



Local Community Network

Vale of Frome LCN

Tuesday 16th June 2026, 7.00pm

Frome Town Hall

Food Resilience and Security Special

1. Welcome to our Food Resilience and Food Security Special meeting of the Vale of Frome LCN

Vale of Frome residents, farmers, community leaders and organisations came together recently at the Vale of Frome LCN Food Resilience Special to explore one of the most important issues facing the area – how to ensure a resilient, sustainable local food system for the future.

The event was organised through the Vale of Frome Local Community Network (LCN) and led by Councillor Helen Kay.

Max Wide, Chair of the Vale of Frome LCN opened the meeting with a welcome to all attendees.

Cllr Helen Kay explained that the meeting's focus evolved from food security, which emphasises supply and crop production, to food resilience, which also considers distribution and access to nutritious food. The group agreed to concentrate on local issues, avoiding national policy debates, and to explore practical community responses.

We were joined by over 60 attendees both in person and online. A full list is available upon request. The format would be speeches and a Q&A with our panellists before breaking into breakout sessions in the second half.

2. Speakers and Q&A

Chaired by Cllr Kay, speeches and presentations were given by the following:

Speaker	Topic
Rob Addicott	Arable Farming
Patrick Twigger	Pig Farming
Hugh Broom	Journalism and Farmers Markets
Cordelia Rowlett	Vallis Veg and local production
Ali Morgan	Food and Environment Policy

2a.) Rob Addicott

Rob Addicott farms around 2,000 acres in partnership with a neighbouring farm, spoke about how his business has embraced regenerative farming over the past two decades. He explained that while the farm still produces traditional crops such as wheat, barley, beans and oilseed rape, it has also diversified into crops including linseed, canary seed, millet and rye. He outlined the core principles of regenerative agriculture, including minimising soil disturbance, reducing artificial inputs, keeping soils covered, maintaining living roots in the ground and increasing plant diversity.

Rob described how new technologies such as drones, variable-rate fertiliser application and cover cropping are helping farmers improve soil health while reducing the use of fertilisers and sprays.

Rob emphasised that healthy soil is the foundation of productive and resilient farming, describing efforts to increase organic matter, encourage biodiversity and strengthen the natural relationship between plants and soil biology. However, he also highlighted the significant challenges facing modern agriculture, including tight farming margins, the high cost of machinery and inputs, difficulties recruiting and retaining skilled staff, and the pressures that have pushed many farms towards greater specialisation.

2b.) Patrick Twigger

Patrick who farms around 250 acres between Trudoxhill and Tytherington, gave an insight into the realities of running a modern, diversified farm business. He described a mixed operation that includes grassland, arable crops, maize, triticale and miscanthus grass, alongside environmental stewardship schemes designed to improve biodiversity and habitat creation. He explained how different areas of the farm are managed for different purposes, balancing food production with environmental benefits, and highlighted the role that long-term planning, crop rotation and land management play in maintaining agricultural productivity.

Patrick also showcased the importance of diversification to farm resilience. Alongside traditional farming activities, his business includes a solar farm, green waste composting operation, pig finishing enterprise and a china hire business. He spoke about turning green waste into compost to improve soil quality and described how livestock, crops and recycled organic matter work together in a circular system to enhance soil health. While supportive of environmental improvements, he highlighted the challenges farmers face navigating regulations, changing schemes and economic pressures, stressing the need for practical solutions that allow farms to remain both environmentally sustainable and financially viable.

2c.) Hugh Broom

Hugh Broom, a food journalist, manager of the Frome Farmers' Market and founder of the Frome Food Network, focused his presentation on strengthening local food distribution and community engagement. He highlighted the success of a series of pop-up community restaurants that brought people together around shared tables, serving locally sourced food prepared by local chefs. The initiative served around 1,000 people over eight events and has since received further support to explore how similar community dining models could be replicated elsewhere across Somerset.

Hugh encouraged parishes and community groups to consider establishing their own community restaurant projects as a way of building stronger local connections around food.

Hugh also spoke about the importance of creating stronger local supply chains.

Hugh discussed opportunities around public sector food procurement and highlighted successful pilots that connected local producers with schools and other public institutions. Reflecting on the closure of Frome's former food hub, he suggested there is potential to revisit community-based food distribution models that allow residents to buy directly from local producers. He argued that shortening the distance between growers and consumers could help strengthen food resilience, support local farmers and create a more sustainable food system for the future.

2d.) Cordelia Rowlett

Cordelia, who runs Vallis Veg and has a background in food policy, argued that local vegetable production has a vital role to play in building food resilience. She highlighted that vegetables are highly nutritious but difficult to store and often labour-intensive to grow, meaning resilient food systems are likely to depend on a network of local growers, allotments and market gardens.

Drawing on historical maps, she noted that Frome once had far more allotments and local food production than it does today, suggesting that rebuilding local growing capacity is less about innovation and more about rediscovering practices that communities have relied upon in the past.

Cordelia also pointed to strong local demand, citing long allotment waiting lists and the number of people interested in growing food if they had access to land.

A key theme of her presentation was the challenge of access to land and making small-scale food production economically viable. She explained how she and her husband have experimented with dividing land into smaller plots to enable more people to grow food and argued that people are more likely to make land productive and biodiverse when they have secure, long-term access to it.

While acknowledging that local market gardening alone will not solve future food challenges, Cordelia suggested that creating opportunities for people to develop growing skills now would build valuable capacity for the future.

2e.) Ali Morgan

Ali Morgan, an author and former adviser with experience in agricultural policy, environmental management and farm support, spoke about the relationship between food production, land use and public health. Drawing on her work in farming and co-authoring a book on diet and agriculture, she argued that livestock have traditionally played a crucial role in maintaining healthy soils through mixed farming systems. She explained how pasture, grazing animals and manure help replenish soil carbon, improve soil structure and support biodiversity, contrasting this with the soil degradation that can occur under continuous arable cropping. She suggested that future food resilience should include a greater focus on restoring soil health and integrating livestock into sustainable farming systems.

Ali also encouraged attendees to think about food resilience through the lens of nutrition as well as production. She argued that farming policy and food production have often been driven by economics rather than nutritional needs and raised questions about the balance of crops, livestock and imported foods within the UK's food system. Her presentation generated lively discussion, particularly around diet, livestock and land use, reflecting the importance of bringing different perspectives together. While some of her views prompted debate, her contribution added a valuable dimension to the evening by encouraging participants to consider how farming, health and environmental sustainability are interconnected when planning for the future resilience of local food systems

3. Breakout

Breakout sessions were led by the following:

Session	Facilitator
Soil	Peter Macfadjen
Young People in Food	Nick Truman (Growing Space)
Food Belt	Caroline Wajsnlum (Field to Fork)
Food Poverty	Lenka Grimes (FairFrome)
What next!	Jess

- Include representatives from farming, community organisations, local councils, food producers and interested residents.
- Use the group to coordinate activity and maintain momentum.

2. Map Existing Food Resilience Activity

- Identify current food-growing initiatives, food support organisations, allotments, producers, community groups and volunteers.
- Highlight gaps, duplication and opportunities for collaboration.
- Better connect organisations already working in the food space.

3. Develop a Vale of Frome Food Resilience Action Plan

- Agree a shared vision for what food resilience should look like in the area over the next 10–20 years.
- Identify priorities, measurable objectives and community-led actions.
- Learn from existing food resilience strategies elsewhere.

4. Support More Local Food Growing

- Explore opportunities for additional allotments and community growing spaces.
- Investigate whether underused land could be made available for market gardening or community food production.

5. Improve Access to Land

- Explore models such as community-owned land, rented plots, smallholdings and food belts around settlements.
- Consider how landowners and farmers could support community food-growing initiatives.

6. Strengthen Local Supply Chains

- Support the growth of farmers' markets and direct sales from producers.

7. Support Vulnerable Residents

- Improve links between food producers, volunteers, community groups and organisations such as Lenka's team at Fair Frome.

- Ensure food resilience planning considers those experiencing food poverty, isolation and limited access to cooking facilities.
- Develop responses that work for both urban and rural communities.

8. Engage Young People

- Create opportunities for children and young people to learn about food growing.
- Work with schools, youth organisations and community projects to build skills and interest in food production.

9. Explore Policy Opportunities

Work with councillors and partners to identify opportunities for wider system change.

