



UNICORN'S

— NEWS —

Spring 2021

REFURB & EXTENSION: WHERE ARE WE AT?

Firstly, a big thanks to you for bearing with us through the disruption! We're about halfway through now and we hope you like where we're at so far.

We're very much enjoying having a **floor** that's not held down with duct tape, and of course it's lovely lino again. Not only is it warm & comfy to stand on, it's made of natural materials (including linseed, from where it gets its name), and is both recyclable and biodegradable, unlike modern vinyl flooring, which is petrochemical based. It's not that easy to find proper lino these days - ours is from a UK company called Forbo.

Although it's not quite finished, the new **shelving** layout is already making our lives easier. We built the old shelves when we moved into this part of the building in 2003!

Once the new units are all in place, there will be more shelf space for stock than before but (like magic!) taking up more or less the same footprint. This means more room for products we think are especially great - like the unpacked range! - and more efficient shelf-filling, with less handling by us. We've arranged the units in a way that will enable you to browse each category in turn - e.g., bread and baking,

breakfast things, cooking ingredients. We've also kept unit heights low, and built in a few wider areas to enhance that open, spacious feeling from the old shop.

Since Easter we've had some temporary ceiling **lights**, but come June (we hope) you should be enjoying a whole new lighting experience! New strip lights will be energy-efficient LED's (the existing lights were so old we could no longer find replacement tubes) plus the shop will be dotted with circular skylights to maximise natural light. In the extension at the front, the amount of glass in the wall has been reduced, but the space will be flooded with natural light from lots more skylights. Although it may not have been noticeable as a customer, the veg area was very difficult to keep cool enough in the summer months to keep fresh produce at its best. The new design has carefully balanced maximum light with minimum heat gain.

What's still to come?

We hope to finish in July. Before then...

- The bulk 'unpacked' dispensers will be returning, and then some!
- Crucially - more space for our organic fruit and veg once the extension is finished.
- A section of living wall in the entranceway.



- Extra bike parking, with (eventually) some of it sheltered from the elements.
- A new trolley park made from the lovely timber of our old porch.
- The doors of our old veg stands repurposed as ceiling cladding.
- We are also hoping to use the extension's flat roof to collect 'grey water' to flush our staff toilets.

The project has been all about helping us better deliver our mission; investing the money we've saved over a decade to build in resilience for the future. We've always strived to create a shopping environment that is **joyful, practical, ecological & fun**. We really hope that's what you'll experience once we're finished. We couldn't have done it without the creative & technical guidance of local architecture co-operative Loop Systems, and interior architects (& regular customers) Phaus.



LEISURE CENTRE NEWS

Hot-off-the-press news about our new neighbours!

After years of trading next door to an empty & sad building, Mosscares St Vincents housing association has been given the go-ahead to develop affordable, low carbon homes with huge community value. It's early days, but we hope to be involved in the development too.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED OR MAYBE WE HAVE REMEMBERED OVER THE LAST YEAR



Everything is connected; everything lives in connection with everything else. Respect this simple fact, corny but true. Give more than you take. Build biodiversity in nature, build wider diversity in human systems for a more beautiful, bountiful and resilient future. Treat mother nature as the motherload to be used and abused and she will bite you on the bum big time. Respect her, cherish her and we all reap the rewards.

Awful structural social and economic inequalities exist in our society and throughout the world. When the shit hits the fan the poor and vulnerable suffer the most.

Do not blame the poor and vulnerable for their suffering, look to the bigger picture. Some profit from pain! Look to see who profits from the poverty and suffering of people and planet. We can get distracted; take our eye off the ball and fight amongst each other rather than look for those responsible for the suffering.

Real value needs to be given to what matters, do not depend on the market to choose wisely. Communities matter, nature matters, the common good matters. Birds, bees and trees; kindness, love and compassion. Build strong supportive foundations for an

ecological and community-focused future. A future where we value what matters and, to that which never really mattered, give the little value it deserves.

This land is our land and we need to look after it. Get playing and planting seeds for the future we want to see. One step at a time, little by little, bit by bit.



CHAIN REACTION

Unicorn has been delighted to partner with CBD during the pandemic, they've brought us some hope in a tough year...

"Chorlton Bike Deliveries was our mutual aid response to the global pandemic - a classic case of thinking globally/act locally. With a level of self-interest (thinking if we can go out to exercise let's make it count) we asked ourselves if we could use our bicycles to do deliveries, particularly for those people told to self-isolate and shield themselves.

Within a matter of days two people became five; we had found an eCargo bike to hire and two more bikes and trailers were loaned to us.

It was as if in the face of fear, co-operation and generosity grew

and our combined biggest and most valuable asset was realised - our community



over 3,000 miles of car-free deliveries for our twelve local traders and an equal number of community groups in Chorlton. This is made possible by approximately 6,000 hours of mainly volunteering by our riders, all who feel so proud to have been part of this development and now are the founding members of our co-operative."

"Bikes and trikes really can be a tool for social change - one revolution at a time."

Check the website for up-to-date services. chorltonbikedeliveries.coop



based networks, both on and off a bicycle. In no time we were picking up donated bakery goods and taking them to local food banks and pantries, delivering free hot meals and Dahl kits for Tibetan Kitchen, menus and food packs for pre-diabetic people, flu leaflets for medical practices, a 'Shop & Drop' for Unicorn customers. At the same time, with quiet roads and cleaner air we seized the opportunity to promote car-free deliveries to our independent traders - our much loved Cheesemongers being the first.

None of us have a background in logistics, so with nothing to lose and everything to gain we have been expanding our services ever since. Since we started we have covered



UNPACKED IN IT FOR THE LONG HAUL



As part of the refurb we'll be making some extra space for our unpacked products.

Did you know...buying "unpacked" is always around 10% cheaper!

The unpacked range is growing steadily but surely. We see this as where our future lies, and we've designed the new shop layout so it gives us the flexibility to evolve, with more "unpacked" products arriving over time.

Despite our (and your) passion for ditching as much packaging as possible, we've been hesitant to rush into 'unpacking' the two hundred or so lines we pre-pack here, all at once. It takes time for shoppers to form new

shopping habits (bringing re-used bags etc.) and for us to develop truly efficient systems and the right infrastructure that works at scale...slow and steady wins the race?!



We are turning around what has been a massive part of our core business model, that has created many jobs. We're in this for the long haul - we've got to get it right.

Of course, we price all our commodities competitively with the supermarkets' prices, but unpacked goods are even better value. The labour savings we gain allow us to make all unpacked products around 10% cheaper than their bagged buddies, and we are super happy that we can make this range particularly affordable and accessible. Please tell your friends about this, maybe we haven't shouted about it loudly enough!



HERE ARE SOME RECENT PRICE CHECKS...

PRODUCT (£/100G)	MORRISON'S	TESCO	ASDA	SAINSBURY'S	WAITROSE	UNICORN	UNICORN UNPACKED	DATE
BLACK TURTLE BEANS	0.35	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.22	0.25	0.22	28/4/21
PORRIDGE OATS	0.25	0.21	0.24	0.21	0.30	0.19	0.16	30/4/21
PUMPKIN SEEDS	0.92	0.92	0.60	1.00	1.00	0.80	0.68	28/4/21
SUNFLOWER SEEDS	0.54	0.77	0.60	1.00	1.00	0.46	0.28	28/4/21
WALNUT PIECES	1.20	2.00	N/A	1.90	1.70	1.39	0.99	28/4/21
RED LENTILS	0.23	0.23	0.22	0.40	0.28	0.28	0.22	28/4/21
ALMONDS	1.25	1.15	0.93	1.52	1.99	0.90	0.83	3/3/21
CHICKPEAS	0.20	0.23	0.24	0.23	0.24	0.20	0.18	28/4/21
BROWN BASMATI RICE	0.18	0.50	0.18	0.20	0.17	0.31	0.28	30/4/21

GREEN = ORGANIC, YELLOW = CONVENTIONAL

And remember...

There's no need to use paper bags for your veg unless you want to. New paper bags have a really high climate impact, and we are more than happy to have veg loose at the till. Or you can reuse your old Unicorn porridge & lentil bags! We've all got a stash of them under the sink - if you keep some in your shopping bag or pannier you won't have to remember them every time. You can use these for both fresh produce and our unpacked range.

And for those times you buy a little more than expected or you forget your bag, we have returnable bags made from 100% plastic bottles - £1.85 deposit price at the tills.



A NEW TEAM AT GLEBELANDS

WHAT NEXT FOR THIS PIONEERING URBAN MARKET GARDEN?

One of our most cherished local suppliers - Glebelands Market Garden in Sale - has recently changed ownership; passing into the capable hands of Dan Larke, aided by a second Dan, former Unicorn veg buyer!

Originally set up by one of Unicorn's founding co-op members, and less than 3 miles away from the shop, Glebelands has always held a special spot in our hearts. It's this small but incredibly productive horticultural oasis that supplies our wonderful loose salad leaves all year round, as well as many, many other seasonal delights like radishes, courgettes, spring onions and fresh herbs.

Not only is their veg exceptional quality, it's usually on our shelves just hours after being picked. Despite our commitment to local food, the vast majority of our produce still travels a long way to get here. Glebelands on the other hand is so local that our workers can get to know it, and many customers have visited it or even volunteered there. There has also been a fair bit of cross-pollination in terms of our staff! Our relationship is the kind we'd love to see a bit more of in the food system - local, personal and mutually respectful.

A BRIEF HISTORY....

Glebelands is a pocket-sized remainder of our local food heritage. From the 1800's, the combination of flat, sandy loam soil and close proximity to the expanding city made the Sale & Altrincham area an ideal location for growing veg. It supported many small market gardens, and became the principal provider of vegetables to Victorian Manchester. Glebelands itself was in use as such at the turn of the twentieth century.

The 3 acre site having fallen into disuse, it was taken on by Lesley and Adam in 2001.

"We were inspired by wanting to avoid the crap jobs of much of contemporary Britain... The UK was experiencing continued interest in organic production as the extremes of conventional farming troubled even the tabloids. How could we fail?!"

The organic crops they produced include 15 types of salad leaf, kale, purple sprouting broccoli, fresh herbs, rhubarb, chillies, courgette & cucumbers. Like most of Unicorn's veg, they were sold very largely unpackaged from the get go. Glebelands also provided a home for Unicorn's veg waste; composting it on site to grow more veg for the shop (as it does today).

Adam (who had also helped set up Unicorn five years previously) & Lesley described the Glebelands/Unicorn model as "an experiment to discover how urban food production, distribution and retailing could be structured to minimise environmental impact and ensure food security." The relationship was designed to be mutually beneficial - the shop receiving high quality produce picked that day, Glebelands minimising their admin, distribution and marketing costs.

Competing with mass-produced produce fuelled by cheap labour, fossil-fuels and chemical inputs wasn't (and still isn't) easy: "The economics of UK horticulture made it as financially difficult as we expected, but our close relationship with Unicorn has made survival possible. We have done what many advocated; produced local food supply against fearsome globalised factors. To that end, we share the experiences of farmers in any country left to the mercy of distorted and short term markets, and with little concern for its soil or environment."

After eight years of incredibly hard graft, Lesley and Adam handed over the site to a new co-operative of growers in 2009; young-bloods Charlotte, Adam, Sally & Ed. Taking

advantage of a surge of interest in local food, the new team raised funding to bring local schools onto site, giving many kids their first experiences of handling soil, learning about bugs and joining the dots between farm and fork.

With the help of a changing roster of workers, Adam and Charlotte remained at Glebelands for well over a decade. Under this exceptionally talented pair of market gardeners, with their happy combination of organic growing skills and business heads, the Glebelands site has undergone continued development of infrastructure and soil health.

The addition of a compost toilet, new packing shed, and several mobile 'caterpillar' tunnels means the site looks significantly different to when Charlotte and Adam arrived. Some of the most important developments have been in irrigation infrastructure. The installation of a borehole, in combination with a system of automated timers, has proved invaluable. This brought increases in efficiency - vital in a business where profit margins are so incredibly tight - optimised cropping conditions, and afforded growers the rare commodity of days off during the growing season! Some of these developments have involved Unicorn funding, with a commitment to (and a vested interest in!) seeing the enterprise thrive.

All of this means that Adam and Charlotte have



NEW OWNER, DAN LARKE WITH DAN WESTON SHOVELLING COMPOST

handed over a very special, thriving organic horticulture business with healthy soil, great biodiversity, well-developed infrastructure, viable financial model and a strong customer base. Reflecting on their 12 years at Glebelands, they wrote "The opportunity to tend this land has been a huge privilege and, as organic growers, the added responsibility of nurturing the environment has given us great satisfaction".

WELCOME TO NEW OWNER DAN LARKE

We're so pleased that Glebelands has found a capable pair of hands to take the enterprise forward.

Dan has spent most of his life working in the music industry, and has been happy to leave behind long months on the road, in an industry he's come to see as "about as environmentally friendly as an oil spill at a coral reef". Keen to get involved with something more ecologically positive, he spent time volunteering at organic growing sites, and after a year on the Kindling Trust's FarmStart programme, something clicked. He joined the Glebelands crew in 2019, working his first full season there in 2020. "I have always had a fascination with how things grow and evolve. To quote the late physicist Richard Feynman "...the inconceivable nature of nature!" And I have always loved being outdoors. I feel it's the natural place for human beings to be".

When it came to buying the business, the pandemic's impact on the live events industry forced his hand. "I really wasn't sure I was ready to jump in just yet, but many of my friends have basically been unemployed for a year now. If I didn't take this opportunity I would either need to look for another line of work or move away from everyone I knew and loved in order to carry on working in organic veg production".

Dan L is joined by Dan W, who contributes several seasons' experience at Glebelands, excellent growing skills, and (having spent eight years purchasing veg for Unicorn) the invaluable "buyers' perspective"! The two Dans plan to spend the next couple of years getting to know the business better and improving their growing skills; continuing to sell the best produce they can grow. Longer term? Who knows! "There are many ideas floating around but I would love to find ways of making our produce available to more people in the local area and working closely with our customers to further reduce things like plastic waste and pollution from transportation".

We are really excited for the next chapter in Glebelands' story. Their produce is abundant on our shelves right now, keep an eye out for

- Salad Leaves
- Courgettes
- Lettuces
- Radish
- Rhubarb
- Spinach
- Spring Onions
- Turnips



For fans of seasonal eating, rhubarb is an early treat in the UK fruit season, arriving as early as April. It's really high in antioxidants (as its bright colour suggests), and a good source of fibre. Glebelands' rhubarb is local variety Timperley Early, which, although grown all over the country, hails from the Altrincham suburb just down the road from their site. It is one of the earliest cropping rhubarbs available.

The simplest thing to do with rhubarb is to make a compote - simply wash and chop up 4 stalks, put in a pan with a bit of maple syrup, or your sweetener of choice, a little vanilla if you have it and the juice of 1/2 an orange or a slug of whatever fruit juice you have. Simmer until soft, about 15 mins. A super quick and delicious breakfast with yogurt and granola or muesli.

Alternatively, wash and chop into big pieces, put in a roasting pan with a sprinkle of sugar or a drizzle of syrup, cover with foil and roast in a hot oven for 15 minutes, then 5 minutes more with the foil off.

Or, make this easy cobbler!

RHUBARB COBBLER

This is a quick, super easy and very forgiving recipe, with lots of scope for creativity! Sweeten it with date or maple syrup or sugar. Use whatever type of 'milk' and 'butter' you have.

It is delicious straight from the oven with some oatly cream.

For the filling:

- 800g Glebelands rhubarb (6-8 large stalks)
- 2 tablespoons sugar or syrup of your choice

For the topping:

- 1 cup plain flour
- 1/2 cup sugar or syrup of your choice
- 2 tbsp margarine, vegan block or coconut oil (choose an odourless coconut oil like our Suma brand)
- 1/2 cup milk of choice (a little less if using syrup rather than sugar)
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp salt

Instructions

Preheat oven to 180C
Trim and wash rhubarb and chop into bite sized chunks
Put rhubarb in greased baking dish and sprinkle with the sugar/sweetener
Roast for 5 minutes while you make the topping

Meanwhile...

Stir the baking powder, cinnamon and salt through the flour (no need to sift anything)
Rub the fat into the above flour mix
Mix in the sugar or syrup and enough milk to make a thick batter
Take out the rhubarb and drop spoonfuls of batter over the top
Bake for 30-40 minutes at 180C, the cobbler bit should be nice and golden

Variations

- Swap in some buckwheat flour for extra nuttiness, or use spelt flour.
- Top the batter with flaked almonds (you may have to cover it towards the end to ensure they don't burn).
- Throw in some strawberries with the rhubarb, like the classic American pie filling.
- Vanilla is one of rhubarb's best friends; add a few drops of extract to the fruit. Or some ginger (powdered or preserved) to give it a kick.



For loads more lovely recipes head to
www.unicorn-grocery.coop

CHART 'O' CHEESE

Unicorn's non-dairy cheeses: pick the right cheese for the job!

SEMI-HARD CHEESES

TYPE	MELTS?	TEXTURE	TASTE & OTHER NOTES	
RISELLA (VARIOUS MOZZARELLA)	Yes, very nicely! Great on pizza	Fairly soft, delicate, can be crumbled or sliced	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neutral flavours• Sprouted from rice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allergen-free, NGCI*
WALNUT GATHERER (VARIOUS)	No	Very smooth Semi-firm, softens at room temp	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Great tasting, a real treat, good value• Cultured from cashews in Hulme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple ingredients,• Soya-free, NGCI*
PALACE CULTURE (VARIOUS)	No	Very smooth Semi-firm, softens at room temp	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Great flavours, most authentic blue cheese• Cultured from cashews and soy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple ingredients• NGCI*
MOUSE'S FAVOURITE (CAMEMBERT)	No, but softens when baked	Very smooth Semi-firm, softens at room temp	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decadent, flavour develops if baked• Cultured from cashews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple ingredients• Soya-free and NGCI*
IAMNUT OK (VARIOUS)	No	Quite smooth, some texture, Semi-firm, softens at room temp	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Great flavours, really tasty• Cultured from cashews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple ingredients, minimal processing• Soya-free and NGCI*
WILD ROOT (VARIOUS)	No	Quite smooth, some texture Semi-firm, softens at room temp	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Great flavours, best Mature Cheddar• Cultured from cashews in Liverpool	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple ingredients• Soya-free and NGCI*

SOFT CHEESES

PALACE CULTURE (VARIOUS IN JARS)	No	Soft Very creamy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Best depth of flavour (esp. Holy Smoke)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cultured from soy, cashews & almonds• Simple ingredients, NGCI*
MOUSE'S FAVOURITE (VARIOUS)	No	Soft Quite creamy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tangy and rich flavours• Cultured from cashews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple ingredients, soya-free, NGCI*
RISELLA (VARIOUS)	No	Soft Quite creamy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good tangy flavour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cultured from almonds, soya-free, NGCI*
NUSH (VARIOUS)	Yes	Soft Quite creamy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delicate and mild	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sprouted from rice, allergen-free, NGCI*

OTHER CHEESES

SHEESE (VARIOUS)	Yes (except Greek) From most to least melty: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mozzarella• Cheddar• Red	Firm Can be grated, sliced, crumbled, cut into chunks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Best warm or hot• Fairly neutral tasting• Mozzarella is especially mildMature Cheddar is a bit stronger	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greek is a bit sour, Feta-like• Coconut oil based• Soya- and nut-free
PASTA FACTORY PARMESAN	No	Sprinkles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Made in Manchester from nuts, garlic, nutritional yeast, nutmeg and salt	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Savoury topping for pizza, pasta, etc.• In the seasonings section

NGCI* = No Gluten Containing Ingredients

SOME BETTER KNOWN AND SOME LESSER KNOWN SEEDS

WORD FIT PUZZLE

5 LUCKY WINNERS WILL EACH GET A £50 GIFT CARD
HAPPY PUZZLING!

Fill in your details below along with the completed puzzle and drop it off at Unicorn for a chance to win! **There will be 5 lucky winners!** The deadline is the 31st July 2021.

Want to buy a unicorn gift card for someone? Visit our website for details

Fill in the puzzle on the left with the words below, you have to use every word and can only use each word once.

4 Letters

Bean
Beet
Kale
Leek
Lyon
Peas

6 Letters

Carlin
Carrot
Cyklon
Pepper
Ramson
Tomato
Turnip
Welsch

7 Letters

Chicory
Goldena
Lincoln
Pantano
Poblano
Pumpkin
Tarbais
Witloof

8 Letters

Delicata
Purslane
Snowball
Victoria

9 Letters

Annarusse
Angelhair
Buttercup
Hungrygap
Romanesco
Rougesang
Rubychard

11 Letters

Cauliflower
Gardenpeach
Goldenqueen
Parismarket

Contact Details (Please write clearly)

Name: _____

Email or phone: _____

7

BE A PART-OWNER OF A TRULY PIONEERING FARM

COMMUNITY SHARES AVAILABLE NOW, UNTIL 3RD JULY!!

Kindling Farm is seeking supporters to invest in sustainable food and farming. By investing, you not only become part-owner in a pioneering farm for Manchester, but help increase local production of organic food, much of which is destined for our shelves. The Farm team shares their vision here...

"Join us to buy a farm and kindle a food revolution!"

We grow hope

Kindling Farm is about growing organic food, but it is also about growing hope. In this era of climate and ecological crisis, it is about creating a food economy rooted in fairness and sustainability; one that values the farmers and producers of our food, respects and nurtures the land and wildlife, and puts the health and well-being of our communities at its heart.

It will be a place where, together, we can support the next generation of farmers, increase access to fresh organic veg for all, pioneer the most ecological farming methods and support others to create social change in their own communities.

After a decade of establishing successful food businesses, running sustainable farming projects and growing a ready market for organic food (and talking about setting up a farm!), Kindling is ready to buy a 100+ acre farm close to Manchester and turning it into the largest community owned agroforestry farm in the Northwest.... it's a chance not to be missed. That's where you come in!

Join Us to Buy a Farm

We are raising investment to buy a farm through Community Shares (CS). CS allows communities to support enterprises that are important to them, by investing amounts small or large. Whether you're a seasonal investor or new to CS, not only will you help get the farm off the ground, you'll be

a part-owner, with a voice in the running of the farm (if you want it). And you can earn up to a projected 3% return per year on your investment!

Many of you will have invested in Unicorn in its early days and know the huge power of raising funds within the community an enterprise serves. In a few years, when our veg is on Unicorn's shelves, you'll have the satisfaction of knowing you helped get it there.

The exciting news is that, over 300 people have invested already! We have had such a successful start to our community shares campaign, reaching our original investment target already - within just one month!

This is an incredible show of support for the Kindling Farm vision and business model - and we are keen to have even more investors and members.

The way we see it, the more people involved, the more commitment there is to making Kindling Farm a success and to creating a fairer and more sustainable food system, and therefore the greater the social and ecological impact.

You can invest anything from £200, and a group of friends can club together to put in this amount. Before deciding to invest though, please thoroughly read the share offer document to understand the terms, conditions and risks of investing in our CS offer. We are also making available a detailed business plan.



Invest or find out more

To find our share offer documents and to invest please visit:

www.ethex.org.uk/invest/kindling-farm

Whether or not you invest, there are tonnes of other ways you can get involved in our work. Check the website for volunteering opportunities, courses, internships and more at: www.kindling.org.uk

If you have any questions please do get in touch via:

farm@kindling.org.uk

COMMUNITY SHARE OFFER DETAILS
OFFER CLOSES: SATURDAY 3RD JULY 2021
MINIMUM INVESTMENT: £200
INTEREST ON SHARES: UP TO 3% P.A FROM THE YEAR 2024/25
YOUR MONEY IS AT RISK
SO PLEASE DO CAREFULLY READ OUR SHARE OFFER DOCUMENTS



UNICORN'S 1% FUND

SPOTLIGHT: ADFREE CITIES

Imagine a city free from corporate advertising. The AdFree Cities Network shares their vision.

Did you notice anything different about billboards during the lockdowns?



Usually paper-and-paste billboards and bus shelter adverts are changed every couple of weeks, and we get new ads on our high streets pushing Tesco, KFC, Coca-Cola, big cars and fast fashion. But back in spring 2020, as life slowed down and people stayed at home, the new ads stopped coming. Billboard posters went unchanged for weeks or months and were left ripped and fading.

Others began to take advantage of this. Art began to appear in place of big brand advertising, spreading inspiring messages of community and justice. We were gifted a glimpse of a world without consumer advertising, with something else hinted at instead. And it felt good.



During this time, too, the Adfree Cities network was born. A brief history: back in 2017 we launched a campaign called Adblock Bristol with a vision to make Bristol the first UK city to be free from billboards and other corporate outdoor advertising. Two years later we held our first ever national conference, kindly supported by Unicorn. Since then, more Adblock groups have sprung up around the UK. So in 2020 we launched Adfree Cities to support this new network.

There are now volunteer-led Adblock groups in Cardiff, Leeds, Birmingham, Exeter, Norwich, Colchester, Lambeth and Bristol.

We have a shared vision: we want happier, healthier cities free from the pressures of corporate outdoor advertising. We are seeking alternatives beyond consumerism: we celebrate community connection, solidarity, public art and nature. These groups work with their communities to prevent new digital advertising screens, and look for opportunities to get existing billboards removed by the council. This year we will be lobbying candidates in the local and mayoral elections to make pledges to reduce and restrict outdoor advertising. And we'll continue to showcase positive alternatives to advertising in public spaces, like this artwork installed on our community arts board in Bristol in 2020 which celebrates the life of grassroots revolutionary Angela Francis.



We're thrilled that Unicorn is supporting our regional groups in 2021. With this support, they can lobby their local council to restrict advertising for harmful products like junk food, gambling, polluting cars and airline flights. They can build community campaigns to remove corporate advertising in favour of public art, a community garden or simply space free from consumer messages. Or they can organise events on the social and environmental impacts of advertising and the opportunities for change.

There isn't yet a group in Greater Manchester; do you want to start one? Please get in touch to find out how we can support you, or visit www.adfreecities.org.uk/get-involved



FAREWELL TO MIJKE...

A long-time & much-missed co-op member's reflections on leaving Unicorn

"At the end of February, I left Unicorn after nine years of working here. It was probably the hardest decision I have ever made. It certainly took me forever. For three years I had been in a long-distance relationship, which felt like living two separate lives. While I was always aware that this way of living wasn't sustainable in the long run, I kept putting off the decision to move to Germany, until a formidable alliance between Covid and my biological clock forced my hand.

As I wrote my goodbye email to the membership and really started to hone in on what this place has meant to me, I realised that it was here that I felt a sense of purpose for the first time. Like most members at Unicorn, I joined the business with almost no grocery experience. There's certainly no common ground in the paths that we took to get us here, but what unites us (well, it unites us most of the time) is a commitment to a set of principles, that are not fluffy or self-righteous, but grounded, achievable and full of integrity. It was like finding my tribe and it quickly proved impossible to separate work and personal life.

After two years in the job, I trained as a veg buyer, which meant I spent a lot of time out of my comfort zone. I still remember the



tears and sleepless nights that ensued. Oh, and dreams of endless stacks of vegetables, which I had either under- or overbought, were a regular occurrence. As I learned and grew in my role, my confidence and job satisfaction increased exponentially. I am still full of respect for those that had the patience and passion to teach me the ways of fruit & veg at Unicorn, the team which ended up becoming my pride and joy.

People work their socks off at Unicorn. I know I just spent three paragraphs praising it into the heavens, but it's by no means an easy gig. It's hard, physical graft and very monotonous at times. Navigating 70 other personalities, all with their own quirks (!), can be intense at the best of times, but combine so many voices with a flat decision-

making structure and the outcome can sometimes be exasperating. Mostly though, this bunch of beings are inspiring and dedicated, and now an important part of my social circle, which I felt especially grateful for during the lonely months of lockdown. I always found the general atmosphere one of permissiveness and inviting authentic expression, and I think I made the most of that.

Now I am compiling my CV in order to find a job in Hamburg and I am amazed at the skills and experience I have gained. However, this dry format cannot ever show the level of influence Unicorn has had on my life, so I am thankful for the opportunity to write this little piece. My heart is still sore from the goodbyes, but my focus is slowly and finally turning to the possibilities in my new life in this new country."



NEW PRODUCTS: BRACKEN HILL CHUTNEYS & PICKLE



We've just introduced three great, traditional preserves from a family-run business in Yorkshire. Each has an ingredients list that is short and simple, just how we like them.

Lots of the fruit they preserve is grown in their own orchard at Sutton-upon-Derwent, which has a history dating back over 100

years. Many of the ancient trees are still fruiting today, and they reckon the flavours of these old fruits are much better than more modern varieties. They grow their own plums, greengages, apples, pears, quinces, mullberries and medlars, and even the chillies they use are grown locally!



Caramelised Onion Chutney: A sweet and sticky favourite, but this is a less-sweet-than-usual version, made with dates instead of sugar. Amazing paired with any of our cheeses.



Apple Chutney: Full of flavour, no need for added sugar - and its absence gives this a real fruit tang. Lovely in a sandwich, with our cheeses, or on the side of almost anything!



Yorkshire Pickle: a traditional sandwich pickle with carrots, apples, onions and swede, but with no added sugar. Try it with hummus or a flavoured tofu between two slices of sourdough bread for an easy, nutritious lunch.

THE WORLD'S FIRST RE-WILDING CENTRE!

We've been happily supporting reforestation project Trees For Life for most of our 23 years.



In 2022 they are opening the "world's first rewilding centre" at their 10,000-acre Dundreggan estate in Glenmoriston, between Loch Ness and the Isle of Skye.

In this incredible part of the Scottish Highlands, the centre will allow many more people to experience a landscape restored after centuries of exploitation, from casual



visitors to really immersive research, study and volunteering experiences. Tfl hope that the wild landscape and the centre's exploration of Gaelic heritage will

encourage people to 'rewild' themselves, and embed the idea that we can work with nature rather than against it. treesforlife.org.uk

SOLID AS A ROCK

The Solidfund network explains how worker co-ops are coming together to grow the movement

"You probably know Unicorn is a workers' co-op, but did you know that many of its members are part of a bigger network of worker owners and supporters? It's called the Worker Co-op Solidarity Fund - or Solidfund, for short.

Solidfund was set up as a simple way for worker co-op members and their friends to put £1 a week into a shared pot of money to support worker co-op learning and organisation. Unicorn members helped set it up & were among the first people to join, and today 59 out of 635 regular supporters are Unicorn workers.

We've collected nearly £200,000 in 6 years, and made lots of small but important distributions of money to help grow and strengthen our movement. For instance we helped Creative Workers Co-op in Belfast buy their own film making equipment, and workers at Natural Food Store to buy out the retiring owner and set up as a co-op.

Lots of other early stage co-ops have been supported, like community hub Kitty's

Launderette in Liverpool and Sail Cargo South East, providing low carbon shipping. As these new co-ops got established, their members in turn joined Solidfund, helping us to expand the mission.



Today, there are around 250 worker co-ops in the UK, from technology companies like Delta-T to ethical food wholesalers like GreenCity. In the future, we hope to support co-ops in new sectors, like Essential Workers - a collective of Latin American cleaners. What we have in common is a commitment to creating decent jobs, collective control over our working lives, and values like working for the health and sustainable development of our communities.

Solidfund also supports initiatives for worker co-op education and training, like Barefoot Developers - a programme to help experienced co-op workers gain the skills and confidence to turn themselves into advisors and organisers for the movement. Some at

Unicorn have been on the course, and are setting out on this new path themselves.

One of the great things about Solidfund is that there's no 'central committee' running everything. Like Unicorn, every member has a say and a vote, and any member can put forward a proposal for discussion and decision.

And you don't have to work in a co-op to be a member. In fact, many of our newest subscribers are simply people who like the idea of industrial democracy, and want to see more businesses like Unicorn. So if you'd like to chip in on a regular basis, and help us strengthen the worker co-op cause, you'll be more than welcome. Check out our website - and join up!" solidfund.coop



NO PLACE TO GROW?

HULME COMMUNITY GARDEN CENTRE EXPLAIN HOW TO GET GROWING WHERE YOU DIDN'T THINK YOU COULD.

CONTAINER GARDENS

The flexibility that containers can give to what may otherwise be an unsuitable growing situation, provides a multitude of opportunities to grow some food and medicine, create a haven for wildlife and brighten up a drab corner.

1. FIND SOMETHING TO GROW IN

Consider using any container that can hold soil or compost and has drainage holes in the bottom. Reuse old buckets, catering-sized tin cans, an old chest of drawers, sink, toilet, baskets or pallets.

2. FILLING

Good quality organic peat free compost with added plant-based fertilizer will provide well for your plants. A free alternative is homemade compost or leaf mould mixed with some weed free top soil.

3. WHAT TO GROW

Grow plants that are suited to your conditions, food you love to eat that tastes best fresh, and flowers in the colours that make you smile.

Vegetables easy to grow from seed and happy in partial shade include kale, peas, spinach, chard and lettuce. Especially useful when they can be harvested more than once by just taking the outer leaves.

Tomatoes, chillies & peppers do well in a sheltered sunny site with regular liquid feeding.

A large container (15-20 litres) can home a courgette for the summer.

4. MAKE THE MOST OF SPACE

Consider the vertical. Grow plants that climb (or trail).

Use trellis, poles or netting to support plants such as tall peas and beans, climbing nasturtiums, sweet peas, morning glory and passion flowers.

Shelving can be used for several layers of plants, and different growth habits can be



grown in the same pot e.g. strawberries with chives.

5. GROW HERBS

Beautiful flowers attract beneficial insects, and the fragrant leaves have great culinary and medicinal value.

Mint, parsley, lemonbalm and chives are perfect in a large pot, sun or shade and will provide an abundance of leaves over a long season.

Robust, sun loving Mediterranean herbs such as lavender, rosemary and thyme are ideal in hot spots.

6. CARE

Containers do need additional watering in dry weather and liquid feeding can prolong cropping. Enjoy the harvest.

The garden centre is open 7 days a week and is well worth a visit!

hulmegardencentre.org.uk



COP26 & CLIMATE ACTION

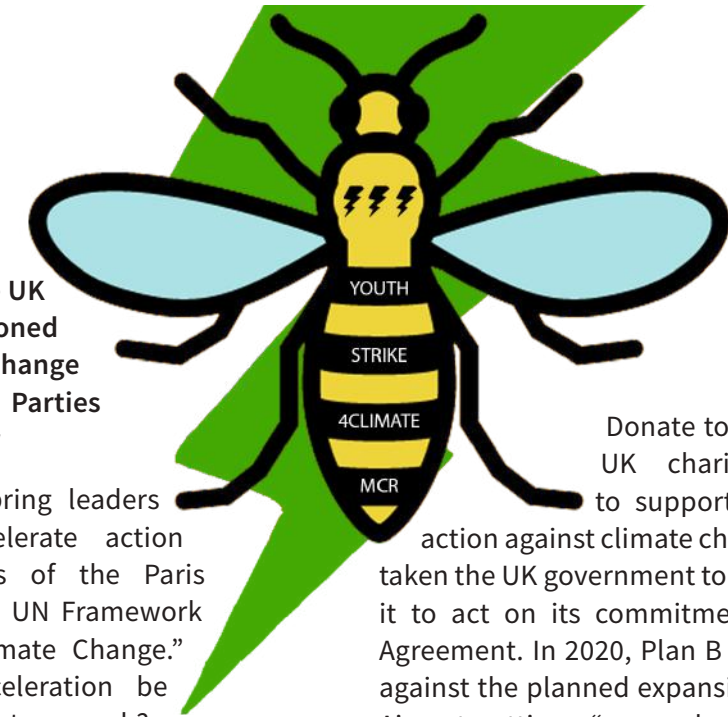


This November, the UK will host the - postponed - 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow

The summit will bring leaders together to "accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change." But will that acceleration be anywhere near fast enough? The signs aren't promising.

If you're freaking out about climate change, here are a few ways you and your family might be able to use your resources - whether time, energy or a bit of cash - to take action in the run-up to the conference.

Sign up to get the newsletter from **Climate Emergency Mcr** and help scrutinise local political action on climate change. This small group of volunteers supports fellow Mancunians to "engage constructively but robustly with their councillors about what is (and is not) happening at the ward level and across the city on climate change." www.climateemergencymanchester.net



Donate to **Plan B**, a small UK charity established to support strategic legal action against climate change. They have taken the UK government to court to compel it to act on its commitment to the Paris Agreement. In 2020, Plan B won their claim against the planned expansion of Heathrow Airport, setting a "game-changing precedent of global application." www.planb.earth

Kids & young adults - get involved with **Youth Strike 4 Climate Manchester**, a group of young people actively working to push for climate justice on a local and UK-wide level. "Whilst we haven't been able to physically strike for over a year, due to the ongoing pandemic, we have been very busy creating education resources and working with other groups across GM to push for climate action."

If you are aged 13-23 and would like to get involved, please message [@youthstrikemcr](https://www.instagram.com/youthstrikemcr) on Instagram or Twitter.

THE PRICE OF EVERYTHING AND THE VALUE OF NOTHING

LANDMARK REPORT BY ECONOMIST PROF. PARTHA DASGUPTA REMINDS US WHAT'S REALLY VALUABLE

In February the Treasury published a landmark Review on The Economics of Biodiversity, calling for "transformational" change in the way we use and value nature.

Emphasising that demand for natural resources has outstripped sustainable supply, the Review condemned the underpricing of nature as a "massive collective failure to manage the global portfolio of all our assets." It highlighted the shortcomings of using GDP (which ignores the depletion of natural resources) as a measure for wealth.

"Many of our institutions have proved unfit to manage the externalities," Dasgupta states. "Governments almost everywhere exacerbate the problem by paying people more to exploit nature than to protect it."

But the Review also offers an optimistic vision, arguing that rapid, transformative changes to measures of economic success

are feasible. Solutions include ditching GDP and integrating the economic value of nature into national accounting systems. Awareness of the benefits of nature should also be embedded in UK education.

Of course, there is a certain irony in saving nature by giving it a monetary value, given where capitalism has got us. Journalist and author George Monbiot criticises the Review's "expectation that we can defend the living world

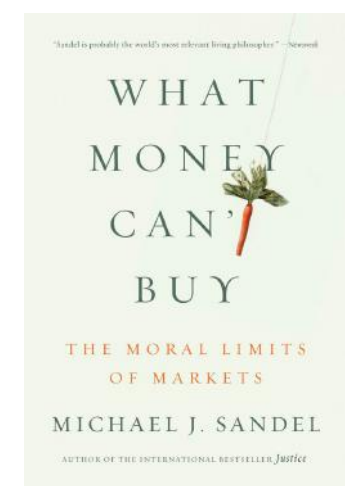
through the mindset that's destroying it." A fair point. But the Review still poses a timely challenge to orthodox economics.

"Professor Dasgupta's report should send shockwaves through the Treasury," contends Green MP Caroline Lucas. "His conclusion is crystal clear: Ministers need to replace GDP growth with environmental protection and human wellbeing as the country's overarching economic goals and apply this to all economic policy making."

Policy change is key. Although lifestyle changes can and do shift culture over time, we need more radical transformation, and we need it now. The food system is no exception. As the food and farming alliance Sustain argues in their response to the Review: "We need to embed diversity and agroecological farming into government policy and farm practice. The alternative is too costly to consider."

Book club recommendation...

If you want a deeper dive into the moral limits of markets, we recommend 'What Money Can't Buy' by Michael J. Sandel. To quote one review, "Sandel asks the crucial question of our time: 'Do we want a society where everything is up for sale? Or are there certain moral and civic goods that markets do not honor and money cannot buy?'"



SPRING VEG NEWS



It's been a cold and dry start to the spring this year: late frosts during one of the chilliest Aprils on record have been felt by all of our growers who are awaiting crops that would usually be ready for harvest by now. Libby Flintoff (based on The Fylde in Lancashire) told us that she's been checking the mercury on a daily basis and fleecing her baby courgette plants in the recent run of frosty nights.

While the shop was closed for renovations a few of us were lucky to spend a day helping out at Glebelands Organic Produce in Sale. Glebelands occupies a beautiful spot next to the River Mersey which feels far removed from its suburban surroundings.

The site plays host to a diverse range of

urban wildlife and is a perfect example of the nourishing effect market gardens have on the biodiversity of our cities. We were lucky enough to spot a varied assortment of birds; from robins and songbirds to a circling buzzard. This was in addition to a scampering fox, a whole host of pollinators such as bees and butterflies and lots of lovely, soil-loving, creepy crawlies. All in an afternoon's work! It was easy to forget we were smack bang in the middle of a huge, urban metropolis.

Unicorn and Glebelands work closely together; their supply of local salad leaves is our hero product on veg and we feel very lucky to have access to such a fresh and local salad supply year round. They grow so many other things besides salads as well; we helped plant spring onions, parsley and



chard as well as potting on some of the plants which we sell for customers to grow at home. We also got to admire the compost-making factory - all the scraps that we generate are collected by Glebelands on a weekly basis and turned into a rich, organic compost for use on the site - a closed loop system which ensures we produce very minimal waste.

We also got to give broad-forking a whirl, an efficient yet ecologically conscious way of aerating and loosening the soil ready for planting. This manual method minimally disturbs the structure and delicate ecosystems of the soil so is the preferred approach for prepping at Glebelands. It was a fun but challenging part of the day!

Turn back to page 4 to read more about Glebelands and its history



Over in Ormskirk, and always keen for a new challenge, Duncan Gielly is adding another large glasshouse to his operation at Lyncroft Farm with a view to extending his pak choi and spinach season and giving more room to his ratatouille crops. We are thrilled that Duncan is increasing his output and we hope to extend our local season on these lines when we would otherwise be looking to Europe.



LEAVING THE EU CUSTOMS UNION: BREXIT AND ITS IMPACT

Leaving the EU Customs Union on the 1st of January this year has presented many challenges for us at Unicorn. In more than 20 years of trading we have developed relationships with many small-scale farmers across Europe and we pride ourselves on our unique offer of organic fruit and veg.

Our model is based on freshness, quality and minimal waste: produce arrives in store and is on the shelves in a matter of hours; we do not buy quantities larger than those we can comfortably sell in peak condition and we prioritise buying direct from the farm gate to ensure the best price for our customers and growers alike.

Brexit has created new barriers to achieving this mission: orders must now be ready days in advance so customs paperwork can be prepared; our buying power has diminished as we try to buy more volume from fewer producers; we are charged a flat fee for each item of produce we buy and from the 1st January next year we will have to pay extra costs for organic certification. Due to our relatively small scale, Unicorn is disproportionately affected by these costs in comparison to the larger multiple supermarkets.

We approached our local MP Jeff Smith with concerns that the cost of import and export documentation would penalise smaller, independent businesses such as Unicorn:

"the notion that no tariffs means no problem is not the case at all. We still have to deal with agent fees, phytosanitary certificates and organic certificates. The admin fees are the same whether it's a box of broccoli or a pallet of broccoli."

Jeff took our case to Oral Questions in Parliament on the 25th March and the conversation has led to talks with members of cabinet, DEFRA and the Border and Protocol Delivery Group. While we are grateful that our message is being heard, the response has been frustrating and limited: we are under no illusions that any help or support is available to businesses of our size.

So far, we have absorbed



the additional costs. We've delayed our annual wage review with the understanding that Brexit could mean a wage freeze for us for 2021. We've been working really hard to make extra efficiencies elsewhere in the business, but there is only so much we can do. Unicorn's model is simple and easy to understand: with no board members to satisfy, our sales

need to cover the cost of goods, our labour and a little extra each year to reinvest back into the business. The uncomfortable truth of Brexit is that this will become a harder reality to achieve in the years ahead.

Affordability and access to good food are matters dear to our heart. We strive to make organic, sustainably-grown ingredients available to a broad customer base and - while paying a fair price to the people producing our food - our aim is to compete with the multiples on price. Please rest assured, we will never compromise on this important goal.

We want Unicorn to outlive us all, to continue serving our community and to demonstrate that a fairer food system is not just feasible, but full of possibility and joy too. While the next few years may not be straightforward, we promise you that we are in this for the long run and we will continue to do all that we can to bolster organic farming both here in the UK and further afield.

Thank you to our amazing customers for your ongoing support, together we will face the challenges ahead.

CABBAGE

All the spring cabbages lend themselves well to a steam-fry! Heat oil in a wok or wide pan, add garlic/ginger/spices, then your chopped cabbage, give a good stir to coat and add a splash of water and a lid, for 3 or 4 minutes. Remove the lid, check if the cabbage is cooked enough and add lemon or soy sauce as desired. Try to avoid overcooking, so that you retain all the wonderful health benefits of these humble crucifers.

One of our favourite combinations is garlic, chilli flakes and fennel seeds, with an optional squeeze of lemon at the end (and a little salt). We make a version of this with cavolo nero and cannellini beans for the deli (we roast it, but the principle is the same).

Or you could go for the classic ginger, garlic, chilli and soy sauce or tamari. Sprinkle some sesame seeds at the end, or drizzle with a sauce made from tahini, lemon and water. Or try it with miso - simply mix a spoonful with a bit of water and stir through for a delicious umami hit. Lovely with noodles for a quick dinner.

SEED SAVING

AN ANCIENT ART THAT CREATES NEXT LEVEL SELF-SUFFICIENCY!

Growing your own veg is one of the most enjoyable ways of being a little bit more self-sufficient. Germinating seed, nurturing plant growth, harvesting and eating your own produce is a very fulfilling process. The cycle continues when plants are left to flower and go to seed, but over the past 40 years or so most gardeners have forgotten about this part of the process; the tradition of seed saving is no longer an integral part of growing plants.

This is partly due to the use of hybrid seeds (usually called 'F1s') which are bred from two different plants, creating a new variety with the desirable qualities from each of the parents. Hybrid plants are popular for their vigour and high yields but they do not produce seed that will grow true to type, so new seed has to be bought every year from the seed company who created it. Heritage and heirloom varieties are descendents of plants whose seed has been saved year after year, passed on down generations. The seed is open-pollinated, which means the plants are allowed to reproduce according to the whims of the bees and the wind, resulting in varieties that are highly adaptable to



local conditions. Gardeners who save open pollinated seed year after year will create ever-changing strains with wide genetic diversity, which means resilience when faced with challenges such as disease and climate change.

For beginners, it's best to start with saving seed from plants that self-pollinate, such as peas, tomatoes and beans. It's as simple as leaving a few plants to set seed, or in the case of tomatoes, separating the seed from the fruit when harvesting. Peas and bean pods can just be left on the plant until completely dry. Always select your strongest plants to save seed from as these will pass

on the best genes. There are some fantastic resources online and to start on the right track you can buy open pollinated seeds from The Seed Cooperative in store or from Real Seeds online.

To encourage seed swapping we will be creating a seed library at the shop later in the year, providing access to a variety of locally saved seed and lots of info so you can learn how to save seeds from your own veg and flowers to share within the community. Hopefully after a few years a collection of locally adapted heirloom and heritage seed varieties will emerge and we will be one step closer to a tasty & resilient local food system.

POSITIVE DRINKING

We've just introduced a brand new range of ground coffee from Percol - all Fairtrade and organic, and packed in fully home-compostable, plastic-free packaging.

For many of us, coffee isn't just a drink; it's got baggage! Whether as a necessity, a treat or a pick-me-up, it's often a touchstone in our daily routines. That might be one of the reasons why coffee was an early success in the story of FairTrade; it meant something to people, so we especially valued knowing it was improving peoples' lives instead of perpetuating poverty.

We're always on the look out for coffee that makes us feel good - which happens when it tastes great AND puts people and planet before profits. Here is a new range that does it for us.



Percol Intense Espresso: an organic Central American & Indian blend; smoky flavour with notes of dark chocolate. Strength - 6



Percol Bold Peruvian: 100% Peruvian organic Arabica beans; punchy flavour with notes of pecan. Strength - 5



Percol Smooth Colombian: 100% Colombian organic Arabica beans; a balanced taste with notes of berries. Strength - 3