



## **Residents call for a community-led food revolution in Tower Hamlets as £168,000 released into experimental growing projects in 2024**

- **The funding will see a new Food and Land Justice Resource Centre established at Kingsley Hall and a Sussex farm beginning to grow crops that meet the needs of Tower Hamlets' global community.**
- **Local residents, the 'Blueprint Architects', call for council to promote existing affordable and community-led food initiatives rather than supermarkets or large corporations**

**Over three years, community groups, housing associations, farms and schools, and local residents known as 'Blueprint Architects' have been working together to create a healthier and more sustainable local food system.**

Tower Hamlets is making serious efforts to make sure every resident has enough food. From the local authority's flagship free school meals, to huge efforts from local residents to run food banks. Yet while wealthier residents can access organic, local food that is good for the planet, many less well-off residents are priced out, dealing with day-to-day food insecurity, lack of growing spaces, with little opportunity to have a say in local decision-making.

In 2021, the Just FACT programme secured over £2 million of funding from the Lottery's Climate Action Fund to tackle this unfairness, and help to create a fairer, healthier and more sustainable local food system in Tower Hamlets. Now, 26 partners and 30 local residents known as 'Blueprint Architects' are working together for a community-led food revolution.

Learn more about the [Just FACT](#) programme and [Blueprint Architects](#) by following the links.

### **Experimenting for a better future**

A unique aspect of the Just FACT programme is that local residents and community organisations decide which projects receive grant money. Last year, successful projects

included fermentation workshops with Oitij-jo, and funding for Stepney City Farm to employ a second full-time Food Grower to improve break-even points with sales.

In autumn 2023, we carried out a [participatory grant making](#) process to decide which Tower Hamlets projects should receive [Action Learning Grants](#).

We are delighted to announce that a further 10 projects will be joining the Just FACT programme. Here is a flavour of the projects that have been funded this year, with the full list on our [website](#).

### [Food and Land Justice Resource Centre](#)

The Food and Land Justice Resource Centre will be established in Kingsley Hall in Tower Hamlets by the Community Food Growers' Network, offering an accessible organising space where resources, skills, support and learning can be shared and disseminated. They will offer training, public talks, organising meetings, soil testing and seed and tool sharing.

### [Folx Farm FAF](#)

Funding will be used to establish a dedicated growing space on folx farm, growing produce for our Tower Hamlets Community partners to sell at their weekly markets. Alongside this, they will explore how a commercial, small scale, regenerative farm can concentrate a percentage of its growing activity on producing foods that are often imported and staples in the diets of many marginalised communities in the UK, in a way that is sustainable and affordable.

### [Eat Not Waste Not](#)

'Eat Not Waste Not' tackles the massive food waste issue that Society Links are seeing through their community projects on the St George's Estate. This initiative will use up waste from the community and re-use it for gardening projects, through composting, green waste for mulching, food compost, and a wormery.

### [Community design and build of accessible compost toilet](#)

In partnership with [Compost Mentis](#), this project will fund the co-design and construction of an accessible compost toilet in Mile End. We hope this will support a wide range of groups and individuals to access the garden, staying for longer periods of time, and maximising opportunities for community food growing in our raised beds and forest garden.

## **What have we learned so far about what needs to change?**

Local residents who are part of the Blueprint Architects group have identified a number of proposals to create a healthy food system, with some key asks for the local council to:

- Commit to community wealth building by redistributing resources from the local authority to community-led projects, particularly access to green and food growing spaces

- Transparency and community involvement throughout the process of developing local policies to ensure that policies reflect the lived experiences of Tower Hamlets residents
- Integrate food policy into wider cross-sector policy
- Funding for local initiatives that are working towards building a just and sustainable food system in Tower Hamlets (including those working on food growing, food waste etc.)

Over the next 2 years the Just FACT partnership will be gathering learning from the projects, and working together to improve the local food system.

**Zarina Ahmad, Head of Programmes at Wen, said:**

“For an equitable and just transition of our food system we need to redistribute power and decision making as well as resources. In Tower Hamlets we see a wealth of knowledge, skills and expertise held by those with roots in the borough. Historically, and even in recent events, this knowledge and community spirit has been the backbone of resilience, going forward it will be and what should shape any transformation in Tower Hamlets. It’s time for more people to step forward, value existing cultural knowledge and flip the narrative.”

**The Executive Mayor of Tower Hamlets, Lutfur Rahman, said:**

“Ensuring every resident has enough healthy food to eat is one of the most important goals of the council. It’s the reason that we rolled out free school meals across the borough. We know there is always more to do, which is why we want to support this innovative project that aims to bring affordable, locally-grown food to residents.

A truly circular local food system also means that in addition to growing food locally and reducing food waste as much as possible, food scraps will be composted to create nutrient-rich soil which can be used to grow more food or support greening efforts in the borough. We want a more sustainable, healthier local food system that can benefit all residents in Tower Hamlets, and we know that achieving this would also reduce carbon emissions, so we are looking forward to supporting this work wherever possible.”

**Notes to Editors:**

- Spokespeople and images available on request.

- Opportunities for photography, filming and interviews at project locations can be arranged upon request. More information on the project available here: <https://www.wen.org.uk/just-fact/>

### **About Wen**

Wen acts to achieve equality, justice and joy at the point where gender and environmental issues meet. Wen works both in East London and nationally to support women and grass-root movements.

### **About Platform**

Platform supports the Blueprint Architect group. Extractive energy, food and financial systems are driving climate breakdown, the defining issue of our time. We're tackling this by exposing who owns and controls these systems, mobilising impacted communities across the UK and envisioning sustainable alternatives. Drawing on Platform's unique 40-year history, our team of campaigners, researchers and artists are working across the UK to transform the political, cultural and social conditions in which polluting industries operate.

### **Contact**

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