BRISTOL, ENGLAND, UK

GOING FOR GOLD SUSTAINABLE FOOD CITY STATUS

This food policy snapshot is based on an interview with Kathy Derrick, Sustainability Team Manager for Bristol City Council.

Bristol is a pioneer of integrated food and climate policies in the UK, setting high standards and ambitious plans for sustainable food systems for more than a decade. In 2016 and 2020, Bristol's declarations of the climate and ecological emergencies further drove the city's integrated food policy work forward. These declarations were followed with citywide CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY Strategies incorporating a number of food targets. These would be consolidated further into the BRISTOL GOING FOR GOLD initiative by the BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL (BCC) and leading food organizations. The initiative took a strategic and collaborative approach to good food governance and action. As a result, in 2021, Bristol was the second city in the UK to be awarded GOLD SUSTAINABLE FOOD CITY status by the SUSTAINABLE FOOD PLACES NETWORK. Bristol is currently developing its first ONE CITY FOOD PLAN to drive significant and lasting improvements to the city-wide food system through to 2030.

**ENABLERS**

INTEGRATING FOOD, HEALTH, AND CLIMATE POLICIES

While the BCC had been working towards a healthy and sustainable food system for over a decade, the 2016 and 2020 climate and ecological emergency declarations formalized the integration of food and climate policies within the City. Following these declarations, the Mayor created a new cabinet post for Climate, Ecology and Sustainable Growth, and worked to integrate the councilor’s work across all City departments. In addition, through its ONE CITY approach, Bristol develops joined-up policies including the recent One City Food Plan and tests its objectives to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This ensures that the City has a common agenda and ambition around development and sustainability, linked to international commitments. This formal policy integration brings knowledge, resources, aspiration, and awareness together for a productive and enabling food policy environment.

Food policy work in Bristol is absolutely integrated. If you can achieve that integration, it's a massive benefit. You can join up your knowledge, your finance, and your aspirations for collective awareness and organisation. It's a much more supportive and productive way to work, and usually, you need to have that joined-up approach to really be impactful.

ENABLING CITIZEN AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN FOOD POLICY

Instead of centralised leadership, Bristol’s food policy work is highly collaborative and coordinated among a multitude of organisations, businesses, and individuals across the city. The Going for Gold initiative exemplified this city-wide organisational approach to food policy. While the BCC provided project support, leading food organisations and city networks came together to form the Bristol Going for Gold partnership. Each partner contributed its unique expertise: the BRISTOL FOOD NETWORK provided planning, leadership, coordination, and connection to the existing food movement; the BRISTOL GREEN CAPITAL PARTNERSHIP helped reach businesses; and RESOURCE FUTURES provided expertise on measuring food waste. The Sustainable Food Places Award was in part a recognition of the City’s collaborative and holistic approach to good food governance.

**BARRIERS**

FEW METRICS AND DATA COLLECTION MECHANISMS

It has been challenging for Bristol to establish a monitoring framework to measure the impact of its integrated food and climate policies. BCC looks forward to drawing from the BARCELONA CHALLENGE toolkit that can be used to estimate greenhouse gas reductions and other socio-ecological and economic co-benefits. However, one area for which Bristol has already received recognition is its exceptional metrics and data collection in the area of food waste. Bristol's approach rests on the food waste hierarchy principles, underpinned by Bristol City Council's TOWARDS A ZERO WASTE BRISTOL strategy (2016). The measurable successes on food waste reduction contributed to Bristol becoming a Gold Sustainable Food City.

FOOD ELEVATED AS PRIORITY BUT LACKING SIGNIFICANT FUNDING

While the Going for Gold initiative elevated food as a city priority, comprehensive funding remains a challenge. The City Council is currently providing funding to coordinate the City’s strategic partnership. This initiative helps foster cooperation and support between different stakeholders, but funding is not plentiful and winning external funding bids is increasingly competitive. National support mechanisms for local food policies remain weak compared to other issue areas, and relevant guidance and new dedicated funding streams would go a long way to support food policy development.

Bristol's political will combined with a partnership of stakeholders across the city led to the success of the Going for Gold initiative. The upcoming One City Food Plan will further codify how progress can be made by 2030 in each of the city’s six integrated food themes. Leadership on food policy is decentralized and priorities are aligned vertically and horizontally across the city, from the mayor and councillors to all community stakeholders. One area of development in Bristol is the creation of a monitoring framework to appropriately measure the climate, biodiversity, health, and resilience impacts of its food policies. Bristol looks forward to learning from and sharing its experience in this regard with other Glasgow Declaration signatory cities.

**BRISTOL'S GOING FOR GOLD INITIATIVE**

- The Going for Gold initiative was chosen as one of three citywide priorities in 2020.
- Bristol City Council provided project support via its Sustainable City Team and Communities and Public Health team, connecting key policies and practices to meet their food agenda.
- The ten integrated themes in the initiative were: buying better, towards zero food waste, urban food growing, community action, eating better, and food equality.
- A citywide partnership network between local government, the health sector, universities, local businesses, schools, food organizations, and citizens led activity on each of the themes.