

## **Notes from the Land Army Discussion.**

*Feeding Manchester* #6 participants were asked to consider the following topics in relation to the proposed Land Army (LA):

### **USEFUL SKILLS FOR VOLUNTEERS:**

- Volunteers need to be able to follow instructions. Volunteers need to possess common sense.
- Useful skills for volunteers to be taught would include: poly-tunnel cleaning, pruning, weeding, picking, planting machines, hand planting, propagating, pricking and potting on, composting, harvesting, tree planting.
- Volunteers with a little bit of knowledge already or need to provide basic training before they volunteer.

### **TRAINING ALREADY AVAILABLE IN GREATER MANCHESTER:**

- Debdale - horticultural training.
- HCGC.
- Trafford Organic Growers Network.
- Urban Growing course from Growing Manchester - 5 wk training - intro to fruit and veg growing.
- Wythenshawe (training that could be a foundation for LA volunteers).
- University? Myerscough College, Heaton Park Beekeepers, sus food projects, BTCV
- Incredible Edible Todmorden have training areas doing horticultural apprenticeship schemes, could copy them and their funding scheme and use it for the LA.
- MEEN - CPD, food and growing, peer learning.
- Plattfield - weekly growing group.
- Manchester College.
- Manchester Leader's programme.

### **TRAINING YOU COULD OFFER:**

- DIG - weeding and picking.
- Abundance - fruit related stuff.
- Hulme Garden Centre.

### **POSSIBLE REWARDS FOR VOLUNTEERS:**

- Progression training, SA apprenticeship training, free food, free plants, accredited training, local business sponsoring programme with rewards, access to nature, socialising, doing a useful task collectively.
  - Travel expenses - cycling rate 20p a mile, bus fare.
  - Lunch!
  - City and Guild's Horticulture.
  - Can we get funding for qualifications?
  - Time Bank model - accumulate experience and get rewards according to work put in Manchester Leadership programme - using students.
    - Practical experience for horticultural students.
    - Could match skills wanted to farmers needs.
    - Need to look after volunteers well and be strict.
    - Need job descriptions.
    - Small teams setting up smallholdings?

## **PITFALLS TO AVOID:**

- Don't want to put seasonal workers out of work.
- The new deal has to be 35hrs per week.
- Corporate volunteers create a lot of work for those using them.
- Difference between volunteers and client users needs to be recognised.
- One time users need to show an accumulation.
- Need to manage peoples expectations.
- Land army has female only publicity.
- Need commitment from people before out-laying on training
- Would volunteers need CRB checks? Referees?
- Could anyone join or would there be an interview process?
- Who would do checks? Would the facilitator be a volunteer or paid?
- Would need a co-ordinator if a big group.
- Would need insurance to cover possible damage / crop destruction.
- Don't want to drift into employer relationship so better no veg in return for work?
- Hard work in winter when wet and cold so best to avoid tough jobs then?
- Need to make it easy as possible for people to volunteer.
- There is a demand for places from agricultural apprenticeships but farmers cannot afford them Structure needs to be looked at carefully.
- Small skilled group more useful than large unskilled group.
- Regular individuals more useful.
- Would be good to have a diversity of volunteers - of all ages etc.
- Security – stealing.
- Massive task!
- Locality and ownership?
- Not too broad but offering different options.

## **ISSUES FOR LATER DISCUSSION:**

- Ethical funding / corporate sponsorship.
- Expenses? transport costs? administration costs? protective clothing - long term sustainability.
- Would save growers time if someone else looked for volunteers.
- Private sector - staff volunteers.
- Recruitment firms – websites.