

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING



Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Stockport Food and Drink Trade Show

What is the Stockport Food and Drink Trade Show?

The Stockport Food and Drink Trade Show was an event for traders and producers operating within a 60-mile radius of Stockport. The event took place in June 2018 at The Market Place and featured 59 exhibitors along with a comprehensive programme of speakers.

Foodsync organised the event as part of a contract with Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC).

What does the Stockport Food and Drink Trade Show aim to achieve?

The event was aimed at professionals in the food and drink industry, ranging from retailers and producers to managers of hotels and restaurants. The objective is to offer “the opportunity for chefs, operators and restaurateurs to see and try new products, and broker supply partnerships.”

By fostering links and connections between local food and drink producers and buyers, the event encouraged businesses in and around Stockport to increase trade with one another. This collaboration could help reduce the carbon footprint of their supply chains and promote more environmentally sustainable business practices.

In line with this vision of creating a food community in Stockport, Jemma Hynes explained that the event’s banners and marketing read: “Come together and share ideas”. There was desire to build a food community with shared values around aspirations and food. The trade show was designed to enable that.

More generally, the event was also a chance to “showcase [Stockport’s] great food & drink offering, celebrating the best in local provenance” and strengthening the restaurant and food trade scene in the area.

How did it work?

The Stockport Food and Drink Trade Show consisted of three elements:

- exhibitor stalls, 10:00-16:00, Stockport Market Place
- programme of speakers, 10:30-14:30, St Mary’s Church (opposite the Market Place)
- informal Award ceremony, 17:00-19:00, Robinsons Brewery

The cost to exhibitors for a stall was £100. This is much lower than many food festivals and trade shows; for example, Cup North coffee festival charges upwards of £250 per stall. The low cost of a stall made the Stockport Food and Drink Trade Show accessible to smaller, independent food and drinks businesses that would typically not exhibit at industry events.

Exhibitors were not permitted to sell their goods. Instead, the Trade Show was an opportunity for them to provide free samples, to talk in-depth about their business and their products, and to build relationships with other industry professionals. The focus of the event was on sustainability and provenance, so exhibitors were expected to be able to field questions and provide information about where their products came from, and how these goods had been processed. The event was free, but attendees had to verify they were connected to the food and drinks industry and register online beforehand.

How did the event come about?

FoodSync has a longstanding working relationship with Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC), and was delivering programmes of support and development for food and drinks businesses as early as 2016.²⁸⁶ FoodSync’s initial role in Stockport was to work with individual food and drinks businesses in the area, to help them create more resilient business structures and to support their strategic development.

As part of a 2017 evaluation of Stockport’s Food and Drink sector FoodSync identified: “[the] need to find longer term mechanisms of engagement, improve communication between the sector and the Council, and seek to fill in the gaps in knowledge and skills”. In turn, SMBC acknowledged “the potential and the need for specialist support to foster this sector”.

Following a competitive tender process, FoodSync was awarded a 12-month contract to support food and drinks businesses, which included delivery of a Food and Drink Trade Show.

The Stockport Food and Drink Trade show and co-operative working
Clarke Nicklin chartered accountants worked with FoodSync to organise and deliver the Trade Show. They are also the main sponsors and organisers of the Stockport Business Awards, so having them on board for the Trade Show drew on this experience and expertise.³⁰³ Additionally, each award was sponsored by an individual or company.

FoodSync also worked closely with all of the businesses exhibiting at the show. Some of them had not exhibited before, and needed support in things like creating business cards, setting up their stalls, and completing the necessary paperwork. Dealing closely with these businesses allowed FoodSync to create some real added value for those exhibitors for whom this was a new

experience. This strengthened FoodSync's reputation and its links with local food and drinks businesses.

FoodSync also benefited from strong support from local politicians. For example, Councillor Brian Bagnall is also a Non-Executive Director at Hydes Brewery, and was able to provide advice and support to FoodSync in putting the event together. He also supported the Trade Show and encouraged other members of SMBC to attend and lend their support.

Stephensons, an independent catering supply company based in Stockport, sponsored the trade show. Julian Lewis-Booth, a Director at Stephensons, was also a Councillor on Stockport Council at the time of the Trade Show.

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