



Wales Co-operative Centre  
Canolfan Cydweithredol Cymru

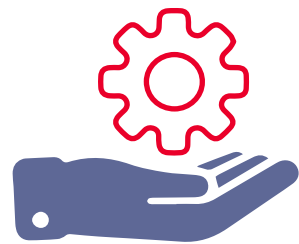
[www.wales.coop](http://www.wales.coop)

# Impact Report

## 2020-2021

**DISCOVER HOW WE'RE CREATING A BETTER,  
FAIRER, MORE CO-OPERATIVE WALES**

# Our key performance indicators



Hours of business support delivered by the Social Business Wales teams:

**8,559**



New social businesses incorporated by the Social Business Wales New Start team:

**117**



Jobs created by the Social Business Wales teams:

**85**



People supported to get online through Digital Communities Wales:

**39,035**



Digital devices provided to care homes, sheltered housing schemes and hospices through Digital Communities Wales:

**1,288**



Groups and organisations assisted to develop community share schemes:

**22**



Businesses converted to employee - ownership:

**5**



Future social entrepreneurs who contributed to our collaborative workshops:

**476**



Staff or volunteers trained by Digital Communities Wales to gain digital skills:

**2,491**



Client satisfaction score:

**6.43/7**



Staff who said they'd recommend the Centre as a great place to work:

**96%**



Staff who said they were proud to work here:

**96%**



Amount raised through community share schemes:

**£547,000**



Groups and organisations assisted to develop community-led housing:

**50**



Turnover generated through contracted and grant income:

**£6.1m**

# Our work

"We are very grateful that we were able to be loaned a piece of equipment which allowed the residents to spend needed quality time with their relatives and loved ones. As a home it allowed the staff to ensure that we were able to provide the best service to our residents in a tough time. Overall, the service provided us with a source of communication which meant that we were able to ensure both the physical and emotional well-being of the residents was well maintained."

Staff member at a care home supported by Digital Communities Wales



We are champions for a fairer and greener society, for co-operative working and for the use of technology for social good – we're leading the public debate, shaping policy and campaigning for positive change



We help to change the way the economy works, by leading the growth of co-operatives, mutuals, social enterprises and employee-owned businesses as well as by supporting small businesses in the foundational economy to thrive

"The support from SBW has been invaluable in getting us to where we are today. From business planning, to structure, governance, our advisor is always on hand to help us find clarity. Especially in the current climate, we cannot thank him enough."

Social Business Wales (Growth) client

"In the most difficult circumstances, to have got our business up and running is a remarkable achievement which we couldn't have managed without you."

Social Business Wales (New Start) client



We enable people to improve their lives and livelihoods by helping them to improve their digital confidence and to make their communities stronger



We are a strong and agile organisation that looks after our people, focuses on making a positive impact and ensures our values underpin everything we do

"Our experience with SBW has helped us grow as an organisation in lots of ways. Having a person dedicated to supporting us has meant we can receive timely interventions, shout when we need it and ensure that we've got a firmer foundation on which to build - more than crucial in these times, although important before that! We also very much appreciated opportunities to connect with others locally which were facilitated by our advisor during lockdown."

Social Business Wales (New Start) client



# Our highlights

## Derek Walker, our Chief Executive, talks about his highlights of the year.



While 2020/21 will always be remembered as the year of Covid-19, here at the Wales Co-operative Centre we will never forget the moments of kindness that made it a year of solidarity, community spirit and co-operation.

We saw social enterprises reaching out to communities across Wales to support those who needed extra help. Social enterprises also stepped up to supply vital resources and raise money for our NHS. It was a year of enormous resilience and change for the sector.

Wales has always recognised the value in dedicated business support for social enterprises, which has been a key factor in the sector's significant growth over the last few years. Having this service in place meant that social enterprises knew where to go for advice when the pandemic hit. Our Social Business Wales team played a vital role in supporting social enterprises to pivot and transform in response to the challenging conditions. The team were also on hand to help a new generation of social entrepreneurs to start-up social businesses. Many people were inspired to set up social businesses this year.

New social enterprises were started in a wide range of sectors, providing growing evidence that social enterprise is fast becoming the business model of choice for start-ups in Wales.

Pre COVID-19, digital inclusion had been on the agenda of many organisations, but the pandemic increased the urgency of this work. It brought the issue to the attention of new audiences. The pandemic has been particularly challenging for older people and those living in care homes who are unable to see friends and loved ones. Our Digital Communities Wales programme was charged with distributing digital devices to care homes, hospices, and young carers to help people keep in touch with friends and family, and to assist with video medical consultations. Our support was not only about distributing devices. We also delivered training and support to organisations during the year.

**We saw social enterprises reaching out to communities across Wales to support those who needed extra help. Social enterprises also stepped up to supply vital resources and raise money for our NHS.**

**It was a year when partnerships were key. Working closely with DTA Wales, Social Firms Wales, WCVA and UnLtd, we launched our ten-year vision and action plan for the sector in July.**

Digital approaches are now an essential element of the operations of most organisations. During the year, we stepped up our efforts to help organisations harness technology to create positive social change. We delivered free webinars and events for social enterprises, including our first online festival, TechFest4SocialGood.

Despite the incredibly unstable and difficult economic period, our commercial work went from strength-to-strength. We won a variety of important contracts delivering work on social care, public sector asset transfer, leadership training, and social value amongst others. I

was delighted that the commercial team exceeded their income targets. We have ambitious plans to grow this part of our business in the years ahead.

It was a year when partnerships were key. Working closely with DTA Wales, Social Firms Wales, WCVA and UnLtd, we launched our ten-year vision and action plan for the sector in July. "Transforming Wales Through Social Enterprise" was co-produced by the sector, for the sector. The document positions us as a dynamic, enterprising sector that can really help the country to 'build back better.'

Finally, I want to thank my colleagues. Their work was more important than ever this year. Despite facing huge upheaval and personal challenges, they never failed to give less than 100%. Our board members also contributed a great deal of their time to steering the organisation successfully through this challenging year, so a big thank you to them too.

I hope you enjoy reading our Impact Report for 2020-21.



"Having use of the iPad has been a positive experience for both clients and staff. Clients can have face time with families and staff have been able to communicate with the GP surgery, sending photos of ailments for a speedy diagnosis. It has been a pleasure to work in partnership with you. Thank you."

Staff member at a care home supported by Digital Communities Wales



## OUR WORK ACROSS WALES

# South East Wales

This year we've played a key role in building up the everyday economy in our South Wales communities. We applied our co-operative values to supporting social businesses, strengthening communities, tackling poverty, and promoting inclusion. Our work helped nurture an inclusive economy where prosperity is shared across the region, and no one is left behind.



**165**  
social businesses  
received support



**Key sectors:** Health and social care, education and training, creative industries, sport

**156**

people supported to start a social enterprise (46% male, 54% female, 14% BAME)



Registered  
**38**  
new social  
businesses



## HERON HOUSE employee-ownership client

Welsh advice firm Heron House Financial Management became employee-owned in October 2020, after the founding directors Saran Allot-Davey and Christopher Jordan set up an employee ownership trust (EOT).

The Newport-based business started to explore succession planning options several years ago but found none that suited.

*"When we started to explore various succession planning options, a trade, sale or merger simply did not fit in with our plans to remain independent and protect clients and staff," Sarah said. "In 2018, we came across employee ownership and since then there has been no looking back."* The transition was supported by the Employee Ownership Wales team at Social Business Wales.

## VALE TABLET LOAN SCHEME digital inclusion initiative

Vale of Glamorgan libraries now loan tablet computers to library members. The first scheme of its kind in Wales launched in October 2020 with support from Digital Communities Wales and Newydd Housing. It offers those who don't have access to digital equipment the opportunity to take the first steps towards getting online. Vale of Glamorgan Council supported the project, with hopes it will tackle social isolation and improve digital

literacy, particularly amongst the elderly, disabled, those on low incomes or those living in rural areas.

Vale of Glamorgan Cabinet Member Cllr Ben Gray said, *"More and more services are being provided as 'digital by default', but we know there are many within our communities who are at risk from digital exclusion. This scheme provides an opportunity to address this digital divide and get our residents online."*

All our tablets come pre-loaded with 4G data. This means that users do not need their own internet connection to access websites and online services with the devices. The tablets also come with a selection of apps, hand-picked by our own specialist staff to help users get up and running as quickly and easily as possible.

## CONNECTING CARERS social care initiative

In Bridgend, our Connecting Carers project worked with Bridgend County Borough Council and wider third sector partners, to expand the volume and range of opportunities for the well-being of unpaid carers help them join in small, mutually supportive groups. In the past year, the project has provided a lifeline to carers isolated by the lockdown restrictions. Online events have brought carers together and given them an opportunity to share experience and plan joint activities. Connecting Carers has also worked with leisure trusts, cultural trusts, and housing associations so they can better support unpaid carers.

Supported  
**15,053**  
people to become  
digitally confident



Supported  
**50**  
organisations to embed  
digital inclusion in strategic  
delivery



Supported 7  
groups with the  
potential to create  
**283**  
community-led  
homes



Supported 2  
existing community-led  
housing groups with  
**48**  
homes in total to grow,  
change and develop



# West Wales

In 2020/21, we worked to improve people's lives in all parts of South West Wales – both urban and rural – by boosting digital skills, creating secure, affordable homes, and supporting social business to provide quality employment opportunities. Our community-led housing work was particularly important, helping local people to take a leading and lasting role in creating secure, affordable homes and strengthening their communities.



**106**  
social businesses  
received support



**Key sectors:** Health and social care, agriculture and food, education, and training

**135**

people supported to start a social enterprise (56% male, 44% female, 5% BAME)



Registered  
**34**  
new social  
businesses



## CÂR-Y-MÔR community shares client

A sustainable farm growing seaweed and oysters under the sea around the St David's Peninsula was able to continue its ground-breaking work thanks to investment raised from community shares. Câr-Y-Môr's vision is to create jobs producing sustainable and local seafood while simultaneously improving the coastal environment and people's diets and well-being.

Câr-Y-Môr community Benefit Society (CBS) set up two trial restoration ocean farms, the first of their kind in Wales, in Ramsey Sound in August 2020 following years of preparation and local people volunteering their time and expertise. With support from the *Community Shares Wales (Resilience)* project, Câr-Y-Môr raised £84,000 through its share offer.

## SWPERBOX CIC social business start-up client

Swperbox is Wales' own meal box delivery company which was born to combat the long-term impact of the coronavirus pandemic, create sustainable careers, invest in community food education, and support a network of Welsh food producers to improve food security. Established in Carmarthen by Welsh chefs and social entrepreneurs, Alex Cook and Stuart Crichton, the

business creates, manufactures, and distributes meal boxes across South and West Wales. Finding their jobs curtailed in March 2020, Alex and Stuart approached *Social Business Wales (New Start)* for support to start a Welsh recipe subscription box business as a way of providing local employment as well as supporting many hard-working small-time farms, fishers, and food suppliers.

## GŴYR COMMUNITY LAND TRUST community-led housing client

Gŵyr Community Land Trust was established in November 2020 to provide affordable and sustainable housing. The members aim to build 12 mixed tenure, affordable, zero-carbon homes in the Gower fringe area which will be available for local people who cannot afford market value homes. Members will take on 50% of the construction process themselves, with every member able to contribute their skills and drive.

The eight families in the group are working with the *Communities Creating Homes* team and DTA Wales. They all live locally, run small businesses, work in the public and third sector and are active members of their local community. They believe this diversity is a strength. After all, who is better placed to understand a communities' needs than those in it.

Supported  
**5,990**  
people to become  
digitally confident



Supported  
**27**  
organisations to embed  
digital inclusion in strategic  
delivery



Supported 23  
groups with the  
potential to create  
**79**  
community-led  
homes

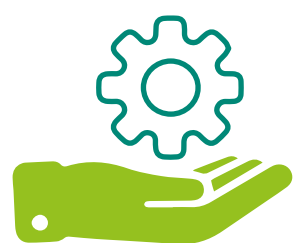


Supported 4  
existing community-led  
housing groups with  
**70**  
homes in total to grow,  
change and develop



# North Wales

**Our work in North Wales over the last 12 months has improved skills, economic opportunities, and connectivity. We've helped people gain digital skills and have supported new and existing social businesses to create better quality employment opportunities, to develop a skilled workforce and more connected communities within the region.**



## 98

social businesses received support



**Key sectors:** Health and social care, education and training, creative industries, tourism

## 134

people supported to start a social enterprise (41% male, 59% female, 5% BAME)



Registered

## 36

new social businesses



## TY'N LLAN community shares client

About 1,000 people pledged more than £460,000 to help villagers to buy their local pub in Gwynedd. Although the area only has a population of 400, support came from people from as far afield as New Zealand to cover the cost of buying Llandwrog's Ty'n Llan.

Villagers set up a group selling £100 shares in March 2021, with support from the *Community Shares Wales (Resilience)* project, to allow them to take over the 200-year-old pub, which closed in 2017.

Group member Wyn Roberts said "it means everything" that their plans to open the venue as a village hub can move forward.

## NORTH WALES DEVICE LOAN SCHEME digital inclusion initiative

Covid-19 meant that hospital patients and people living in care homes in North Wales couldn't receive visitors, whilst social distancing meant that older people living independently couldn't access their community or see family and friends.

To address this, *Digital Communities Wales* worked with the North Wales Social Care and Well-being Improvement Collaborative. As a result of the initiative, 205 digital companions were trained, 185 health & social care Digital Champions were trained, and 396 iPads were loaned out to care homes and people within the community. 82% of hospital staff felt the iPads had a positive impact on staff time, whilst 93% felt they had a positive impact for patients.

## GWYNEDD COUNTY COUNCIL social care client (commercial contract)

It is Welsh Government policy to develop a stable and resilient social care sector delivering options and choice, quality and support, and good outcomes for all service users. To do this, care commissioners are being encouraged to create a more diverse provider base offering greater sustainability and social value. Gwynedd County Council wanted assistance to evaluate how far this was already happening in its domiciliary care services and how it could be increased. The *Wales Co-operative Centre* social care team engaged with 30+ providers. This feedback was formulated into a report which will now shape the Council's future domiciliary care contracts.

Supported

## 4,578

people to become digitally confident



Supported

## 94

organisations to embed digital inclusion in strategic delivery



Supported 6 groups with the potential to create

## 105

community-led homes



## £458k

raised from community shares to invest in community-owned businesses



# Mid Wales

Traditionally dependent on agriculture, and with a widely dispersed population, our work in Mid Wales during 2020/21 focussed on developing the foundational economy through social businesses and employee-owned firms anchored in the area and providing quality employment opportunities. Through our community-led housing work, we brought people together to decide what kind of homes and communities they want to live in and create affordable homes which meet local community needs.



## 34

social businesses received support



**Key sectors:** Health and social care, tourism, agriculture, and food

## 33

people supported to start a social enterprise (42% male, 58% female)



Registered

## 9

new social businesses



## WAVEHILL employee-ownership client

Aberaeron-based social and economic research company, Wavehill, became employee-owned in December 2020, cementing its team-orientated ethos and business approach.

Wavehill, which was established in 1992 with offices in Aberaeron, Bristol, Newcastle, and London, has developed a strong reputation and proven expertise in the fields of social and economic research, evaluation, and impact assessment.

The company moved to an Employee Ownership model with the support of the Employee Ownership Wales team at Social Business Wales.

Founder Director of Wavehill, Mark Willis, said: *"We have clear company values, an extremely strong ethic and a culture based on collaboration and respect, so when it came to continuity and succession planning, becoming employee owned was a natural progression for Wavehill."*

## THE CROSS KEYS social business start-up client

A former Llanfyllin pub was transformed into a community hub thanks to business support from the Social Business Wales (New Start) programme. The Cross Keys, Llanfyllin CIC is an old pub on the high street, which

was converted into a community well-being space featuring a café, book corner, sensory room, permaculture garden, emergency accommodation for the homeless and hire space for community activity groups and life events. The Cross Keys also had support to establish an electric bike hire business, which has created employment for a member of the community who was unemployed and struggling to find work.

## TIR CYFFREDIN community-led housing client

'Bryn Tyrnol' in Machynlleth, Powys has been privately rented to five tenants for several years. The landlord wanted to sell the house but was keen to offer it to the existing residents at an affordable purchase price, despite the high market value, to keep it in the hands of the community. The residents worked with Communities Creating Homes to assess the viability of becoming a housing co-operative. The five have plans to create space for two more members by converting outbuildings, employing a local builder who specialises in sustainable and traditional building materials. They are doing something different in an area where second home ownership is pushing up house prices for everyone.

Supported  
**1,175**

people to become digitally confident



Worked with

## 6

organisations to embed digital inclusion in strategic delivery



Supported 9 groups with the potential to create

## 84

community-led homes



Supported 2 existing community-led housing groups with

## 9

homes in total to grow, change and develop



# Our financials

**Joanne Jones, our Director of Corporate Services, summarises our financial position.**



During the year, the Centre generated turnover totalling £6.1m, through contracted and grant income.

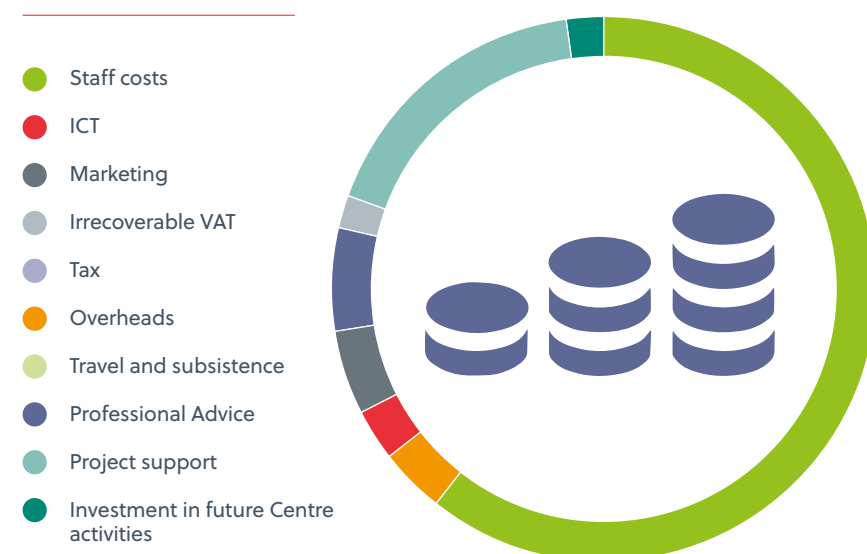
This year, despite the covid-19 pandemic, we made a surplus of £92k. This will be reinvested to further the objects of the Centre. Most of the Centre's activities operate on a cost recovery basis.

The Centre has reserves totalling £965K which includes £200K designated for new business and investment

opportunities. As the funding climate changes, so should the Centre's outlook on new business opportunities. This reserve is designated to manage potential risk associated with new business opportunities.

**This year, despite the covid-19 pandemic, a surplus of £92K was realised. This will be reinvested to further the objects of the Centre.**

## How income was used



# Our funders

Thanks to all our funders for their support



# Our accreditations



"Through you, my project has an exciting future with the potential to offer training/skills development opportunities and part time employment to rurally isolated people. I'm so appreciative of the support you have offered to enable me to make a useful contribution to our local economy."

Social Business Wales (New Start) client



