

Impact Report 2023

July 2023

URBAN FOUNDRY

Certified B Corporation

TISC REPORT AFFILIATE

better business act

Creu Lleoedd Cymru
Placemaking Wales
Llofnodydd y Siarter | Charter Signatory

We are a Living Wage Employer



Director Dr Ben Reynolds at the first Welsh B Corp social in Cardiff.

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Please note, whilst our past impact reports spanned a calendar year, this particular report has been extended to 18 months to synchronise with our B Corp reaccreditation. It covers the timeframe from January 2022 to July 2023.



Foreword by Tara Tarapetian, Director

Everyone says that they are different.

It is a phrase that is rolled out by organisations during pitches and talks.

And there are multiple organisations across the UK offering similar services to Urban Foundry, some achieving comparable results.

From the very beginning, when we formed in 2004, our intention was never solely driven by monetary gain. There was a deeper motivation; a reason behind the work and for doing what we do. A purpose that went beyond self-interest.

Whilst many people pay lip service to being purpose-driven, or add it as a bolt-on or afterthought, we have always sought to embody it in everything we do.

We are a creative regeneration agency, forging great ideas to change the world for the better by improving the lives of people, making great places, and building better businesses.

Obtaining B Corp certification wasn't some epiphany that changed what we were doing or how we were doing it, rather it provided us with the means to go some way to proving we did it. It gave us a framework to compare our performance and to do some of the hard work of creating a road map for our continuous improvement.

Since late 2020, we have experienced significant growth, marked by the addition of numerous brilliant and creative individuals who share our passion for making a positive difference in the world.

We are united by a common purpose, which revolves around the concept of regeneration – an encompassing notion that entails enhancing the social, economic, and environmental aspects of the places where we live, work, learn, and have fun.

That is our essence, our identity and our mission. We know that we are not without flaws, but we constantly strive to be the best possible corporate citizens we can be.

This report provides an insight into our activities and achievements over the past year. Please get in touch if you'd like to discuss our work further.

ideas@urbanfoundy.co.uk

Background to Urban Foundry

Background to Urban Foundry

Our team

What sets us apart is the blend of qualities found among our team members. We combine a rare combination of a deep understanding of regeneration theory, a strong creative streak, and being grounded by a pragmatic and socially entrepreneurial 'do-it-yourself' approach to getting things done.

While many other organisations excel in one or two of these areas (and sometimes surpass us), the blend of these three is what makes us unique.

At the core of it all, our purpose and ethics bind these qualities together like glue. It is the ethical foundation that holds our three elements in harmony and ensures that we apply them to a noble cause.

We frequently visit schools and educational settings to talk about our work and purpose-driven business. Young minds are often the best at cutting straight to the issue and keeping you grounded, and asking "Sounds great... but what do you actually do?"

It's easy to get lost in the aspirational language and it is important to bring it back to basics.

What our work looks like

What our work looks like on a daily basis takes the form of at least one of the following:

- Making things happen – engaging audiences ('stakeholders' to use the jargon), conducting feasibility studies to test ideas, support for business planning, fundraising support, mentoring advice and guidance for start-ups, partnership/consensus building, and piloting our own initiatives.

- Making things last – ongoing marketing and communication support, one-to-one mentoring support for start-ups/micro-enterprises and third sector organisations, organisational reviews, helping people to diversify their income streams, and training and workshops. All this alongside a variety of initiatives aimed at making urban places more sustainable through good urban design and working with nature in towns and cities.

- Making a difference – everything we do aims to make a positive difference, and the people we work with are trying to do the same, so we deliver impact evaluations (either supporting people to do their own or delivering it for them), conduct research, and we are industry-leaders in deploying theory of change as an approach.

Values

As well as our core values, we seek to deliver our work in line with the Welsh Government's Well-being of Future Generations Act ways of working; everything we do should:

- Focus on the long-term – asking ourselves how our actions can create a lasting impact;
- Be integrated – all our work should be 'on brand' for us, which means ensuring it directly contributes to our stated purpose. Our work is focused on working with others who have a clear purpose and on helping them achieve their purpose;
- Involve people – our approach always considers the full range of stakeholders, including those that are often overlooked or feel they don't have a voice;
- Be collaborative – working with other agencies and individuals to achieve a common purpose; and
- Be preventative – doing all we can to get in front of risks so that we can reduce or remove them before they become a problem, and learning from where things may not have gone to plan to help inform future projects.

Clients

Nobody has a monopoly on good ideas or changing the world for the better, so we work with a range of people and organisations, from small community groups and start-up enterprises, third sector charities and social enterprises, through to large private and public sector bodies. Our scope is all-encompassing - from UK-wide projects to the smallest community initiatives, and all things in between.

"Urban Foundry play a huge role in supporting students at Swansea College of Art alongside providing guidance and valuable industry knowledge to staff and leaders within the organisation. From internships, pop up opportunities and guidance on strategic planning along with being great people to work with. They are valued university partners."

Caroline Thraves,
Academic Director for Swansea College of Art
at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David


Cyflog Byw i Gymru
We are a Living Wage Employer

Overview of commitments and corporate impact this period

Overview of commitments and corporate impact this period - B Impact Scores

"Urban Foundry is a pioneering organisation – amongst the first in Wales to achieve BCorp certification, leading work on meanwhile and popup spaces in Wales, working to mainstream green infrastructure urban regeneration projects with Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales, creating the wonderful Swansea Bay Street Markets social enterprise to support local producers and bring life to places, and great ambassadors for paying a Real Living Wage.

They consistently demonstrate their commitment to integrating ethics and sustainability, and a proactive aspiration for creating positive change."

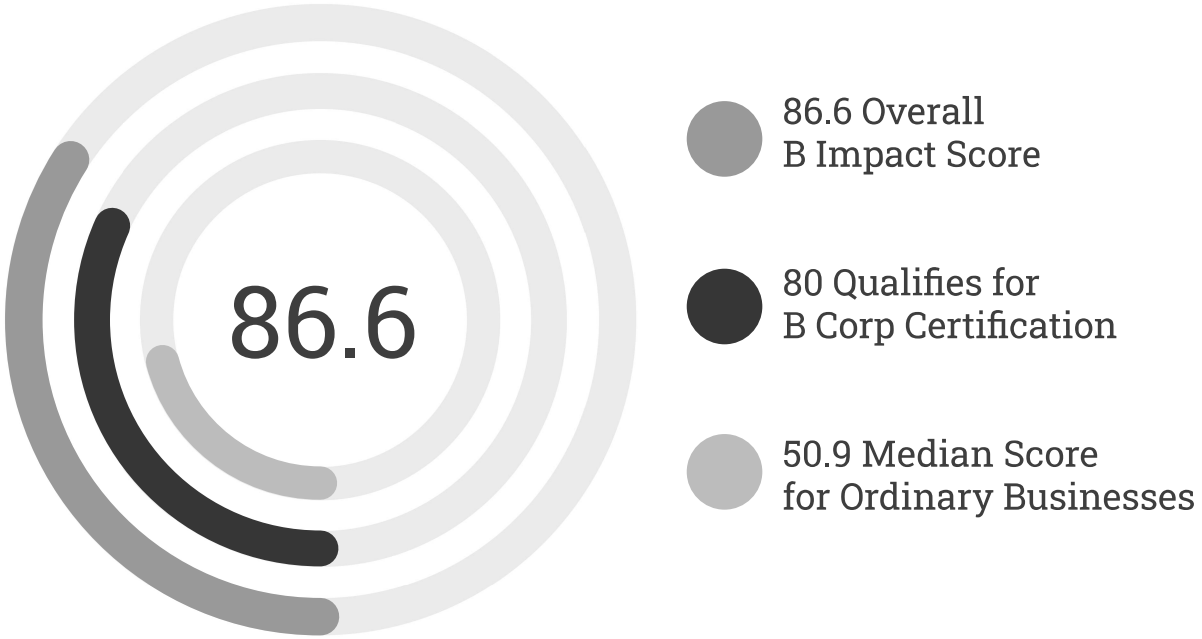
Julie James,
Member of the Senedd for Swansea West

We went through our first re-certification with B Lab during this reporting period – our first recertification since first gaining the standard.

It was a no less rigorous process compared to our original certification, further complicated this time as our two sister brands (Swansea Bay Street Markets Ltd and Canolfan Ltd through which we run our venue and popup activities) were also incorporated into our assessment.

Furthermore, the goalposts had shifted a little with new aspects of the recertification – and consequently, more areas for us to cover.

We were very pleased to increase our score from 81.5 to a new verified score of 86.6. Most businesses that complete the assessment score an average of 50.9 currently.



Some new things we've introduced since we first became certified are detailed in the following sections:

Governance

- We were a sole owner-founder-run business when we were originally certified. We have now taken on our longest-serving employee as a second Director of the company with shareholding (and in so doing created gender balance on our board and ownership structure).

- We have incorporated a written ethical purchasing component into our finance policy, which is included in staff handbooks. This includes a range of ethical purchasing considerations from how we buy from key suppliers to ensuring that any meetings in third-party venues are held in independently owned facilities to help recirculate as much money as possible into the local economy.

- We were early signatories to the Better Business Act movement and we promote it and its intent in our work.

- We have lobbied the Welsh Government and our Local Authority for B Corp and the Real Living Wage to be incorporated into decision-making criteria for awarding of tenders and grants in our local area, and Wales more generally.



Workers

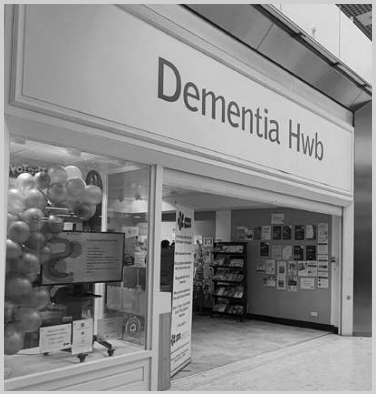
- We were already an accredited Real Living Wage employer before we gained B Corp status – we have since structured our remuneration policy so that when the Real Living Wage increases, all staff salaries also increase to keep pace with inflation.
- When the cost of living crisis hit we gave all our staff cost of living bonuses to help cushion the impact of rising costs.
- We've formalised hybrid working – we had flexible working before the Covid-19 pandemic, and we have now augmented that to offer certainty to all staff whose jobs allow for offsite working.
- With the creation of our own venue (HQ Urban Kitchen – see case studies), we provide subsidised food and drink for all our staff and volunteers.
- Our former intern from our Academy, Obaidah Sbeitan, joined our team permanently as our Events and Business Development Manager, leading our events work for the Quadrant Shopping Centre and giving a talk in the new Swansea Arena to several hundred students. The student has become the teacher!



"I love what Urban Foundry does, even before I joined. A company with a mission. Urban Foundry looks for talent and creativity, and this helps deliver better results for the community - retaining customers and building loyalty. Being a B Corp also helps with attracting other like-minded businesses and organisations."

Obaidah Sbeitan, Urban Foundry







Community

- Director Ben was honoured to be asked to serve as one of the Civic and Business Commissioners on the Swansea Poverty Truth Commission – the first of its kind in Wales.
- We signed the Swansea Pride pledge to support our local LGBTQ+ community, who we have further supported with the provision of a PopUp unit for the Swansea Pride event.
- In our new HQ Urban Kitchen venue, we have implemented a permanent 10% ‘blue light’ discount on all hot food and drink as a thank you to those who put themselves on the front line throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.
- We increased the amount of pro bono support and advice that we have given to small-scale start-ups and non-profits in our local area.
- We celebrated 10 years of delivering artisan street markets in our local communities.
- We have established PopUp Wales to reuse empty shop spaces to reduce urban blight and create opportunities for small businesses and third sector organisations.
- We established an Employment Hub through our PopUp Wales scheme, working with Swansea Council and various third sector partners.
- We donated soup urns to a local homelessness charity.
- We helped a local third sector group to establish a Dementia Hub in our local shopping mall through our PopUp Wales scheme.

Environment

- We have worked with Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Government to establish a Green Infrastructure funding stream and to introduce the concept and best practice to local authorities.
- We have worked with Swansea Council to establish two rain gardens in the courtyard at our new venue to act as demonstrator projects.
- We partnered with Swansea Council and Natural Resources Wales to secure Community Renewal Fund (CRF) funding to pilot a supply chain development project to deliver Green Infrastructure projects for our local area to support the development of the local green economy.
- We established a Library of Things in our local area and joined the Wales-wide movement through Benthyg Cymru.
- We hosted a Repair Café as a PopUp event in the local shopping mall.
- We have moved all PopUp (or 'Meanwhile') spaces that we have taken over to renewable energy and accredited B Corp supplier Octopus.
- Our Uplands Market project was recognised by the Design Commission for Wales as an exemplary initiative for temporary placemaking initiatives in the built environment and features as a case study in their Placemaking Guide.
- We signed up to the Welsh Government and Design Commission for Wales' Placemaking Wales Charter.
- We have given several talks on the concept of the 15-minute city, linking it back to our long-standing work on creating sustainable urban environments, which itself draws on the seminal work of Jane Jacobs.
- We have updated our written environmental policy and tied that into our written finance policy for procurement – both form part of our staff handbooks, some of the key aspects are listed opposite.
- Our new HQ Urban Kitchen venue uses local suppliers wherever possible and aims to be fairtrade – it sources its tea and coffee from ethical sources via certified B Corps.
- We have worked hard to create a strong vegan menu in our venue, which has a lower carbon footprint than non-vegan foods.
- We have supported the Swansea Food Partnership with free staff time to further its work.
- We supported the Swansea Green Economy conference, promoting Green Infrastructure alongside Natural Resources Wales and Swansea Council.

Our environmental policy

- We use non-toxic janitorial products.
- We use soy-based or low VOC inks for in-house print and more generally we seek to minimise print.
- We will not purchase any goods that contain tropical hardwood from unsustainable sources and if we require hardwood we will seek to purchase from locally (Wales) sourced hardwood or other sustainable temperate sources.
- Any clothing items we purchase for promotional or other purposes will be sourced from ethical producers, and more generally we will not purchase promotional items that are likely to be thrown away/not used.
- We use recycled paper for print wherever possible.
- We do not laminate items unless it is to reduce the need for continual reprinting.
- We aim to use unbleached/ chlorine-free paper products.
- We only use recyclable or biodegradable takeaway containers.
- We will only purchase rechargeable batteries – where we have inherited non-rechargeable batteries we will use them to the end of their lives and then dispose of them responsibly.
- We only purchase unbleached and sustainable napkins and toilet rolls and we do so from a certified B Corp (Naked Sprout).
- We do not print emails unless essential and we use paperless billing from suppliers wherever possible. Our own billing is paperless.
- We store and exchange documents electronically and view documents onscreen wherever possible.
- We reuse waste paper wherever we can.
- Our business cards have a matt finish, use recycled paper, and are themselves recyclable. We use electronic means to transfer contact details where possible.
- Our emails carry a ‘think before you print’ message bilingually (Welsh and English) in the footer to discourage unnecessary printing of emails.
- We facilitate hybrid/home working.
- We use online banking.

"Working for Urban Foundry is different as it’s a company that genuinely puts people first, both its staff and the people they do projects for. We don’t just take projects for the sake of making a profit, but to actually make a difference and help make changes to the local area and community. Being a part of a company that really means what it says, is not only refreshing, but genuinely inspires me to work harder and be a better person in my own life. Being a B Corp makes a huge impact as it gives us the structure to build upon and helps hold us to our own high standards."

Derek Palmer, Urban Foundry

- We use our own carrier bags rather than disposable plastic bags.
- We source electronic equipment using the Greenpeace Guide to Greener Electronics.
- We repair broken items wherever we can.
- We donate any surplus to charity, including surplus food being donated to homelessness centres nearby.
- We encourage clients to consider how many (if any) hard-copy documents they require from us for any reports we produce.
- We seek to minimise any single-use items, using refills wherever we can.
- We ask suppliers not to send us items in plastic packaging or with polystyrene. Where this is unavoidable we will take this to an appropriate recycling point.
- We sort our waste and recycle everything we can, including composting organic waste.
- We use an accredited waste contractor.
- We use energy-efficient electronic items.
- Our office and venue have thermostats to limit heating.
- We use natural ventilation where we can – opening doors and windows rather than air conditioning, and in winter we keep doors and windows closed to retain heat.
- We turn off electrical items when not in use.
- We are moving towards replacing all lighting with more energy-efficient LED bulbs and fittings.



Customers

- All our work is dedicated to supporting individuals and organisations that aim to create positive change in the world, or those who strive to be better corporate citizens.
- We seek partnerships with businesses that share our sense of purpose and ethics.
- The following section presents a variety of case studies, illustrating the work we've undertaken during this reporting period and the impact we've made.
- While we couldn't feature all our projects, we've chosen a diverse selection to highlight the breadth of our efforts. Regardless of sector or company size, we are united in our belief that business can be used as a force for good.

Case studies

HQ Urban Kitchen

Perhaps our biggest addition to our work has been the creation of HQ Urban Kitchen. We secured the lease during our last impact reporting period and opened early in this reporting period in late February 2022.

The venue is a social enterprise and, like our street markets initiative, echoes all our values. It is an accredited Real Living Wage employer (not easy to do in the hospitality sector at the best of times, let alone during the current economic circumstances) and seeks to source as much Welsh produce as possible from local suppliers.

HQ Urban Kitchen uses ethical suppliers for its tea and coffee, sourcing them from TeaPigs and Coaltown respectively - both accredited B Corps, and the latter a fellow Welsh B Corp. It also has a strong vegan menu, which helps reduce the carbon footprints of the enterprise and its customers.

HQ Urban Kitchen is used as a base for the Local Area Coordinator for the ward in which it is situated, which has led to the creation of a men's Tai Chi class that we host.

Additionally it has hosted an artist-in-residence initiative and a range of community and public sector-led events and activities.



HQ
URBAN
KITCHEN

Anti-Social After Work Drinks

One of the goals of having our own venue was to be able to deliver more activities that support the wider community.

Recognising the need for a relaxed and informal space where small businesses can socialise and network, Tara Tarapetian, Director of Urban Foundry, teamed up with Lucy Beddall, a business owner who works in The Engine Room @HQ, to create 'Anti-Social After Work Drinks.' Held monthly at Urban Foundry's HQ Urban Kitchen venue, this event aims to encourage collaboration, support, and camaraderie amongst businesses in Swansea.

The sense of isolation experienced by individuals working alone or in small businesses has been further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the rise of remote working. Anti-Social addresses this issue by offering a much-needed opportunity for professionals to connect. Taking place from 5pm to 7pm on the third Thursday of each month, the event's popularity has soared since its launch in April 2023. It has succeeded in providing a supportive environment, attracting even those who typically avoid traditional networking events. Participants have formed new friendships and valuable connections. The events regularly draw a diverse crowd, including representatives from the third sector, charities, and small businesses.

Anti-Social

"I love Anti-Social. It's a really unpressurised event that attracts a wide range of people who turn up each month. I've met some great businesses – some of whom have led to new collaborations. It's different, fun and enjoyable. Much needed in Swansea."

Lisa Lucas, Industry Relationship Manager, UWTSD





Supporting local theatre

Urban Foundry is committed to supporting local theatre and the arts.

By providing support and a venue (HQ Urban Kitchen) for theatre in Swansea, it has given performers and theatre companies a low-risk opportunity to showcase new work that may not have otherwise come to fruition. This has encouraged artistic exploration and enriched the local theatre scene by bringing fresh and exciting performances to the community.

The affordability of the shows, with ticket prices ranging from 'pay what you can' to around £10, has made these productions very accessible. This inclusivity has helped diversify the audience and reach a broader cross-section of the community.

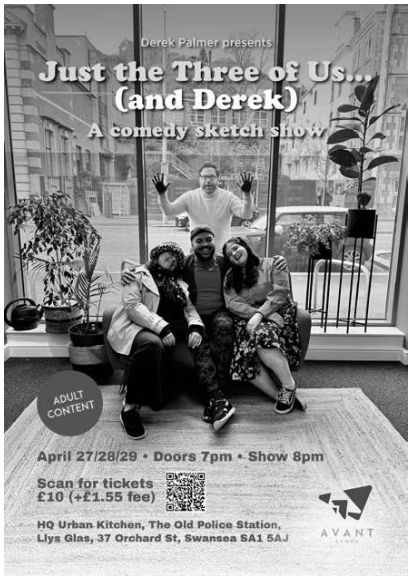
By promoting the various productions through the company's social media, Urban Foundry has extended the reach of these shows to a much wider audience.

This increased visibility has helped to sell more tickets and support the actors and has raised the profile of the local theatre scene as a whole. The success of these events has demonstrated the demand and appetite in the area.

The list opposite identifies a number of the shows that Urban Foundry has supported and the subsequent impact of the show and our support.

"Urban Foundry's support has had a huge impact on so many aspects of local theatre. Many of the shows have been sell-outs, and people have commented how this kind of 'pub theatre' has been missing in Swansea and something that they loved being able to attend. On a more meaningful note, shows such as these have helped bring underrepresented issues and discussions, especially around homophobia, religion and the effects that this can have on an individual, to a wider community of people."

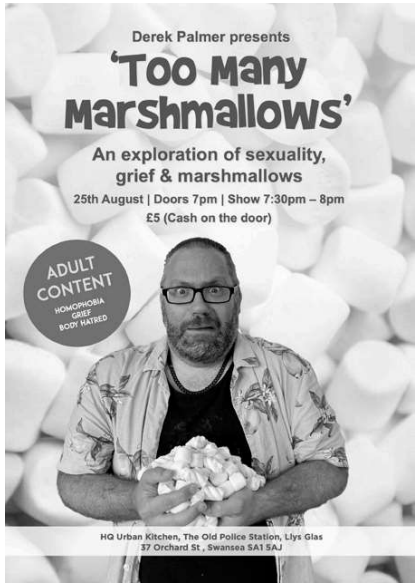
Derek Palmer,
Urban Foundry (and Performer,
Writer and Theatre-maker)



Just the Three of Us... and Derek

Type:
Comedy sketch show
Impact:
The venue's support provided a space for rehearsal and performance, making the show possible. It offered affordable and accessible theatre to the community, with positive feedback from the audience.





Too Many Marshmallows

Type:
One Man show
Themes:
Sexuality, body image, grief
Impact:
Gave an LGBTQ+ voice a platform and resonated deeply with the audience, addressing LGBTQ+ issues and grief. Many people found it relatable and felt heard and less isolated.

The Witness

Type:
Piece of theatre
Themes:
Religion, sexuality, loss, suicide, hiding one's true self
Impact:
Support helped secure funding for Avant Cymru to produce the play. It allowed a first-time writer to workshop, develop, and share their work. The play brought attention to underrepresented issues, such as homophobia and religion, encouraging open discussions.



The Engine Room @HQ

Urban Foundry wanted to establish a dynamic co-working space, promoting collaboration and mutual support amongst like-minded businesses. The objective was to create an environment that encouraged innovation and creativity whilst also serving as a new office space for Urban Foundry's expanding team.

The co-working space, named ‘The Engine Room @HQ,’ is located close to Urban Foundry's project HQ Urban Kitchen. The space was converted from an empty and disused set of rooms into a vibrant hub to meet the needs of the different businesses that share it.

As with our other projects, it was renovated with sustainability at its heart.

In addition to an open co-working area, The Engine Room @HQ includes a meeting room that businesses can hire. The integrity of the space was maintained by selectively inviting interesting and creative businesses to be part of our collaborative community.

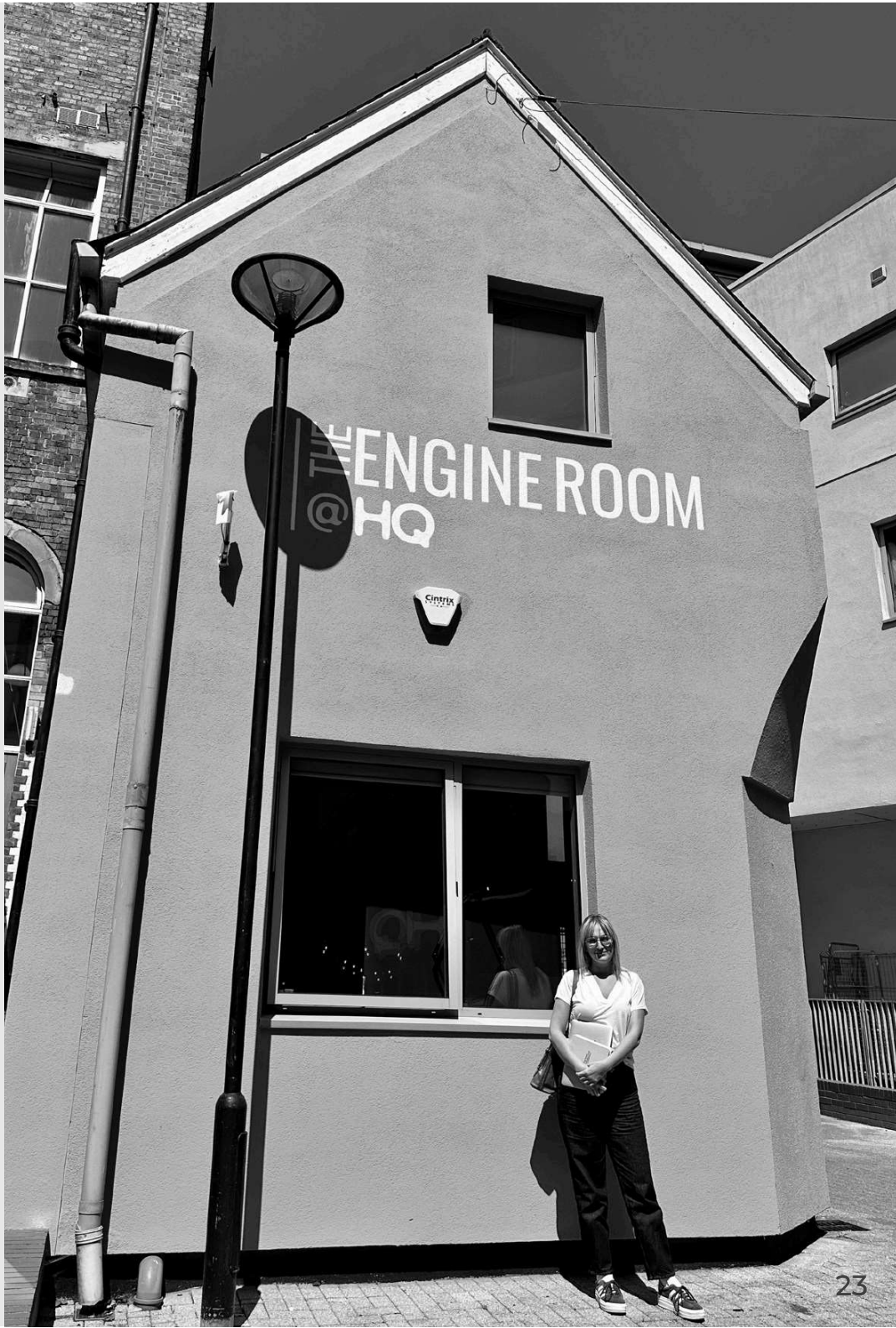
It has resonated strongly with businesses seeking an inspiring and dynamic atmosphere, leading to the development of new joint projects and partnerships among participants.

One such success story is Lucy Beddall, the founder of ten:15 marketing. Lucy's business grew after joining The Engine Room @HQ co-working space, transitioning from a freelance operation to a fully-fledged business. Working alongside Urban Foundry and other businesses provided her with invaluable opportunities, including joint ventures and projects. Lucy’s business has experienced significant growth, and she has already doubled the frequency of hiring the office space.



"I have benefitted significantly from the expert advice and support available at The Engine Room @HQ. The sense of 'in it together' and shared ambition really boosted my confidence, empowering me to take steps to expand ten:15 marketing. Plus, it has grown my client base and taken me in unexpected directions. It's a real ecosystem of collaboration that supports growth and innovation."

Lucy Beddall, Owner, ten:15 marketing



Homes As Power Stations (HAPS)

HAPS is an innovative initiative that aims to revolutionise Welsh housing for a sustainable future. The project combines energy-absorbing and energy-efficient systems to reduce reliance on traditional energy networks and enable sustainable living. HAPS comprises PV solar panels, heat pumps, batteries, and mechanical ventilation heat recovery systems that work together to reduce the carbon footprint of homes and promote energy savings.

The project has the potential to make the Swansea Bay area a leader in green construction, retrofitting, and sustainability. It would also contribute to economic growth and the development of a local supply chain. HAPS is part of the Swansea Bay City Deal portfolio and is being led by Neath Port Talbot Council.

Urban Foundry worked with the project team at Neath Port Talbot Council to create a brand identity for HAPS that reflects the project's innovative and sustainable nature.

We produced a memorable and appropriate logo, a bilingual strapline, and a full set of brand guidelines to demonstrate how the new brand should be applied across a number of marketing assets.

Following in-depth interviews with some of the key stakeholders involved in the project, we also produced a very detailed marketing strategy that set out a roadmap on how marketing and communications should be managed. We demonstrated who the target market was and offered suggestions on how to best target them, such as what activity would be most appropriate. The strategy was written with sustainability at its core - it was tailored to the capability already in their team and made recommendations on how the plan could be carried out logistically and strategically.

The client was very impressed with what we produced, and the brand was launched effectively in line with our recommendations.

HAPS

Trawsnewid Cartrefi Cymru
Transforming Welsh Homes



Arts Arkade

Arts Arkade was a popup research and development space for digital artists to experiment with cutting-edge technology such as motion capture, AI and other methods of machine learning. We ran the space in collaboration with Swansea Council and supported Swansea University PhD student, Tunde Olatunji.

Alongside local artists seeking to upskill, many charities and community organisations passed through the doors to test the technology.

We also organised events within the space to initiate the formation of a creative network in Swansea and South West Wales, as well as several continuing professional development talks to support local creative professionals. Subjects included computational thinking, bid writing, crowdfunding, and well-being.

A direct result of those talks is the imminent establishment of a Swansea Creative Network by Swansea Council to provide further support for the local creative sector.



Green Infrastructure Training

We collaborated with the Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales, and Swansea Council to incorporate Green Infrastructure (GI) into urban regeneration. GI provides vital services like cleaning air and water, regulating temperatures, and supporting biodiversity. We aimed to establish a local supply chain in Swansea that could deliver and maintain GI. With funding from the UK Government's Community Renewal Funding (CRF), we partnered with Natural Resources Wales and Swansea Council to launch a pilot project.

In Swansea, we conducted a series of free training courses on GI.

These workshops, led by GI experts, covered topics such as green roofs, rain planters, and sustainable drainage systems. The 11 sessions attracted 176 participants, including landscape gardeners, maintenance organisations, urban designers, and third sector groups. Practical sessions on building rain planters and tree planting were included, along with networking opportunities with local authorities and like-minded organisations.

The workshops received overwhelming demand, reaching full capacity with waiting lists. Our project marked the first step in developing a local GI supply chain.

A survey revealed that 90% of respondents improved their understanding and skills in the GI sector, with 87% expressing interest in implementing GI. An independent evaluation confirmed the positive outcomes. This initiative has the potential to create new jobs and businesses while supporting the region's transition to a greener future.

The project's success highlights the importance of continued funding for such endeavours. Urban Foundry is now collaborating with partners to build on this achievement and progress to the next project phase.



"I am really pleased with the range of businesses who attended the sessions. We have a wealth of talent and expertise in Swansea, and I am pleased that we were able to offer businesses the chance to learn from leading GI experts from across the UK and the opportunity to create a local GI industry for Swansea."

Penny Gruffydd, Sustainable Policy Officer, Swansea Council



"This project was all about how we can increase urban greening across the Swansea Bay area in a sustainable way. We're genuinely pleased with the positive response to the workshops. Feedback told us that there is a real need for this, and these workshops allowed us to build up the expertise and skills within the local area. Everyone who attended the workshops came away with a good foundation to build a business sector around delivering exceptional urban greening for people and nature."

Fran Rolfe, Senior Green Infrastructure Officer, Natural Resources Wales

Swansea Library of Things

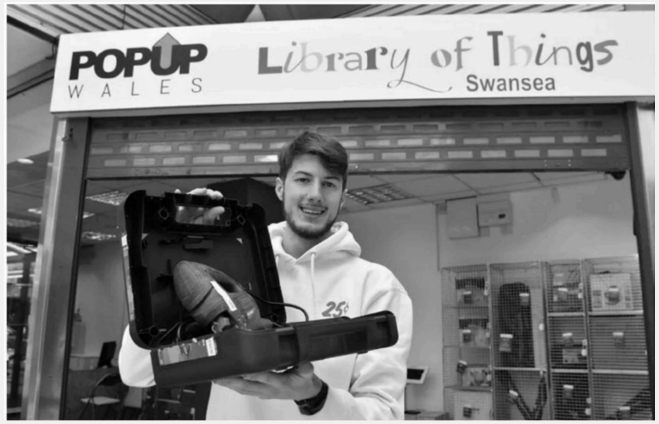
In April 2022 we launched Swansea Library of Things, a circular economy project that became particularly relevant as the cost-of-living crisis unfolded.

It offers a low-cost hire service to the public where they can borrow a number of household items. By reusing items, that one product is used many times instead of lots of products only being used occasionally. The project reduces the environmental impact of manufacturing methods and reduces the number of resources used in manufacturing.

The project had a strong social media campaign, reaching over 35,000 Facebook accounts at launch - to date we have over 1000 members, with the project featuring in national media on four occasions; twice on BBC Wales prime-time news.

Most importantly, the value to the customers has been rewarding with a range of users needing low-cost solutions, including people on low incomes, refugees, and renters. We offer a pay-what-you-can-afford option to ensure the availability of the items for people who really need them.





Library of Things
Swansea

"I started working at Urban Foundry because I was looking for a good employer. I certainly found one, but in addition to that, the purpose behind the company and commitment to making a positive difference makes Urban Foundry a great company to be a part of. To have B Corp accreditation is recognition that we are doing things right."

Gareth Willis-Falco, Urban Foundry





Greek Flavours

Greek Flavours is a new homemade Greek food restaurant located in Swansea's City Centre. The restaurant is the brainchild of owner and chef Alex Stetos, who first gained popularity by renting a pitch at Swansea Bay Street Markets (another Urban Foundry initiative), serving authentic, high-quality Greek dishes from his van. As his following grew, Alex outgrew his first unit in the city's suburbs and set his sights on opening a sit-down restaurant in the city centre.

Alex had a vision for his restaurant but lacked the necessary funds and support to bring it to life. He also needed advice and guidance on how to scale up his business and secure funding for his redevelopment.

We have provided one-to-one business support to Alex, helping him to secure funding and providing advice and support, and we supported him to secure the further funding he needed to refurbish a derelict unit in Swansea's city centre.

Greek Flavours opened its doors in early February 2023 and has received high praise from customers. The restaurant is the only Greek restaurant in Swansea's City Centre, adding to the vibrant culture of independent restaurants in the area and offering a new and exciting cuisine for residents and visitors to try. The space has been beautifully designed, making it a fantastic place to socialise with friends and family.

Greek Flavours is a heartwarming story of passion and success. Alex Stetos' journey from selling Greek food from a van at our street markets to opening a sit-down restaurant to rave reviews is inspiring, and we're proud to have been a part of it.

GREEK
FLAVOURS
BY ALEXANDER

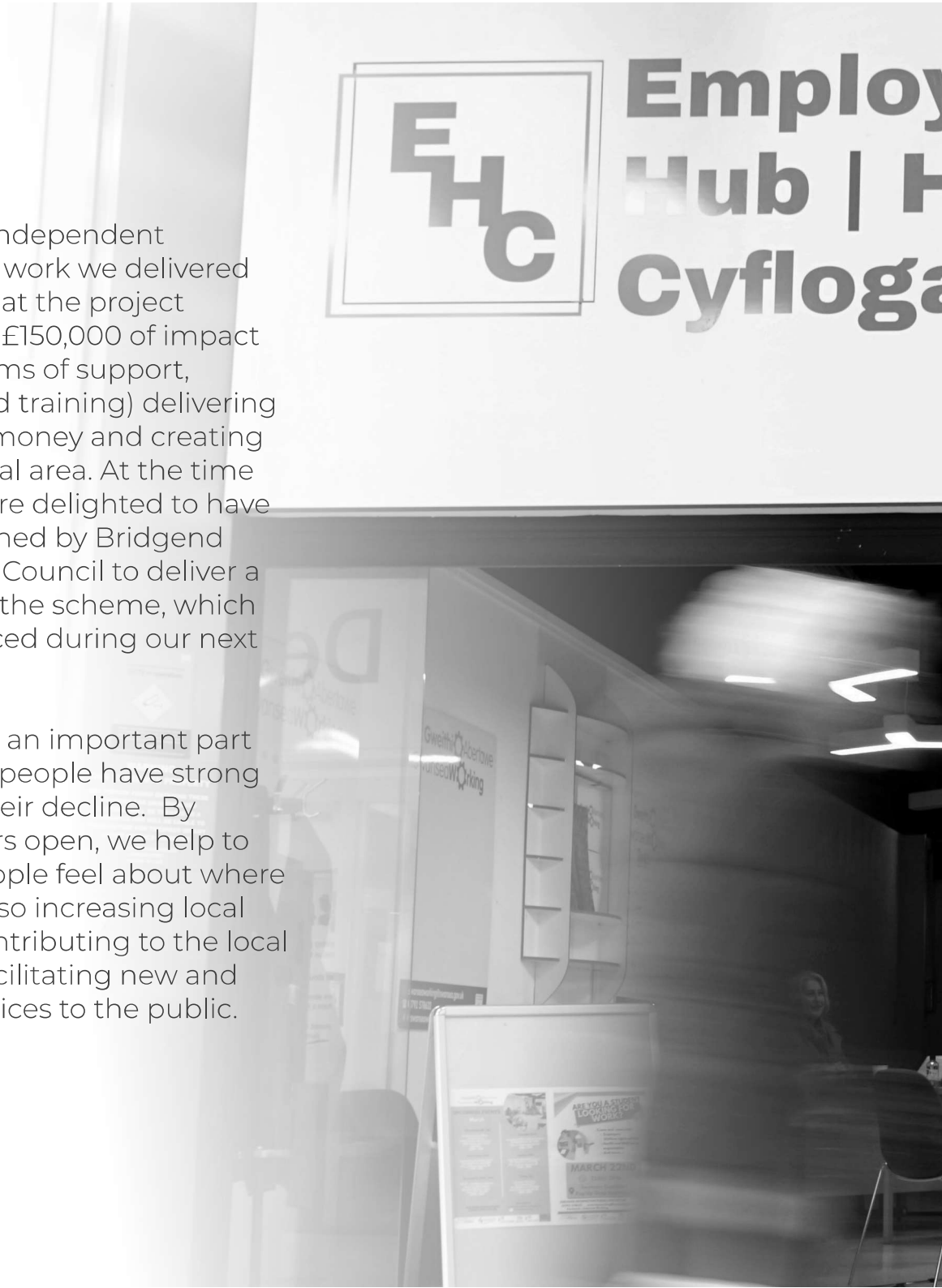
PopUp Wales

The PopUp Wales scheme aims to revive town centres by leasing empty shops and then sub-letting them as popups. It helps revive town centres by boosting footfall and dwell time, improves perceptions by reducing the number of empty units and creating activity, and creates opportunities for independents, start-ups, charities and services to have their business in busy retail areas that they would otherwise struggle to locate in.

We are delighted to have collaborated on an Employment Hub and a Dementia Hub, as well as providing space for community interest companies and artists' studios. We used such a space for our own Library of Things, as well as supporting the opening of a similar initiative in Bridgend. We have provided spaces for a spectrum of organisations, from graffiti artists to storefront offices for professional service companies and start-up retail businesses.

In Bridgend, an independent evaluation of the work we delivered demonstrated that the project delivered almost £150,000 of impact (measured in terms of support, expert advice and training) delivering strong value for money and creating impact in the local area. At the time of writing, we were delighted to have been commissioned by Bridgend County Borough Council to deliver a second phase to the scheme, which will be commenced during our next reporting period.

Town centres are an important part of any place and people have strong feelings about their decline. By keeping the doors open, we help to improve how people feel about where they live, while also increasing local employment, contributing to the local economy, and facilitating new and existing vital services to the public.




POPUP
WALES
Job Opportunities
CLEANING VACANCIES
We are hiring
Competitive rates of pay
Flexible hours
Minimum 30 hour contracts available
Apprenticeships & Promotional opportunities
Employee Benefits
Holiday Pay
Students
MORE THAN EMPLOYMENT
MWY NA CHYFLOGAETH
YN CHWILIO AM WAITH?
Gallwn eich helpu i
SO FIT
Upcoming Events
ARE YOU A PARENT LOOKING FOR WORK?
MARCH 28TH
28 Mawrth
Meet Our Partners
Opening Times
– Saturday
– 3pm
POPUP
WALES

51.6 Talks



Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, we had just established a series of talks called 51.6. They are ideas talks which shine a light on acts of creative revolution by hand-picking exciting projects to promote to Swansea.

The idea behind these talks is that they leave the audience with knowledge of how they could adopt similar practices themselves.
A casualty of Covid-19, this was the last element of our pre-Covid delivery that we had yet to return to, and we're pleased to have now brought it back.

Our most recent talk invited artist Hilary Powell to talk about the POWER project where she and filmmaker Daniel Edelstyn have launched a project to turn their entire street in London into a solar power station. They were joined by Emily Hinshelwood, Director of locally-based community-owned, third sector renewable energy wind farm operator, Awel Aman Tawe, and operator of the Egni Photo-voltaic project. Additionally, Joe Kidd of Afallen and Hiraeth Energy also spoke.

The talks are all about positive change and how to practically make it happen. The tagline is "Ideas Inspire Change". They are well attended by a largely change-maker audience and inspire Swansea's own initiatives.

51.6

Green Infrastructure Public Engagement



Swansea Council and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) required public consultation about the impact of Green Infrastructure in urban spaces and improving biodiversity in existing green spaces.

We conducted a series of community engagement surveys covering the Swansea Region including the rural areas of Mawr and Gower, seeking to find the variety of opinions about introducing more Green Infrastructure into Swansea.
The results were enlightening and highlighted what the public need. They were used to feed into the communication and strategy around introducing more nature into our surroundings. They were very well-received by Swansea Council and Natural Resources Wales who are incorporating the learning into the further development of a county-wide Green Infrastructure strategy.

"We commissioned Urban Foundry to carry out some community engagement around Green Infrastructure for the Council in early 2023. I was particularly impressed with the team's flexible and nuanced approach. They adapted their working practices and approach to ensure the engagement was relevant to each community they worked in whilst remaining true and consistent to the required outcome of the commission."

Penny Gruffydd, Sustainable Policy Officer, Swansea Council

Quadrant Shopping Centre

Quadrant Shopping Centre, located in the heart of Swansea, hosts a diverse range of retailers, including well-known brands like Boots and HMV. The shopping centre holds a key position within Swansea City Centre's fabric and identity.

In 2017, Quadrant Shopping Centre enlisted the support of Urban Foundry to enhance its in-centre events and cultivate authentic connections with the community. They wanted to curate impactful experiences that would attract and engage individuals in a meaningful manner.

The Quadrant Shopping Centre is owned by the Coal Miners Pension Fund and has since solidified its partnership with us to deliver their marketing and events throughout the year, working alongside another local company (and our good friends) ReTHINK PR and Marketing, who deliver the day to day marketing and communications. The objective was to work with Quadrant Shopping Centre to deliver exceptional events that captivate and resonate with the local community - and ultimately increase footfall and spending.

The primary focus was to create events that appealed to local communities. The events celebrate the richness of local artistry and talent and contribute to improving the local area, using local suppliers for delivery whilst maintaining a high-quality end product.

We wanted to deviate from the typical corporate activities often seen in commercial settings and instead deliver transformative experiences that breathed new life into the space.

By activating the central space, we wanted to bring it to life and turn it into a special area for community events and become a vibrant and exciting place where people get together, have a great time, and participate in different activities. Working closely with ReTHINK marketing and Quadrant Shopping Centre, our team embarked on a collaborative journey to create a diverse calendar of events.

Some examples of the range of events we have successfully organised to date include:

- A dinosaur-themed 'event
- Coronation Tea and Cake
- Easter Egg Hunt
- Disney Princess Day
- St David's Day celebrations
- Rock School Sessions
- Storytelling
- Repair café
- Funding and jobs fayre

By incorporating these events and more, we worked to create an inclusive atmosphere that was popular with the local community whilst instilling a sense of pride and belonging and providing opportunities for exclusively local suppliers for the content.

The impact of the events has captivated and engaged individuals who may not have traditionally frequented Quadrant Shopping

Centre. Each event has resonated strongly with the community, drawing in diverse participants and breaking barriers to create a welcoming space for all.

The commitment to family-friendly experiences has played a pivotal role in this success. By providing a range of engaging activities and entertainment suitable for all ages, we have created an environment where families can come together, create lasting memories, and explore the Centre's offerings.

There has been an increase in footfall within the Centre. Participants of our events often extend their visit beyond the event itself, taking the opportunity to explore and enjoy the shops and services available at Quadrant Shopping Centre. This positive trend has undoubtedly contributed to a vibrant and thriving atmosphere, benefiting both the community and the Centre's retail establishments. Furthermore, it has contributed to the Centre's managing company's sustainable development goals, which has caught the attention of other shopping centres and encouraged them to do the same.

Quadrant
SHOPPING









Swansea In Gloom Walking Tours

We launched the creative project Swansea in Gloom to add to the cultural offer of the city with a gruesome "Edinburgh-style" walking tour uncovering the dark secrets of Swansea and giving customers a whole new perspective of the city.

Our home town of Swansea is historic. While the aerial bombings of WW2 and subsequent development have erased some of that history, much is still standing for all to see. As a port town, there's many a tale to tell. The Urban Foundry office and cafe sit in the old police station in a historically lively part of Swansea - the perfect starting point for a tour.

The tours have been greatly enjoyed with tours selling out regularly. It has been featured in the national press and provides cultural value to the area.




WalesOnline Bookmark Comments 25

The old Ben Evans store superimposed to how the area looks now (Image: Gareth Wills Falco)

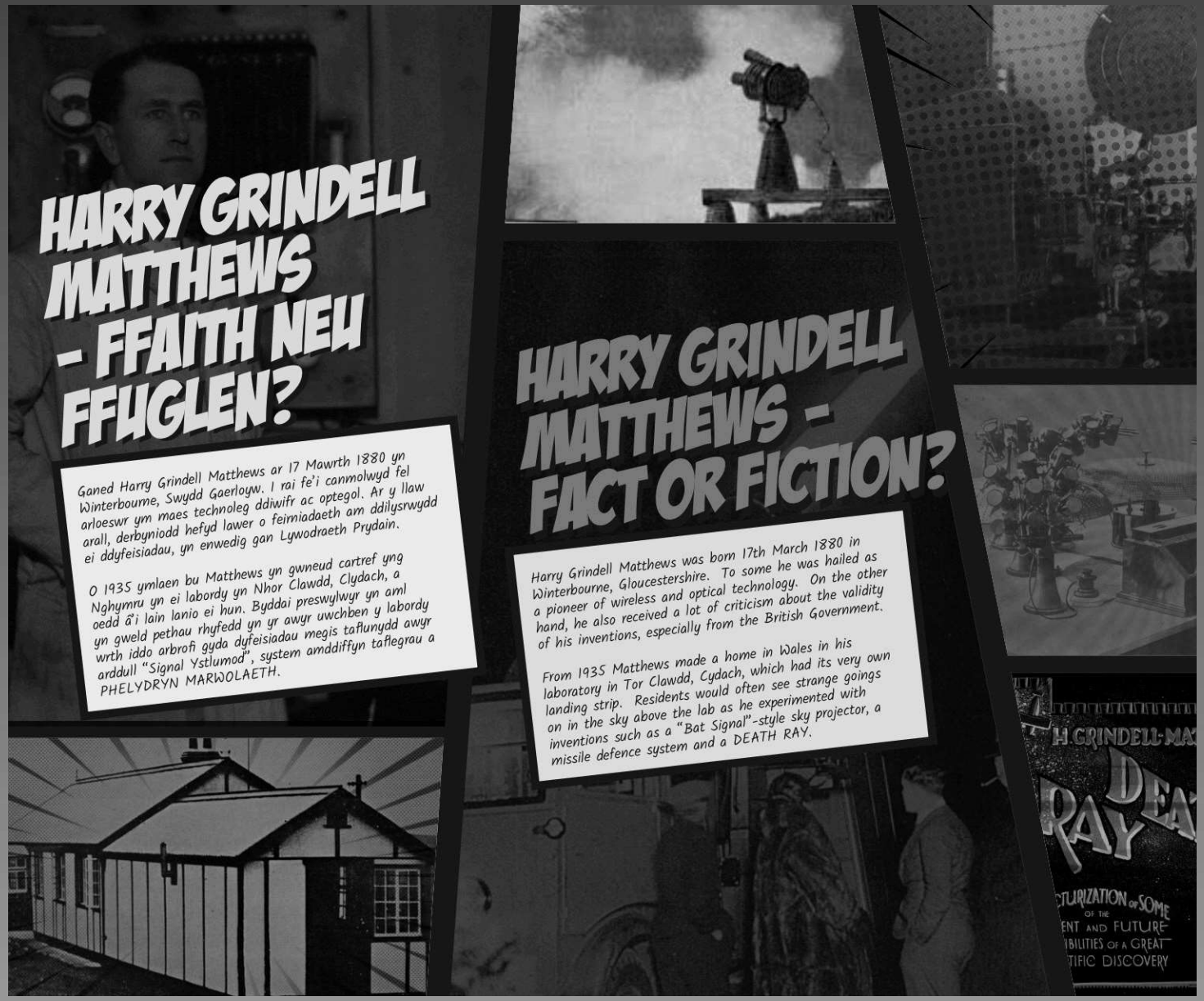
A new walking tour in Swansea promises to teach people about the city's darkest secrets of 'murder, superstitions, debauchery and ghosts that lurk in every alleyway'. Swansea In Gloom is a new 90 minute attraction that will tell some of the most gruesome stories from the city's past.

Harry Grindell Matthews Exhibition

Harry Grindell Matthews is a little-known inventor from our local area. He was a pioneer of wireless technology who was well known to Tesla and Edison, and for a time, he had a mysterious scientific lab in Clydach, Swansea.

To celebrate such a significant, and under-appreciated local figure, we created an exhibition highlighting the amazing inventions that Matthews developed. We positioned the exhibition in a large shop unit in Swansea's main shopping centre to raise awareness of this fascinating character.

It was created in a playful and engaging way which allowed the audience to decide for themselves how important Harry Grindell Matthews is, including a voting system and a fun 'comic book' aesthetic.



Celebrating 10 years of street markets

SWANSEA BAY

• STREET MARKETS •

The first Uplands Market took place in July 2013 and we have just celebrated its tenth birthday.

The markets were created as placemaking projects – using a popup event (a street market) to temporarily transform a car-dominated space in Uplands into a people friendly space once a month, and creating opportunities for local artisan traders in the process. Fast forward 10 years and the markets project has achieved a lot. We have highlighted 10 key achievements – one for each year of operation. You can read more in previous impact reports and the market website:

www.swanseabaystreetmarkets.co.uk

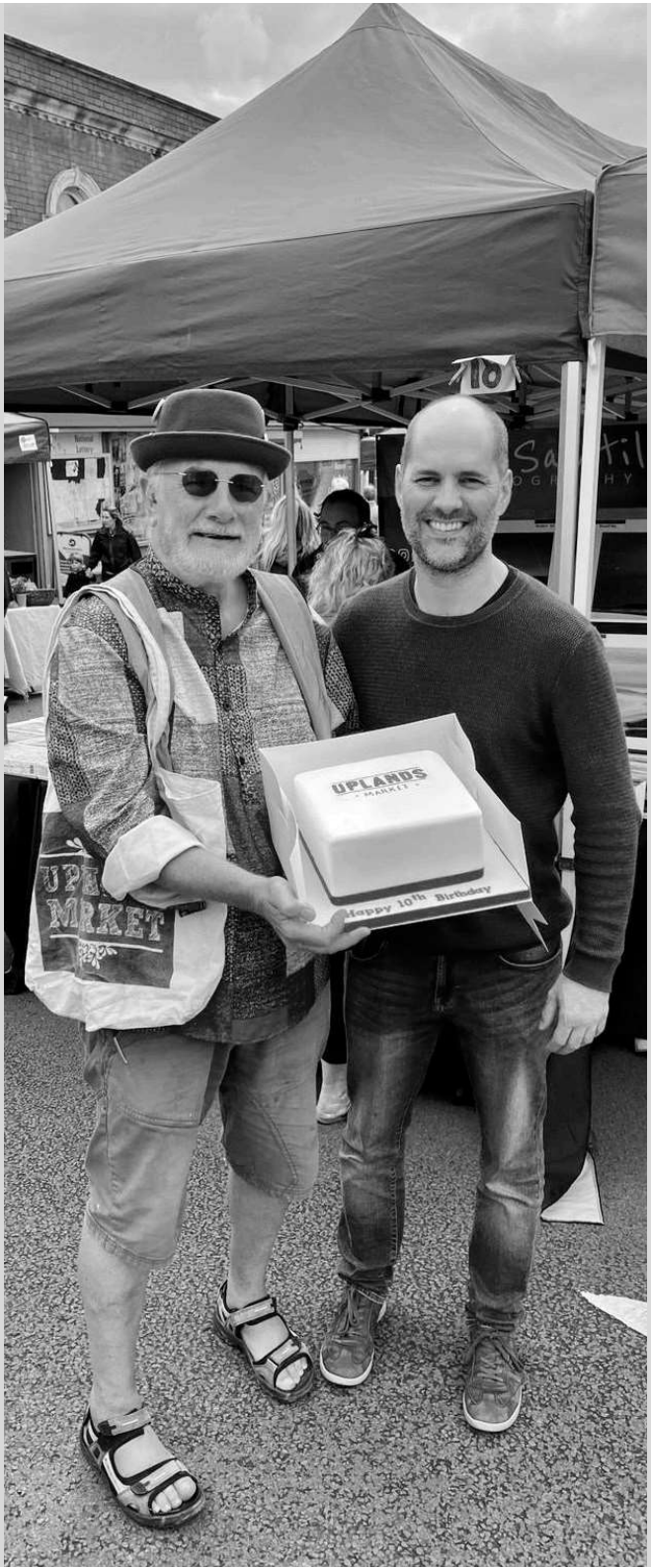
1. Uplands Market is a social enterprise. This means that it is not driven by profit. Rather, it is motivated by a desire to make positive social change.

2. It has created jobs. Three amazing Swansea residents have been hired part-time to book traders, respond to enquiries, and ensure that market day runs smoothly.

3. It's all local, artisan produce. All the traders at the markets are small businesses. Over half of them are from Swansea, with almost all the remainder coming from within the Swansea Bay region, keeping as much of the money spent at the markets as possible within the South West Wales economy. All the produce is directly grown or produced by the sellers, creating a close connection between customers and the producers of these goods.

4. It's kind of famous. Uplands Market has been heralded as a best practice case study in the Design Commission for Wales' Placemaking Guide 2020, and it was featured as one of the Daily Telegraph's Top 10 Street Markets in the whole of the UK. And we were awarded Highly Commended in the Swansea Life Awards. Now other organisations visit Uplands Market to see how it can be done. The Welsh Government even commissioned us to write a best practice guide on running markets, and street markets are now featured in their Programme for government, drawing strongly on our work.

5. It has multiplied across the Swansea Bay region. Not literally, but due to the success of Uplands Market, the organisers were approached by other areas in Swansea and asked to create similar street markets there. Hello Marina Market, Mumbles Market, and Port Talbot Market.



6. It has developed new businesses. It has provided a safe and supportive environment for new enterprises to launch and trade since its inception. Little Valley Bakery, Cyfle I Adeiladu, Naturally Kind Food, and Popty Pizza all used Uplands Market as a launching pad for their businesses before establishing their own shops. They've formed strong ties with Uplands' local businesses, acting as suppliers to a number of them. We've also worked with both universities in Swansea by offering student internships to help run the market. A few have even gone on to launch their own businesses there. Some of the team have been invited to give lectures and talks about Uplands Market to universities, colleges, and even the Chartered Institute of Marketing.

7. It has boosted local business. Working with the local universities, research at the markets shows that one in every five market visitors spends between £10 and £20 in local shops. It has also attracted new people to Uplands, many of whom return to shop in the permanent stores. Some of the stores participate in the market by offering special deals on market days. Local coffee shops have even walked around offering coffee to traders.

8. Many of the original team still work at the market. Ben Reynolds, Gordon Gibson, and Susie Johnston were all integral in setting up the market and continue to work on it today, along with Tara Tarapetian, who joined them in 2015.

"Urban Foundry is a safe and supportive place to work, everyone is taken seriously and has a voice. Being a B Corp is important because it means we are not only talking the talk, but we are walking the walk too."

Susie Johnston, Urban Foundry

9. Our traders are loyal. Many of our traders have been with us since the beginning, such as Taste of Persia, Olives & Co, Goggi's Cuisine, More Music, Ultimate Drifter, Ruby Anne Ceramic Jewellery, Caws Teifi, Carn Edward, Achc Art, Wild & Rare, and Cuckoo Mill Farm.

10. The team who founded the market, and our current market manager are all long-term residents of Uplands and were originally inspired to do something nice for the community. Since 2013, we've made great friends with residents, local businesses, traders, and volunteers. The feedback we get from the community is incredible, and we are always grateful for the positive vibes. We love Uplands and are looking forward to another decade of markets!

"Uplands Market has had a fantastic impact on Crumbs. We have just had our 10th birthday as well and it's great to see how Crumbs and The Uplands Market have grown together. It's been lovely working together with all the volunteers of the Uplands Market and seeing the growth of the Uplands community. Here's to many more Uplands Markets!"

Rebecca Cobley, owner of Crumbs Café in the Uplands



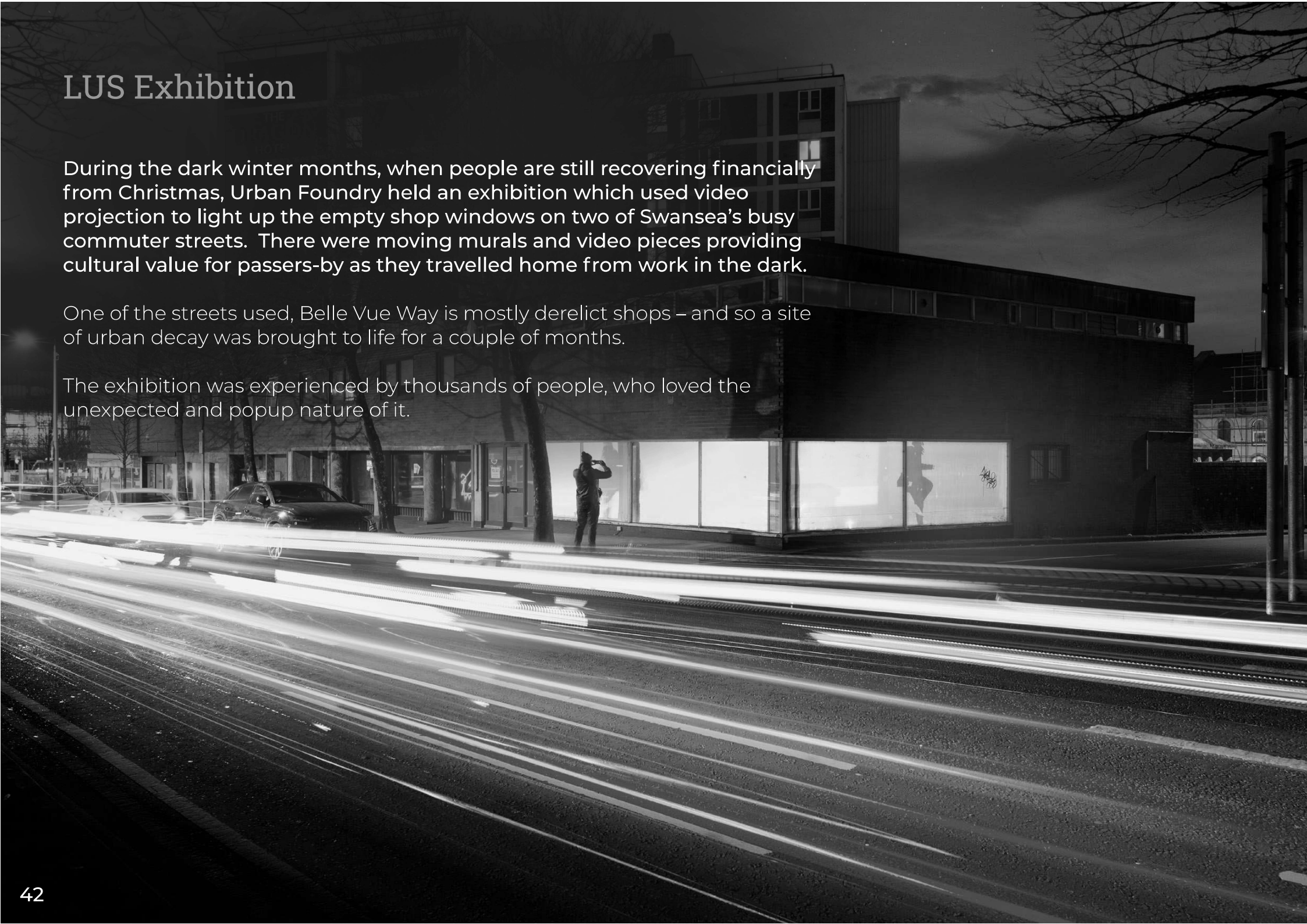


LUS Exhibition

During the dark winter months, when people are still recovering financially from Christmas, Urban Foundry held an exhibition which used video projection to light up the empty shop windows on two of Swansea's busy commuter streets. There were moving murals and video pieces providing cultural value for passers-by as they travelled home from work in the dark.

One of the streets used, Belle Vue Way is mostly derelict shops – and so a site of urban decay was brought to life for a couple of months.

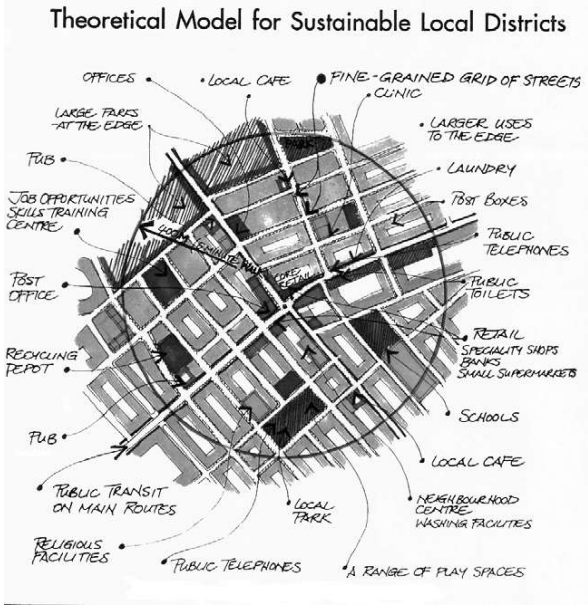
The exhibition was experienced by thousands of people, who loved the unexpected and popup nature of it.



Pobl Housing Group

We worked with Pobl Housing Group and its partners to evaluate their Greener Penderi initiative. We brought the project partners together to better understand and articulate their intended impact through a theory of change.

We then drew together their existing research, as well as conducting research of our own, to provide an evaluation report for their funders (the Community Renewal Fund – 'CRF') to articulate the impacts the project had made.



"Urban Foundry delivered a series of workshops for our Community Regeneration Team at Pobl, focusing on the theory of change, evaluation, urban regeneration and pop-up urbanism, and Green Infrastructure. They were really great sessions that provoked deeper thinking, reflection and generated conversation. The ideas discussed were backed by modern examples which really helped to capture our team's imaginations and energy to push into new thinking spaces for community regeneration."

Becky Cole, Pobl Group

Swansea University Entrepreneur in Residence

Working with Swansea University, Director Ben Reynolds has been their Entrepreneur in Residence, working with students with business ideas to provide mentoring through one-to-one sessions. He also sits as a judge on the 'Big Pitch' event alongside other Swansea alumni, which awards a combination of free support and funding (the latter kindly supported by Santander) to the winning pitches to help students develop their ideas.

Ben has also delivered various guest lectures to students looking to establish social enterprises, covering the basics of social enterprise and purpose-driven business, and the theory of change.



"Urban Foundry's founder, Dr Ben Reynolds, has been supporting the Enterprise team at Swansea University over the last few months - helping to support entrepreneurial students and graduates on their start-up journeys as their Entrepreneur in Residence. He's delivered in-depth, educational and inspirational sessions on entrepreneurship, both online and in-person, as well as providing start-up consultations to a number of students on a 1-2-1 basis. Students who've met with Ben truly valued his advice and he's been a fantastic addition to the Enterprise team's services."

Angus Phillips, Enterprise Support Officer – Swansea University

Wellbeing Future Generations Commissioner

Right at the end of the reporting period, we were honoured to be commissioned to work for the Wellbeing Future Generations Commissioners office to support them in shaping the next few years of their programme using a theory of change. The Wellbeing of Future Generations is world-leading legislation and something that we are proud to be supporting.

Whilst the Act covers the public sector, we have always considered it to be a benchmark for every organisation operating in Wales to aspire to, whether in the public, private or third sectors. Through all our work we seek to adopt its ways of working (long-term, integrated, involving people, collaborative, and preventative), and we are working towards aligning our reporting on our impact with the goals of the Act.

This project concludes during our next reporting period, so more on this in our next report.



Other things we've been doing

Those are some more detailed case studies. As well as those, in the reporting period we have:

- Continued to deliver sessions through the Welsh Government's Big Ideas Wales Role Models programme, visiting schools, further and higher education settings and the Princes' Trust to talk to young people about purpose-driven business.
- Worked through Social Business Wales to support several social enterprises to develop their business plans.
- Developed a series of popup events for Swansea Business Improvement District.
- Worked with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council to support the development of their Green Infrastructure initiatives.
- Delivered a free workshop on meanwhile spaces for Swansea Council's Business Support Team.
- Expanded our PopUp Wales initiative to deliver feasibility work for Caerphilly County Borough Council and Carmarthenshire County Council to pave the way for meanwhile/popup space initiatives in both areas.
- Supported the University of Wales Trinity Saint David to establish a vision for the Dylan Thomas Centre building as a hub for its activity.
- Supported Dove Workshop to deliver a feasibility study to assess the viability of a social enterprise to deliver home help in the community.
- Supported Re-Live, an arts organisation in Penarth, to explore their options for taking on a new building and securing longer-term revenue funding.
- Evaluated Natural Resources Wales' approach to supporting Green Infrastructure.
- Supported Afallen in a local food producers/suppliers mapping study in our home town of Swansea as a first step in the process of strengthening local food supply chains.
- Delivered a pre-feasibility scoping exercise for Cwm Taf Morgannwg MIND mental health charity for establishing a wellbeing hub.
- Undertaken a swift 'check and challenge' review for the high-profile Plaza redevelopment for Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.
- Delivered some spooky placemaking through the temporary takeover of Oystermouth Castle for a Halloween-themed event.

- Undertaken a review for a purpose-driven subsidiary company of a local wind farm community fund to assist in improving its financial viability.
- Undertaken feasibility work for Treorchy Rugby Football Club to explore the future of their clubhouse facilities for their own purposes as well as the wider community.
- Undertaken feasibility work to explore the viability of securing the future of the Resolven Miners' Welfare Hall.
- Delivered a scoping report for Cardiff Community Housing Association on meanwhile space potential for their development in Grangetown, Cardiff.
- Delivered a talk on heritage and urban regeneration for Carmarthenshire County Council's conference.
- Evaluated the regional volunteering initiative for Swansea Council for Voluntary Services.
- Evaluated the Community Transport initiative delivered as a partnership initiative between 4theRegion and Swansea Council for Voluntary Services.
- Evaluated Swansea Council's Workways initiative aimed at getting longer-term unemployed individuals back into work.
- Evaluated the Covid-19 response by Bridgend Association for Voluntary Services (BAVO).
- Continued to serve as an invited member of the Regeneration Swansea Partnership.

Urban Acupuncture PhD with Swansea University

We have partnered with Swansea University to sponsor our first PhD. Supported by Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funding, the PhD will explore Urban Acupuncture – a relatively new term that covers much of the kind of work we do, meaning a large number of relatively small interventions in urban areas that collectively work to regenerate them. It's not a new idea but it isn't particularly well-researched, and so the PhD, hosted at Swansea University and based with us, will look to explore the concept in the UK context.

With several excellent applicants, we are delighted to have recruited an outstanding prospect who will begin studying in Autumn 2023. More on that in our next impact report!

What we said we would do at the end of 2021	What we did
Re-accredit as a B Corp, increasing our score.	✔ With score increased.
Open a social enterprise venue, creating new jobs for our local area, all paying at least at the Real Living Wage and providing opportunities for other organisations.	✔ HQ Urban Kitchen social enterprise is up and running, creating 6 full-time equivalent jobs, primarily for young people.
Create a Library of Things through PopUp Wales.	✔ The pilot project grabbed prime-time news headlines and we're now looking at how we can make it a viable long-term initiative.
Expand the PopUp Wales initiative more generally.	✔ Expanding to Bridgend and increasing from the initial 4 venues to over 30 now at the time of writing this report.
Further develop our work on Green Infrastructure to make urban areas work with nature, rather than against it.	✔ We created a pilot project with Natural Resources Wales and Swansea Council, which was very successful and we are about to develop a second phase.
Re-establish our 51.6 series of talks;	✔ We were delighted to bring this back with artist Hilary Powell, with more events planned.
Continue our Academy working with our local universities and doing more to support students to remain in the city, reducing the 'brain drain' of graduates leaving the area after completion of their courses.	✔ We were delighted to work with two students in this reporting period, one supporting the marketing development for our new HQ Urban Kitchen venue, and one working with us on community engagement projects.
Continue to support the Swansea Poverty Truth Commission as it moves into its delivery phase.	✔ Director Ben is proud to serve as one of the Civic and Business Commissioners.

What we said we would do at the end of 2021	What we did
Continue to use the platforms we have to encourage others to accredit and support the wider adoption of the Real Living Wage.	✔ We are very pleased that through our influence, local funding stream applications in our area now carry this as an assessment question. We regularly draw attention to the need to pay fair wages and publicise the Living Wage accreditation, and we are often referenced as a fair work 'champion' by other agencies in Wales.
Create more local employment opportunities directly by expanding our team.	✔ We are delighted to have added Obaidah Sbeitan, Gareth Willis-Falco and Hannah Davies to our Urban Foundry team, plus a whole team of people employed at our HQ Urban Kitchen venue.
Begin to expand our shareholding and add a new Director to move away from single-person ownership.	✔ Our longest serving employee Tara is now a company Director and shareholder.
Build relationships with other Wales-based B Corps.	✔ Just! in July 2023 we were delighted to attend the first Welsh B Corp BSocial in Cardiff, we're looking forward to the next one.
Contribute further to a wide range of projects in our community that align with our purpose;	✔ Too many to mention in summary, but if you've read this far you'll have gotten the idea!
As always, still have fun doing what we do!	✔Done and done – it is so lovely seeing one another in person again and having our own venue gives us even more opportunities to launch exciting projects.

Looking ahead – next steps

By the next time we report we will be celebrating our 20th year – two decades of purpose-driven business!

By then, we aim to have:

- Improved the monitoring of our carbon footprint, water usage and waste to create a more measurable framework for our environmental impact.
- Further enhanced our existing efforts to create more walkable and cyclable places, particularly focusing on our home town.
- Improved local places in Wales by reducing the number of empty shops by further developing our PopUp Wales initiative.
- Improved the support infrastructure in our home town to support change-making individuals and organisations.
- Further developed Green Infrastructure as a key sustainability component of towns and cities in our part of the world.
- Created a better measurement approach to engage our staff in evaluating our impact using the Most Significant Change technique.
- Better articulated our impact by directly mapping what we do to the Wellbeing Future Generations targets and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

"Working at Urban Foundry is refreshing. Every day I'm in work I feel like we are a little closer to creating a quality legacy for our stakeholders. An environment of quirky individuals all striving to accomplish good work with a strong sense of parity between staff. "

Hannah Davies, Urban Foundry



A visit to Coaltown Coffee in Ammanford.
A fellow Welsh B Corp and supplier of coffee to our venue HQ Urban Kitchen.



"Swansea Council is delighted to work in partnership with Urban Foundry who facilitated our Business Swansea Start-up Enterprise Club session on PopUps and Leasing Commercial premises. It is fantastic that our local business experts are prepared to share their knowledge and expertise for the benefit of the city's start-up community."

Stephen Williams,
Economic Development Officer
for Swansea Council





Find out more about us and our work at:

www.urbanfoundry.co.uk

You can also visit the websites for our dedicated projects at the following sites:

www.hqurbankitchen.co.uk

www.swanseabaystreetmarkets.co.uk

www.popupwales.com

www.51point6.co.uk

www.swansealibraryofthings.co.uk

Certified B Corporation

TISC TISC REPORT AFFILIATE

better business act

Creu Lleoedd Cymru
Placemaking Wales
Llofnodydd y Siarter | Charter Signatory

We are a Living Wage Employer



Impact Report 2023

July 2023

URBAN FOUNDRY

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