



COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING



Middlesbrough Council

Growing Middlesbrough

What is Growing Middlesbrough?

Growing Middlesbrough is the brand through which Middlesbrough Food Partnership originally promoted its work. It was created in 2015 by Middlesbrough Environment City, the independent charity that coordinates Middlesbrough Food Partnership. However, the Growing Middlesbrough brand has since been superseded by the 'Middlesbrough Food Partnership' brand, although Growing Middlesbrough is still widely used and recognised.

As a project, Growing Middlesbrough encourages local businesses to purchase goods and ingredients that have been grown or produced within 50 miles of Middlesbrough. Businesses can sign up to become a part of Growing Middlesbrough, and customers can choose to shop or eat at businesses displaying the Growing Middlesbrough logo. It acts as a network of local food growers, producers, and retailers, and provides information for the public. Growing Middlesbrough run a number of events, such as Local Food Weekends, and maintains a directory of local businesses that have signed up to the network.

What does Growing Middlesbrough aim to achieve?

Growing Middlesbrough aims "to promote local sustainable food and the ambitions of the Food Action Plan". More specifically, the Growing Middlesbrough initiative "works to address issues related to the supply of and demand for local food."

By encouraging businesses to procure locally grown and produced goods and products, Growing Middlesbrough aims to support the local economy, reduce the carbon footprint of the supply chain, and supply fresher, better quality food to businesses and customers. Through public-facing campaigns and events such as Local Food Weekends, Growing Middlesbrough also aims to "raise the profile of local food".

How does it work?

Growers, producers, wholesalers, retailers, caterers and veg box schemes can sign up to Growing Middlesbrough for free, but they have to meet certain criteria. For example, caterers must use at least two

basic ingredients from within 50 miles of Middlesbrough and have a 3* hygiene rating, while food retailers must sell at least 4 products from within 50 miles of Middlesbrough.

Being a part of the project allows businesses to use the Growing Middlesbrough logo, attend free events and workshops, and be listed on the Growing Middlesbrough website and directory.

How is Growing Middlesbrough set up?

Middlesbrough Environment City Trust (MEC), an independent charity, established Growing Middlesbrough as part of its wider 'One Planet Middlesbrough: Creating Sustainable Communities' project. The One Planet Middlesbrough project ran from 2013-2017, and the financial records suggest that Growing Middlesbrough was created around 2015/16.

Middlesbrough still use the One Planet framework to deliver its sustainability and environmental work, but it seems that the 'Creating Sustainable Communities' project is no longer active. However, Growing Middlesbrough continues to run, and is still delivered and managed through MEC. MEC now chair the Middlesbrough Food Partnership, and developed Middlesbrough's Food Action Plan; Growing Middlesbrough feeds into this activity.

As a result, Growing Middlesbrough does not have a dedicated team or an independent structure. It is part of MEC's wider work and forms a strategic brand under which they can cluster their local food business activity. Growing Middlesbrough has a food procurement sub-group, which includes members of the Middlesbrough Council procurement team.

Growing Middlesbrough and co-operative working (operational)

Through MEC, Growing Middlesbrough works in partnership with staff from Middlesbrough College, Middlesbrough Council, and Teesside University. For example, Teesside University sources food from local suppliers as part of Growing Middlesbrough, as highlighted in their 2017/18 Environmental Report.

Growing Middlesbrough holds several events, such as Local Food Weekends, with producers and interested businesses in its network. However, activity on this seems to have diminished; the last Local Food Weekend was in 2017. The SFC 2019 Silver Award claims that Growing Middlesbrough ran "two additional Local Food Markets" in 2018/19, but I could find no further information about these events. However, the Growing Middlesbrough website does have a directory of local food markets.

Middlesbrough Council's procurement team have also been working with the Middlesbrough Food Partnership on ways to promote local food procurement in its next policy refresh. However, it's not clear when this will be published; their most recent procurement strategy dates from 2009.

However, Middlesbrough Council's commissioning and procurement website pages include a section called "Buy Boro". Here, the local council outlines its commitment to "spend as much [of its procurement budget] as possible with Middlesbrough and Tees Valley-based businesses". This is very much in line with the aims of Growing Middlesbrough, but the Buy Boro pages make no reference to food procurement or to the Growing Middlesbrough initiative.

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