

A Social Enterprise Manifesto for Wales

A Catalyst for Sustainable
Growth and Inclusive
Communities

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Introduction

Social enterprises play a vital role in Welsh communities and the Welsh economy

They deliver essential services to improve wellbeing, use innovative green technologies to embed sustainability, create inclusive and accessible jobs for those outside the labour market, create local wealth that is redistributed back into communities, and much more.

They harness the spirit of entrepreneurialism to create social value and make change that tackles the root cause of social problems.

We are passionate about the potential of this model – the triple bottom-line of people, planet and profit – to create even more impact in Wales.

We want social enterprise to be the business model of choice and for our country to be the best place in the world to start and grow a social enterprise.

As the Social Enterprise Stakeholder Group, we – Cwmpas, Development Trusts Association (DTA) Wales, Social Firms Wales, UnLtd and the WCVA – bring together organisations who provide specialist support to social enterprises.

We work with social enterprises every day and support them to deliver their incredible work.

Together, we are delivering the Transforming Wales through Social Enterprise Vision and Action Plan.

Our 2025 Social Business Wales mapping report sets out the state of the sector. We estimate that there are now at least 3,113 businesses in the sector, an increase of 13% from 2022.

The sector is estimated to generate between £3.5bn and £5.7bn of turnover each year each year and is estimated to employ between 57,000 and 68,000 people.



In this manifesto, we outline why social enterprise should be embedded throughout each political party's manifesto and set out our priorities for how the next Welsh Government can support the social enterprise sector in Wales.

We will set the ambition to make Wales a social enterprise nation.

The next Welsh Government will be key to ensuring this innovative, resilient and exciting sector can continue to deliver and contribute to building a sustainable, inclusive Welsh economy.

Our Key Asks

Specialist Support

Proactive Market Development

Accessible & Appropriate Funding Options

Community Wealth Building

Empowering Community Ownership

Social Entrepreneurship Education

Why Social Enterprises are a vital asset across different sectors

Social enterprise is a vital component in realising the vision of a thriving Wales.

The sector already does inspiring, impactful work and is passionate about achieving more.

The triple-bottom line model can be applied across different sectors to create even more economic and social value in a sustainable way.

Growing the sector will be key to putting the wellbeing of people, planet and future generations at the heart of a rebalanced economy that is world-leading.

Wales has all the key components required to make this vision a reality and lead the way with an economy that works differently, leading to positive outcomes for our economic wealth, for communities, and for the planet.

Here we set out how and why social enterprise is an invaluable asset for building the Wales we want to see.



Economy.

Wales needs to rebalance and develop its economy to achieve sustainable prosperity, and supporting social businesses will be essential to this.

These businesses will build the foundations for sustainable, inclusive economic growth across Welsh communities.

Re-balancing the economy means ensuring economic power is retained locally, creating a more inclusive and productive economy that builds on local strengths and assets and enhances community wealth.

Without this, we won't solve the structural problems we need to – like unequal development, persistent poverty, and the devastating loss of jobs because of decisions made elsewhere.

Economy

Strengthening the social economy and growing the different business models within it will be essential to fostering inclusive growth that benefits everyone in Wales.

Empowering the creation of a strong supply chain of Welsh businesses with a triple-bottom line and democratic ownership embedded in their models will create a more robust, resilient economy.

These models are proven to be vital assets in community wealth building; anchoring businesses within their communities, creating and redistributing wealth locally, prioritising well-being and social value, and creating better environmental outcomes.

The key difference between a traditional private sector business and a social business is that any surpluses made by the latter are principally reinvested in the business or the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners.

The data from the 2025 Social Business Mapping Report is broadly consistent with previous years.



The proportion of businesses that reinvest surplus to grow or sustain the business has returned to 2020 levels of 93% of businesses, compared to 90% in 2022 and 93% in 2020.

At the same time, there is consistency in the number of businesses that use their surplus for community, social, environmental, or charitable benefit.

In 2025, this was reported by nearly half of businesses (47%), the same as 2022 and up from 23% in 2020.

There are many examples of inspiring social businesses in Wales who have used innovation and entrepreneurialism to grow, creating jobs and economic value in Welsh communities:



Dulas LTD

**Founded:
1982**

**Sector:
Renewables**

Founded in 1982 within the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT), Dulas has been at the forefront of the renewables industry for nearly four decades, creating innovations that are still leading the field today.

Based in Machynlleth, they are an employee-owned co-operative that has the prioritisation of people and planet embedded in their business model.

They have displayed incredible growth and in 2024 won the SME Exporter of the Year Award at the Wales Business Awards.

They export solar powered vaccine refrigerators to over 80 countries worldwide and make an enormous difference to communities that often struggle to gain access to life-saving vaccines.

They are a wonderful example of a specialist, innovative social business that is creating wealth and high-quality jobs in Wales in a co-operative, growth-focused way.



This shows what is possible when people come together and identify opportunities for innovative, mission-driven businesses.

Supporting the next generation of these businesses in Wales will be key to realising an ambitious vision of a productive, inclusive, world-leading economy and we need to be proactive in facilitating their ideation and growth.

Social enterprises are also strongly connected to, and work in harmony with, other key policy agendas including the Foundational and Circular Economy principles.

So many of our social enterprises help deliver these key strategies, providing essential local services and developing innovative solutions for waste minimisation, re-use and regeneration.



TrydaNi

Founded:
Mid 1990s

Sector:
Automotive

TrydaNi is a non-profit Community Benefit Society with a mission to support local communities to create and run car clubs, and to facilitate a shift away from traditional models of car ownership towards a cleaner transport future.

They have car club locations across Wales, from Bethesda to Cwmgors, and are working with new partners to set up clubs – connecting people to their communities in a sustainable way.

TrydaNi's long-term vision is for the electric vehicles in its network to be powered by locally-generated community renewables, keeping costs low and boosting Wales' energy independence.

A Community Benefit Society, community ownership is key to TrydaNi's long-term vision to further expand its network and empower members to have a say in the decisions that affect their local club and the wider network.

Living Wage

The latest evidence shows that social enterprises create high-quality jobs, paying the Real Living Wage at a significantly higher rate than the wider private sector.

Research from Social Enterprise UK found that 84% of social enterprises report paying the real Living Wage – that's 8 in 10 social enterprises compared to an estimated 1 in 9 employers across the wider economy.

This is supported by the 2025 Social Business Mapping Report, which suggests that 84% of social businesses in Wales with employees pay the real living wage to all staff (£12.21 in April 2025).

This represents an increase from 66% in 2022 (£9.50).



Le Pub

Founded:
1992

Sector:
Live Music

Painting By Carl Bevan

Le Pub has been at the heart of Newport's music and cultural scene since 1992, operating as a bar, restaurant, and nightclub.

Le Public Space was born from its success and is the largest independent space for the creative arts in the city. On their website, it states "We are community-owned, not for profit. That means everything we do, will always be about getting bigger and better".

Their commitment to creating social value is demonstrated by the fact they are only of only two live grassroots music venues to be accredited Real Living Wage employers across the UK.

Across different sectors and with different shapes and sizes, social businesses are showing the entrepreneurial spirit to answer Wales' challenges and build a stronger, fairer and more sustainable economy.

Supporting these initiatives and pro-actively fostering new ones should be central to the Welsh Government's economic agenda.

Jobs and Skills

For Welsh communities to thrive and to finally end the unacceptable levels of poverty in this country, we need good-quality, inclusive jobs.

One of the biggest challenges facing Wales is the high levels of people locked out of the labour market for a variety of different reasons. The Welsh Government has responsibility for economic development, employability and skills, and the UK government has recently committed to devolving employment support.

We need to ensure that high-quality employment is accessible to all, for the benefit of the individuals affected by unemployment and our communities and economy as a whole.

Jobs and Skills

Social enterprises provide a unique solution to tackling unemployment amongst the most marginalised of our communities across Wales.

Creating localised solutions and responding to community needs, our social enterprises are providing vital work experience, work preparation, training, volunteering and employment opportunities that are uniquely person-centred, nurturing and adapted, so that no-one is excluded.

The 2025 mapping data suggests that social businesses tend to draw their employees from the local area, with 80% of respondent businesses' workforce living within 10 miles of their workplace, up from 78% in 2022 and 57% in 2020.

This ethos makes social enterprise a hugely important contributor to the personal development and growth of individuals that face often complex barriers to participation in main stream employment, enabling them in many cases to gain the confidence and skills to move on to the 'mainstream' opportunities.

Wales unfortunately has the highest disability employment gap in the UK at 30.9% (Anything's Achievable with the Right Support: Tackling the Disability Employment Gap, Senedd report, 2025).



To create the inclusive and sustainable jobs that are the solution to this crisis, we need a strong supply of new and growing social enterprises and social firms.

Social Enterprises are already leading the way in creating inclusive opportunities for people to enter the labour market.

**ELITE****Founded:
1994****Sector:
Employment**

Elite Supported Employment Agency Ltd, based in the south Wales valleys, has been assisting people with disabilities to obtain and maintain paid employment opportunities, within the community, via one to one support since 1994.

Relying on joint working with local businesses to provide vocational opportunities, they recognised the need to set up their own sustainable business, with the aim of creating paid employment or work opportunities for our candidates – ELITE Paper Solutions then launched in 2015.

The nature of the business ensures that there is a job that will meet every need, irrespective of the person's disability, making it a fully inclusive workplace. Their staff are of varying age, ability and equality of opportunity is a strong ethical focus.

Through using their services, they enable organisations to pursue their environmental responsibilities, exercise corporate social responsibility and be as cost effective as possible, in relation to their disposal of confidential document waste.

ELITE has provided opportunities for thousands of disabled people – providing training and support, getting them into employment and helping people to remain in work. They have grown to employ 125 people with a turnover of just under £4 million, winning contracts from the public and private sector.

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Many people are locked out of the labour market or struggling to find work for reasons other than disability.

Our 2025 Social Business Mapping Report found that 22% of social enterprise employers who had taken on new employees in the last 12 months reported that these included individuals who were unemployed immediately before taking up the post.

This reinforces the sector's role in providing employment opportunities for individuals who are further away from the labour market.

Social enterprises are flexible, nurturing and prioritise people and well-being.



Community Impact Initiative

**Founded:
2016**

**Sector:
Construction**

The Community Impact Initiative delivers innovative community regeneration projects to achieve positive socio-economic change across South Wales.

They support people from disadvantaged backgrounds to improve their health and wellbeing, build their confidence and self-esteem, learn new skills, achieve qualifications, and make positive life improvements through the renovation of empty properties in local communities.

They regenerate and invigorate community spaces, returning empty properties to the housing market, improving living standards, and providing an affordable and effective solution to the housing and empty property issues of Wales.

Tim joined the Building Resilience in Communities project in Glynneath, with previous experience in DIY and ready to pursue a career in property maintenance.

Despite having never held paid employment—only volunteering roles—he remained motivated. Tim felt that in the past, his Asperger's syndrome had affected his ability to secure paid work.

Even before he joined the project, Tim's interest in DIY and home improvement was clear, and he was determined to use his skills in a professional setting. Although he lived far from the project site and had to take two buses every day, Tim's unwavering commitment was evident—he was also always among the first to arrive each morning.

Throughout the project, Tim showed his incredible resolve and diligence in achieving significant milestones. He earned his First Aid certification, completed Health and Safety training, and passed the CSCS test.

Towards the end of his time with the project, Tim's efforts paid off, and he secured a full-time retail job.

Jobs and Skills

Our 2025 Social Business Mapping Report suggests there may be a trend where local authorities with greater deprivation may have a greater proportion of social businesses.

This pattern reflects the role of social businesses in providing employment and services in areas where mainstream economic activity is more limited, and where there are likely to be fewer private sector opportunities.

This also demonstrates the role of the social business sector in both generating economic activity and also contributing to inclusive local economies – particularly in areas facing socio-economic challenges.

Social Firms Wales, a member of the Social Enterprise Stakeholder Group, exists to support the development of Social Firms, a form of social enterprise that prioritises the creation of employment, volunteering and training opportunities for disabled and other disadvantaged groups.

A model recognised globally, Social Firms offer a vital opportunity for people who face multiple and deeply entrenched barriers to employment within the open labour market.

Social Firms Wales now have 130 members within Social Firms Wales who are committed to socially inclusive employment practice and collectively which provide hundreds of employment, training and volunteering opportunities to disabled people.

Health and Social Care

Social enterprise models should be central to our vision of making Wales a healthier nation.

Community-based social enterprises offer a proven model of creating healthier communities and delivering early-stage, sustainable, preventative approaches to tackling health inequalities and reducing pressure on public services.

Improving health and wellbeing remains the most commonly selected objective in our mapping of the sector, cited by over 80% of businesses – a rise from 75% in 2022 and just over half in 2020 – reflecting the sector's continued commitment to supporting physical and mental health.

Social enterprises across Wales are already providing essential services.

From innovative approaches to providing person-centred health care within communities, to bringing people together in community spaces to reduce isolation and loneliness, to improving wellbeing through the establishment of leisure and wellness services, or saving local leisure services so people can continue to access them in their own community.

A preventative approach to tackling the growing demand on NHS services is key and social prescribing demonstrates the potential for this in Wales – but for this to happen, we need a strong supply chain of mission-driven, community-based health and care providers.



**Community
Wellness CIC**

**Founded:
2021**

**Sector:
Health**

Community Wellness CIC provides a unique model of holistic care for vulnerable people in the community. It delivers a range of therapeutic group activities and interventions in safe community spaces that encourage peer support, collective learning and healing.

“Every week at Community Wellness, at Cefn Mawr, we have been supporting a community of people to improve their mental wellbeing.

Many of the people we see are, or have recently been, in crisis. People referred to us by their local GP surgery, who tell us that, without Community Wellness, they would be on a waiting list, waiting for vital mental health support.

Despite this urgent need, we find ourselves once more without the funding to carry on.”



In addition, we know community-led, co-operative and social enterprise models are key to a robust, people-centred social care sector.

Rooted in communities and operating with a focus on wellbeing, social enterprises in the health and social care sectors provide innovative services and solutions that complement, enhance and take pressure off public sector provision.

By reinvesting profits into services and communities, they ensure that care is high quality, sustainable, responsive, and tailored to the needs of individuals and families – providing enhanced outcomes for those who need support.



**Cartrefi Cymru
Co-operative**

**Founded:
1989**

**Sector:
Social Care**

Cartrefi Cymru Co-operative provide skilled and respectful colleagues to work in people's homes and local areas, promoting independence, social inclusion, and safety.

As a multi-stakeholder co-operative, they harness the talents and ideas of all their members to enhance communities for everyone. They are a vibrant collective with 1,200 employees, supporting 650 individuals and have thousands of friends, relatives, and advocates.

"Membership is open to the people we support, our employees, and community supporters. We have democratic structures that ensure members have a strong voice and real control. All members are encouraged to contribute and are valued for their time, talents, and community connections. We promote self-help and independence, both for individuals and for our organisation.

Being co-operative strengthens us in all these aspects, and retaining our charitable status ensures that our priority remains the people we support."

Health and Social Care

Better pay and working conditions for those working in co-operative and social enterprise providers within these vital sectors address the retention and recruitment crisis in care, with providers citing 'recruitment to grow not to replace'.

Demand for these services is only going to go up – the current system is in crisis whilst at the same time profits are being extracted out of Welsh communities by private providers.

We need a transformed social care sector with co-operative and social enterprise values at its heart – and now is the time to step up building the anchor institutions embedded in local communities that can lead on this.

Environment, Climate & Nature

To protect nature, reach sustainability targets and mitigate the impacts of climate change, we need to adapt the way our communities and economies work.

Embedding the triple-bottom line into business is a proven way of doing this.

In 2025, social businesses were again asked about the priority they place on mitigating the climate crisis and working towards net zero carbon emissions.

The findings suggest a stronger commitment overall, with 66% of businesses describing this as either a high or essential priority, up from 51% in 2022.

Notably, the proportion of businesses identifying climate action as a high priority has increased significantly, rising from 25% in 2022 to 43% in 2025, while those rating it an essential priority remained relatively steady at 23%.

There is significant potential for economic and social value to be created in a sustainable way in the green economy.

Supporting social enterprises with the triple-bottom line model to capitalise on these opportunities will maximise the economic, social and environmental value created, while ensuring that businesses are rooted in Welsh communities, building community wealth and creating sustainable economic growth.



Câr-Y-Môr

**Founded:
2019**

**Sector:
Environment**

Câr-Y-Môr is a pioneering project that exemplifies the potential of the Community Benefit Society model.

It was established in 2019 as a community benefit society operating a Regenerative Ocean Farm, growing seaweed and shellfish and is based at Clegyr Uchaf, St Davids, Pembrokeshire.

Two trial farms are located just off the coast near St Davids, at Porthlysgi and Carnarwig. It is the first commercial seaweed and shellfish farm in Wales. They have two main aims:

- To improve the coastal environment through regenerative ocean farming, and;
- To improve the wellbeing of the local community through job creation, supply of fresh local seafood, and environmental restoration.



They are already making a huge impact. Câr-y-Môr was named as the Social Enterprise of the Year at the Social Business Wales Awards 2023, after the judges were impressed with its commitment to making a positive impact on the Welsh coastline and the local community, and their innovative approach to running a business that puts people and community at its core.

As well as creating innovative businesses in the green economy, to achieve our ambitions we need to ensure that businesses across all sectors are adopting green practices. The triple-bottom line model means that social enterprises are best placed to do this.

At the same time as prioritising economic sustainability and achieving their social mission, social enterprises lead the way in adopting green ways of working.



**Creating
Enterprise**

**Founded:
2015**

**Sector:
Construction**

Creating Enterprise won the Social Enterprise Innovation of the Year Awards at the 2023 Social Business Wales Awards. A subsidiary of Cartrefi Conwy, they started trading in 2015 and have quickly grown into the social contractor of choice for North Wales.

In November 2020, they were named as the Fastest Growing Company in Wales. This team is the perfect example of how social enterprise can deliver on its three ambitions: business success, environmental sustainability, and helping people.

They build environmentally friendly homes using sustainable materials and are innovative in finding new ways to lower their carbon footprint, such as by sourcing eighty percent of its timber from Wales and constructing its frames onsite.

As well as having an environmental mission, it has a social mission to create well-paid, full-time employment opportunities for the local community it serves. Its Creating Futures Academy helps local people find and access training, volunteering, and employment opportunities.

Education

Entrepreneurial skills are critical for developing innovative solutions to Wales' challenges, from eradicating poverty to transitioning to a green economy and safeguarding the Welsh language.

Teaching students how to identify community needs and develop sustainable, co-operative solutions fosters creativity, critical thinking, and resilience. These attributes are indispensable for empowering young people to contribute meaningfully to Wales' economy and society and be active participants in the labour market of the future.

By embedding social enterprise into education, we can prepare the next generation to lead initiatives that address climate change, economic inequality, and cultural preservation.

Integrating social enterprise and co-operative models within the curriculum provides an opportunity to nurture entrepreneurial skills that prioritise community well-being and sustainability.

By expanding initiatives such as the Robert Owen pilot project which, through Welsh Government funding, developed resources about co-operatives and social businesses to inspire awareness amongst young people, Welsh schools can benefit from tailored resources and content that enable teachers to inspire students with real-world applications of social entrepreneurship.

Social enterprises also serve as a powerful bridge between education and community engagement. Schools and colleges that embrace social enterprise can connect students with their local communities, offering practical opportunities to learn through active participation in social projects.

This approach not only enhances students' understanding of their communities but also builds a sense of pride and responsibility – supporting the Cynefin aspect of the curriculum which seeks to connect learners to the place where they feel they belong, where the people and the landscape around us are.

The Welsh Baccalaureate could provide an ideal opportunity to scale this. Furthermore, social enterprises create inclusive learning environments that cater to diverse talents and abilities, making education more accessible and equitable.

These are all values at the core of the new Welsh curriculum and seeing the social enterprise sector as an asset in its development is a clear opportunity.



Romodels

**Founded:
2022**

**Sector:
Education**

Romodels believe in a world where all children have the freedom to dream and the opportunity to reach their full potential. They provide early immersion into dynamic future careers and skillsets.

Their aim is to inspire primary-aged children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, by helping young learners discover people in innovative careers.

They believe that by introducing learners to people tackling global challenges, working in future-focused fields like sustainability, technology, and engineering, we can help them develop the skills of the future.

By showcasing Romodels from across Wales, who look like them or come from similar backgrounds, or are breaking stereotypes, they aim to open up a world of future career possibilities.

They are already working with 50 schools across Wales and want to reach 10,000 children this year. They want other social enterprises to join them in this mission:

"Romodels thrives through collaboration, and we're calling on socially-led firms across Wales to get involved by sharing their stories and expertise.

If you're a mission-led business, let's work together to bring more Romodels (role models) into classrooms and shape a brighter future for all children".

Cymraeg

Developing co-operatives and social enterprises that have the Welsh language at their heart is essential for creating robust economic foundations in communities where Welsh is a thriving community language.

These enterprises provide meaningful work opportunities for Welsh speakers, enabling them to remain in or return to majority Welsh-speaking areas.

By anchoring their operations in local communities, co-operatives and social enterprises combine an entrepreneurial mindset with community-centered values, ensuring long-term sustainability for both the economy and the language.

The growth of the social enterprise sector in Gwynedd as a vital part of the economy and people's lives demonstrates the significant value the Welsh language can have as an economic asset – bringing people together, creating networks of pro-active individuals and businesses, and anchoring decision-making in communities.

The Perthyn project has demonstrated the transformative impact of early-stage seed funding in empowering community-led initiatives in Welsh-speaking areas.

By expanding this model, we can unlock further potential across Wales, not only in communities where the Welsh language is strong but also in areas where it is not spoken by the majority.

Cymraeg

Supporting new social enterprises in these communities will create new opportunities for people to learn, use, and share the Welsh language, fostering its growth and normalising its everyday use.

Moreover, social enterprises are uniquely positioned to align with the cultural and linguistic goals of Welsh communities.

They bridge economic development with cultural preservation, promoting an inclusive approach to the future of the Welsh language.

Expanding support for these enterprises and pro-actively developing opportunities for new social enterprises will encourage innovative projects that connect economic productivity with our language, culture and heritage.



**Menter yr
Eagles**

**Founded:
2023**

**Sector:
Community Benefit**

Menter yr Eagles is a Community Benefit Society developing community-led projects to meet the needs of the local area in Llanuwchllyn.

The community is feeling the effects of the second homes and holiday homes crisis, seeing extremely high numbers of visitors over the summer but a huge drop over the winter. House prices have risen so far that they are out of reach of local people, especially the younger generation, threatening the future of the language.

The group was formed in response to the sale of Tafarn yr Eagles, a pub which is a vital local asset. In the summer of 2023, they launched their share offer to raise money to buy the pub, and had a hugely positive response.

Now, the group offers a variety of essential services to the local community, including the pub, a restaurant and a local shop. They are developing further initiatives – including exploring community-led housing.



**Hen Ysgol Bodorgan
– Malltraeth Ymlaen**

**Founded:
2006**

**Sector:
Community Benefit**

Malltraeth Ymlaen is a social enterprise in Aberffraw, in the Bodorgan area of Ynys Mon, which is running a community centre in the old Ysgol Bodorgan building.

Statistics demonstrate the challenge to the Welsh language in this area – the 2021 census showed that 55% of people in the area speak Welsh, a drop of 12.7% since 2011.

A significant reason for this drop is the rise of people moving into the area, particularly buying second homes. This group received Perthyn support in order to offer accredited Welsh language courses, community events in Welsh and fully-translated materials.

The space is now a successful community asset, bringing people from all communities and Welsh language abilities together to connect and thrive in Welsh.

Culture

By promoting community-owned and social enterprise models in the arts and cultural sectors we can address pressing challenges such as saving vital community assets, preserving vital venues and creating diverse, inclusive businesses.

The proportion of social businesses promoting culture, heritage or the Welsh language has nearly doubled over five years, rising from 24% in 2020 to 47% in 2025.

Similarly, the percentage of businesses providing access to services has grown substantially, from 27% in 2020 to 50% in 2025.

Community-owned social enterprises offer a sustainable solution for safeguarding arts and culture spaces that might otherwise be lost.

By anchoring these spaces in the hands of local people, they remain vibrant hubs for creativity and connection.



Galeri

**Founded:
1992**

**Sector:
Performing Arts**

Galeri is a thriving social enterprise that plays a central role in Caernarfon's cultural life.

It is a multi-purpose arts venue including a theatre, cinema, gallery spaces, and creative workspaces. Galeri supports local artists, hosts diverse events, and showcases Welsh language and culture.

Profits are reinvested into community projects and maintaining affordable access to the arts.

It exemplifies how social enterprises can sustain vibrant cultural ecosystems while contributing to local regeneration and community wellbeing through creativity and participation.

Culture

Inclusive access to culture and the arts is essential for fostering a society that values creativity.

Social enterprises are uniquely positioned to champion this inclusivity by breaking down barriers to participation.

Whether through outreach programs or creating affordable opportunities, these organisations ensure that culture remains accessible to everyone, regardless of their circumstances.

Additionally, the arts sector faces significant challenges for self-employed and freelance workers, who often struggle with precarious working conditions and limited support networks.

Co-operative solutions, such as freelancer co-operatives or shared resource hubs, offer a way forward by providing shared services, collective bargaining power, and mutual support.

By enabling artists and creatives to pool resources and collaborate, these models create more stable and resilient careers in the arts.

The next Welsh Government should seek opportunities to develop and scale these co-operative initiatives, ensuring that Wales' creative workforce has the tools to succeed.



Beacons Cymru

**Founded:
2010**

**Sector:
Performing Arts**

At the 2024 Social Business Wales Awards, Beacons Cymru were nominated for the One to Watch Award.

The South Wales Valleys-based organisation identifies and nurtures young musical talent right across Wales, and creates opportunities for young people in the music industry, regardless of background or circumstances.

Elan Evans, Project Manager at Beacons, said:

“What we’re always trying to do is give young people the skills to learn how to be a sound technician, how to be a self-sustaining artist, how to be a project manager... They then take those skills away with them and organise events, or start new projects in their communities. That’s what’s important to see.”

Social enterprises are leading the way and being pro-active in addressing systemic under-representation of diverse communities in the creative industries.



Tân Cerdd

**Founded:
2020**

**Sector:
Performing Arts**

Tân Cerdd is a Black-led social enterprise founded in 2020 to tackle the under-representation of Black artists in Wales. Co-founded by vocalist Dionne Bennett, it emerged in response to the Black Lives Matter movement, with a mission to amplify Black voices and decolonise the Welsh music and arts scene.

Operating as a Community Interest Company, Tân Cerdd creates platforms for Black, Asian, multi-ethnic, and working-class artists to perform, collaborate, and thrive.

Its flagship activity is the monthly Neo-Soul Jam at Chapter Arts Centre in Cardiff, which provides an open, supportive space for musicians to showcase their talent.

They lead prominent Black History Month events, such as Windrush @ 75, and co-produce artist showcases and development workshops with institutions like Brecon Jazz Festival and Wales Millennium Centre.

Through mentoring, performances, and cultural events, Tân Cerdd empowers artists and reshapes the Welsh cultural landscape. Tân Cerdd stands as a powerful example of how social enterprise can drive cultural inclusion and systemic change.

Supporting the social enterprise sector within arts and culture is a vital step toward building a vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive creative economy. By committing to this agenda, Welsh political parties can empower communities, protect cultural heritage, and ensure that the arts continue to thrive as a cornerstone of Welsh identity and society.

Communities & Inclusion

Social enterprises are pivotal to creating united, inclusive communities.

Social enterprises across Wales have providing services and activities and improving their community at the heart of their mission, and because social enterprises are run by people embedded in the local area, they know exactly what will work in their community to bring people together and create community cohesion.

Social enterprises are experts at finding innovative, financially-sustainable means of providing services to those who need them.



Get The Boys a Lift

Founded: 2019

Sector: Mental Health

Get The Boys A Lift, based in Haverfordwest, is a dynamic community-focused organisation launched by a group of friends which provides free mental health support to the people of Pembrokeshire while promoting open discussions about mental wellbeing.

The team run a clothing and coffee shop in Haverfordwest called 'Our Place', offering a unique café experience where visitors can chat to counsellors and make new friends. The project has gone from strength to strength since 2016, now offering a mix of in-person and online counselling services to anyone over 17.

At the heart of GTBAL's work is a focus on community-based activities that bring people together, regardless of background or circumstance. Recognising the challenges faced by marginalised groups, the organisation provides targeted support in key areas such as health and well-being, employment readiness, and social integration.

Marginalised communities are more adversely affected by current social and economic inequalities. We are seeing many examples of social entrepreneurs with lived experience directly tackling issues which affect them, whether this be due to discrimination, disability, poverty and/or past trauma.



Obehi's

**Founded:
2019**

**Sector:
Retail**

Omo established Obehi's, Wrexham's first African community shop, offering traditional fresh African produce to help the African community who recently moved to the area feel at home.

Omo arrived in Wrexham with her family in 2011, escaping domestic abuse with the support of Women's Aid.

Omo was homesick at first and felt that having traditional African food and culture would have brought her comfort, but there was no support in the local area.

Determined to prevent a growing African community from feeling the same way, Omo decided to make a difference for them. In 2019, Omo secured funding to begin delivering African food to families who couldn't afford to travel to shops because most of the African community didn't have recourse to public funds.

The nearest shop was over an hour away in Liverpool, but Omo made trips to as far as London too.

As the number of families benefiting quickly grew, Omo realised she needed a more sustainable solution. Omo opened Wrexham's very own African community market in 2023, offering fresh food and vegetables imported weekly from Africa. Omo has even introduced health products into the store by popular demand.

The African community in Wrexham gained a sense of community which didn't exist before the shop opened. Several jobs have also been created and everyone in the community can explore the shop to access African culture.

A diverse mix of these social enterprises offering these opportunities that improve wellbeing, foster pride in the local area and build relationships of trust will be essential to ensuring the tight-knit communities we have always associated with Wales remain for the next generation.

How to make Wales a social enterprise nation

To achieve our goal of making Wales the best place in the world to start and grow a social enterprise, and for social enterprise to be the business model of choice in Wales, we need to be radical.

We need social enterprise to be at the heart of Welsh Government policy.

We need the existing sector and the thousands of passionate, entrepreneurial people working in it to be considered vital assets as we work together to build the Wales we want to see.

We need new opportunities for the triple-bottom line, mission-led business models to be pro-actively discovered and acted on.

As the Social Enterprise Stakeholder Group, our experience of working with the sector every day has told us that the following policy recommendations will be essential to achieving that vision.

Our Recommendations

Expand and strengthen specialist business support tailored to the needs of social enterprise

Invest in proactive market development of the social enterprise sector.

Continue to invest in specific funding streams to support social enterprises to explore, start and grow.

Embed a community wealth building approach in procurement and commissioning practices to create the conditions for sustainable, inclusive growth.

Introduce a Community Ownership and Empowerment Act that gives social enterprises the opportunity to protect community assets

Foster a new spirit of social entrepreneurialism in the next generation by embedding social enterprise, wellbeing economics and study of the Welsh economy into the curriculum and in Welsh universities and colleges.

Expand and strengthen specialist business support tailored to the needs of social enterprise

Specialist business support for these enterprises has been identified by the businesses themselves as being crucial to their growth.

The support provided through Social Business Wales working in collaboration with other providers has helped these businesses to grow, created hundreds of good quality jobs and safeguarded many others.

An independent evaluation of Social Business Wales highlighted an “ongoing need for specialised support for the social business sector, recognising the multi-stakeholder environments and specific legal, constitutional and financial arrangements that have wide-reaching implications for the successful operational of social businesses”.

In the 2025 Social Business Wales mapping report, 67% of social businesses indicated that they would find dedicated business support useful to a large extent. A further 24% said they would find it useful to some extent, suggesting that nearly all respondents see some value in support that is designed specifically for the sector.

The key requirement for specialist social enterprise support is that advisors have a specialist understanding of the characteristics of social enterprises – that they are multi-stakeholder, have a triple bottom line, differing legal structures and alternative funding options.

This specialist support must be available to social businesses at all stages of the business cycle.



This means from support to nascent entrepreneurs who have just had a new idea, to established firms who need help through challenging times, to businesses who are seeking to diversify and grow.

“The support from Social Business Wales has been invaluable in establishing our business focus, from their hands on practical support to their signposting skills in areas of expertise.

Their accessibility has been second to none, assisting and often motivating us in our development. I believe their support is not only beneficial to new, fledgling business, but also those that are established facing challenges, aiding them to implement solutions” – Elite Paper Solutions

Invest in proactive market development of the social enterprise sector.

As well as providing high-quality specialist business support to social entrepreneurs and social businesses, we need to be proactive in identifying market opportunities for social business models and convene stakeholders (public, private and third sector) who can make things happen to help meet economic, environmental and social demand.

Opportunities for growth-focused, economically sustainable social businesses exist across different sectors, communities and supply chains.

Identifying these opportunities requires specialist development capacity embedded in communities and sectors, whether that's the green economy, food production, manufacturing, construction, finance, and much more.

To make social enterprise the business model of choice in Wales, we need to be proactive in spotting and capitalising on these opportunities.

In 2022, Audit Wales published 'Social Enterprises – A Missed Opportunity', which highlighted that social enterprises need to be better utilised by local authorities to maximise their impact for the people and communities they serve.

Investment in the capacity to do this is key.

Welsh Government investment in this capacity through a pro-active, expert-led market development hub will be key to maximising the potential of the social business model and its impact on people, planet and profit within communities.

Continue to invest in specific funding streams to support social enterprises to explore, start and grow.

Social enterprises rely on a funding matrix of revenue generation, grant and loans and the financial needs of the sector are not being met by commercial banks and lenders.

We therefore call for the continuation and diversification of funding to social investors to enable them to continue to meet the financial needs of the sector in Wales.

As in 2022, access to grant funding is the most widely reported barrier to growth for businesses in the sector, affecting over half of respondents.

This suggests that competition for funding remains high, while many businesses continue to operate with limited capacity to plan for growth alongside delivery.

The sector requires more flexible and accessible financial support from early-stage seed corn funding, through growth to scaling, targeting impact rather than outputs.

Further consideration should also be given to the use of patient capital, as well as the specific needs of the sector that can be met; ensuring investment is taken up by under-represented groups.

Embed a community wealth building approach in procurement and commissioning practices to create the conditions for sustainable, inclusive growth.

Community Wealth Building is a proven economic development concept that will give Welsh communities the best route to sustainable and inclusive prosperity.

It means growing local economies by keeping money, jobs, and ownership rooted in communities, and using public assets and spending to support fair work, local and democratic ownership, and the triple-bottom line model.

As part of its commitment to community wealth building, the next Welsh Government should set ambitious but achievable targets for the percentage of public procurement going to social enterprises, to ensure public bodies actively nurture social enterprise supply chains and work with local social enterprises to ensure commissioning processes are accessible.

It is no longer sufficient to say that social enterprises are valued, but remain responsive to an under-developed supply chain.

Wales has made many positive steps in recognising social value and embedding it within procurement processes.

Supporting capacity to reform procurement processes to develop understanding of social value and community wealth building remains key.

It is clear that complex commissioning processes are a significant barrier to small-scale but high-impact social enterprises being able to deliver their services in a sustainable way.

Reforming these processes to support social enterprises to do their work is vital.

Introduce a Community Ownership and Empowerment Act that gives social enterprises the opportunity to protect community assets

The Welsh Government should introduce a Community Ownership Act to empower social enterprises to take over land and assets from both public and private sectors, ensuring they remain valuable community resources.

Many essential spaces—pubs, shops, cultural venues, and green spaces—face closure or loss of local ownership, threatening local services and identity.

By granting community-led and community-owned initiatives first refusal and financial support, the Act would safeguard assets for long-term community benefit, fostering economic resilience and local prosperity.

Local economies should be re-balanced so communities have the opportunity to own land and assets to create new social enterprises that can build community wealth and improve the wellbeing of local people.

Scotland's Community Right to Buy has demonstrated success and England is pressing ahead; Wales must act now to protect social infrastructure and create a fairer, more sustainable economy for future generations.

We cannot risk falling further behind.

The Welsh Government should invest in dual specialist support services, enabling both the sellers / transferers and buyers / transferors to be better prepared and better able to manage the processes around community asset transfer or acquisition.

Foster a new spirit of social entrepreneurialism in the next generation by embedding social enterprise, wellbeing economics and study of the Welsh economy into the curriculum and in Welsh universities and colleges.

Equipping young people with the skills and mindset to create businesses that prioritise social and environmental impact will drive a fairer, more resilient economy.

Teaching these principles in schools, colleges, and universities will inspire future leaders to build enterprises that address local challenges and strengthen communities.

We can keep more young people in our local communities by empowering them to develop the solutions to the challenges we face.

Work with us

The Social Enterprise Stakeholder Group is committed to Transforming Wales through Social Enterprise and delivering our Ten Year Vision and Action Plan.

We work with the social enterprise sector every day and are committed to embedding the voice of the sector in our work and supporting a successful and impactful social enterprise sector in Wales.

If you have any questions, or would like to work with us to transform Wales through social enterprise, please get in touch with our Policy and Engagement Officer Daniel Roberts via dan.roberts@cwmpas.coop.

