



Give Peas a Chance!

The innovative project bringing organic
dried split peas to Scottish school meals



Give Peas a Chance! in Aberdeen City 2024–2025

How public procurement enabled a new supply chain for Scottish organic dried split peas.

Give Peas a Chance! is a pilot project to get Scottish organic dried split peas into school meals, funded by Sustain's Bridging the Gap programme. The award-winning pilot built a new supply chain and route to market for the peas, giving pupils access to healthy and sustainable food. It was named the Best Local Initiative Championing Children's Healthy Food at the Children's Food Awards 2025.

Pilot partners are Soil Association Scotland, Aberdeen City Council, pea producer Phil Swire, the Royal Highland Education Trust (RHET) and the Royal Northern Countryside Initiative (RNCI).

The pilot aimed to:

- connect Aberdeen City young people with climate-friendly food.
- support the creation of a new human consumption market for the peas in Aberdeen and across Scotland.

- encourage producers to plant more peas as part of their crop rotation, enhancing biodiversity and soil health on farm and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Through funding from Bridging the Gap, the pilot provided a subsidy for Aberdeen City Council to purchase the peas for the same price as a previously purchased non-local, non-organic pulse. Phil Swire and Soil Association Scotland built a new supply chain to bring the peas from the field to school meal plates. Caterers at Aberdeen City Council crafted recipes to use the peas effectively on the primary and secondary menus. Alongside this, pupils took part in educational activities created and delivered by education partners RHET and RNCI.

In 2025, Moray Council and The Highland Council joined Give Peas a Chance! and started serving the peas in schools.

Building the supply chain



Why peas?

Organic dried split peas offer a simple, affordable way to tackle health, climate, and cost-of-living challenges.

Peas are a local climate solution

Peas have been grown in Scotland for hundreds of years. In Aberdeenshire, farmer Phil Swire uses peas as part of his crop rotation to fix nitrogen in the soil. Peas have nodules in the roots that have a special type of bacteria, enabling the plant to take nitrogen from the air and hold it in the plant to help it grow. Pea crops reduce the need for synthetic fertiliser, which is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. Growing organically also improves biodiversity and soil quality, which helps soil hold more water and reduce the risk of flooding.

Peas are nutritious

The peas are rich in protein, dietary fibre, and micronutrients including iron, manganese, thiamine and folate. They have no cholesterol and are low in fat. Peas' fibre and nutrient content may help to prevent chronic disease, such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes.

Peas are ideal for school meals

– and for meals made at home. They are delicious, affordable and versatile, and can be used in a number of recipes. They are shelf-stable and store for long periods of time, which helps in driving down food waste.

“As organic farmers, we're not allowed to add any inputs or synthetic fertilisers, so we need to grow that fertility naturally. Peas have a symbiotic relationship with rhizobium bacteria, which fixes nitrogen for us. If we can put peas into our rotation, it really helps us grow healthy and nutrient-dense food.”

Phil Swire, organic farmer and pea producer, Balmakewan Farm, Aberdeenshire



Peas on the menu

Getting the peas onto school menus required the development of new pea-based dishes that met nutritional regulations, could be made in school kitchens and were appealing to pupils. Aberdeen City Council caterers brought ideas and inspiration to a recipe development day in February 2024.

The caterers created new recipes to sample at the recipe development day, choosing six to be trialled in schools from April 2024. During the trial period, caterers tweaked the recipes based on feedback from pupils. For example, cocoa powder was added to the pea muffin and cookie. The October 2024 annual menu featured 11 innovative recipes that included the Scottish organic dried split peas across the primary and secondary school menus.

The dishes were a hit: 173,011 pea-based dishes were served in Aberdeen City Council's primary schools between April 2024 and March 2025.

“

The volume of peas that we've been purchasing is vastly greater than we'd anticipated. It's really encouraging that the meals are being chosen by the pupils.

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Susan Bailey, Catering Advisor,
Aberdeen City Council

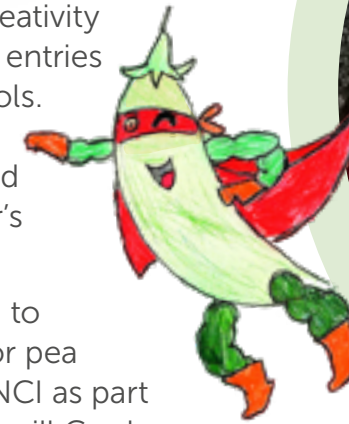


Peas in the classroom

Education pilot partners RHET and RNCI created fun, hands-on educational activities for pupils to explore the farm-to-fork journey of the peas.

Introducing: Superpod!

RHET invited Aberdeen City pupils to design a pea character for the pilot. The competition sparked creativity across the city, with 60 entries submitted from 7 schools. The winning character, Superpod, was designed by a pupil from St Peter's R.C. Primary School.



Pupils were also invited to design a seed packet for pea seeds, distributed by RNCI as part of their popular Windowsill Garden project. The winning design came from a pupil at Skene Square Primary School.

The prize was a class visit to Balmakewan Farm, where pupils from both schools learned how peas are grown and harvested.

RNCI also delivered a series of classroom talks and RHET created a suite of **new resources**.

“

To introduce a new ingredient like this to a menu without giving teachers and pupils a chance to learn about it is really difficult. This pilot is a great opportunity for them to learn about the journey of the pea from the farm to the plate.

”

Alison Johnston, Project Manager,
Royal Northern Countryside Initiative



Feb 2024

Bridging the Gap funding secured

Apr 2024

Aberdeen City Council caterers launch trial menu with pea-based recipes

Sept 2024

First classroom talks in Aberdeen City Council primary schools

Oct 2024

Aberdeen City Council caterers launch new annual menu with pea-based recipes

May 2025

Moray Council join the project

Jun 2025

The Highland Council join the project

Dec 2025

End of Bridging the Gap funding

Nov 2023

Initial partner visit to Balmakewan Farm

Feb 2024

Recipe Development Day with Aberdeen City Council catering team

Jun 2024

Pea character competition in Aberdeen City Council primary schools

Jan 2025

Bridging the Gap extend project funding to December 2025

Jun 2025

Aberdeen City Council class visits to Balmakewan farm

Sept 2025

First classroom talks in Moray and Highland Council schools



What's the pea-tential?

Give Peas a Chance! shows there is real potential to create new markets for Scottish organic dried split peas for human consumption.

The peas are high in fibre, packed with nutrients, and they have helped reduce the carbon footprint of school meals compared to similar dishes on previous menus. They play a vital role on farm, by fixing nitrogen naturally as part of an organic crop rotation.

Increasing human consumption of Scottish organic dried split peas supports national priorities, including Good Food Nation ambitions and Scottish dietary goals. Give Peas a Chance! is part of a growing movement to increase the production and consumption of pulses, with initiatives like international campaign Beans is How, and Glasgow Food Policy Partnership and Glasgow Community Food Network's Full of Beans.

The pilot also revealed opportunities to strengthen Scotland's food system. While all other parts of the supply chain are possible in Scotland, the lack of a processing facility means the peas must leave Scotland to be processed, adding cost and emissions

and losing value in the supply chain for producers. This 'missing middle' of the supply chain means it remains small-scale and underdeveloped, with limited investment and resilience.

With the right investment, Scotland could close this gap and unlock the full benefits of locally grown pulses, through:

- Further research on the feasibility of pulse supply chains in Scotland, including additional markets and business case for processing equipment.
- Funding for supply chain projects like Give Peas a Chance!
- Grants for new processing equipment.
- Exploration and investment in cooperative models for the dried pulse sector.
- Farming incentives for including peas in crop rotations.
- Development of a sustainable protein strategy for Scotland, following the examples of Denmark, Finland and France.

“Peas are much overlooked here in Scotland, but could be a key crop for the future. It's something that grows really well in certain regions, nutritious, incredibly sustainable as part of a crop rotation, and great for food security. To fully realise the benefits – and expand peas across public procurement and other markets – we must develop this supply chain in Scotland to make it resilient.”

Sarah Gowanlock,
Programme Manager,
Soil Association Scotland

Lasting impact

The peas remain a hit – Aberdeen City Council put peas back on the menu in 2025–26.

At the start of the 2025–26 school year, two more local authorities – The Highland Council and Moray Council – joined the project, thanks to extended funding from Bridging the Gap.

This extension means over 350 more schools and nurseries can access the peas and thousands more pupils are now enjoying healthy, climate-friendly meals featuring Scottish organic dried split peas.

Give Peas a Chance! offers a model for creating new supply chains that have health, sustainability, and local economic development at their core by utilising the power of public procurement and through cross-sector collaboration.

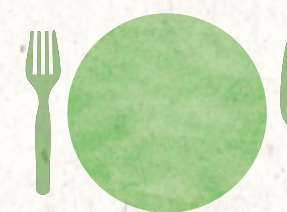
“Give Peas a Chance! is a fantastic example of how climate action can start on the school plate, benefiting children's health and the local economy.”

Cllr Kate Willis, Climate
Change Committee Chair,
The Highland Council

“We're always looking for ways to make school meals more engaging, nutritious and sustainable. This project is a fantastic example of how we can do all three, while giving pupils the opportunity to understand where their food comes from.”

Cllr Kathleen Robertson, Chair,
Education, Children's and Leisure
Services Committee, Moray Council

Impact in Aberdeen City



60
schools
serving
the peas

173,011
pea dishes served

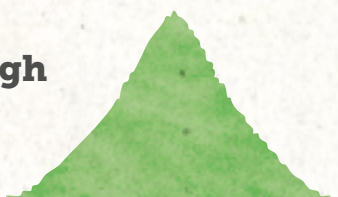
11 new pea-based
recipes

£1.66 – the amount
recirculated
in the Scottish economy for
every £1 spent by the council



11,677
people reached through
education activities

2,971kg
of peas purchased
– equivalent to the
weight of 5 cows



**Watch the
project film**



www.soilassociation.org/GivePeasAChance

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