

## **Incredible Edible Todmorden – discussion after Pam Warhurst’s presentation**

People’s initial responses were around the issue of how to engage people in the Incredible Edible idea when everyone is so busy and it is so hard to get volunteers.

Pam stressed that Incredible Edible has a very positive approach and goes out of its way to emphasise ‘the power of small actions’. Whatever you can contribute is worthwhile, however small you might think it is. In addition, they work hard to match volunteers to activities that suit them – for example, when a poet volunteered, they asked her to write some vegetable haikus that could be used in displays around the town. Pam said everyone has a piece of the jigsaw that makes up the full picture and they need to be encouraged to see the value of that particular piece. There’s also a useful IET maxim: ‘Keep boring meetings short; eat cake often.’

People also wanted to know how to get started if you didn’t have any money. Pam emphasised that the experience of IET had been that you should ‘just start’ and the money tended to materialise. She said that once people saw you were serious and reliable they would often want to have a part in what you were doing.

There was some discussion about why Incredible Edible had been so successful and it was suggested that its main power was in firing people’s imaginations – helping them to tell a new story about the future, one that is different from the dominant narrative handed down by the powers that be.

When talking specifically about how churches might engage with Incredible Edible, it was felt that it should be easy for the Church to gather people together and then to discover what excited them about the Incredible Edible proposition. Pam emphasised that Incredible Edible is not a blueprint or a set of instructions – it’s a proposition and a starting point that develops in a unique way each time it is adopted.

Other suggestions for engaging churches in Incredible Edible included collecting wisdom from the congregation about growing and preparing food, and using the land that is attached to many church buildings for growing food and attracting pollinators. Many churches also have kitchens that could be places where people come together to learn skills associated with food production.

Pam emphasised that there is no ‘quick fix’ for the challenges we face. Incredible Edible had been going for seven years already. However, she reminded us of a saying people often used to quote when she worked for the Forestry Commission: ‘The best time to plant a tree was thirty years ago; the second best time is now.’