NATIONAL HEALTHY UNIVERSITIES NETWORK
CITY UNIVERSITY, LONDON
THURSDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2013

Images: Incredible Edible; UCLan SU Food Co-op; Mark Dooris

REPORT OF MEETING

&

REPORT OF THEMED SESSION/ WORKSHOP
ON HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD

CONTENTS

WELCOME

- Bill Thompson welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Paul Curran, Vice Chancellor of City University who gave a brief introduction and welcomed participants to the university.

INTRODUCTION AND NETWORK UPDATE

History and Overview

- Mark Dooris gave a history and overview of the UK Healthy Universities Network, which was initially established in 2006 and then developed and strengthened as part of a three year HEFCE-funded project from 2009-2012.

Website

- During this time, the Healthy Universities Website and the Healthy Universities Toolkit (comprising guidance packages, case studies and a self-review tool) were developed. He thanked those who have submitted case studies and encouraged others to submit new cases too, using the Case Study Template form available on the website.
- Using Google Analytics, Mark provided a summary of website traffic. These were really encouraging. Since it was set up in 2010, 9546 unique visitors from 127 different countries have made 16,601 visits to the website. The statistics indicates that interest and engagement has increased over time – with 2,187 unique visitors making 1,361 visits during the period May-November 2013 compared to 722 unique visitors making 3,309 visits during the period May-November 2013.

Recent Development and Expansion

- Mark also outlined the expansion of the Network: from its humble beginnings as an informal gathering of a handful of English universities, there are now around 70 HEIs on the Network's mailing list. Following discussions with colleagues in Wales and Scotland, a decision was taken earlier this year to rebrand the Network as the UK Healthy Universities Network:
- In Wales, the Welsh Government is leading the development of a Healthy and Sustainable FE and HE Framework/Programme. Good progress has been made and an online assessment tool is nearing completion, taking the form of a matrix comprising topics/issues (mental and emotional health and wellbeing; physical activity; healthy and sustainable food; personal and sexual health and relationships; substance use and misuse; sustainable environment) and themes/focus areas (governance, leadership and management; environment, facilities and service provision; community and communication; academic, personal, social and professional development). It has been decided that the scheme will not be award based. Importantly, the development supports a 'continuum' approach across the education system.

  o In Scotland, a number of HEIs such as Robert Gordon University and Dundee University are active in developing and implementing Healthy University programmes – and are also in discussion with NHS Health Scotland regarding further developments.
  o In Northern Ireland, there has been little development to date. However, Mark has recently held discussions with Hilary Johnston at the Public Health Agency. She is keen to engage with the Network and promote the Healthy Universities agenda.

NETWORKING: UPDATES, SHARING OF PRACTICE AND PEER SUPPORT

The networking session provided time for participants to discuss their work – sharing ideas, experiences and challenges and offering peer support. Key issues highlighted included:

- Universities involved in the Network are at different stages – from having a few disparate activities through to comprehensive and strategically-led programmes. There was a common interest and motivation in working towards the joined-up 'whole university' approach that characterises Healthy Universities – addressing the wellbeing of staff, students and the wider community.
- Universities have also had very different entry points for their Healthy University programmes – with co-ordinators being located in academic departments, student services, HR, sports and other services.
- A number of universities are increasingly drawing on academic expertise to guide their Healthy Universities work – in relation to both health topics (e.g. eating disorders) and processes (e.g. marketing and communication). This approach also lends itself to engaging different disciplines and opening up opportunities for student research (to understand needs and opportunities; to evaluate activities) and curriculum development.
- Securing ongoing commitment, leadership and buy-in can be an ongoing struggle – and it is important to identify allies and advocates.
- Different HEIs allow different degrees of freedom/autonomy in relation to branding and marketing Healthy University initiatives.
- It is crucial to find effective ways for universities and students' unions to work together, but many universities find that this is influenced by the particular sabbatical officers in post.
- Many HEIs are experiencing restructuring and/or cost containment, severance and redundancy. This makes it particularly challenging to sustain a 'healthy workplace' – and there are real tensions in implementing programmes to enhance employee wellbeing and resilience (e.g. mindfulness) without being tokenistic.
- It can be challenging to engage external agencies in planning and delivering work. Teesside are making good progress in this area – with the local public health team working with the university, hospital and college as 'healthy settings'. Other participants gave examples of positive experiences of securing external resources and input in thematic areas such as sexual health, mental wellbeing and smoking cessation. UCLan highlighted the value of inviting external public health respresentation onto the Healthy University Steering Group.
- Alcohol use remains a key challenge, although it was noted that the issue is now 'on the agenda' of NUS and students' unions.
- Judy Orme outlined the Food for Life Programme, which is jointly led by the Soil Association, Garden Organic, the Health Education Trust, the Focus on Food Campaign and the Royal Society for Public Health. It is planning to expand and develop its work beyond schools – with higher education being one target sector – see RSPH news item for more information. Judy is leading the evaluation team for this development.
- Participants from Cardiff Metropolitan University described their EmWell project, which has adopted a strategic approach to improving organisational performance through focusing on staff health and wellbeing to effective performance – and has also matched academic expertise to research opportunities and provided possibilities for student research. They also talked about their Eatwell project, which involves collaboration between academics/researchers, catering and the sustainability engagement group.

GENERAL DISCUSSION AND ACTIONS AGREED

Contact NUS and Alcohol Concern regarding NUS report and further action on alcohol and students.   Mark Dooris

Consider how the Case Study template could be simplified or made more flexible and discuss with Steering Group.   Mark Dooris

Consider whether newsletter could be cascaded via other circulation lists (e.g. AMOSSHE, UHR, BUCS) so that it reaches a wider range of people.   Mark Dooris

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 15 May at Cardiff Metropolitan University.

THEMED SESSION ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Professor Tim Lang, City University

- Food represents a convergence of public health and sustainability agendas: following 'healthy eating' guidelines will have the 'co-benefit' of reducing our carbon/ecological footprint – and consciously trying to reduce our carbon/ecological footprint will naturally encourage healthier eating.
- Evidence does not necessarily lead to change: universities need to get more 'savvy' about identifying the opportunities for change and not be so focused on the pursuit of evidence.
- Universities need to reflect honestly and painfully on their role in research – and its link to utility and impact. In particular, we need to dare to generate 'big visions' of how things could be different and what kind of future we need and want. Universities (and society as a whole) cannot continue to serve the amount of meat and dairy-based food that it currently does – this is hugely carbon intensive and totally unsustainable. A recent report published by the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Tackling Climate Change Through Livestock highlights these issues.
- The situation is urgent: we can't afford to leave the future to the likes of Tesco and other food retailers – who treat food as a commodity and have largely ignored public health and sustainability.

Pam Warhurst

See PowerPoint Presentation

- Incredible Edible in Todmorden is an experiment....
- Big movements and innovations start with small ideas on the back of a serviette – we need the courage to think and do differently.
- Whilst Incredible Edible is, on the one hand, all about food – on the other, it is about people in their communities and environments. Food can serve as:

  o A universal vehicle for connecting people with each other and with their environments – and for changing how people relate to each other and the world around them
  o A universal language to initiate a conversation about the future – how we want it to be, how it needs to be and how it can become what it needs to be
  o A practical example of how we can respect each other and the earth – and 'be kind'.

- The Incredible Edible 'model' brings together and connects 'community', 'learning' (all ages, all disciplines) and 'business'.
- Key mechanisms include:

- o 'Propaganda Gardens' – to initiate that conversation
  - o Edible Trails/Routes – to highlight actions and take people on a journey
  - o Developing the 'whole system' – using food growing as an entry point to encourage widespread interest in locally sources food and diversity of activities that 'join the dots' between community, learning and business.

- Key Lessons:

  - o Stop whinging about nothing ever happening and do something!
  - o Stop thinking you always have to get permission...!
  - o Stop waiting to get funding – just do something!

- Other 'notes':

  - o 'Food tends not to be vandalised...'
  - o 'Don't attack the problem head-on, attack it from the side'
  - o Whilst this talk by Pam was not recorded, you can see a TED Talk by her.

- Expansion and Networking

  - o The Todmorden experiment has led to worldwide interest – and there is now an Incredible Edible Network.

- From Incredible Edible to the Edible Campus

  - o Leeds University and Leeds Metropolitan University have joined together to initiate this approach.

Discussion

- Range of universities engaged in providing cooking skills courses/training, some involving their catering services.
- Range of universities have small-scale examples of food-growing initiatives – lots of potential to develop further.
- Do universities understand what it means to be a community – and 'a community within a community'? Universities are tasked to link sustainably with their communities – could this be an entry point?
- Key role of landscape design in creating engaging conversation-provoking edible landscapes.
- Food for Life focuses on changing food cultures, linking food growing, cooking skills and healthy and sustainable food provision and will explore whether the Food for Life Partnership model together with the Food for Life Catering Mark can be transferred from schools into universities. To what extent can it offer a framework for catalysing 'the edible campus'? Can we take the School Food Plan and adapt it for higher education? If any universities feel they have initiatives or work in this area that they would like to share or discuss with the research team at the University of the West of England, Bristol then do contact Judy (Judy.Orme@uwe.ac.uk).

APPENDIX 1: ATTENDANCE

Speakers

Prof Paul Curran	City University, London
Prof Tim Lang, PhD	City University, London
Pam Warhurst CBE	Incredible Edible

Present

Mark Barry	Cardiff Metropolitan University
Coral Brazier	Kingston University
Chris Deacy	Cardiff Metropolitan University
Sharon Doherty	UCLan
Prof Mark Dooris	UCLan
Jonathan Dover	City University, London
Maxine Holt	Manchester Metropolitan University
Mark Jordan	Southampton Solent University
Emma Lloyd	RSPH
Sally Mills	University of Northampton
Joanne Newton	London South Bank University
Manuel Olonso	Loughborough University
Prof Judy Orme	University of the West of England
Jitesh Pandya	De Montford University
Doug Parkin	Leadership Foundation for Higher Education
Andrew Phelps	Cardiff Metropolitan University
Christine Rajah	City University, London
Anne Richardson	Teesside University
Amanda Rigbye	University of Salford
Sue Rothwell	University of Chester
Lizzie Sabine	UWE
Emma Walters	Cardiff Metropolitan University
Philippa Weaver-Smith	City University, London
Hazel Wright	Teesside University

Apologies

Gil Barton	Robert Gordon University
Dame Carol Black	
Sue Bowker	Welsh Assembly Government
Rachel Brown	Cardiff University
Jenny Dunstall	University of Northampton
Amanda Griffiths	University of Sussex
Dr Ian Kenvyn	Leeds Trinity University College
Colum McGuire	NUS
Eileen Martin	Teesside University
Anna Marie Myers	Sheffield Hallam University
Dr Sue Powell	Manchester Metropolitan University
Alisa Stanton	Simon Fraser University
Mrs Judy Stevenson	Sheffield Hallam University

APPENDIX 2: BIOGRAPHIES OF SPEAKERS

Tim Lang

Tim Lang has been Professor of Food Policy at City University's Centre for Food Policy since 2002. He was a hill farmer in Lancashire in the 1970s and for the last 37 years has engaged in public and academic research and debate about food policy. He's been an advisor to many bodies, from the European Commissioner for the Environment to the Mayor of London. He was Commissioner on the UK Government's Sustainable Development Commission (2006-11). He's co-author of *Ecological Public Health* (Routledge, 2012), *Food Policy* (Oxford University Press, 2009), the *Atlas of Food* (Earthscan, 2008) and *Food Wars* (Earthscan, 2004).

Pam Warhurst

Pam Warhurst CBE is a British community leader, activist and environment worker best known for founding the voluntary gardening initiative, Incredible Edible, in Todmorden, West Yorkshire – of which she is currently Chair. Pam was formerly Chair of the Forestry Commission Great Britain and has previously served as a member of the Board of Natural England and as both Deputy Chair and Acting Chair of the Countryside Agency. In 2005, she was awarded a CBE for services to the environment.