

## Reading gets growing for Town Meal 2015

Community groups and partners in Reading are coming together to launch Reading Town Meal 2015. The popular Town Meal event will return to Reading on Saturday 3rd October– and organisers are inviting everyone in Reading to get involved now to make this the biggest and best celebration of local food yet.

The Town Meal 2015 will see over 1,000 local people tuck in to a delicious free lunch cooked by Reading College students from the fresh ingredients grown by gardeners, allotment holders and local food producers. The home-grown feast is to be served up in Forbury Gardens alongside a packed programme of music, workshops, hands-on activities, plus a market place of community groups and local food stalls. New this time will be the chance to get top tips from experts on how to grow your own food and lots of fun activities for children of all ages.

On Saturday 20 June at 11.30am, growers at Amersham Road Community Garden in Caversham will be kicking off preparations by planting vegetables to add to the pot for the Town Meal. Town Meal organisers will also be on hand at the community garden seeking suggestions for this year's menu and signing up volunteers to be Reading Mealmakers – the vital people who will make Reading's Town Meal happen.

“Whether it's growing some extra fruit or veg to donate to the Meal, joining the volunteer team on the day, running a stall or workshop, or helping to spread the word, Mealmakers are what the Town Meal is all about,” said Paul Harper Chair of the Steering Group putting together the event. “We'd love to hear from anyone who's interested in taking part – come along to meet us at the launch this Saturday morning between 11.30 and 12.30, or simply go to our website [readingtownmeal.org.uk](http://readingtownmeal.org.uk) or call 0118 958 6692.”

Adam Moss has already signed up to be a Mealmaker. He said “I really enjoyed being a part of the team at the last Reading Town Meal – it's such a fantastic day and helping it come together on the day is exciting. As soon as I heard it was happening this year I signed up to volunteer again!”

Notes for Editors:

1. Preparations for Reading Town Meal 2015 will be launched on Saturday 20 June between 11.30 and 12.30 with a photo call and public drop in session at Amersham Road Community Garden, Amersham Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 5NA. For further information contact Julie Roberts tel: 07934 716689.
2. The Town Meal Steering Group is organising this event and comprises: Food4Families (a BIG lottery funded project managed by Reading International Solidarity Centre (RISC)), Reading College, Reading Food Growing Network, Reading Borough Council Culture & Sport Services, True Food Community Cooperative, Transition Town Reading, Reading Voluntary Action and other volunteer members.
3. Food4Families aims to work with communities across Greater Reading to increase the amount of food grown locally and sustainably and has created 20 community gardens across Reading where people learn how to grow their own food under the guidance of professional tutors. Amersham Road Community Garden is a garden set up by Food4Families.

4. RISC is the biggest Development Education Centre in the UK, working with schools and community groups to build understanding of sustainable development and promote social justice.
5. Reading Food Growing Network aims to promote and expand locally grown food through sharing knowledge, information and ideas alongside advice and support to local growers
6. Reading College Hospitality, Travel & Tourism department are contributing their expertise and use of kitchen facilities where their catering students will prepare and cook the Town Meal, which they will then serve in Forbury Gardens.
7. Transition Town Reading is a local group of the UK network that aims to promote resilient local economies and co-ordinate the transition of our community to one that is less reliant on fossil fuels; has a smaller carbon footprint and reduces the impact of climate change.
8. True Food Community Cooperative is a social enterprise, owned and run by its members, that enables its members and others to buy affordable organic food and other produce and supports local food production.
9. Reading Voluntary Action (RVA) promotes strength within Reading's voluntary and community sector. RVA's Development worker, Community Involvement, Rachel Goater works to increase the number of people who are active in communities around Reading by improving communication and ensuring people know how and where they can get involved in social groups, community events, sports, volunteering and democracy.
10. Reading Borough Council is supporting the event through logistical advice and support.
11. Each of the previous Reading Town Meals held in 2011 and 2013 have served over 1,000 people with a free hot lunch cooked from tasty local ingredients grown locally, and filled Forbury Gardens with stalls and activities all celebrating local, sustainable food. A short film of the first Reading Town Meal can be seen here <https://vimeo.com/36269113>