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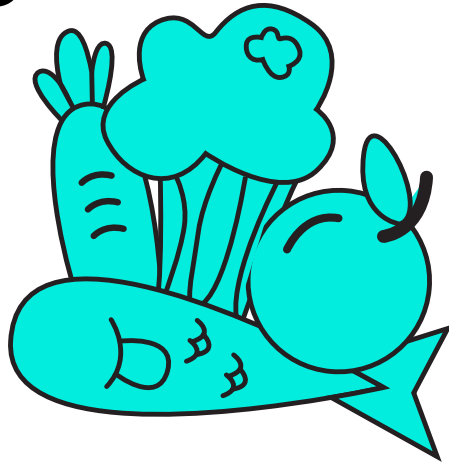
FOOD FOR THOUGHT

BRIEF 1

Brief 1:
Food for thought

How might we rethink our current food system to design out waste?

Background

Food plays a central role in all of our lives. It determines our physical and mental health, shapes our daily routines and social interactions, and is an essential part of our communities and economy.

However, a huge amount of food waste occurs throughout the system, at a time of growing food insecurity. This isn't only in households – much of this waste takes place in the hospitality and food service sector, and the manufacture, retail and wholesale sectors.

Waste doesn't only take the form of edible food: many inedible by-products of food production are discarded before food reaches shops or aren't captured and separated properly by food businesses during disposal, rather than being reused as inputs for agriculture and bio-energy.

This is a big problem because the way our food is produced is damaging our planet's natural systems. A huge amount of energy and resources are required throughout the different stages of the food system to grow, harvest, transport, and package goods. As a result, industrial food production is one of the biggest contributors to deforestation, freshwater pollution, biodiversity loss, and climate change.

Consider all of these different forms of waste, and how they appear at different stages of the food production process. How do they relate to each other, and to other social issues like poverty, inequality, and the climate crisis? What if we saw these forms of waste as design problems and tried to prevent them right from the beginning?

What needs to change?

We need to reimagine our current model of food production to be more **circular**, in order **to design out waste** at all stages of the system; ensure that **products and materials are kept in use** instead of discarded; and to **regenerate natural systems** rather than degrading them.

Key Statistics:
- Over 2 million tonnes of food that goes to waste each year in the UK is still edible – enough for 1.3 billion meals (WRAP, 2019).
- Food bank use has increased by 128% compared to this time five years ago (The Trussell Trust, 2021).
- About 21–37% of total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are the result of the food system (IPCC, 2019).
- Food waste itself is estimated to contribute 8-10% of total man-made greenhouse gas emissions (IPCC, 2019).

How to approach the brief

- We encourage you to create design proposals that **consider them within wider systems**. Think about all of the different stages of the food system and where you might be able to intervene. Think about different actors in the system – don't just focus on the individual consumer or household. Could your proposal address the brief from the perspective of food manufacturers, retailers, local or national government, restaurants, waste management companies, or farmers? Once you've spotted an opportunity you can then zoom in to learn more about the issue, then zoom out again to look at the wider impact it has on the rest of the system you've identified.
- Once you have identified a problem to focus on, **co-design through conversations with the potential audience** of your proposal, making sure you understand their needs and motivations. Try to talk to both professionals and people with lived experience.
- **Test and prototype your ideas early.** Real world problems require real world ideas that need to be tried and tested to see if they stand up and where they might be improved further.
- Think about the **long-term impact** of your proposal. How might your proposal ensure that we're acting as 'good ancestors' in creating a better future for generations to come?

Brief toolkits

We have collated a range of resources to inform and inspire your thinking. Take a look below for brief specfic toolkits:

Brief 1

How might we rethink our current food system to design out waste?

Some existing examples that might meet this brief include…

- ChipsBoard: a biomaterials company creating products from food waste, built on circular economy principles
- FoodCycle: a UK charity that combines surplus food, spare kitchen spaces and volunteers to create three-course meals for people at risk of food poverty and social isolation.
- Apeel: Apeel uses materials that exist in the peels, seeds, and pulp of fruits and vegetables to create a protective extra peel that seals moisture in and keeps oxygen out.

Further resources:

- What is a circular economy?
- The circular economy in action (see 'Food' section)
- Youth consultation for the National Food Strategy (see in particular 'closing youth statements' on p.31)

Brief 2

How might we ensure that schools become places of belonging for all pupils?.

Some existing examples that might meet this brief include…

- Peer Mentoring Toolkit (HeadStart Kent): Peer mentoring has been evidenced as having a positive impact on the emotional health and well-being of children and young people, and can be used to improve a sense of belonging in schools
- Smart School Councils: a whole-school approach to democracy, involving all children's voices in decision-making, enabling pupils to learn a broad range of key skills as a result.

- Diversity Role Models: an organisation that delivers interactive workshops to embed inclusion and empathy in schools, through education and storytelling from LGBT+ or ally role models.

Further resources:

- Place and belonging in school: why it matters today. Case studies (UCL & National Education Union)
- Young people failed by approach to mental health in secondary schools across England (Mind)
- Mentally Healthy Schools: Relationships and belonging (Anna Freud Centre for Children and Families)

Brief 3

How might we restore nature to urban spaces to ensure that people and the planet thrive together?

Some existing examples that might meet this brief include…

- Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust: a proposal for reimagining the empty Broadmarsh shopping centre into an urban oasis of wetlands, woodlands, and wildflowers.
- Parklets: small parts of residential streets reclaimed by the community for people to stop, rest and enjoy
- The Orchard Project: a national charity dedicated to the creation, restoration, and celebration of community orchards

Further resources:

- 8 cities rewilding their urban spaces
- New research shows the need for urban green space
- Biophilic design: What is it?

Judging criteria

Your proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1

Social and environmental impact:

- How does the proposal make a positive difference for people and/or the natural world?
- How does the final proposal consider diverse needs and equitable ways to meet those needs?
- How does the proposal engage with the local community in its chosen context?
- How does the proposal consider using materials, processes, and resources in a sustainable way?

2

Rigorous research and compelling insights:

- Has the pupil/team undertaken first-hand research by identifying the needs and motivations of people affected by the problem in your brief?
- Has the pupil/team conducted research into the wider context of the problem on the internet or through reading material?
- How does the proposal build on key insights grounded in people's needs and motivations, and gained through wider research?
- How does the proposal incorporate feedback and testing through prototyping and iteration?

3

Viability:

- Has the pupil/team considered how the proposal will work in practice?
- Has the pupil/team considered the cost of the proposal and how it might be funded and sustained?
- Has the pupil/team identified any potential barriers that might prevent the proposal working in practice? How might these be overcome?
- Has the pupil/team considered how they would measure the success of their proposal if it became a reality?

4

Creativity and innovation:

- How is the proposal different from existing solutions? How might it be better or more useful?
- What unexpected or surprising elements are included in the proposal? What value do these add to the idea?