

Seren Coffi opened on a damp February morning in Cardiff, the kind of morning where the sea mist drifts far enough inland to blur the edges of buildings. The shop occupied a narrow unit near the old docks, previously a betting office, then briefly a vape store.

The founders liked to mention this history it gave the place a sense of continuity, of reuse rather than replacement. From the start, Seren Coffi insisted it wasn't "just another coffee shop." The chalkboard by the door listed not only the day's beans but their origins, shipping methods, and the cooperatives involved.

Welsh was given equal prominence on signage, even when suppliers warned it might confuse tourists. The furniture was mismatched but intentional: reclaimed chapel pews, tables built by a local carpenter whose name was printed discreetly on the menu.

The opening week went well, local press described Seren Coffi as thoughtful, principled, and in demand. The flat whites were good not exceptional, but good enough and the atmosphere invited lingering, students brought laptops and retirees read papers. Conversations stretched longer than the average transaction, for a while, this felt like validation. The founders rotated shifts behind the counter and decisions were made together, usually after closing, sitting with coffees that had gone cold. Whether to stock pastries from a larger regional bakery or wait for the smaller one outside Aberystwyth to scale up, whether to raise prices slightly in response to energy costs or absorb the difference? Each question was discussed thoroughly, often returning to the same phrases: fairness, community, doing things properly, the customers noticed some praised the care while others asked why the queue moved so slowly.

By the summer, Seren Coffi had become a fixture. It hosted poetry readings, informal language exchanges, and a monthly "pay-what-you-can" evening that drew crowds and goodwill in equal measure. Photos circulated online and a lifestyle magazine listed it among "Places Giving Cardiff Its Soul Back." That attention brought interest, a small hospitality group reached out about "exploring possibilities" they talked about a second location and concepts like brand consistency and bulk purchasing. One email mentioned that Seren Coffi's story would "travel well" the founders discussed it for weeks, carefully although no one said no outright. Around this time the price of coffee beans spiked, It wasn't unexpected news outlets had been running stories about climate pressures, shipping disruptions and consolidation in the supply chain. Seren Coffi's importer sent apologetic updates while other cafés adjusted quietly with new prices, smaller cups and shrinkflation strategies, Seren Coffi updated the chalkboard to explain the increase, some customers appreciated the transparency others stopped coming as often.

Winter was harder than anticipated as the energy bills climbed as the building's insulation while charmingly original leaked heat relentlessly. The espresso machine needed servicing; the technician warned that parts were harder to source these days

One founder suggested switching to a more common model. Another worried about the ethics of the manufacturer. Meetings ran later and the same topics returned now edged with fatigue. The question of hiring extra staff was raised and deferred repeatedly, volunteers offered to help during events and this did solve some problems but on the other hand created others. A nearby chain café opened in November, all glass and loyalty apps, their opening discounts were generous and Seren Coffi responded by extending opening hours, though the footfall rarely justified it. On several nights, staff outnumbered customers, still, there were moments that hinted at renewal, A feature on a national radio programme brought a brief surge and a local council officer floated the idea of Seren Coffi supplying coffee for civic events, the hospitality group returned with a revised proposal this time more concrete, more urgent. The numbers were laid out plainly certain suppliers would need to change. The menu would have to standardise. Some decisions would move faster, with fewer people involved. “You’d still have your values,” they assured, “just with more reach” The founders asked for time, in the meantime, a small but telling shift occurred, one of the founders took a part-time job elsewhere, “just to steady things” another began missing evening meetings, no one made a fuss they all understood.

It is now January 2026 and the outlook is bleak but they remain open, still loved, but increasingly brittle. A broken grinder has gone unreplaced for weeks, the poetry nights have stopped, the chalkboard grows less detailed and is no longer being updated daily. When the decision finally comes to close the doors it will be a sad day, but today is not that day! There is still £2,000 left in the petty cash which can be used to turn it all around..

The product is in demand, the business model is sound but the business is failing. It is your task to offer a detailed creative solution which will turn around this business.

The rules are that neither the leadership the current source of governance or suppliers cannot be changed, engage lateral thinking and remember a capitalist solution is not always a good solution be mindful I am not seeking a costings breakdown of how the £2000 will be used but is simply a tool that is available.