

Local Food Links Annual Report 2017-18



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Chair's Report

First of all I would like to thank my fellow Non-Executive Directors for their support over the last 12 months, which was my second year as Chair of Local Food Links.

For personal reasons one of our NEDs, Stephen Slough, resigned and I would like to thank Stephen for his contribution to the Board. His IT expertise was extremely beneficial on a number of occasions.

I would like to welcome to the Board, Robin Amswych, who joined us in February 2018. Robin has a strong background in HR which was a skill the Board had identified as needing.

This year Dorset County Council invited school meals providers to submit tenders which, if successful, would lead to them becoming an approved supplier for the Delivered in Primary School Meal Framework commencing in September 2018. I am delighted to say that LFL was successful.

Following this, LFL submitted a number of mini-tenders to supply individual schools and 15 new schools confirmed that they wanted to start working with us from the beginning of the new academic year, September 2018. The Board soon realised that our existing kitchens would not be able to cope with the anticipated increase in demand and that we needed a new kitchen.

The search for new premises took up a lot of our Chief Executive's time and in the end we chose a site on the Granby Industrial Estate in Weymouth. This had to be completely fitted out and, as I write, is due to become operational at the end of October.

LFL continues to grow bigger and stronger and I can only see a very positive future for the company. The only cloud on the horizon is if a future government decides to abolish universal infant free school meals. The current government has tried to do this twice but has been unsuccessful because the policy is well supported by opposition parties.

Mike Henderson
Chair

Chief Executive's Report

The 2017-2018 academic year was a particularly challenging one as we were preparing for a significant expansion and planning a new kitchen. For the first time, Local Food Links was accepted as a Dorset County Council approved provider on the School Meals Framework. This was a significant achievement in itself. Schools that chose to appoint a caterer outside of the Framework, set up their own tenders and all of these needed responding to on an individual basis. In total, LFL won 15 new contracts which is something to be very proud of.

The new contracts meant that the smallest kitchen, located at Dorchester Middle School since 2012, would close at the end of July 2018 and a brand new kitchen would open in Weymouth. The majority of the new contracts are for schools in the Dorchester Area Schools Partnership and therefore the plan was to have a new kitchen with easy access to the Dorchester area. We would like to thank the staff and pupils at DMS for all their support and kindness during our 6 years at the school.

The funding of a new kitchen meant applying to various organisations for both grant and loan assistance. We are immensely grateful to CAF Venturesome for the £200,000 loan and to the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for their £60,000 grant and also to the Dorset Business Growth Fund for their £50,000 grant.

A site for a new kitchen proved harder than anticipated to find as the significant electrical and gas requirement meant that the choice was fairly limited. The new kitchen will be located at C7 Link Park, Chickerell Link Road in Weymouth. The brand new Weymouth Team (including all 4 members of the former Dorchester Team) started working together in August 2018 to prepare for the year ahead.

We welcomed two new schools during this year – St Mary's Primary School in Thorncombe and Winsham County Primary School, which is in Somerset. Both schools are small and receive a delivered in hot service. The meals have been going down very well and we are delighted to be working with them.

st Mary's Primary School,
Thorncombe, Dorset



The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation who have generously funded LFL for many years, organised and paid for a short film to be made about LFL. The Foundation uses short films on their website to demonstrate the variety of organisations they support and the organisations themselves are able to use the films in their PR and marketing. We are really delighted with the film and feel privileged to have been chosen as one of the organisations to be highlighted. Please [click here](#)¹ and take a look for yourselves.



In August 2017, LFL discovered that they had been shortlisted for "Contract Caterer of the Year" in the EduCatering Excellence Awards. Although LFL didn't actually win, it was wonderful to be one of three organisations to be shortlisted and we collected our framed certificate at the Awards Ceremony in London in October.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNPLXXLyGG4&t=11s>

National Schools Meals Week takes place in November every year and LACA (Lead Association for Catering in Education) organises "Host a School Chef" during the week. This involves top class restaurants and hotels hosting a school chef in their kitchen for a day. LFL was lucky enough to be invited to send one of our chefs, Chris Plowman, to Rick Stein's Sandbanks Restaurant in Poole. Chris, from our Shillingstone Kitchen, represented the organisation well and had a thoroughly enjoyable experience. Find out more about the day in the Shillingstone Kitchen Manager's report.

Chris Plowman had a busy year as he also represented LFL at the School Chef of the Year Competition. It was Chris' first experience of the competition and he learnt a lot. Chris created a Creole Chicken dish with Sweet Potato Mash and a Salsa followed by Apple and Blackberry Tart. Chris will be putting his experience to good use when he represents LFL again next year in the competition.

In November 2017, LFL hosted a visit from Melissa Nobrega, Founder and Chief Executive of Caring Cooks of Jersey, another social enterprise in the school meals sector. Jersey Schools currently have packed lunches only and Melissa came to discover more about a delivered in school meals service and we were happy to share best practise.



LFL has managed to guard the price of a two course school meal for more than 4 years, however, in February 2018 it was decided that an increase of 10p per meal would be necessary to ensure that the food quality would not be affected because of rising costs. This brings the cost to parents of a school meal to £2.40. Schools and parents clearly understood that this was a reasonable action to take and sales were not affected by the price increase.

The last academic year was challenging in terms of staffing. Several members of staff were on long term sick leave following operations and/or sickness and a substantial amount of money was spent on temporary staffing to cover this. We also said goodbye to some valued members of staff during the year:

Gillian Reynolds, Catering Manager, had been with Local Food Links for 11 years and managed all four Kitchen Managers, developed the menu and recipes, and was also the lead person for Health and Safety and Food Safety. Gill was great fun to work alongside and was dedicated to growing the organisation over the years. We wish Gill all the best in her new role at Pecorama.

Gary Free, Finance Manager, retired in October 2017 after 5 years at LFL. Gary was an excellent Finance Manager who always remained calm in a crisis and had good advice for every occasion. Gary also has a wicked sense of humour which I miss particularly! We wish Gary and Sue a long and happy retirement.

Laura Cox, Office Manager, had been with LFL for just over 2 years and has gone onto a more senior position at Screwfix. Laura is immensely skilled at graphic design and marketing and we appreciate the huge improvements she made to our communications with parents especially. We wish Laura all the best in her new role.

The saddest goodbye of all was to our Deputy Kitchen Manager in Bridport, **Paul Halsey**. Paul discovered that he had leukaemia in December 2017 and, sadly, died on 27 May 2018. Paul was, literally, a larger than life character – it was impossible to be sad or down with Paul around, he was a cheeky Essex Boy who kept everyone laughing. Paul was a good chef and a great colleague and friend and LFL Bridport misses him immensely. Ashley Painter, Kitchen Manager, Bridport and Paul's close friend, will be paying tribute in his report as well.

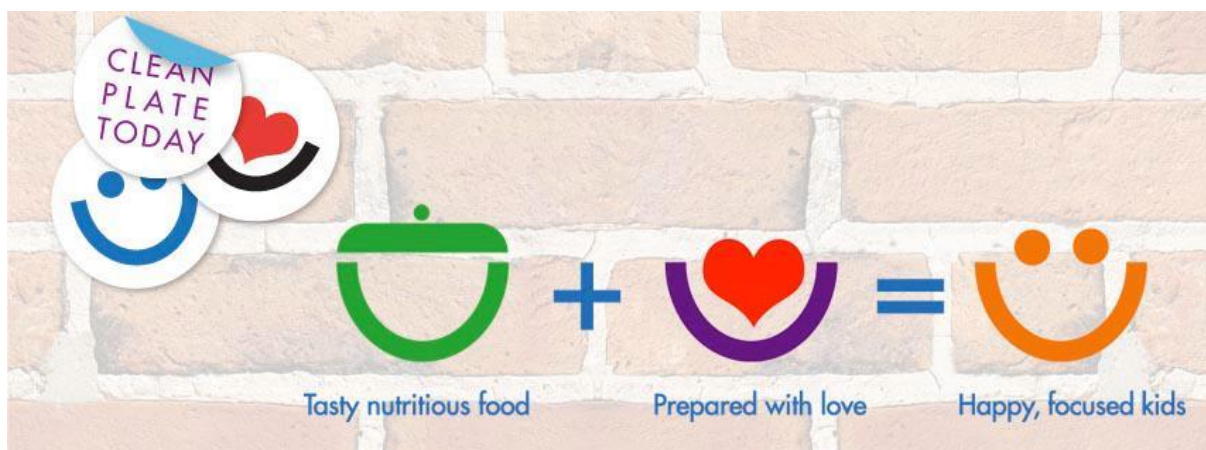
On a much more positive note, we welcomed some new members of staff to LFL during the same time:

Barry Dovell, Catering Manager, has replaced Gill Reynolds. Barry comes from school catering as he was Head Chef at Milton Abbey School for more than 10 years. Barry has joined the organisation at a busy time and has settled in very quickly.

Linda Newman, Finance Manager, has replaced Gary Free and brings both banking and business experience to the role. Linda has also settled in very well and already feels like an integral part of the team. Linda also had a running start as grant funding was a new area which she quickly got to grips with.

As always, at the end of another very busy year, I have a lot to be thankful for, particularly, the people I work with at LFL, at our schools and on the Board of Directors. We welcomed **Robin Amswych** to the Board this year and Robin has already been very generous with his time and expertise, especially when it comes to HR. Thank you everyone as we successfully planned for another significant expansion on top of the day job!

Caroline Morgan
Chief Executive



Bridport Kitchen

It's been a bit of roller coaster ride for the Bridport team this year, but regardless of how difficult things got physically, mentally and emotionally the guys stuck together and carried on to continue to provide the professional level of service and quality required to produce 1,100 meals a day.

The year began well in September with three new staff members joining the team: Mattias Larsson as Kitchen Manager, Claire Newberry as Assistant Cook and I came back to LFL as Cook. The run up to Christmas was busy but smooth with no real hiccups, other than the odd staff sniffle.

Unfortunately on our return from the Christmas holidays the team received the bad news that our Deputy Kitchen Manager Paul Halsey had been admitted to hospital with leukaemia and would not be returning to work in the near future. This had a big impact on the team because Paul was such a big character within it and was also the 'go to' man for most things. At the same time we had just started supplying Winsham Primary School and although things seemed pretty steady for a few weeks it soon became clear that with Paul off and other staff sicknesses the team were starting to feel the pinch. As always, we stuck together and pushed through, with many staff members stepping up and working even harder to ease the pressure of staffing shortages. Will Stork acted up as Deputy Manager, Claire Newberry acted up as Cook and Fleur Heaney acted up as Assistant Cook.

Staffing shortages unfortunately continued. Mattias Larsson resigned to return to the restaurant/pub trade, Liz Green went on maternity leave, I had a period of sick leave due to a back injury and we became aware that Paul's condition was deteriorating and that he would need bone marrow transplants and so would not be returning to work soon. Gill Reynolds had also announced that she would be leaving. Understandably the team were very unsettled and worried and so I successfully applied to become Kitchen Manager and Will Stork was promoted to Deputy.

We were all delighted when, after Easter, Paul had been allowed home and was well enough to come for a lunchtime visit. Seeing Paul was a huge morale boost for the team, as was hearing him say that he had no intention of letting his illness beat him and that as soon as he was able he would be returning to work on light duties.

Sadly though on the 27th May, despite his every effort, Paul Halsey lost his battle with his illness and passed away that afternoon. For everyone at the Bridport site and throughout the whole company this was a devastating and unexpected turn of events. Paul was a much loved member of the team and the thought of him not returning left the team at its lowest.

With that in mind, Will and I set out to get the team back on track and re-build morale. Several members of the team pursued training in new areas: Karina Holman

become a First Aider and both Dan Staple and Will Stork became Fire Marshalls. We also began looking forward to the Weymouth expansion and new schools starting in September.

As a final note, I would like to say a big thank you to the Central Team and to Caroline for all their help and support to myself and my team, especially through the darker days when they tried to make things that little bit easier. I would also like to say well done and thank you to the Bridport team for all their hard work, patience and understanding through what has probably been one of the most difficult years Bridport has seen.

Ashley Painter

Bridport Kitchen Manager.



Paul Halsey
Deputy Kitchen Manager, Bridport
25th January 1975 – 27th May 2018

Blandford Kitchen



As usual, it has been a very busy year here at Blandford but thankfully there have been no changes in staff, which can be unsettling.

In the early part of the year, there was much excitement when a film crew arrived to make a short film for the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. We hadn't realised what a film star we had in our midst – Chris Haskell well and truly showcased his hidden talents and is now thought of as the George Clooney of the Blandford kitchen!

From December until the beginning of the Summer Term it was difficult because the Shillingstone Kitchen Manager was on long term sick leave which meant that the Shillingstone kitchen needed our support. Sue Benjafaar very kindly transferred to the Shillingstone kitchen on a temporary basis to provide them with the help they needed. Thank you to both Sue and the whole team for rallying round and ensuring that both kitchens could continue supplying meals to all their schools.

Overall I feel that the past year has been good, with everyone pulling together. We stopped supplying one school at the end of the year, St Andrews CofE Primary School in Fontmell Magna, because they joined The Southern Academy Trust but from the beginning of the next academic year we will be supplying two new schools and are looking forward to doing so.

As in previous years I would like to give my team my heartfelt thanks, as without them, the Blandford kitchen would not function as well as it does – Thank you to all of you.

Jayne Fry
Blandford Kitchen

Dorchester Kitchen



I was on long term sick leave during the Autumn Term following surgery, but I am happy to say that Christine Herridge very competently filled my shoes. A big thank you to both Chris and my team for all their support whilst I recovered.

We said goodbye to Evelyn Rowlands who resigned in December 2017 and also to Jenny Christofi who left at the end of the Summer Term to run her own business.

Vicky Ayres joined the team as a General Assistant in March and has proved to be a very good member of the team, fitting in from the start and bringing with her a great sense of humour.

Tracy Eden got married in December and became Tracy Rice. We wish her and her husband lots of happiness in their married life together.

Much of the Summer Term has been spent preparing to move out of Dorchester Middle School (DMS) and working with the Central Team to recruit additional staff and plan what will be needed in the new kitchen. We are all very sad to leave DMS after many happy years working there but we are looking forward to starting the next academic year in Weymouth, building a bigger team and working with more schools.

Fiona Gabe
Dorchester Kitchen

Shillingstone Kitchen

The Autumn Term started with a buzz. All of our schools continued receiving our school meals and we were complimented on the care and attention we paid to pupils with special dietary requirements which reduced parental worry.

As Caroline has already commented on in her report, Chris Plowman enjoyed a fantastic opportunity working at Rick Stein's restaurant as part of the "Host a Chef" initiative. This enabled him to experience first-hand working in a busy kitchen in a top end restaurant and also witness catering trends, production techniques and new equipment – Today's catering trends evolve into tomorrow's norms and the meals that future pupils want to eat.



Chris Plowman was also selected to enter, and became a Regional Finalist in, the School Chef of the Year competition which he thoroughly enjoyed. This involved designing and pricing a menu to budget, using specific ingredients; choosing the

best cooking methods and ensuring the food was presented attractively. This obviously necessitated practise and the whole team realised their dreams of being Masterchef judges!



"The opportunity to represent LFL in the School Chef of the Year competition was such a privilege. To get to the Regional Finals was amazing and to get positive and constructive feedback from the judges has given me the impetus to do it all over again next year when I hope to be able to progress further in the competition." Chris Plowman

Sadly in early December I had an accident which resulted in me being compelled to take long term sick leave. My team stepped up and, with the support of Head Office and colleagues from neighbouring kitchens, continued to deliver the service we are renowned for and our customers expect until I returned in May. I would like to thank them all.

In the Summer Term we focussed on reviewing and standardising recipes on the menu, ensuring that LFL served salad items that children know and enjoy and introducing more cold puddings that pupils could take outside in the glorious sunshine. At Shillingstone we pride ourselves on the food we send out, every dish is cooked to the nutritional standards and made with a great deal of love. Being based within a school, we are all delighted to be part of the school journey because we know that children who eat well are children that learn well.

Ruth Cook
Kitchen Manager

Board of Directors

Michael Henderson **Chair of the Board and Non-Executive Director**

Michael graduated from the University of Surrey with an honours degree in Hotel and Catering Management. He then spent his working life in the pub industry, holding various senior positions with Marstons, Greenalls, Scottish and Newcastle Breweries and latterly Heineken. He estimates he has been responsible for some 2000 pubs over his working life. He currently acts as a mentor for Dorset Mentoring and, at present, is mentoring 4 small businesses.

Caroline Morgan **Chief Executive**

Caroline has a degree in French and Catering Management and a passion for pure gastronomy and nutrition. After graduation, Caroline became Manager of the School of Hospitality at Oxford Brookes University. She then moved to Dorset and worked for the Dorset Food and Health Trust, running healthy eating workshops in deprived areas of Weymouth & Portland. She was also a governor at the Prince of Wales School in Dorchester, helping to improve food standards.

Caroline joined Local Food Links as the School Meals Development Manager in 2006, with a brief to set up a service delivering hot meals to all eight Bridport primary schools daily. The organisation, and Caroline's role, expanded rapidly and she became Chief Executive in March 2012.

Veronique Singer **Non-Executive Director**

Veronique has worked in Dorset schools for 18 years, initially as a deputy headteacher and then as a headteacher. She is currently head at Radipole Primary School in Weymouth, which is a larger than average primary school. The school installed a kitchen in 2011 and began working with Local Food Links in 2012.

Mark Swire **Non-Executive Director**

Mark qualified as a Chartered Accountant in 1994 and spent 5 years with KPMG in London, working in audit and transactional services. He then moved to Ceridian Corporation, a US listed company, in a Group Accounting role that involved reporting and internal control in payroll and outsourcing.

More recently Mark has been involved with several start-ups, including one that was AIM-listed while he was Finance Director, and co-founded a UK-based ethical clothing company. Mark is currently Finance Director of an owner-managed telecoms company in Dorset and is active in local animal and children's charities.

Nick Ziebland
Non-Executive Director

Nick has spent most of his career in retail, working at J Sainsbury, Drivers Jonas and primarily in the retail division of BAA plc. At BAA Nick initially oversaw retail operations, turning over £150m a year. He then became Director of Retail Strategy and was responsible for the successful design, leasing, construction, fit-out and opening of 140 shops and food & beverage outlets at Heathrow Terminal 5. He retired from BAA in 2008.

Nick was recently on the board of the South-East Coast Strategic Health Authority and an AIM-listed company. He is now a Non-Executive Director of Poole Hospital.

Robin Amswych
Non-Executive Director

Robin is a retired senior management/HR consultant with experience in both large and small organisations and of successfully running his own small business for 20 years. Throughout his career Robin has focused on the achievement of improvement in performance at all levels in an organization. Robin is active in the local community and is the local authority Governor at Beaminster School.

Linda Newman
Company Secretary and Finance Manager

Linda joined Local Food Links in Oct 2017 as Finance Manager and is AAT qualified. She has a wealth of financial and management experience with over 25 years for Barclays Bank in management accounting and business partnering roles in London and Poole.

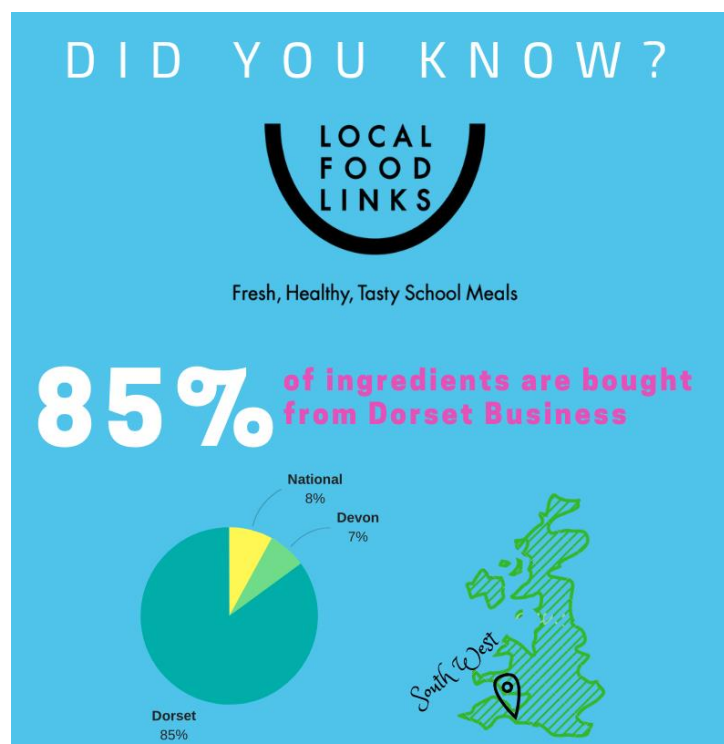
Linda has first hand customer experience of Local Food Links from when her daughter was a pupil at St Catherine's Primary School in Bridport and is passionate about helping Local Food Links to be a success.

"I am very impressed with the ethos of Local Food Links and what the business has achieved over the years. Caroline Morgan and her team do an outstanding job in providing local primary school children with healthy, locally sourced meals within extremely tight budgets and as a Director I would be working to support this effort."

Robin Amswych

Being a Business for Good

- ✓ Reducing food waste, by only producing the number of meals ordered
- ✓ Reducing food miles, by buying from local suppliers
- ✓ Feeding children well, always meeting nutritional standards
- ✓ Free range eggs, Marine Steward Council certified sustainable fish, British Red Tractor meat and no added salt
- ✓ An inclusive school meals provider, our cashless system reduces the stigma of means-tested free school meals
- ✓ A flexible employer, 90% staff work term-time only





Fresh, Healthy, Tasty School Meals

DID YOU KNOW?

A whopping

493,099

meals were cooked and delivered in 2017/2018



Christmas Dinners ordered and produced in 2017



4,438



Number of van routes for each hub...

- Bridport - 3
- Dorchester - 2
- Blandford - 2
- Shillington - 2

Number of schools per hub...



Bridport - 16
Dorchester - 4
Blandford - 10
Shillington - 6

Total number of schools - 36

Supplying Fresh, Healthy, Tasty School Meals

All Saints Cof E Primary School; Archbishop Wake CE Primary School; Beaminster St Mary's Academy; Blandford St Mary CE Primary School; Bridport Primary School; Broadmayne First School; Broadwindsor CE VC Primary School; Burton Bradstock CofE VC School; Cerne Abbas CofE First School; Charmouth Primary School; Cheselbourne Village School; Damers First School; Dorchester Middle School; Downlands School; The Dunbury CofE Academy; Durweston CofE Primary School; Frome Valley CE First School; Greenford CofE Primary School; Hazelbury Bryan Primary School; Manor Park CofE VC First School; Milborne St Andrew First School; Milldown CofE VC Primary School; Loders CE Primary Academy; Okeford Fitzpaine CofE Primary School; Parrett & Axe CE VA Primary School; Piddle Valley CofE First School; Pimperne CofE VC Primary School; The Prince of Wales Primary School; Powerstock CofE Primary School; Puddletown CE VC First School; Radipole Primary School; St Catherine's RC School; St Mary's CE VC First School; St Mary's Catholic First School; St Mary's CofE VC Primary School; St Mary's CE Middle School; St Michael's Primary School; St Nicholas CE VA Primary School; Salway Ash CofE Primary School; Shillingstone CofE Primary School; Spetisbury CofE Primary School; Stalbridge Primary School; Sticklands CofE Primary School; Stower Provost Community School; Symondsburry CofE VA Primary School; Thorners Primary School; William Barnes Primary School; Winsham Community Primary School; Winterbourne Valley CE VA First School.

Thank you!

To our Funders:



To our Suppliers:



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