

# Summary of Learning: Scotland Knowledge Exchange



## Introduction

This document summarises learnings from Just FACT's very first Knowledge Exchange trip to Glasgow and Edinburgh. The trip took place in August 2024.



## About the Just FACT project

Just FACT is a 5-year partnership programme led by Women's Environmental Network (Wen) with research from Platform London. It is made up of a network of people and projects in Tower Hamlets and is funded by The National Lottery Community Fund (TNLCF)'s Climate Action Fund. The partnership is made up of 26 organisations and groups delivering funded projects as part of Just FACT. Our vision is to create an environmentally sustainable and socially just food system in Tower Hamlets. In other words, we want to see a food and land system that gives people the right to healthy, culturally appropriate food produced through socially just and ecologically sound methods.

## Purpose of the Knowledge Exchange trip

As the Just FACT programme moves into its final year, we are focused on our goals of creating

- A resilient food system designed by and for diverse communities
- A stronger local and national movement for a just food and climate transition

## Knowledge Exchange Trips offer an opportunity to:

1. Learn, inspire, and be inspired from others who are actively making progress in the food and climate sector elsewhere in the country. We can support one another to see new perspectives, problem-solve, and try out new ideas or approaches. We can explore how community-generated knowledge and action can lead to food justice being embedded into policy design.

2. Create a movement by meeting the need for food justice projects to connect and build power nationally. Our hope is to expand our network, enabling us to cultivate a national constellation of food justice projects and partners working towards shared aims.



## Organisations participating in the exchange

<b>Tower Hamlets</b>	<b>Scotland – Glasgow &amp; Edinburgh</b>
Hussina Raja – Just FACT Mobiliser at Wen	Kristina Nitsolova – Locavore, Glasgow
Zarina Ahmad – Head of Programmes at Wen	Cat & Susan – Propagate, Neilston Co-op
Zoe Miles – Tower Hamlets Food Partnership Manager at Wen	Agnes Taiti – Wakibia & Co at Lauriston Farm, Edinburgh
Masoom Ahmed – Food store & Madywell Community Garden, Just FACT Partner	Peter FaassendeHeer – Scottish Government
Alani Shafiq – Mad Leap & Blueprint Architect	Chris & Lykke – Glasgow Community Food Network CIC
Rab Brownwell – Tower Hamlets School Food Improvement Manager	Jill Muirie – Glasgow Centre for Population Health / Glasgow Food Policy Partnership
	Jav & Nayab – Andalus, Glasgow
	Iskon Hare Karishna Organic Eco Farm, Edinburgh

	Glasgow Gurdwara
	Dr Magdalen Lambkin & Thalia – Interfaith Glasgow
	Abigail, Jade, Diana, Ci Ci & Pete – Nourish, Edinburgh

## Schedule

Just FACT Scotland Exchange Visit	Tuesday 20 <sup>th</sup> August	Wednesday 21 <sup>st</sup> August	Thursday 22 <sup>nd</sup> August	Friday 23 <sup>rd</sup> August
10.00am – 11.00am		Lauriston Community Farm, Edinburgh	Glasgow Centre for Population Health / Glasgow Food Policy Partnership	Interfaith Glasgow / Thalia - food podcast
11.00am – 12.00pm		Lauriston Community Farm, Edinburgh	Propagate and Andalus	Travel to Nourish, Edinburgh
12.00pm – 1.00pm		Meeting with Peter Faassen De Heer from, Public Health, Scottish Government	Propagate and Andalus	Nourish, Edinburgh
1.00pm – 2.00pm	Arrival - station Pick up	Drive back to Glasgow	Lunch at Iskcon Organic Farm	Nourish, Edinburgh
2.00pm – 3.00pm	Lunch at Locavore - informal meeting with Kristina re - Locavore	Meeting with Glasgow Community Food Network at KPC	Iskcon Organic Farm visit	Nourish, Edinburgh

3.00pm – 4.00pm	Propagate – Neilston CoOp	Meeting with Glasgow Community Food Network at KPC	Drive back from Iskcon Organic Farm visit	Drive back to Glasgow
4.00pm – 5.00pm	Propagate – Neilston CoOp	Meeting with Glasgow Community Food Network at KPC	Drive back	Drop off at Train Station
5.00 – 6.00pm	Propagate – Neilston CoOp			
6.00pm – 7.00pm		The Glad Café CIC	Gurdwara Langar	



## Knowledge Exchange learnings

### Part 1: Learning About Each Other's Projects

Participants reported that they:

- Valued the opportunity to share their own work and gain insights from others' experiences.
- Appreciated visiting various projects and seeing innovative ideas in action, such as Lauriston Farm's culturally appropriate crops and urban composting solutions.
- Came to understand cross-sectoral collaborations as vital for achieving food justice.
- Heard diverse perspectives from Scotland and England on food justice, emphasising importance of culturally appropriate practices and addressing the impact of colonialism on food systems.
- Found the diversity of projects they heard about helped them to reflect on their own goals, contributions, and intentions.

#### Quotes:

"The diverse and radical nature of food justice work in Scotland versus the need for more inclusive and culturally appropriate practices." - Zarina Ahmad, Head of Programmes at Wen

"Also explaining what I do/why I'm there repeatedly helped me gauge my own intention and projects and reminding myself why I do what I do for myself and community." - Alani Shafiq, Mad Leap & Blueprint Architect

"Propagate Neilston – really liked the concept of growing plants in the community garden that have clear medicinal benefits and uses. Aim to take inspiration to do the same at Madywell Gardens by labelling the plants that

help towards mental health, digestion. " - Masoom Ahmed, Madywell Community Garden, Just FACT Partner

"I just wanted to say thank you so much for reaching out to us and for taking the time to visit us at KPC – Lykke and I felt incredibly energised from the conversations that we had with you." - Chris Kane, Glasgow Community Food Network CIC

"It was great to meet policy makers different from the ones I meet in Tower Hamlets - it was refreshing." - Zoe Miles, Tower Hamlets Food Partnership Manager

"It was so lovely to meet you all. The trip was a wonderful learning opportunity for me too and I was very encouraged to hear about the work you all do. I would love to chat more about how we can continue to link projects and would be especially keen to learn more about Just FACT's programme and 'experiments' with resilient cultural crops." Agnes Taiti, Lauriston Farm, Edinburgh

"Rhyze mushroom coop was on the farm, and I had an impromptu tour - it was very invigorating. Shrooming is lonely work and troubleshooting with a farm that does similar work on a similar(ish) scale was so motivating as my yields have been very low recently - learnt farming techniques and equipment ideas - will hopefully return to do a workday with them when possible. Have already had positive results since implementing some learnings from their farm." - Alani Shafeeq, Mad Leap & Blueprint Architect

"It was a real pleasure to meet with you all and hear about your work. It would be fantastic to pay you a visit in London sometime." - Dr Magdalen Lambkin, Development Director (part-time), Interfaith Glasgow

## **Part 2: Learning About Food Justice Movement Building**

Participants reported that they:

- Learned from differing regional approaches, such as Preston's community wealth-building initiatives that involve grassroots movements and innovative procurement models.

- Came to see the value of addressing cultural and systemic barriers in Scotland's food justice scene.
- Understood better how policy complexities have an impact on health and food systems.
- Explored the intersections of food justice and climate change, recognising the need for inclusive, culturally appropriate food systems.
- Discussed challenges around bureaucracy in food justice spaces.
- Learned how engagement with spiritual and cultural spaces inspired deeper connections between food justice and community health.
- Understood more the role faith-based organisations play in advancing food justice and the importance of engaging diverse communities.
- Highlighted challenges of land ownership, policy work, and structural inequities.
- Explored challenges faced by organisations talking about global food injustice particularly Palestine

### Quotes:

"Scotland's climate/food justice scene is very White. It was useful to bring the Just FACT programme to share the diverse projects and engagement from down South." - Zarina Ahmad, Head of Programmes at Wen

"Preston has a good procurement model focusing on community wealth building by working with their local Universities and councils, to only buy locally. It measurably reduced poverty." - Zoe Miles, Tower Hamlets Food Partnership Manager at Wen

"Found the faith spaces and food work to be interesting, it's a bit of a blind spot for Just FACT" - Hussina Raja, Just FACT Mobiliser at Wen

"Seeing small pockets of community gardening pop up and troubleshooting with similar farms has been incredibly motivating." – Alani Shafiq, Mad Leap & Blueprint Architect

"It was inspiring to sit and listen to you speak candidly about the challenges faced when trying to meet all the needs of differing communities." – Zarina Ahmad, Head of Programmes at Wen





## Part 3: Learning About the Knowledge Exchange Process

Participants reported that they:

- Valued the combination of site visits and policy discussions, noting the importance of creating intentional spaces for reflection and exchange.
- Benefitted from candid conversations, mutual learning, and relationship-building across interfaith and interregional connections.
- Felt there could be improvements in approach, including clearer pre-meeting planning, access needs communication, and co-creating agendas to ensure participant contributions align with the exchange's goals.
- Emphasised the value of practical demonstrations and tangible takeaways for applying new practices.

## Quotes:

"I think this connection made through the knowledge exchange visits—both the interrelations among individuals and links across projects and sectors—is invaluable in making a collective transformation to the food system." – Zarina Ahmad Head of Programmes at Wen

"It was lovely to do it and meet you all. I just wish we had more time to do this more often." – Peter Faassen de Heer, Scottish Government

"Consider structuring future knowledge exchanges with more input from participants on their interests and areas of expertise." - Hussina Raja, Just FACT Mobiliser at Wen

"Maybe a pre-meeting where we figure out intentions... to also be a voice of representation...and an exchange of physical gifts, I should've brought shrooms, Ojito pickle or some leaflets." – Alani Shafiq, Mad Leap & Blueprint Architect

"Feedback – to see them in action via an event – Andalus." - Masoom Ahmed, Madywell Community Garden, Just FACT Partner



## Next steps

### Tapping into faith spaces:

The exchange allowed us to experience a range of projects in operation in Glasgow and Edinburgh. What was new and impressive for the Just FACT team was the food justice work being done by different faith spaces. Whilst visiting the Glasgow Gurdwara, we learnt about the concept of langar and the act of Sewa, which we were invited to take part in. We have a big Gurdwara in Bow that would be great to connect to. Food justice work is embedded in and second nature to faith spaces by way of feeding the poor over Ramadan, langar in Gurdwaras, or food pantries providing food parcels via the help of churches. Currently Just FACT is not directly linked to faith spaces, and it's an area we can tap into and learn from, especially given the large Muslim population in Tower Hamlets, as well as the plethora of mosques, churches and gurdwaras.

Interfaith Glasgow shared their work with refugee and asylum seeker communities and how they bring people together from different faith groups and non-faith groups to eat together as part of events they run. This was fascinating given how each faith group can have its own dietary restrictions.

We visited Iskon Hare Karishna Organic Eco Farm, a therapeutic gardening project based on a smallholding in Lesmahagow, South Lanarkshire. It was amazing to observe how they operate entirely on renewable energy, with two operating Gaia 11kW wind turbines, made possible with the financial backing of Energy Saving Trust (EST) Scotland. Since 2011 they've helped generate green electricity and reduce the environmental impact of their electricity consumption. It could be valuable for Just FACT to explore how renewable energy sources could integrate into growing spaces.

## Actions

- Explore the possibility of a longer trip duration, with an extra half-day at the beginning and end for briefing and debriefing
- Investigate the community wealth building model used in Preston and explore potential learnings for Glasgow and Tower Hamlets
- Just FACT to visit faith spaces in Tower Hamlets: Bow Gurdwara, East London Mosque, Churches – understand the food justice work they do which is part of their everyday spiritual practice
- Secure funding for future trips, and improve our approach based on learning from this exchange

## Benefits of this knowledge exchange

- Shared learning - not feeling that you need to reinvent the wheel when there's a wealth of knowledge out there that can be tapped into.
- Collaboration - when meeting other projects, you can see how and where the gaps are and therefore can collaborate to build on the work you're already doing.
- Cross Pollination - visiting multiple diverse spaces can help to gain an overview picture of the food justice sector enabling cross pollination of ideas, thoughts, knowledge, expertise and resources.
- Part of a bigger movement - often we can get stuck in our own silos and stepping out helps to connect/reconnect to a bigger movement for transformational change.



## Contacts

Women's Environmental Network - @wen\_uk – info@wen.org.uk

Just FACT Programme – [www.justfact.co.uk](http://www.justfact.co.uk) - justfact@wen.org.uk

Hussina Raja, Just FACT Mobiliser – hussina@wen.org.uk