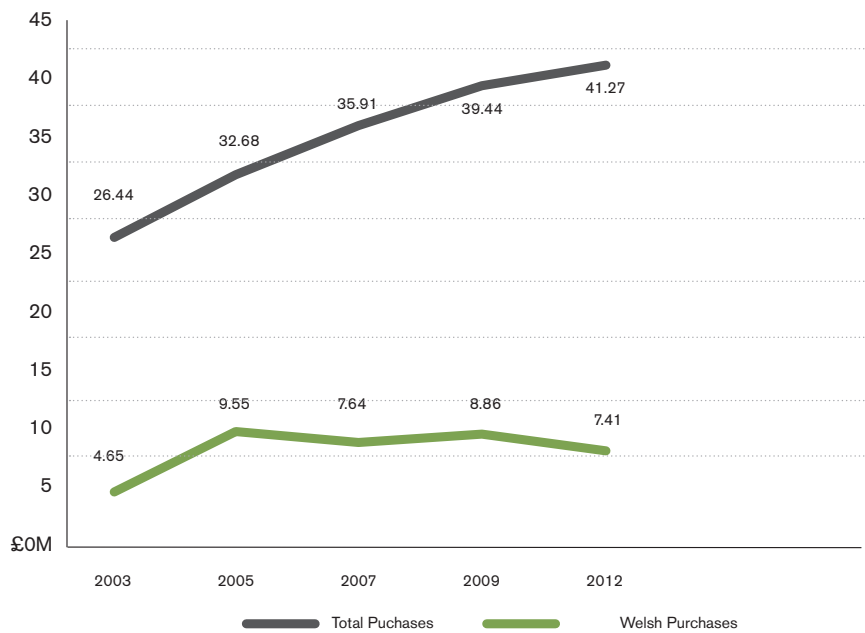
Organisation Type	Total Food & Drink Purchases	Purchases from Welsh companies	Percentage from Welsh Companies
Local Authorities	£41,269,636	£28,064,199	68%
NHS	£18,397,517	£14,153,320	77%
HE & FE	£10,332,042	£3,722,528	36%
Military, Police and Fire	£1,865,187	£412,716	22%
Other public sector	£2,540,842	£830,557	33%
All Organisations	£74,405,224	£47,183,319	63%

Source: Strategic Marketing (2013)

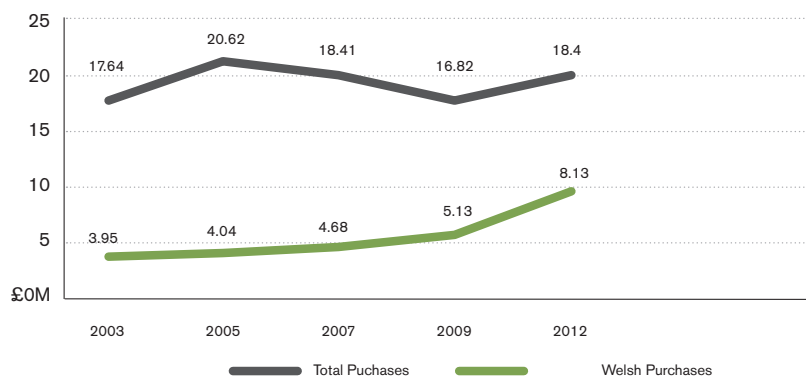
As we can see from **Box 3.4**, the purchasing trends in these two sub-sectors have diverged in recent years. The value of total food purchases in the Local Authority sub-sector increased by 5% between 2009/12, but the value of products of Welsh origin fell by 16%. In contrast the value of Welsh origin products purchased in the NHS has increased significantly since 2009 and this trend is almost entirely due to the fact that the NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership has actively encouraged the supply chain to make greater use of local produce and local suppliers (which are not necessarily the same thing of course). The NHS seems more able and willing to use its power of purchase to refashion the food supply chain, which is exactly what occurs across the whole public sector in Scotland.

Box 3.4: Local Authority and NHS Food Purchasing Trends 2003/12

— Local Authority Purchases



— NHS Purchases



Although we should not read too much into the differences between Local Authority and NHS food purchasing trends, the contrast does raise wider questions about procurement capacity in the two sub-sectors. This capacity issue was addressed in the McClelland Report, the most detailed public procurement audit ever conducted in Wales. Its central findings with respect to procurement capacity were the following: (i) the NHS could be considered an exemplar in terms of the resources it devoted to procurement (ii) seven local authorities were deemed to be adequate (iii) the Welsh Government was found to be weak on the staffing side and (iv) as many as 15 of the 22 Local Authorities were said to “have weak, or very weak, procurement capability as measured in resources” (McClelland, 2012:30).

Thanks to the determination of Jane Hutt, the Welsh Government Minister for Finance, the sobering findings of the McClelland Report were used to shake up the public procurement profession to ensure that Wales secured better value for money for the public purse. One of the most important public sector innovations was the creation in 2013 of the National Procurement Service, which will manage contracts across the public sector “to reduce expenditure, eliminate duplication, develop a sustainable procurement model and increase efficiency” according to the launch statement. To date more than 73 public bodies have joined the NPS and these include the Welsh Government, the NHS and every Local Authority. The National Procurement Service strategy aims to promote collaborative procurement in 6 categories - ICT, Fleet and Transport, Professional Services, Corporate and Business Services, People Services and Utilities, and Construction and Facilities Management. By using the combined purchasing power of its members, the NPS aims to secure annual savings of £25 million.

Although food was not included in the original list of procurement categories, it has subsequently been added, and its inclusion raises important questions as to whether food, and especially fresh produce, can be classified as just another commodity or whether it should be treated as a unique product category on account of its centrality to health and wellbeing. Securing savings of £25million is a laudable objective, but the NPS strategy could be detrimental to health and wellbeing if it drives down food prices to levels below what good food costs to produce and what good food producers need to remain viable.

One of the reasons why the Food for Life Partnership was created was to prevent the commodification of food and ensure that good food in the public sector could yield multiple dividends for all parts of the food chain - securing not just value for money in a narrow sense, but *values for money* in the broader, multi-dimensional sense (Lang, 2010; Morgan, 2012; Powell et al, 2015).

4. Food for Life

The *Food for Life Partnership* (FFLP) is one of the most inspirational social experiments of our time and needs to be lauded as such because it addresses pressing societal challenges through a sustainable food programme that integrates the multiple goals of public health, ecological integrity and social justice.

In practical terms it seeks to deliver sustainable diets by harnessing the energies of public sector caterers, private sector suppliers and local communities that want their schools and hospitals to enjoy food that is good for people and planet alike. Launched in 2007 with the support of the Big Lottery, the FFLP was designed to promote the “whole school approach” to school food reform, which promotes the healthy-eating message through every aspect of the school - the classroom, the dining room and the vending machine in particular – and ensures that the landscape and the mindscape of the school are compatible and mutually reinforcing. FFLP is now branching out in two different ways – *geographically*, by diversifying beyond its original schools in England and, *sectorally*, by including day nurseries, universities, hospitals and care homes as well as schools (www.foodforlife.org.uk).

The FFLP is a highly innovative collaboration between charities (consisting of the Soil Association, Garden Organic, Focus on Food, Health Education Trust and the Royal Society for Public Health) that builds partnerships with schools and other institutions to enhance their food culture. The FFLP approach in schools uses a framework for change focussing on the *whole school approach* to good food, impacting on health, education and sustainability. Schools work towards bronze, silver and gold FFLP Awards in a process that actively involves pupils, staff, parents, and the wider community in growing and cooking food and linking with farms to learn where their food comes from. In addition the Soil Association works closely with catering teams in schools and other settings to improve the quality and provenance of meals through the Food for Life (FFL) Catering Mark, which also has bronze, silver and gold awards based on the following criteria:

- The *Bronze Catering Mark* has fixed standards and these focus on removing harmful additives, trans fats and GM from the menu and ensuring that the majority of dishes on the menu are prepared freshly from unprocessed ingredients
- The *Silver and Gold Catering Mark* standards are assessed on a points system, rewarding spend on ethical, environmentally friendly and local ingredients

Today over a million Catering Mark meals are served each weekday, totalling more than 178 million meals a year. These meals are served in a wide array of settings – including over 7,400 schools, 150 nurseries, over 30 universities, 7 hospitals, 75% of London boroughs, 25% of English schools and 8 Scottish local authorities.

One of the myths about FFLP meals is that they are “posh nosh” for the few and not the many. But the fact of the matter is that the FFL Catering Mark has been secured in such a

wide array of settings – by public sector catering teams as well as private sector caterers – that it is clearly not confined to the more prosperous parts of the country. The case of Oldham in Greater Manchester proves the point (see **Box 4.1**).

Box 4.1: Oldham Wins Gold

Anne Burns is the head of catering in Oldham Council, one of the 10 local authorities that make up the Combined Authority of the Manchester City-Region, and her catering team was the first winner of the Food for Life Catering Gold in the North West for the quality of the school meals service. I first met Anne when we shared a public platform at a food policy conference. At that time Oldham was the holder of a Silver award and she told me in no uncertain terms that it was only a matter of time before her and her team won a Gold award – and 2 years later they did just that. Recently I spoke with her again to ask a simple question: what were the key factors in winning Gold? Everything depends, she said, on the people at the helm – the professional commitment of the catering manager, the skills and enthusiasm of the catering team and the sustained political support of local politicians. What about the cost of FFLP meals, was it not prohibitively expensive for a cash-strapped council in a relatively deprived local authority area? The cost was not prohibitive, she said, because sound menu planning and close working relationships with suppliers helped her catering team to win the Gold award with a 60p cost of food-on-the-plate. Oldham charges £2 per head for a school meal, one of the lowest charges in the region. What are the challenges ahead? The main challenges for Oldham, she said, were: (i) to boost the take-up of school meals because take-up was still just 50% of eligible children (ii) to market the service better to parents so that they appreciated the high quality service and (iii) to sustain a high quality service in an age of austerity.

The first independent evaluation of FFLP in schools was published in 2011 and it unearthed some very significant findings (Orme, et al, 2011). A sub-sample of 111 Flagship schools was studied, 75 primary schools, 31 secondary schools and 5 special schools. In terms of catering provision, 45% had local authority providers, 37% had in-house provision and 17% had a private contractor. The sample also had an above average representation of schools located in ward catchments with high child poverty. Some of the most significant findings were:

- The FFLP flagship school programme was associated with increased school meal take up above the national trend for both paid and free school meals;
- Children reporting eating an average of 4 or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day increased as a result of increased exposure to experiential food education, which included school gardens, cookery classes and farm visits;
- School census data showed that FFLP flagship schools, on average, improved their attainment scores over the course of the programme period;
- More than two-thirds of senior teachers said that FFLP activity fed through into positive Ofsted assessments for personal development and wellbeing
- Professional development opportunities for catering staff increased, raising the number of formal qualifications and staff satisfaction ratings;
- FFLP addressed the whole school community (children, parents, staff, school caterers and suppliers) and the good food message rippled throughout the system, from the classroom

to the dining room and beyond to the home and the supply chain

The evaluation concluded by saying that, while not universally the case, the FFLP Schools Award “can act as a proxy for outcomes across school meal take up, parental engagement, sustainable food attitudes and healthier eating. These outcomes relate to schools in diverse settings, including those with indicators of higher social deprivation or lacking in infrastructure or staff skills at the outset. Achievement in these circumstances provides a strong case for multi-level and holistic food reform programmes in school settings” (Orme et al, 2011:15).

The FFLP model is now setting the policy agenda for good food throughout the UK, especially in Scotland, where it is being supported by the Scottish Government as part of Scotland’s ambition to be a Good Food Nation. Over the past three years Food for Life Scotland (FFLS) has increased the number of Catering Mark awards from 3 to 24 and serves over 16.6 million certified meals (bronze, silver and gold) per year in nurseries, schools, universities, work places, care homes, community lunch clubs, leisure centres and visitor attractions. With the support of the Scottish Government and its local partners, FFLS plans to build on this success in the following ways:

- 1— **Food in the Public Sector:** Having Scotland’s public sector lead by example with the NHS, local authorities and Scottish Government signing up to offer fresh, seasonal, local and sustainable produce
- 2— **A Children’s Food Policy:** Developing a specific children’s food policy in recognition of the impact of food on the health of young people and their ability to influence society’s behaviour for generations to come
- 3— **Local Food:** Working with communities and producers to encourage the production and sale of more locally grown food
- 4— **Good Food Choices:** Promoting good food choices to consumers, enlisting the support of retailers, food producers and public bodies (FFLS, 2015)

What is so impressive about this FFLS strategy is that it uses the public sector as a platform on which to promote its good food message to other settings in the private and civic sectors, illustrating how the power of public purchase can have effects way beyond the public sector itself. Although the FFLS strategy is primarily designed to promote the health of people and planet, these ethical values and regulatory standards also serve as commercial selling points for the Scottish food and drink industry because they resonate with the values of discerning consumers in and beyond Scotland.

Wales has been something of a desert for the FFLP model compared to England and Scotland, which is odd when the values embodied in the model are very similar to the values championed by the Welsh Government – especially in such areas as prudent healthcare, sustainable development and social justice for example. But all is not lost because, according to the public sector food purchasing survey, almost six in ten (57%) organisations have heard of the Soil Association’s Food for Life Catering Mark and, of these, half have considered adopting it.

According to the Soil Association, the following organisations have achieved the Catering Mark at Bronze level for some of their catering facilities:

- Aberystwyth University for three restaurants
- Cardiff University for three student/staff restaurants
- University of South Wales (listed as University of Glamorgan for Stilts Food Court and University of Wales, Newport for a cafe on the Caerleon Campus)
- University of Swansea for two food halls
- Eden Foodservice – for 48 schools in Anglesey

Furthermore, more than half the organisations that responded to the survey thought the FFL Catering Mark was beneficial to their organisation. One of the biggest differences between Wales and Scotland is that the Scottish Government offered robust support to the FFLP initiative because it recognised that the latter could create a momentum from the grassroots that could chime with and provide support for its own strategy of becoming a Good Food Nation – a strategy that is primarily driven by a burning desire to improve Scotland’s poor public health by making good food more readily available and affordable to all, a strategy that it will also benefit Scottish food and drink producers.

Since the Welsh Government shares these goals - and the social, economic and ecological values that inform them - there is no reason why it could not emulate its Scottish counterpart and embrace the FFLP model and champion good food for all. While ministers might say that they already support the principle of good food for all, the point is that nothing speaks louder than the FFLP imprimatur, which provides the incontrovertible evidence that public bodies are not just talking about values but practicing them - the difference between good *intentions* and good *practice*.

5. The Public Realm

It is well known that governments have been rendered powerless to act by the twin pressures of globalisation and austerity. Well known perhaps, but quite wrong. The notion that governments are powerless victims of circumstance is one of the most pernicious and disempowering notions in the world today. To counter this noxious idea we need to identify compelling narratives in which the public realm – by which I mean governments at all levels along with their associated public sector bodies – is promoting *and* practicing sustainable development in its own estate and helping the private and third sectors to do likewise. In an age of austerity there will always be pressures to cut costs to the bone, a stance that can be profoundly counter-productive if it displaces cost elsewhere in the system, where it is less perceptible in the here and now. There is no better example of cost displacement than reducing the quality of public food – especially in schools, hospitals and care homes – because poor diets generate short term costs in the form of nutritional poverty and long term costs in the form of burgeoning healthcare charges. How should the public realm react?

The Spectre of the Nanny State

Despite the spectre of the Nanny State – an ideological weapon that has been wielded to great effect by the food industry to forestall public regulation - the public realm has a financial obligation and a moral duty to regulate the production and consumption of unhealthy food and drink – *financially* because the cost of diet-related disease threatens to bankrupt the NHS, *morally* because there are no greater inequalities in our society than premature death and disability caused by poor diets. And only governments, working in concert with civil society movements and enlightened businesses, can counter the formidable power of the junk food industry, which is the primary source of our obesogenic environment.

Fortunately, powerful voices are calling for more radical action to be taken to address the causes of diet-related disease. Simon Stevens, the chief executive of NHS England, has said that educators and public health bodies need to tackle obesity with the same ferocity as teen pregnancy and drink driving, labelling obesity “the new smoking”, because it is the cause of 1 in 5 cancer deaths. In the same vein, Professor Mark Drakeford, the Welsh Government Minister for Health, told the annual conference of the NHS Confederation last year that “collective action to address public health concerns remains one of the most powerful contributions any government can make to the welfare and wellbeing of its population”.

For both these health service leaders the biggest challenge facing the NHS is how to transform the culture of the health service from a *treatment* service to a *prevention* service. What needs to be said loud and clear is that the good food movement has an essential role to play here because the transition to a prevention culture needs to occur in society at large and not just within the health service and it will not be accomplished unless good food is made more readily available and affordable. In other words, the good food movement is the greatest ally of the NHS and the civic energies of the movement need to be harnessed if the

societal challenge of diet-related disease is to be met with a societal response.

Obesity: The Big Idea

What more can public policy do in the face of societal challenges like the obesity epidemic? The big idea about obesity is that there isn't one! That is to say, no *single* action has anything other than a modest effect because there is no silver bullet or big idea in the battle against obesity. As it is a societal problem, with multiple causes, every section of society needs to be part of the solution, and there is no better place to begin than in our schools, where children learn how to view and value the world. But schools are only one part of society and therefore a school food policy is nowhere near sufficient to achieve the kind of societal changes that we need to secure a healthier and more sustainable society (Morgan and Sonnino, 2008).

All the evidence suggests that approaches aimed at getting individuals to voluntarily change their eating behaviour have very limited impact unless the *context of consumption* is also changed – to make healthier choices more readily available and affordable. Re-shaping the context of consumption requires a composite approach in which regulatory, fiscal, contextual and informational approaches are combined to help people in their communities to help themselves (Garnett et al, 2014).

Galvanising the Public Realm

There are very few places in Europe where the public realm looms larger – in social, economic or political terms – than in Wales. Creating a dynamic public sector is therefore nowhere more important than in Wales, where the age of austerity will propel the issue of public service innovation to the forefront of Welsh politics for the foreseeable future. In this febrile atmosphere there will be strong pressures to cut programmes and services to the bone, not least because of external pressure from the Treasury and because cost-cutting exercises are always easier to implement and measure than value-creating projects – even though the latter may be more cost-effective in the long term.

The following three proposals are animated by the need for a principled and practical prospectus for a public realm that needs to be galvanised and re-imagined like never before in its history.

Proposal One: Boosting the Power of Purchase

The status of public sector procurement managers needs to be radically enhanced because these professionals are the key to securing not just value-for-money in the narrow economic sense, but also *values-for-money* in the broader sense (eg Community Benefit clauses to support jobs and training as well as SMEs and other sustainable development goals). Boosting the power of purchase means investing in public procurement professionals, an urgent task because there is a serious procurement skills deficit in the Welsh public sector as I argued in the IWA's *the welsh agenda* magazine in 2012, an argument that was later confirmed by the McClelland Report (Morgan, 2012).

The Welsh Government responded to this skills crisis by launching a new training programme – the *Home-Grown Talent* Project, which plans to invest £10.9m over 5 years in training procurement professionals for the public sector. Laudable though it is, this project will not produce nearly enough professionals to plug the skills gap. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that these newly trained professionals will be able to deliver the kind of *sustainable* procurement agenda that is embodied in the FFLP model, where food is not viewed and valued as a basic commodity. For these reasons, there's a strong case for investing in a cadre of public procurement professionals who are able to design and deliver a *values-for-money* programme.

In operational terms this proposal could be delivered by investing in a dozen new sustainable procurement officers, all of whom might be attached to the National Procurement Service, where they could service public sector bodies throughout Wales. The salary of a procurement officer with a CIPS (Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply) qualification is just over £40,000 a year, which means that the whole package would cost in the region of £500,000 a year.

Proposal Two: Promoting Good Food in the Public Sector

Public bodies that claim to be operating a good food policy for their staff and clients should be encouraged to provide incontrovertible evidence to a public that is becoming increasingly sceptical of such claims - and the FFL Catering Mark is the most credible way to convey this commitment. As we saw in section 4, many food procurement managers in Wales are already aware of the FFL Catering Mark and the potential benefits of adopting it. The good food movement long ago shed its image as being an exotic fringe activity for the initiated few, evidenced by the fact that over 40 cities in the UK have adopted a good food policy, including Cardiff, where *Food Cardiff* is championing good food for all and using the capital as a showcase for local produce from all over Wales – demonstrating that a good food policy has benefits for producers as well as consumers. Even more pertinent, perhaps, is the fact that the Scottish Government has resolutely committed itself to becoming a Good Food Nation, leading from the front by adopting the FFL Catering Mark model in its own catering and promoting the model to others as well.

In operational terms the Welsh Government's commitment to good food for all would be immeasurably improved if it followed suit – by adopting the FFL Catering Mark in its own catering service (currently managed by Eures) and by funding a dedicated policy officer to promote the good food cause throughout the public, private and third sectors.

Proposal Three: Enhancing Healthy Schools with Food for Life

School food reformers have made a lot of progress in Wales in recent years, both at a local level and at the national level, where the *Appetite for Life* programme set new standards for the quality of food in schools. On a broader front the *Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes* promotes health and wellbeing in the round and it has a presence in all 22 of the local authorities in Wales. It would be a short step to upgrade this network by encouraging it to adopt the FFLP model – a quality imprimatur that signals that these schools are committed to the highest standards of sustainability. In operational terms this could be delivered through a small scale pilot exercise – 2 clusters of 5 schools each for 2 years, costing £75,000 per cluster, amounting to £300,000 in total.

Public service innovation works best when it is based on small scale trials, focusing on what works and scaling and spreading the model (Mulgan, 2014). The FFLP model has proven its worth elsewhere in the UK and it is time for Wales to explore the model to enhance its sustainability credentials. The proposed pilots might seem small relative to the scale of the challenges of obesity and climate change, but the aim is to roll it out on a national basis as soon as the pilots are complete.

Taken together these three proposals would do much to galvanise the public realm at a time when it is being challenged like never before. The conventional wisdom will say that this is no time to embark on fripperies like food policy experiments. To which I would say two things.

First, the Welsh Government has made bold commitments to public health, social justice and sustainable development - indeed it was the first government in Europe to incorporate a commitment to sustainability in its constitution. The commitment to becoming a Good Food Nation would open a new chapter in this story of a devolved government being bold in principle *and* resolute in practice by demonstrating its duty of care for the health and wellbeing of its citizens.

Second, the Welsh Government has a *political obligation* (on account of its sustainability duty) and a *social need* (on account of the high rate of diet-related disease in Wales) to make health and wellbeing second to none in importance. A practical commitment to becoming a Good Food Nation, by making good food more readily available and affordable, would do more than anything to signal to the world that the values of public health, social justice and ecological integrity are alive and well in Wales.

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