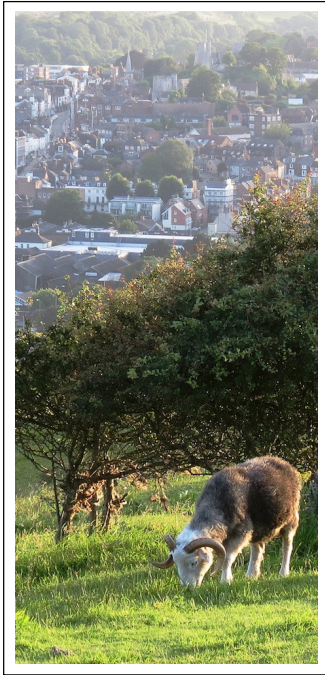


Lewes & Ouse Valley eco-nomics Group (L&OVe) update December 2012

L&OVe – looking at the benefits to our community from our surrounding landscape



“If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world” (Tolkien, ‘The Hobbit’)

Before we move on from Lewes’s most renowned community-based speciality of Bonfire Night, towards the approaching “festive season”, a quick mention that Colin and Andrew appeared on ‘Rocket Radio’ on Thurs 1st November to talk about L&OVe and specifically about BoB (our ‘Building on the Benefits’ initiative – see below). We explained Naturegain, what L&OVe has been up to, described BoB and encouraged anyone who’s involved in local activities that benefit from the local environment - or which help enhance the local environment - to get in touch.

Each month we have started to feature one type of *naturegain* - the benefits we receive from the local environment (or ‘ecosystem services’, to use the scientific term). Last month we looked at nutrient cycling – a crucial ‘supporting service’- well suited to November and this month we want to focus on an equally vital ‘provisioning service’: food. This seems highly suitable to this time of year!

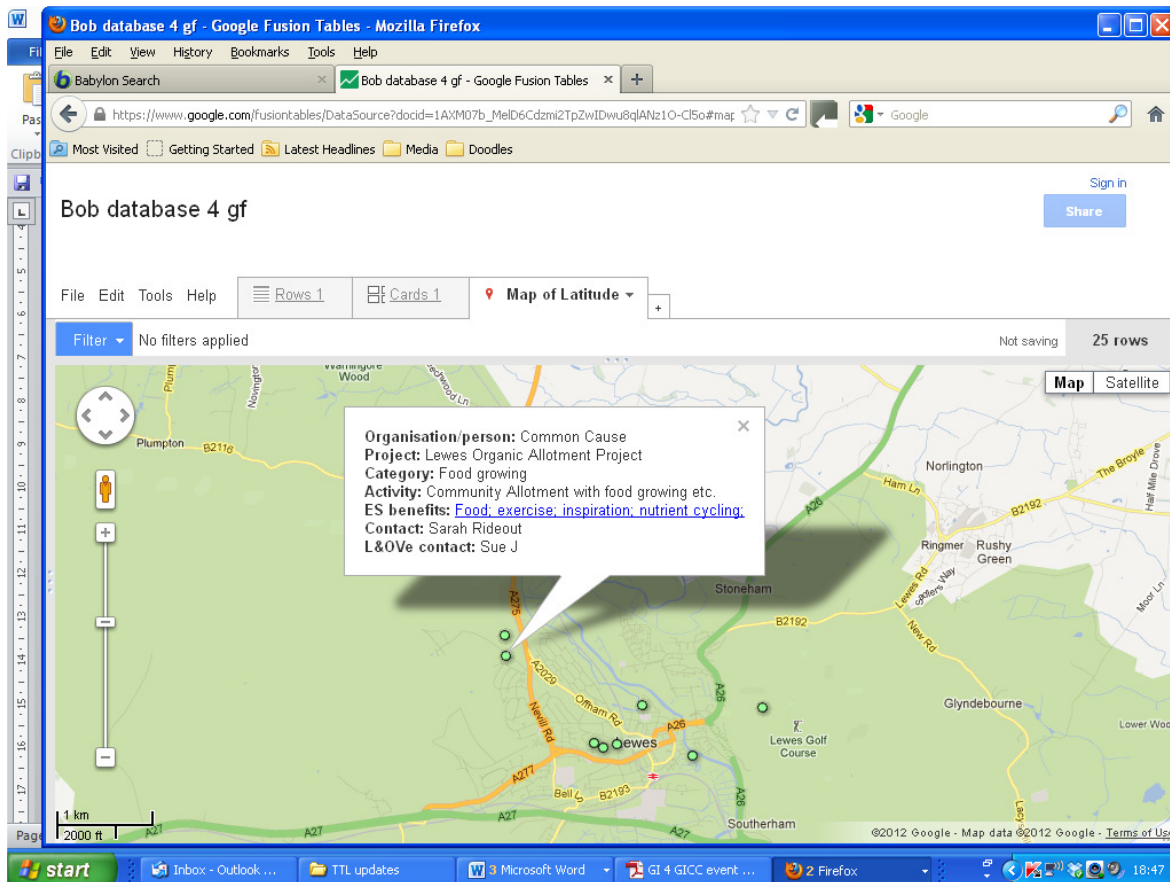
Traditionally, the autumn was a time for stocking your larder with things to eat during the cold season. Most of our food used to come from the local environment, whether it was grains, vegetables, fruits, honey, or meat - as a ‘provisioning service’, something that we get from nature (albeit with the help of farmers!). In the past, local foods would be processed and preserved to ensure they lasted through the winter, including a feast at Christmas. The quote from Tolkien seems to be appropriate as the festive season approaches (not to mention the imminent release of the Hobbit movie!). Now, in the age of globalization, we don’t need to stock our larders because we can pop down to the shop (or supermarket); but all that food on the shelves has to come from somewhere - nature is still providing a service, though it may be an environment far, far away that is doing our ‘provisioning’ and it’s hard to tell if we contributing to the other side of the coin and helping give back what is needed to maintain the naturegain.

At L&OVe we are looking to uncover the evidence that sustainability can be achieved through greater links between the local economy and the local environment. If we look carefully, we can see the connections, and we can take action to ensure the benefits are being maintained or enhanced, rather than degraded. Food production is an activity that has already started to feature with BoB

L&OVe Building on the benefits (BoB): BoB involves us working with other community groups, businesses of individuals who are already making use of the local environment, and who want to enhance the naturegain. And new initiative over the past month is an attempt to map the BoB network. Gavin B (who is quite new to L&OVe) has suggested we use Google maps to plot where all the relevant projects around Lewes are. We have started to build a spreadsheet, adding

information on the projects, which will be magically transformed into an interactive map! So far, we're testing the system with just a few projects, but we thought it worth just showing you what the map will look like – the screen-shot below shows the map with the Lewes Organic Allotment Project highlighted to show the information recorded about that site.

We hope then to open this up, so that people can input their own information and data on sites they work on or use and we hope such 'crowd-sourcing' will encourage engagement with BoB across the web-savvy elements of the Lewes Community!!



So ... the mapping is underway please get in touch to tell us about local examples of people, projects, groups and businesses producing or enhancing local 'naturegain' (if you've forgotten what naturegain is, have a look here: <http://www.transitiontownlewes.org/524.html>) - projects for us to support and map our call of last month, "Can you help us?" remains on our lips!

Please eMail Colin on tc09@gn.apc.org with ideas and examples L&Ove will pull these all together and map the benefits coming from our local environment via these projects and activities.

Date of next L&Ove meeting: Tuesday 4th December at Lewes Arms (upstairs meeting room), 7.30 pm

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