



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Report on the Evaluation of Welsh Government's Foundational Economy Projects (2023–2025)

Evaluation of Foundational Economy Projects (2023–2025)

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Evaluation of Foundational Economy Projects (2023–2025)

1. Introduction

The Welsh Government has worked with stakeholders and delivered a diverse range of projects across Wales during 2023-2025, aimed at strengthening key Foundational Economy (FoEc) sectors. The FoEc team has developed and led on a series of initiatives, linking with relevant policy officials as needed, with a focus on collectively strengthening local supply chains, creating / safeguarding jobs, promoting fair work, fostering collaboration and driving innovation.

The term 'foundational economy' refers to the sectors of the economy that provide the goods and services that underpin everyday life - sectors the Welsh Government has a strategic focus on are care and health services (including social care and childcare), management of social housing, construction of residential and commercial buildings, energy and utilities, food, high street retail and services, tourism and public transport.

These sectors account for 51% of employees in Wales, 47% of overall turnover and 60% of the businesses headquartered in Wales. There are 65,000 businesses (60% of all business in Wales) which operate within the Foundational Economy.

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning issued a Written Statement in April 2025, announcing a new Foundational Economy Mission Statement:

[Written Statement: Publication of Foundational Economy Mission Statement \(28 April 2025\) | GOV.WALES](#)

The Foundational Economy objectives we aim to support through the Mission are:-

- Identify and support opportunities for more jobs, better jobs, greener jobs and promote fair work, including good pay, representation, security, and opportunity to progress.
- Increase 'household liveability' by facilitating rising wages through promotion schemes such as Real Living Wage, helping increase the affordability of foundational essentials to support universal access to high quality goods and services.
- Build local supply chains to keep people, skills and wealth in Wales.
- Contribute towards addressing the climate and nature emergencies.
- Encourage collaborative innovation and experimentation to improve basic goods and services, especially where these build resilient social infrastructure, such as through cooperative and community-owned projects.

These objectives were embedded across all the Foundational Economy projects delivered.

An evaluation exercise has been undertaken by the Foundational Economy team in Welsh Government, for projects delivered during 2023-2025 and this report summarises the outcomes of that, demonstrating that value for money and return on investment (ROI) was achieved, reflecting on the effectiveness of the projects, what worked well, what didn't, any lessons learned and to highlight the positive outcomes of the projects.

2. Organisations funded

20 organisations were funded during 2023/24 and 2024/25 covering a range of Welsh businesses, Local Authorities and academia (see Annex 1 for a full list of organisations and project summaries).

3. The funding process

The first tranche of projects in 2023 was run under the Backing Local Firms Fund (BLFF), which was a Programme for Government commitment at the time, being “to build on our approach to the Foundational Economy and develop a Backing Local Firms Fund to support local businesses”. By 2024-25, the BLFF was drawn to a close and some projects continued under FoEc funding and Innovation funding.

An open call for project proposals was issued to public sector organisations, businesses and third sector firms in 2023, setting out the key criteria for supporting FoEc objectives that needed to be demonstrated. 14 organisations were successful in receiving FoEc funding. The Welsh Government's Innovation team were able to fund a further 5 proposals, enabling us to support as many organisations as possible under the BLFF banner.

There were 21 projects covering 3 key FoEc sectors, with 15 in Food, 5 in housing / construction and 1 focused on driving FoEc innovation.

The types of businesses supported included 7 social enterprises, 6 limited firms, 3 non-profit organisations, 3 Local Authorities and 1 Higher Education Institution (HEI).

Funding was allocated via grant award for 20 of the projects and 1 food project was delivered via a 3-year contract through the procurement route, following a mini-competition within Welsh Government's Food Division's Food Sector Development Framework Agreement.

For the grant funded projects, targets, objectives and payment profiles were agreed with all project leads, with payment usually being made quarterly in arrears. Grant award letters were issued and returned, authorised by two signatories.

Foundational Economy officials held regular progress update meetings with project leads to ensure everything was progressing as expected. Project leads submitted regular claims to the Monitoring Team for processing and payment, along with a progress report showing the evidence set out in the grant award letter. The Monitoring Team reviewed the claim and accompanying evidence and then once satisfied, released funds to the organisations.

4. Funding amounts

Funding for the 15 projects from the FoEc budget totalled £1,402,376.50 and £1,397,453.38 was claimed. The 3-year contract awarded via the procurement route totalled £190,000. It is pleasing to report that all projects ran to budget and achieved their agreed targets, with one project coming in slightly under budget.

2 of the food projects supplemented the FoEc funding with additional monies totalling £4,873.01, one from their own budget and the other from an alternative funding source.

The Welsh Government's Innovation team allocated additional funding of £1,030,688 to enable 5 further projects to be supported. 2 of the projects were able to successfully deliver against all objectives and fully utilise the award of funding. There were some challenges that affected delivery timescales for 3 of the projects, resulting in revised delivery plans and funding used. Overall, a total of £692,703.62 of the funding was utilised. 3 of the supported organisations have continued dialogue with the Innovation team about the possibility of accessing further support to continue their innovation activity.

5. The claims process

It is pleasing to see the majority of the organisations found the claims process worked well and was straightforward. One food firm commented it was “very satisfactory, adopting a flexible approach, sympathetic to the dynamic needs of the projects.”

6 businesses reported some delays in claims being processed and reimbursement being made, due to staff shortages and lack of communication in the Monitoring Team. This caused some difficulties, delays and put a strain on resources. One small food business described the process as “exhausting, time-consuming and negative”.

6. Job creation and retention

All 19 organisations that received funding support Fair Work and pay the Real Living Wage (RLW). 7 organisations are RLW Accredited and one social business paid the RLW but felt accreditation was unnecessary.

It is pleasing to see that all the organisations, with the exception of 2, reported that no job losses occurred as a result of the funding ending. The 2 were food projects, where a one-year project officer appointed as a specialist role to help with delivery role, ended when the project ended in March 2025; the other saw 0.4 FTE x 2 jobs, appointed for project delivery, lost when the funding ended.

Multiple roles were created across the projects in specialist support, community engagement, project management and technical support. The projects were successful in directly creating or safeguarding 1,352 jobs / work placements, including:

- 1,119 jobs retained via the food accreditation grant scheme ran by Mentera.

- 120 learners placed in low-carbon work experience programmes through Cyfle, with 80% progressing into employment or apprenticeships.
- 120 additional jobs reported as created through supporting 20 contractors to work towards PAS2030 accreditation, a mandatory requirement for retrofitting energy efficient housing products.
- 8 Welsh organic producers on farms through school meal vegetable sourcing, led by Food Sense Wales and supported by Castell Howell, providing them with an income of £34,333 and an estimated £127,034 of social, economic and environmental benefit to Wales. 2 FTE roles supported in Carmarthenshire Council, both of which have continued since end of project.
- 2 members of staff for Cardiff Council's Food Hour project - dietetic lead and dietetic assistant practitioner.
- 6 jobs retained at the HEI through development of the Foundational Economy Innovation Networks to promote innovation amongst Welsh businesses.
- 1 full time job created at Menter Mon through their Tech Tyfu project.
- A dedicated Community of Practice manager was appointed for the housing/construction project and remains employed, being integral to their ongoing development.

7. Skills developed through projects

It is very pleasing to see that all organisations reported the projects helped them gain a wide range of skills, from project management / planning, mentoring and facilitation skills to mentoring, knowledge transfer, communications, marketing. Specific examples include:-

Food projects:-

- Mentera ran a grant scheme that supported 52 Welsh food firms achieve SALSA and Micron2, accreditation required for schools and hospitals food supply. This helped retain 1119 jobs and enabled long-term growth and sustainability.
- The project lead of Cookalong Clwb has qualified as a NHS Community Nutrition Specialist in order to have a more specialised knowledge of food in communities and now understands that the earlier we engage children with food, empower them with understanding of ingredients, we can negate a number of the NHS interventions for health and food.
- Several of the food projects reported a better understanding and knowledge of public sector food supply and infrastructure, along with how to better connect and support growers, public sector organisations and wholesalers. Aligned with that, a better understanding of how local supply chains work and the challenges and solutions therein was also achieved.
- BIC Innovation developed deeper economic knowledge through engagement with Cardiff University economist on their Welsh Food Index.
- Two managers at Well Fed have significantly improved their project management skills through the project.

- Closer working with the Welsh organic horticulture sector increased several food projects understanding of crucial aspects like harvest alignment, yields, forecasting and new product development.
- Social Farms and Gardens gained an increased awareness of the barriers horticultural farms face and how to overcome these barriers, along with increased awareness of how the planning system works and what is within its gift. Furthermore, there is better interpretation on permitted development rights and what needs planning permission in Wales.
- Carmarthenshire Council supported 'Food Sustainability Training' for Council Catering Staff Management and subsequent training for front-line catering staff. They also gained skills required to utilise Primary Food Products (Fresh) that supports the Foundational Economy through shorter supply chains.

Housing and construction projects:-

- NetRet Group supported 24 Welsh SMEs in preparing for PAS 2030:2023 certification, positioning them to lead in retrofit and decarbonisation services. Through digital onboarding, tailored training plans, and comprehensive pre-audit support, NetRet ensured that participating contractors were audit-ready and aligned with UKAS standards.
- Cwmpas reported the project provided a platform for learning of the synergy between sustainable procurement and development and the mechanisms for delivering social value development.
- SimplyDo indicated their project was very useful in supporting the creation of underpinning processes to support future housing organisations in innovation activity, providing sector experience and learning on working with these organisations. The engagement with these audiences also provided learning of how to market effectively to foundational economy suppliers across Wales. Also developed geovisualisation capability within the platform to present results of research demonstrating accurate mapping of the business community.
- One of the housing projects improved organisational capacity, increasing their ability to take on additional projects by building a pipeline of skilled, work-ready individuals.
- WoodKnowledge Wales advised the project provided a platform for learning of the synergy between sustainable procurement and development and the mechanisms for delivering social value development.
- Cyfle reported the project led to extensive skills building across 4 key areas:-
 - **Enhanced Workforce Capability** - By hosting participants on structured placements, Cyfle staff have had opportunities to mentor, coach, and supervise, strengthening their leadership, communication and management skills. Teams have developed greater adaptability by integrating trainees into live projects and ensuring consistent quality and safety standards.
 - **Knowledge Transfer & Upskilling** - Experienced colleagues have been encouraged to share technical expertise in a practical setting, reinforcing their own knowledge while providing real-world training to new entrants. Cyfle has broadened its exposure to the latest industry practices, ensuring their workforce

remains up to date with evolving construction methods and sustainability requirements.

- **Improved Organisational Capacity** - The project has increased their ability to take on additional projects by building a pipeline of skilled, work-ready individuals. Staff have gained experience in project planning, induction, and monitoring processes, helping Cyufle refine their internal systems for workforce development.
- **Stronger Team Culture** - Hosting work experience participants has fostered a culture of inclusivity, mentorship, and professional growth.

Innovation project:-

- The FEIN project improved innovation and circular economy knowledge and skills of participants in the programme as well as helping build the skills of the delivery team as they adapted the programme to a majority private sector audience.
- The project also enabled the finance and administration assistant to improve finance and numerical skills as they had previously focused on admin responsibilities primarily.

8. Apprenticeships and work placements

The projects resulted in a range of apprenticeships, mentoring, and training programmes being widely implemented, building future workforce capacity and supporting Net Zero goals, including:-

Food projects:-

- Carmarthenshire Council has established a Volunteering Operations and work is currently under-way to support an Apprenticeships Programme in collaboration with other Education providers locally.
- Menter Mon took on an Environmental Science student for one week.
- Mentera provide a range of apprenticeships and work placements including an A Level student who was provided work experience through the Food Funding Accreditation Scheme. The student was able to gain experience in project management and marketing and since the project end has joined the team full-time as a marketing trainee.
- Castell Howell has sponsored and supported horticulture projects with the Young Farmers Federation and a junior Agri Academy (with Farming Connect).

Housing/construction projects:-

- 120 young people completed the on-site placement and workplace experience programme with Cyfle Building Skills, including careers and CV writing workshops, mentoring workshops, Net-Zero workshops and a 10-day onsite placement at one of 60 engaged employers across Wales.
- Of the 120 Cyfle candidates, 80% of participants have gone on to secure an apprenticeship scheme or employment.

- One of Cyfle's 120 apprentices was recognised at the prestigious Youthbuild 2024 Awards in London where he received an award in the 14–18-year-old category for Outstanding Achievements.
- As a result of the Communities of Practice, Woodknowledge Wales have been able to help people access training. With skills, training and recruitment being a prevalent topic at all CoPs, Wood Knowledge Wales has refocused their work to include 'understanding Gen-Z' and future-proofing the workforce. As a result, a plenary and several breakout sessions have been dedicated to education, skills and recruitment at WoodBUILD 2025.

9. What worked well

Many of the businesses reported that partnership working, collaboration, stakeholder engagement and improving links through supply chains were very beneficial for project success. Specific examples include:-

Food projects:-

- Social Farms and Gardens felt their project success was helped by a "large and committed partnership" in developing new planning guidance to drive increased horticulture and effective land use in Wales. This approach they felt was wholly innovative and "will create a ripple effect for years to come".
- The Food Community of Practice, facilitated by Cynnal Cymru, helped bring people not normally in the same room together and sparked connections, innovation and support between projects eg members were able to test the new 'Assured Growing Toolbox' for growers, developed by the Development Trust Association and also worked together to develop a new Growers' Standard. See section 14 for further information on the Food Community of Practice.
- Welsh Veg in Schools project found partnership working and having a variety of funding sources worked well. They also appreciated the flexibility to move budget between budget lines and facilitated the smooth running of a project that had many variables that weren't under direct control (e.g. the weather!).
- Castell Howell appreciated the 'learning by doing' approach, solving problems as they arose.
- The Larder Cymru project saw a new North Wales Procurement Roundtable formed, which proved very beneficial to help LAs network and achieve economies of scale with key suppliers - including Harlech – and it's pleasing to see these roundtable meetings are still taking place. This project also demonstrated how improving relationships between procurement managers, catering officers and local suppliers can result in more Welsh produce on school menus, with Caerphilly Council nearly doubling its spend on Welsh school food following menu-re-design.
- Cookalong Clwb found involving school children in menu development, tasting and food education was also reported by several food projects as having worked very well.
- The food projects help bust the myth that public procurement is a barrier to local sourcing. There are flexibilities in the legislation for innovation and local approaches that build in social value - projects such as Welsh Veg in Schools, Larder Cymru and

Well Fed demonstrate how effective this can be. Supply chain interventions worked very well, whereby Local Authorities and Health Boards would work within contractual arrangements and engage wholesalers to make switches to make more Welsh food available through frameworks.

- Cardiff Council's Food Hour project found building on existing evidence-based training, ensuring consistency and credibility in delivery, worked well for them, along with strong engagement throughout the consultation process, with active participation from stakeholders.
- Many organisations reported building new skills through the projects both across the organisation and with partners was very beneficial. Promoting Wales and Welsh produce nationally has also paid dividends. Several projects appreciated how the FoEc funding enabled them to 'learn by doing' and solving problems as they arose.

Housing/construction projects:-

- One of the housing projects found their initial recruitment and engagement with project partners worked well, as some partners were 'cold' to the process. This proved successful in helping them find a totally Welsh supply chain across 3 procurement challenges and develop processes for unearthing and verifying diverse and 'unseen' suppliers in local economies around Wales. The 'active facilitation' approach of the Cwmpas project was found to be very beneficial and enabled getting the right people in the room to explore challenges/opportunities and develop measurable actions. This approach led directly to the establishment of communities of practice, jointly owned by TAYC and Wood Knowledge Wales, who supported the Team to carry out more work once the project funding from WG had ended.
- Communities of Practice developed by Tai Ar y Cyd (TAYC) and Wood Knowledge Wales facilitated knowledge sharing among over 95 organisations in timber and housing sectors.
- Cyfle found its mentoring and support scheme crucial in helping address the risk of non-completion of the programme, allowing them to identify any problems and provide intervention at the earliest opportunity (as a result only one candidate left the programme due to personal circumstances). The scheme's success also importantly helped develop skills in young people in rural regions, providing youngsters with the opportunity to gain experience in the built environment, helping lead to apprenticeships and employment.
- Wood Knowledge Wales found site visits to member organisations helped with learning from each other and gaining new perspectives eg social housing developers and architects & designers visiting timber frame manufacturers to gain a better understanding of timber systems. Their Community of Practice was also invaluable in enabling Wood Knowledge Wales to make use of synergies between the different communities of practice, organise events around common topics and ongoing projects. It has also supported the further development of the groups, in particular their membership growth and output, through times of limited engagement.

Innovation Project:-

- Cardiff Met found that additional reach was achieved through an end of project dissemination event, sponsored by Public Health Wales and Welsh Government, entitled 'Innovations in Circular Economy - Learning from Welsh Organisations'.
- This attracted over 50 participants and featured witness testimonies from participant organisations, who confirmed the inspirational and motivational value of FEIN, as measured by pronounced interests in experimenting with applications in a range of applied work settings.
- Involvement from organisations like Cwmpas and WRAP Cymru also provided value and support in developing challenges and helping with development of solutions.

10. What didn't work so well

Organisations reported a range of issues across the various projects which proved challenging. Partnership working proved to be a double-edged sword for several projects - although reported as being extremely beneficial, many projects found managing the various partners and stakeholders involved in the project to be administratively challenging and time consuming.

One organisation commented 'juggling multiple responsibilities, including other projects and programs, required careful prioritisation and coordination'. Conflicting priorities, timescales and lack of staff / resources also proved difficult for some. Specific examples include:-

Food projects:-

- Carmarthenshire Council experienced initial constraints in recruiting a programme lead and recruiting schools before the project could get off the ground.
- BIC Innovation noted "complexity of the sector makes implementation difficult, including the availability of data from public sector organisations."
- Several organisations found the claims process to be slow and communication poor due to staff shortages, which resulted in some delays in payment.
- The Welsh Veg in Schools project was impacted by poor growing due to adverse weather conditions, with veg volumes not being as hoped. Also cited challenges on timings on funding, crop planning and farm visits being expensive and difficult to organise. The project was also impacted by the lack of necessary infrastructure for primary veg production, with no facilities to wash, slice and store the veg before it is delivered to schools (who often require it ready to use) and often partners had to all pitch in to wash carrots which is commendable but not sustainable.
- Castell Howell, a partner in Welsh Veg in Schools and also undertaking new product development on a range of Welsh dishes for schools, was also affected by poor weather conditions. They found a significant barrier to the further development of lamb products was the dramatic price increase of Welsh lamb. At the time of development (summer 2024) lamb prices hit record market prices, exceeding £8.50/kg in 2024 compared to £7.50/kg in 2023. These prices reflect the product costings of lamb meatballs at £11.22/kg, compared to chicken and pork circa £6.55/kg.
- Well Fed struggled to achieve partnership working with Local Authorities and felt they were impeding progress with no desire to learn from others.

Housing/construction projects:-

- SimplyDo found that engagement from partners and the ability to implement change was variable and expectations around the availability and completeness of data need to be more effectively managed.
- Another organisation reported 'balancing project delivery tasks with time for strategic thinking was a challenge'.
- Organisations reported that limited participation by partners and stakeholders was a key barrier, as businesses are under pressure and working at capacity especially small ones. One housing/construction project also noted 'competition can undermine collaboration and can at times make it hard to build up trust again'.

Innovation Project:-

- Cardiff Met's FEIN (Foundational Economy Innovation Network) project reported the only negative comment gathered by the end-of-programme survey pointed to the programme being academic.

11. Lessons Learned

The projects provided invaluable reflections on the lessons learned from many of the challenges faced. Specific examples include:-

Food projects:-

- The Larder Cymru project found that all LAs have different aspirations for their school meal services and are at different stages of progress, meaning standard work is not always replicable across LAs and tailored solutions work better.
- Development Trust Association feels that "Partnership alignment is crucial" with their project having been designed as a partnership to leverage each partner's core mission and expertise, rather than DTA Wales leading thematic delivery outside its remit. Also, "Financial incentives impact engagement" with them finding partners were more responsive and committed when funding covered a significant portion of their time; limited financial input resulted in low prioritisation of tasks.
- Welsh Veg in Schools project highlighted that growers currently carry the greatest burden of risk in the supply chain due to weather and crop failures and felt all stakeholders should take a share of this risk. Similarly, growers are the stakeholders receiving the lowest proportion in the value chain - value should be shared equally across the system.
- Castell Howell recognised that to make growing organic/agroecological Welsh vegetables viable for the growers, a system of extending product shelf life was critical. In the absence of individually quick-frozen processing capacity in Wales, there are numerous options to freeze the vegetables in the form of multi-portion meals. They believe "the BLFF grants and their legacy, have made a significant impact to help facilitate change, leaving a legacy that has continued beyond the completion of the projects".
- Through their Tech Tyfu project, Menter Mon found that Green-Up Farm would like to deliver salad leaves to the public sector but has mentioned that they have struggled

to find the correct environment to preserve the salad leaves once they have been harvested from the vertical farms. Green-Up Farm have been referred to Will Stiles of Aber Innovation and Aberystwyth University to see if they can support.

- Cookalong Clwb have learned that “all children engage with food and that a continued determination is essential to change and improve lives through reducing food waste, reducing food costs and empowering children to cook”. Also, a proactive approach to funding is essential and their future plans are to work with a professional to support this often complicated process.
- Mentera noted the positive impacts the projects have on jobs and supporting Welsh firms, involving food safety accreditations, many of which would have lapsed without FoEc funding.
- Social Farms and Gardens felt that closer working with planning policy officers in the early stages will be beneficial in future projects.
- PLANED and Carmarthenshire Council highlighted the need for building in extra time to project timelines for unexpected issues and to always have a contingency plan should delays occur.
- Well Fed felt that many Local Authorities are not interested in innovation and not up to date with social issues, with many focusing on only spending their funding as a timed project which can be a waste of resource.
- Complexity of the sector makes implementation difficult, including the availability of data from public sector organisations.
- Through their Welsh Food Index project, BIC Innovation learned that complexity of the sector makes implementation difficult, including the availability of data from public sector organisations but found a high level of appetite for support to aid the public sector organisations to deliver better food for their customers.
- Cardiff Council learned that it is imperative for the Food Hour pilot to be experienced for schools & stakeholders to understand its worth, and the importance of creating Food Citizens.

Housing/construction projects:-

- SimplyDo highlighted the need for project partners and stakeholders to understand and be willing to undertake a process of innovation change. Also, there is a need to manage expectations of supplier mapping and scouting that it is impossible to provide a 100% complete picture of business demography within a region due to factors such as the ‘unseen’ economy which don’t feature on standard structured data sources (e.g. Companies House, Crunchbase etc.)
- Cyfle’s key lessons learned include reconciling differing delivery models, rebuilding employer networks in unfamiliar regions, and addressing gaps in local knowledge and partnerships. Additionally, Cyfle had to manage increased administrative demands while maintaining its high standards of pastoral care and qualification outcomes. The experience underscored the importance of agile governance, robust financial planning, and proactive stakeholder engagement. Another critical lesson learned was the value of shared apprenticeship models in safeguarding learners during sector disruptions, reaffirming Cyfle’s role as a resilient and inclusive training provider across Wales.

- Cwmpas recognised clients and contractors inevitably have a focus on the 'day job'. Modest resources to support 'active facilitation' can have a major impact - the opportunity costs of not plugging these limited resources into the 'implementation gap' are huge in terms of lost opportunities for collaboration, supply chain growth, jobs and training etc.
- Wood Knoweldge Wales highlighted that all Communities of Practice have voiced concerns about training, skills and recruitment and have provided input on the Timber Industrial Strategy around the topic. This has led to a stronger focus of their work on generating a better understanding of GenZ and how to support industry to regenerate itself so it becomes attractive to future generations and more mature people with transferable skills alike. As a result, a plenary and several breakout sessions are dedicated to education and training, skills and recruitment at WoodBUILD 2025.
- NetRet reflected that the recruitment / delivery to the project has to be managed to align with funding.

Innovation Project:-

- Cardiff Met's FEIN workshop programme found it beneficial to ask participants to define their interests in the Foundational economy, which included a wide range of aspects such as procurement and supply chains, wellbeing support, waste reduction and recycling and community engagement and partnership working.

12. What would organisations do differently with hindsight?

Experiences gained through the projects enabled organisations to reflect on lessons learned, challenges and solutions and what they would do differently in future, examples include:-

- Many organisations felt that earlier working with partners and decision makers / influencers would be helpful in future, to better understand their needs and skills to ensure the best fit for the project. Several felt securing earlier funding and some form of continuity in funding would be helpful in future.
- The importance of trust, flexibility and tailored engagement especially for small businesses with limited capacity was cited as needed in future. One size fits all approaches often are not suitable.

Food projects:-

- Several projects referenced the importance of ensuring timings around crop planning and understanding growers' priorities for that growing season.
- Welsh Veg in Schools project felt with hindsight and more funding, they'd have worked to secure more of the infrastructure needed for the supply chains, secure greater and more timely buy in from Local authorities and spend more time with the kitchens explaining how the ordering process works and how the veg might be different from what they expect.

- more time to spend with the school kitchens would be useful, explaining how the ordering process works and how the veg might be different from what they expect also needs to be built in.
- Well Fed would create a programme of work that excludes local authorities as they found it difficult to engage them.
- Securing greater and more timely buy in from Local Authorities was also cited as key for success. One project lead said in future they would take more time initially to 'co-produce the project with all stakeholders to ensure buy-in and on-time start'.
- Investment in regional infrastructure close to food production hotspots is required for the success of future veg supply to schools and hospitals. This would help support spreading and scaling of supply, as well as help address the gap between growers and wholesalers.
- BIC Innovation felt with hindsight, they would have simplified the project objectives to enable trialling of their new Welsh Food Index tool to be undertaken within the funding period.

Housing/construction projects:-

- Wood Knowledge Wales has recognised the need to constantly evolve their approach to running their Communities of Practice (CoPs) as they all work differently and evolve at different speeds. They commented "CoPs cannot be forced....trust is hard won and easily lost".
- SimplyDo would give consideration in future to the organisational fit with the project and the scope may need to change to reflect the various strengths and weaknesses of project partners. Also, potentially a longer project initiation period to really understand potential partners needs and relevant fit with the outcomes of the project.
- NetRet would have engaged with decision influencers such as Net Zero Hwb at an earlier stage.
- Cwmpas felt that securing earlier funding and some form of continuity in funding would have made for a more successful project.

Innovation Project:

Cardiff Met felt securing further funding would have enabled Circular Economy Innovation Communities (CEIC) to engage more SMEs across South Wales.

13. Food Community of Practice

A new Food Community of Practice (CoP) was set up in 2023 for food project leads, facilitated by Cynnal Cymru and was successful in supporting collaboration and innovation across the food projects. Some examples of feedback received below:-

Castell Howell commented *"Through collaborative group engagement, led by Cynnal Cymru, the collective outcomes of many of the projects are bigger than the individual projects themselves. The BLFF Food Networking forum was highly effective in finding*

commonality, synergy, sharing areas of expertise, shared resources and learnings across all projects.”

Food Sense Wales commented “the food CoP was very useful, particularly to link up with projects that overlapped or could add value. Also to link projects with other assets – e.g. making sure Food Partnerships were aware and linked with projects in their area”.

Menter Mon reported “the BLFF Community Practice meetings were extremely useful to engage with the other BLFF food projects – which may not have happened without this facilitation.”

Social Farms and Gardens commented “The Community of Practice was useful as a trusted space where activity could be celebrated and connected.”

Cookalong Clwb commented “Really helpful, to meet other businesses to work in partnership with has been brilliant and share our progress. The team has been an incredible support with guidance and encouragement and to see all of the progress that companies are making across Wales – from growers to producers, to suppliers and end users – totally invaluable.”

14. Innovation, collaboration and resources

Developing new and innovative approaches to collaboration, service delivery and processes was a key theme running through all the projects, which saw partners and stakeholders who would not normally work together, in the same room and new relationships built across supply chains. Examples include:-

Food projects:-

- BIC Innovation developed a new Welsh Food Index, an innovative tool for use in procurement to enable the ‘Welshness’ of food being bought to be scored, to drive Welsh food on the public plate and deliver social and economic value aligned with WFGA. They worked with economists to help build the tool as well as engaging with over 50 food stakeholders across the Welsh public sector, Welsh Government and Future Generations Commissioner’s office.
- The Welsh Veg in Schools project deployed effective collaboration across supply chains supplying 14 tonnes of vegetables to 219 schools in 7 Local Authorities, supported by Castell Howell, who understands the pressures on the food system; the vulnerability of global supply chains, and the need to build local resilience and invest in local supply chains.
- The Welsh Veg in Schools project also built new skills at every level. Training and support was provided to growers to deliver safe, high-quality produce, partnering with Lantra and Farming Connect. They also developed the ‘Small Growers Suppliers Standard’ to ensure compliance with legislative food safety requirements. The Food Sense Wales website contains information packs on the project for schools, children and farmers/growers:- Welsh Veg in Schools - foodsensewales.org.uk
- The innovative Larder Cymru project has seen excellent engagement with growers and has driven collaboration by forming a new North Wales Procurement

Roundtable, with stronger working between Local Authorities leading to achieving economies of scale with key suppliers - including Harlech. After reviewing and redesigning the school food menus in Wrexham, they have switched to Harlech from an English supplier and menus now highlight Welsh produce. They also did a survey with parents that showed 72% believed it important to have a range of Welsh and/ or local food options on the menu. Larder Cymru's 'Best Practice Welsh Food for Schools 2025' report can be accessed here [Larder-Cymru-A4-S.pdf](#)

- Menter Mon's Tech Tyfu project has driven innovation for more environmentally friendly production amongst small firms breaking into public and private sector supply of salad crops and microgreens. Snowdon Valley Farm worked with Adam's Water to trial a device which can break up the salinity of water and make it easier for plants like tomatoes to benefit from nutrient intake. Results have found an increase in yield from trials, meaning more produce can be grown in one space using the device.
- Well Fed in North Wales applied innovation to the food system to build local supply chains and tackle food poverty. They launched 'Amazon style' food lockers, a first in Europe, ensuring families in areas of deprivation have access to healthy food. They worked with farmers to include Welsh veg in over 50 new dishes, removed ultra processed food from their menus and also removed plastic from their vending.
- Projects saw best practice and innovative approaches shared between peers and partners. The importance of building trust amongst peers was also highlighted with one project lead saying "Trust is a critical enabler for change".
- PLANED worked with Cowpots Farm & Camping, a rural farm outside Whitland. The farm is owned by a multi-generational family and the vending machine has allowed a further diversification Cowpots Farm Shop. For the second machine, PLANED worked with Foothold Cymru, a social justice charity in Wales. One of their initiatives includes a village store located in the heart of Llanelli. The shop provides bulk purchased products sold at cost and surplus food from the area that would otherwise go to waste. The shop is run completely by volunteers which limits time open. The introduction of the vending machines enables products to be available to the community 24/7.
- Through their meat-processing arm, Celtica, Castell Howell undertook innovative new product development with a new range of Welsh meat / veg dishes for schools. These were carbon-friendly, nutritious and contained less meat and more healthy plant-based alternatives, such as chickpeas, to keep prices competitive whilst ensuring the same nutrition (quite often more so than the big brands often bought by schools). New dishes have included a new Welsh tomato sauce and Welsh meatballs along with hybrid mushroom burgers and Castell Howell has worked with catering officers, food buyers in Local Authorities and school children to trial and promote these.
- Powys County Council and the Brecon Beacons National Park Association have adopted the innovative new Planning Guidance created by Social Farms and Gardens to support small horticultural businesses. Lucie Taylor has been awarded

the 'Women of Influence 2025' from The Planner Magazine as a result of her leading-edge work on developing the Planning Guidance. A range of resources have been developed to help other growers and disseminate the project's learnings including a "[How to Guide](#)" for horticultural farmers, "Criteria for Land for Small Farms" and "Notes for Considerations when Developing Leases for Farmers".

[Publications and resources | Social Farms & Gardens](#)

- Cardiff Council and Cardiff and Vale Public Health Dietetics Team's project, introducing a 'Food Hour' into schools, has won two catering Awards - LACA Awards for Excellence - Nan Berger Memorial Award and Foodservice Cateys – Education Caterer of the Year, with the judges commenting it was "a clear winner" for its unparalleled innovation and operational excellence, demonstrating clear impact over and above 'business as usual' and showed unrivalled engagement over the other entries".
- The Food Hour project also produced a Toolkit, developed through consultation with staff and pupils, offering flexible resources aligned with the Welsh Curriculum. It includes activities across four key principles—Nutrition Education, Cooking, Sustainability, and Growing. More information and education packages can be found here - [The Food Hour - foodsensewales.org.uk](https://foodsensewales.org.uk)

Housing/construction projects:-

- Joint efforts between housing providers, SMEs and tech innovators improved procurement and retrofit readiness. Innovation in housing is seeing local capacity boosted through funding PAS2030 and Microgeneration Scheme Certification – this will help enhance housing stock across Wales, reduce energy bills and improve household liveability through greater residual income.
- Simply Do has delivered new innovative AI-driven solutions for Trivallis to improve household liveability. Extensive collaboration in their project involved, the SBRI Centre for Excellence and several Local Authorities and Housing Associations.
- Cwmpas applied innovation to Net Zero housing development, through "active facilitation" in mobilising stakeholders and driving measurable action through Communities of Practice.
- Cyfle reported that 60 employers have engaged with the programme to provide onsite placements for young people.
- Wood Knowledge Wales has connected suppliers with clients who have the demand for low carbon timber products, to bring a large network of 60 Welsh organisations (Housing associations, architects, joiners, timber frame manufacturers and sawmillers) together into strategic, collaborative projects.

Innovation Project:-

- Cardiff Metropolitan University ran FEIN (Foundational Economy Innovation Networks) to embed FoEc approaches and innovation in Welsh businesses, involving 34 organisations from diverse sectors such as Health and Social Care, Waste

Management and Recycling, Housing, Construction, Tourism, Creative Industries and Design, Food and Retail, and Community Development.

- They collaborated with a range of organisations in running the network including Cwmpas, WRAP Cymru, Natural Resources Wales and NHS Wales.
- Videos of innovative projects developed and feedback from participants have been developed:-

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLtCROU4co6y7GpY2_K1nJr6C4G1MgAl8f
<https://ceicwales.org.uk/awen-cultural-trust-challenge-update/>

15. Environmental Impacts

All projects have supported shorter supply chains through more localised supply, with associated reduced carbon emissions, Net Zero gains and a range of positive environmental outcomes. Specific examples include:-

Food projects:-

- Carmarthenshire Council's 'Future Gens Menu' for schools saw a reduction of the carbon footprint of meals from 1.24kgCO₂e p/meal to negative 1.67kg CO₂e p/meal (sequestered carbon). Through reduction and sequestration this has equated to 7 tonnes of carbon emissions saved.
- Well Fed's work to address food poverty and provide innovative lockers ensuring families in need can eat healthily, has seen 50% of their power input now coming from solar power - for a food business this is significant.
- Welsh Veg in Schools programme has seen a 20% increase in land-use to grow vegetables in Wales, whereas the rest of the UK has seen a decline. This has contributed to carbon savings, shorter supply chains, biodiversity gains and reduced reliance on imports.
- New carbon-friendly and nutritious Welsh dishes have been created by Castell Howell, including a new Welsh tomato sauce and Welsh meatballs along with hybrid burgers involving Welsh beef and Welsh mushrooms. These dishes often contained healthy plant-based alternatives such as chickpeas to keep prices competitive whilst ensuring the same nutrition.
- Castell Howell also commissioned NFU Energy to conduct a carbon audit, which underlined the difficulty and cost required to complete a full Life Cycle Analysis across all Castell Howell / Celtica farm suppliers. A legacy of the projects is the continued dialogue on reduced environmental impact across the supply chain - the project leaders continue to be in dialogue with industry partners, such as Hybu Cig Cymru and will continue to work in partnership with stakeholders to establish the true carbon impact of supply chains.
- Through the BLFF project group, Castell Howell worked with BIC Innovation to determine the environmental impact of the organic broccoli against conventional frozen broccoli. The life cycle assessment by Swansea University demonstrates that the organic broccoli could have 66-83% lower

carbon emissions due to the elimination of large transportation distances and lower production impact.

- Vertical farming trials carried out by Menter Mon's Tech Tyfu project demonstrated reduced water use and shorter supply chains.
- Cardiff Council's Food Hour project partnered with Size of Wales to incorporate staff training on sustainability and deforestation into Nutrition Skills for life. They also ran Seasonal Sessions combining activities from the four Food Hour principles: Nutrition Education, Cooking, Sustainability and Growing which the children really enjoyed.
- An additional 2,4000 trees of differing varieties have been planted at the Wern Farm site through Social Farms and Gardens' project.

Housing/construction projects:-

- Cwmpas launched the TAYC net zero pattern book, endorsed by 25 social landlords, with over 400 homes in development. This followed a "Can-Do" action plan aligned with the Well-being of Future Generations Act, helping accelerate Net Zero housing development.
- The NetRet Group have supported 20 contractors to attain Micro Generation Certification Scheme accreditation and also run a similar scheme for 20 contractors to become PAS 2030 accredited. There is a shortage of contractors in Wales with these accreditations, so this work has helped support the Optimised Retrofit Scheme, which often sees registered social landlords having challenges finding suitably qualified contractors to deliver work.
- Cyfle has championed low-carbon awareness and carbon literacy by promoting renewable energy, green technologies, and a deeper understanding of net zero, its significance, and practical strategies for achieving it.
- Wood Knowledge Wales' Delivering Net Zero project has resulted in a collaboration of 23 social landlords to produce standardised house designs for most built homes. The homes will be built using timber, increasingly Welsh timber and by a short, strong and sustainable supply chain. This will result in improved citizen access to affordable, good quality FoEc goods and services, particularly affordable homes with low embodied carbon and reduced need for heating.
- SimplyDo identified 156 Welsh organisations to perform retrofit housing upgrades in Caerphilly to reduce the carbon footprint of housing. This provides environmental benefits with more carbon-efficient heating and renewable energy resources embedded within the housing sector for the following decades.

16. Could the projects be scaled up and if so how?

It is inspirational to see that nearly all the projects are either scaling up already or are keen to do so and all showing real positivity and enthusiasm in developing the work further:-

- Carmarthenshire Council commented they are already starting the scale up process for Carmarthenshire (pending funding) over 3 years to every primary school in Carmarthenshire, aiming for 2.1m meals annually. They say the 'Future Gens Menu' approach could be undertaken with every local authority in Wales, through the correct partnerships.
- Well Fed is scaling up and investing in their business, focusing on the commercialisation of each of the three funded services – vending, lockers and solar (more details in 'Looking Ahead' section below).
- Welsh Veg in Schools commented the FoEc funding contributed towards them being able to build and gain traction and support from a variety of stakeholders. They are already scaling up with the 2025 forecast being 15 growers, 60 tonnes of veg, 13 LAs and 1 million portions of veg. Their overall mission is to ensure that 25% of all veg going into schools in Wales is local and organic by 2030. Importantly, they highlight the need for significant investment in infrastructure, systems and recognition of investing in our supply chains now to secure future supplies, due to our vulnerability to climate change and global instability. The project lead commented *"It feels like Welsh Veg in Schools has created a unique momentum and is an opportunity to grow the organic horticulture sector in Wales which we need to grab now."*
- Development Trust Association's new Toolbox for Growers has advised that the communication tool/ database could be moved onto Open Food Network as a licence free piece of software that could be used by buyers to help manage multiple small-scale growers feeding into one larger contract.
- BIC Innovation fed back that yes, trialling of the Welsh Food Index (WFI) can take place, followed by roll out to different public sector organisations however funding is required for this.
- Cookalong Clwb indicated they could scale up with a financial commitment to enable all schools, groups and charities to benefit from kitchen confidence and food knowledge.
- Menter Mon commented that for their Tech Tyfu project, it would be great to partner with a grower/farmer to trial a larger scale vertical farming system powered by renewable energy in order to bring the running costs down and increase the feasibility of growing produce indoors for use in the public sector.
- It is pleasing to see Menter Mon's Larder Cymru project has already been scaled up with the continuation of the Larder Cymru project and a larger Welsh presence at the 2025 Local Authorities Catering Association (LACA) trade show, which showcased a range of Welsh food for school meals.
- Social Farms and Gardens have advised that the innovative Partnership involved in publishing new planning guidance for growers, are already working with both Powys County Council, other Local Authorities and Welsh Government Food and Planning Divisions on developing, replicating and scaling up the test case and using the guidance wider.
- Mentera will be encouraging other non-accredited Food businesses to obtain accreditation and highlights the benefits of this evidence-based approach, although recognises another grant scheme will require funding. Working in partnership with Food Innovation Wales, it is pleasing to hear that Mentera are seeing an increased

number of businesses preparing and applying for accreditation and this FoEc project has contributed to this.

- Cardiff Council indicated that through partnership engagement, additional work on 'Food Hour' for the wider dietetic team has been sourced with the Ely & Caerau Children's Centre; they are eager to upskill staff and utilise dietetic expertise and possibly the Food Hour framework, to embed key nutritional messages within their provisions. Links have also been established with other schools in the cluster such as Cardiff West Community High School, who would be keen to be involved if the 'Food Hour' were to incorporate a secondary school provision, and the cluster Welsh Medium schools and church schools have also enquired about their potential involvement with 'Food Hour'.
- PLANED are looking at how their vending machines can be more sustainable, for example, whether the current or future machines could be run on solar power. Another is looking into the use of returnable/reusable vegetable and fruit boxes to reduce plastic/single use packaging.

Housing projects:-

- Cyfle indicated that scaling up would be possible, as it was clear that there was a huge demand from participants interested in the programme, however we could only accommodate 120. To consider next time, they could bid for a bigger contract.
- Cwmpas reported that this is already happening and additional, relatively modest resources to support active facilitation would 'oil the wheels' and speed and scale up progress.
- Wood Knowledge Wales has said that as the membership grows, they are exploring the feasibility of further communities of practice so that all types of members can come together within their peer group, such as building product manufacturers and medium scale processors.
- SimplyDo has indicated that their work has the potential to be scaled to other foundational economy industries and use cases in healthcare, agriculture, transport and social care. To make this approach a reality, it may be necessary to roll out the programme with key foundational economy industry partners in Wales (or serving Wales) to develop models of best practice before scaling these innovative approaches to localising supply chains across the economy.

Innovation Project:-

- Cardiff Met have reported that 61% of exit survey participants asked for help in securing additional funding to support innovation plans and resourcing bids, suggesting that FEIN project follow-up would be welcomed by participants
- Further research could explore how roles within the FEIN community of practice have evolved beyond the programme lifespan. The series of support workshops, the development of reflective journals and portfolios, the writing of innovation plans, and the final regional conferences have all allowed participants to learn from one another and to embed reflective practice in extended workplace networks.

- All of this points to the potential benefits of post-programme engagement and investment. Participants may need some additional support in the following months to complete and disseminate their innovation plans and secure additional resources.

17. Looking Ahead

It is pleasing to see many of the projects have secured additional funding or evolved into long-term programmes, with plans to scale up operations, deepen community engagement and continue contributing to Wales' Foundational Economy and Net Zero ambitions. Current activity and future plans include:-

Food projects:-

- Well Fed has reported they are scaling up Vending - Prospective corporate/public customers will be invited to the showroom to try and test the appliances. They will then work with them to agree terms and install into their premises. They will then offer a meal/food service using an app-based ordering system and fresh food delivery service. They are targeting 10 systems sold/leased within the 1st year. They have an arrangement with a Leasing company to support the roll out.
- Lockers - The first Locker will be installed adjacent to their production kitchen building to serve the local community. The other locations are being chosen in consultation with community partners. The 2nd location to be adjacent to St Asaph Cathedral as a result of developing a partnership with the Church of Wales – goes live in November 2025. The third will likely be installed in a local business park where there is no food provision and a number of call centre facilities (so high staff numbers with no shopping options)
- Solar - It is now operational and will be at full capacity once accepted onto the National Grid – permissions due July 2024. This has reduced current utility output by 50% - so very important to their commercialisation of all services.
- Menter Môn are trialling street food type salad bars in secondary schools, using locally grown, seasonable vegetables based on similar set ups in Malmo. Also supporting food supply chains with the new Healthy Eating Regulations to identify opportunities for reformulation of products and new product development.
- The Welsh Veg in Schools project is being expanded to cover North Wales and will include more growers / wholesalers, more vegetables and more Local Authorities. Food Sense Wales, who lead the project with partners Castell Howell and Lantra, aim to expand further over coming years to source 60 tonnes of Welsh vegetables to produce 1 million portions of veg for school meals, engaging with 15 growers and 12 Local Authorities across Wales. Their overall mission is to ensure that 25% of all vegetables going into Welsh schools is local and organic by 2030.
- BIC Innovation hope to continue with the trialling and testing of their Welsh Food Index (funding dependent) so it can be rolled out to different public sector organisations.
- Social Farms and Gardens' new planning guidance is being implemented in two locations. In North Powys (Local Authority owned site) Social Farms and Gardens are partnering with Powys Council and a Housing Association to decide how they can

maximise benefits from the land through mixed use of housing, employment and growing. The South Powys site has seen private land secured, in the Bannau Brycheiniog park authority and they are now seeking partners on site to do the rural enterprise development work. Off the back of their initial FoEc Funding, Social Farms and Gardens have been able to source additional funding to further support the Future Farms project. They are working with Local Authorities and Welsh Government to roll out the Guidance across Wales.

- Cookalong Clwb will deepen its work with low-income families and launch new campaigns on sustainable food, including their new corned beef initiatives with primary school students in Monmouthshire.
- PLANED is investigating solar-powered vending machines and reusable packaging to further improve sustainability and carbon reduction of their 24/7 community vending machines

Housing/Construction projects:-

- Woodknowledge Wales plan to expand their Community of Practice networks to support housing and timber sectors, introducing new Forestry and Land Use and Contractors' Communities of Practice.
- SimplyDo have taken their learnings from their work on Social Housing and are working alongside Transport for Wales to decarbonise public transport in Wales.
- NetRet Group Ltd have been granted further funding from the Foundational Economy team to offer a Renewable Membership Program that will support Welsh contractors to achieve Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) accreditation or Flexi Orb certification. This program will strengthen the Welsh renewable energy supply chain, support job creation and advance Welsh Government's net-zero objectives.
- Cyfle and NetRet will continue to expand their low-carbon training and certification programmes, building a skilled workforce aligned with Wales' Net Zero goals.

18. Quotes from project leads:-

The FoEc grants, and their legacy, have made a significant impact to help facilitate change, leaving a legacy that has continued beyond the completion of the projects. The following quotes from project leads show the value of our investment into the Foundational Economy:

"The FoEc grants provided a genuine catalyst for collaboration and innovation. They allowed communities, organisations and local business to test new ideas with confidence, creating momentum that continued well beyond the formal project period. The legacy isn't just in what was delivered, but in the stronger, more connected networks that have emerged as a result".

"The funding has enabled us to develop a comprehensive, robust tool that would aid procurement teams across the region to buy more Welsh food more effectively."

"The financial support that was provided by the FoEc grant enabled food and drink companies to achieve industry recognised accreditation which allowed access to markets and customers. This meant that jobs were secured and created. The project has made an

important contribution therefore towards strengthening the resilience of the sector and opening access to new markets”

“The FoEc grants were key to not only financially support Castell Howell, but to also facilitate dialogue and shared learning across all projects. As our projects progressed and evolved being flexible and adaptive was critical, the FoEc recognised this and were supportive. The grants helped instigate the positive change needed, with the legacy continuing as the projects continue to evolve. Nevertheless, to fully deliver on the ambitions requires a long-term programme of targeted support and partnership, from farm to kitchen and beyond. I look forward to seeing how this can develop”

“The FoEc funding was invaluable in enabling SimplyDo’s place-based procurement approach, pioneered successfully within the social housing sector through the FoEc grant, to be adopted through our work with other key foundational economy sectors including transport, healthcare, and defence. The insights gained from this impactful work led to a separate innovation project with Caerphilly Council called "Local Search" which has just won two awards at the Government Opportunities Wales Procurement Awards. This project is creating digital capabilities that will help public sector procurement teams more effectively identify and engage with local businesses that are typically hard-to-find and hard-to-reach (aligning with the Procurement Act 2023).”

“The Foundational Economy grant let us take Welsh SMEs from interest to audit-ready for PAS 2030 a mandatory certification for installers in the funded retrofit sector. Through digital onboarding, pre-audit reviews, and practical training, firms reached PAS 2030 readiness and adopted a quality-first culture. They are now growing with certification, building local capacity in Wales, and delivering work that benefits homeowners well into the future.”

“The grant has changed everything, enabling us to develop strong partnerships with individuals, groups and communities across Wales, empowering our children with kitchen confidence changes lives, changes all of our lives!!!! The Give Chickpeas a Chance campaign with Size of Wales was enabled by this grant, changing the future of school meals in Monmouthshire for ever, with children at the forefront of that change, as the change makers!”

The Foundation Economy grant, which supported work experience opportunities for young people, has enabled Cyfle to expand the scheme across the Region, supported by Clients, Colleges and SME Contractors”

“The funding enabled CEIC to develop the innovation capabilities of SMEs within the foundational economy.”

‘The Foundational Economy Fund has been pivotal for developments in Carmarthenshire over many years. The flexibility and understanding of innovation has enabled us to move from feasibility to scalable action within a relatively short amount of time, maximising impacts and shared learning for Wales.’

“Development Trust Association are now hosting a toolbox and a range of resources on our DTA website, to help small-scale vegetable and fruit growers to navigate the world of procurement. This includes information about accreditation standards, finance, planning and

opportunities for collaboration, as well as guidance on the new procurement legislation. We worked closely with the Welsh Veg into Schools project during development to ensure these tools were meaningful and tested. It's great that we could do our bit to support that cohort of growers into new supply chains, and hope that many more growers can be supported in future by our resources"

"The Foundational Economy Grant Funding has enabled us to capitalise on the opportunities presented by Welsh Government's commitment to universal free school meals for primary school children. We are also grateful for the continued support from the Welsh Government's Foundational Economy team, which has allowed the project to progress beyond its initial funding period and continue to improve the quality of primary school meals across Wales".

19. Conclusion

In summary, the Foundational Economy projects have demonstrated their impact through this report and how they have helped to strengthen the Food, Housing and Construction sectors, as well as boosting innovation amongst Welsh businesses. There are also consequential benefits, with consumers being able to access better FoEc goods and services which are helping improving wellbeing eg, warmer homes, more nutritious food.

The projects have demonstrated how effective targeted economic and supply chain interventions can be, especially when combined with climate change goals and show just how much can be achieved, with relatively little funding, through innovative approaches and collaboration.

The cross-cutting nature of the FoEc and its relevance to multiple portfolios across Welsh Government has been highlighted through the wide range of projects. The work on increasing supply of local, nutritious and sustainable food into schools has touched on a wide range of divisions including Education (UPFSM team), Food and Farming, Health and Poverty. The work to build green skills and help future-proof retrofit and energy efficiency in the housing sector has strengthened links with Housing, Skills and Construction.

It is very pleasing to see that many of the projects are already scaling up and this is testament not only to their success to date but also to the passion, dedication and hard work of the project leads concerned.

The feedback from organisations on what worked well, what didn't, lessons learned and what could be done differently in future, provides invaluable learning from the projects which will hopefully help shape future projects, enable further scaling and spreading or inspire others to replicate similar approaches so the Foundational Economy can continue to be nurtured for generations to come.

**Foundational Economy Projects:
List of organisations and projects supported**

Food projects

(If you wish to read more about the project, please click on the organisation name to be taken to 'Project details and positive outcomes' section in Annex 2)

	Name of Organisation	Project Description
1	BIC Innovation	3-year contract to develop tools and approaches to support FoEc team's work to increase the amount of Welsh food being served up in schools and hospitals, including a Welsh Food Index, for use at the procurement stage, to score the 'Welshness' of products being supplied.
2	Cardiff Council	Set up a Food Hour so that every child has the opportunity to spend (a minimum) of one hour a day in school "with food"; to share nutritious meals, learn about food and learn through food. One of the main aims is to increase the uptake of UPFSM in the pilot schools.
3	Carmarthenshire Council	A holistic approach to developing a collaborative 'Future Generations' school menu redesign as part of the UPFSM roll-out, utilising local and regional assets through a place and partnership-based approach.
4	Castell Howell	Evolving the vegetable supply chain in Wales to increase Welsh veg and potato products in school meals through switching from imported produce. Develop a Welsh chip working with Puffin Produce. Explore how to extend life of seasonal produce
5	Castell Howell / Celtica Foods	New product development of a range of value-added Welsh meat and veg-based food products for public sector supply (either primary plate recipes e.g Welsh meatballs and kofkas or as ingredients for multiportion meals e.g. pizza toppings, meatballs in sauce), run taste panels and work with public sector caterers.
6	Cookalong Clwb	Empower school children, families and teachers with life-long cookery skills, shopping on a budget and improving mental health and wellbeing.
7	Development Trust Association Wales	Develop a new collaborative 'toolbox' of practical solutions for growers to address current barriers for growers and also support three businesses to increase production of locally grown horticulture for public sector supply, through wholesalers and food procurement hubs; provide various packages of business support and upskilling.

8	Food Sense Wales	'Welsh Veg in Schools' project to grow/supply organic, sustainable veg for schools rather than rely on frozen imports (continuation of phase 1 of 'the Courgette Pilot' but this phase 2 to include more veg and more LAs). Testing the Sustainable Supply chain investment scheme. Stakeholder engagement and research for a pilot in North Wales for Food and Fun/growing season 2024.
9	Menter Mon	Tech Tyfu vertical farming project to provide support to five small & medium growing businesses, seeking to supply microgreens and veg directly into wholesalers for large scale public procurement contracts.
10	Menter Mon	Larder Cymru project - Increasing Welsh food on school menus. Larder Cymru will work with 6 local authorities across Wales and associated wholesalers / producers to review existing food supply frameworks and menu provision to develop a new menu that incorporates more Welsh produce and Welsh suppliers.
11	Mentera	Food hygiene accreditation grant scheme - covering costs of Micron2 and Salsa for Welsh food SMEs (which can often be a barrier for small food firms in entering the public sector food market) and helping drive up the Welsh supply base.
12	Monmouthshire Council	Development Kitchen for meals on wheels for elderly/vulnerable in the region– re-developing service to include Welsh food, reduce CO2 and offer more customer choice. <i>Please note this project was not able to complete as planned and did not provide the requested details to enable it to be included in this report.</i>
13	PLANED	Establishing community-led local food distribution in rural Carmarthenshire, establishing and promoting local suppliers, producer and growers. Fresh food vending machines to be located in areas without close access to a shop or other food & drink retail provision.
14	Social Farms and Gardens	To develop supplementary planning policy and guidance to facilitate smoother transfer of public land into community stewardship for local food production in Powys.
15	Well Fed	Innovative Amazon-style 'meal lockers' to tackle food poverty/food insecurity in communities & public sector. Remove ultra-processed food from menus and plastic from vending operations. Production upgrades to increase meal production; enhance vehicles; boost development teams.

Housing/Construction projects

If you wish to read more about the projects, please click on the organisation name to be taken to 'Project details and positive outcomes' section in Annex 2)

16	Cwmpas	Put immediate and flexible resources into the net zero implementation gap to remove barriers to progress and establish practical and sustainable delivery solution.
17	Cyfle	Help create a pipeline of future talent of green skills - encourage and promote new green technology opportunities for electrical and plumbing employers to deliver Net Zero/Low Carbon Work Experience activities for young people across the South-West Wales Region.
18	NetRet Group	Deliver PAS 2030:2023 certification to 20 Welsh SMEs, providing full support through digital onboarding, pre-audit assistance, and the audit process to boost the retrofit supply chain in Wales.
19	Simply Do	Build on the previously successful supplier recruitment pilot with Caredig Housing and deliver social housing innovation around in Wales, growing locally owned businesses/suppliers in the housing sector in Wales and ensuring social housing providers can meet the increasing demands caused by the ongoing socio-economic challenges in Wales.
20	Wood Knowledge Wales	Facilitate collaboration in the Housing sector, bringing together landlords, architects, timber producers, and manufacturers to agree approaches to engage with a standardised home build design. The homes will be built using timber, increasingly Welsh timber, and by a short, strong and sustainable supply chain.

Innovation project

If you wish to read more about the projects, please click on the organisation name to be taken to 'Project details and positive outcomes' section in Annex 2)

21	Cardiff Metropolitan University	Set up new FoEc Innovation Networks (FEINs) in Cardiff & Swansea to develop local SMEs. Enhance their capabilities to tender for public sector contracts and improve strategic collaborative relationships between SMEs and regional public sector stakeholders. Create an FoEc ecosystem in south Wales.
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Positive outcomes in key FoEc sectors

Food

Food is a critical Foundational Economy (FoEc) sector in Wales and the biggest by number of businesses (inclusive of retail), with 18,190 businesses, making up 28% of the FoEc and 17% of all businesses. The food sector also generates the largest turnover within the FoEc at £21,721bn.

The annual public sector food spend in Wales is approximately £85m (Brookdale 2022), 58% of that is with Welsh firms and approximately 23% is on food of Welsh origin. Welsh Government's new Community Food Strategy contains an ambition to increase that to 35% by 2030.

The FoEc food projects have been aimed at increasing the 23% figure - growing local food production and horticulture, shortening supply chains and increasing innovative approaches through building stronger and closer relationships between growers, wholesalers and the public sector. Some of the positive outcomes from the food projects include:-

- Improved access to public sector markets for 52 food organisations, through the food accreditation grant scheme ran by Mentera, helping to retain 1119 jobs and enabling long-term growth and sustainability.
- The Tech Tyfu project, which supports Welsh firms with vertical farming, enabling small firms to break into public and private sector supply of salad crops and microgreens. Snowdon Valley Farm trialled a device which can break up the salinity of water to make it easier for plants like tomatoes to benefit from nutrient intake, resulting in increased yields from trials. Fresh & Tasty microgreens have expanded their business in Abergele and have begun to supply microgreens, salad crops and edible flowers to 6 counties across North Wales, whilst Fungi Foods have been able to produce and deliver 20,000 packets of Lions Mane mushrooms for Aldi.
- Well Fed in North Wales led on innovative meal development using the eatTAINABLE stainless containers. They designed a full menu (cooked and chilled) ready to be held (foodsafe) within stainless containers as opposed to the previous plastic. This meant new tests for heat and shelf life and customer testing. They have designed/piloted 50+ meal types as a result. Well Fed have also established new partners in Wales and Internationally.
- Welsh Veg in Schools demonstrating that a small increase in school meal budgets could unlock significant local economic impact, job creation, and environmental gains. Over 200,000 organic Welsh vegetable portions have been delivered to schools in 7 Local Authorities, supporting Welsh growers, improving child nutrition and resulting in a 20% increase in land-use to grow vegetables in Wales, while the rest of the UK has seen a decline. This generated £34,333 in grower income and an estimated £127,034 in wider social, economic, and environmental benefits

to Wales.

- Welsh Veg in Schools has shown that adding 3.3p per meal per day to the price paid by Local Authorities and Welsh Government would allow for 2 portions of local organic veg to be included seasonally and would incentivise the following benefits:-
 - 901 tonnes of purchased veg would provide £2.21 million direct to Welsh producers with a multiplier of 3.7 to give an estimated £8.2 million in social, economic and environmental benefit
 - £555,500 investment in infrastructure leading to increased capacity to supply and increased average farm income in Wales / more resilience in the supply chain
 - 74.3 FTE jobs on Welsh farms
 - 50 hectares of organic veg
 - 35% increase in birdlife fields
 - 226 tones CO2e saving
 - Reduced reliance on imports from countries at high risk of water scarcity.
- School menu review and re-design work with 6 Local Authorities, by Larder Cymru, has been very effective. The first to complete it – Caerphilly – nearly doubled the amount spent on Welsh food ([Welsh council introduces school menu based on local produce - Farmers Guide](#)). They also ran a survey with parents that showed 72% believed it important to have a range of Welsh and/ or local food options on the menu. In Wrexham, the menu re-designs resulted in them switching to Welsh wholesaler, Harlech, from an English supplier. The menus in Wrexham now highlight Welsh produce to help drive the increase of FSMs.
- Castell Howell have created a new suite of Welsh dishes for schools using Welsh meat and Welsh seasonal vegetables, such as their lamb meatballs with added pea protein complemented by a Welsh tomato sauce with extra Welsh spinach, chard and kale, along with a Welsh cauliflower cheese and Welsh burger consisting of Welsh beef and mushrooms. These were carbon-friendly, nutritious and contained less meat and more healthy plant-based alternatives such as chickpeas to keep prices competitive whilst ensuring the same nutrition. Children have been involved in taste testing and providing feedback.
- The food projects have resulted in Castell Howell and Harlech Foodservice working innovatively with local growers and producers to make significant increases in the supply of Welsh products distributed to schools and hospitals. Castell Howell has reported spend on Welsh food increasing by 173% from 2021 to 2024. Harlech Foodservice has reported increases from 2021 to 2024 of 90% for Welsh meat, 120% for Welsh milk and 64% for Welsh school drinks.
- Social Farms and Gardens have developed new planning guidance for Powys County Council which is now available as an online resource, following extensive and innovative collaboration and partnering. The project worked with, new Powys County

Council planning guidance, which is available as an online resource. The planning guidance, a result of input from specialist consultants and the Future Farms Steering Group, is a huge step forward and was tested during consideration of the merits of the planning application at the Post Office land site at Sarn, east of Newtown, Powys – now Wern Farm. It has been approved for use in Powys and Bannau Brycheiniog park authority (and is being used on public and private sites in North and South Powys respectively) with other Local Authorities keen to use it.

- Carmarthenshire Council's 'Future Generations Menu' for schools brought £34,000 back into the Foundational Economy with foundations set for a further £40,000 to be put directly into the farm operations at Bremenda Isaf Farm and £1.4m annually into Primary Agriculture (food production). It became the UK's first "Public Land to Public Plate" model, serving food from the County Farm to local schools and directly employing horticultural staff, also supporting 'Food Sustainability Training' for Catering Staff and Management in Carmarthenshire County, resulting in a cultural shift in mind-set of catering staff who now, with the local authority, share a purpose and mission for further development.
- Over 2,000 engaged in food education (families, school children and teachers) through the Cookalong Clwb, improving kitchen confidence. Development of new school meals featuring local ingredients developed and adopted, including a chickpea korma created by the Cookalong Clwb and the children of Monmouthshire County Council. Angharad Underwood received the Local Community Award at the Welsh Food and Drink Awards in 2024 and has also qualified as a NHS Community Nutrition Specialist.
- Cardiff's Food Hour project has won two awards - LACA Awards for Excellence (Nan Berger Memorial Award) and Foodservice Cateys – Education Caterer of the Year
- New partnerships between growers, schools, local authorities, and wholesalers enabling increased supply of Welsh, seasonal produce, wide-reaching food education and a shift in food procurement patterns.
- Rural communities in West Wales having 24/7 access to fresh, local produce through PLANED's community vending machines, with reduced carbon footprint via reduced travel distance and plastic packaging.

Housing and Construction:-

The Housing sector comprises 14,710 businesses in Wales (98% of which are headquartered in Wales), covering 67,835 employees. The sector generates annual turnover of £6.8bn.

The Construction sector comprises 16,450 construction businesses in Wales, employing over 83,000 people. The sector generates the second highest turnover, following Food, at over £17bn per year.

Some of the positive outcomes from the housing and construction projects include:-

- Cyfle has supported 120 young people, far from the employment market, to attain net zero plumbing and electrical skills through a structured workplace programme. 80% of the young people have gone on to secure some form of apprenticeship or employment.
- SimplyDo has recruited 5 organisations to the Welsh Innovation in Social Housing (WISH) project – Caredig, Caerphilly County Borough Council, ClwydAlyn/Onnen, RHA and Trivallis – all collectively driving Net Zero housing, as well as highlighting 156 Welsh businesses that could perform the function of the current UK headquartered supplier for Caerphilly County Borough Council.
- Wood Knowledge Wales has facilitated approaches to agree a standardised home build design, through innovative collaboration in the Housing sector, bringing together landlords, architects, timber producers, and manufacturers. The homes will be built using timber, increasingly Welsh timber, and by a short, strong and sustainable supply chain.
- Launch of the TAYC Net Zero housing pattern book led by Cwmpas, endorsed by 25 social landlords. Prototyping with 12 landlords a total of over 400 homes in development.
- Simply Do found a totally Welsh supply chain consisting of 483 suppliers, across 3 procurement challenges, for potential future contract opportunities which will lead to job security and job creation. Also, development of new processes and 'Local Search' functionality within the SimplyDo platform, for unearthing and verifying diverse and 'unseen' suppliers in local economies around Wales, along with improved data through 'geovisualisation' using PowerBI to make it user friendly and interrogatable for clients. This was a new open innovation process for SimplyDo.
- Community of Practice models facilitated knowledge sharing among over 95 organisations in timber and housing sectors.
- 24 SMEs have been supported in their gaining PAS 2030:2023 certification, positioning Welsh companies to lead the market in retrofit and decarbonisation services.

Project Details and Positive Outcomes

FOOD PROJECTS

BIC Innovation

BIC has provided valuable support to the FoEc team to increase the amount of Welsh food served up on public plates, as well as also supporting many of the food projects and improving join-up. Wide engagement with over 50 food stakeholders took place in the development of a new innovative tool - a Welsh Food Index, for use at the procurement stage, to score the 'Welshness' of products being supplied. They also secured expertise from a Cardiff University economist to sense-check the weightings used to measure the various metrics for the WFI. Trialling and testing has not taken place yet unfortunately due to lack of funding but it is hoped the WFI will be picked up again in the future and finalised ready for use.

In conjunction with Castell Howell and Swansea University, BIC also undertook research to increase knowledge of the carbon footprint of locally grown produce compared to currently frozen imported supply, showing the environmental benefits of utilising locally grown produce if the infrastructure to deliver can be developed and supported. Life-cycle assessment found organic Welsh broccoli could deliver 66–83% lower carbon emissions than conventional frozen broccoli, by avoiding long-distance transport and fossil fertilisers, analyses showed Welsh organic carrots are notably higher in potassium and magnesium, benefits that hinge on careful cooking to retain nutrients like vitamin C.

Some of the challenges faced include the complexity of the sector making implementation difficult, including the availability of data from public sector organisations but BIC found a high level of appetite for support to aid the public sector organisations to deliver better food for their 'customers'.

Positive outcomes:

Development of a new, innovative Welsh Food Index, a tool to enable the 'Welshness' of food being bought to be scored (now needs to be tested and trialled funding dependent).

Extensive engagement with over 50 food stakeholders across the Welsh public sector, Welsh Government and Future Generations Commissioner's office as well as input from a Cardiff University economist.

Undertook life-cycle assessment that found organic Welsh broccoli could deliver 66–83% lower carbon emissions than conventional frozen broccoli and that Welsh organic carrots are notably higher in potassium and magnesium.

Castell Howell

Castell Howell's projects 'Evolving the Welsh Vegetable Supply Chains' and 'Developing Welsh Meat Based Food for Schools' collectively evolved a resilient Welsh supply chain that brings agroecologically grown vegetables and Welsh meat into nutritious, commercially viable multi-portion meals for schools. Across both projects, CHF purchased 18 tonnes of Welsh vegetables (c. £34k) and helped unlock on-farm efficiencies (most notably funding washing/bagging equipment at Bremenda Isaf Farm) while all participating growers achieved the Farming Connect Supplier Standard.

Product development proved that Welsh vegetables can be core ingredients in school-ready dishes, from tomato bases enriched with spinach and chard to Cauliflower Cheese and Welsh Beef Bolognese, and a suite of beef and lamb meatballs formulated with added veg and pea protein to balance nutrition and cost. School engagement was central to the project's success, with over 500 pupils and their families participating in tasting events across Caerphilly, Torfaen, Swansea and Camarthen. Feedback varied by dish and region, highlighting the need for tailored marketing strategies, especially for meals featuring Welsh lamb and leafy greens. The project also led CHF to appoint a dedicated school engagement officer in July 2025 and enabled CHF to support horticulture projects with the Young Farmers Federation, a junior Agri Academy with Farming Connect

The projects also strengthened the evidence base. A Swansea University life-cycle assessment found organic Welsh broccoli could deliver 66–83% lower carbon emissions than conventional frozen broccoli by avoiding long-distance transport and fossil fertilisers, while BIC Innovation/NutriWales analyses showed Welsh organic carrots are notably higher in potassium and magnesium, benefits that hinge on careful cooking to retain nutrients like vitamin C. BLFF networking, led by Cynnal Cymru, amplified impact by reducing duplication and sharing resources across projects. Challenges included lamb price volatility and limited freezing capacity, but the work aligned with 2025 revision of and demonstrated the viability of local sourcing at scale.

Looking ahead, CHF will continue work with Welsh Veg in Schools and aims in 2025 to purchase 60 tonnes of Welsh veg, work with 15 growers, and supply 12 local authorities, while continuing carbon measurement and targeted marketing (especially for lamb and leafy greens) to embed local, climate-robust sourcing across the public plate.

Positive outcomes:-

Vegetable Production

Identifying where efficiencies need to be introduced and investing accordingly is a significant legacy of the BLFF grant. Bagging and washing the vegetables grown added an additional cost to the production of Welsh vegetables. CHF were able to work with a small farm in Carmarthenshire, Bremenda Isaf Farm, to wash 10T of carrots by hand and through reallocation of a linked project's funding they were able to purchase a larger washer and fixed weight bagger to improve the process.

Product specification for both efficacy in the school kitchen (correct size tomatoes for either cutting or not being a choking hazard) and for further processing (slicing and dicing) was a key outcome from the BLFF project.

After the review to the nutritional standards of primary schools in Wales in 2025, CHF were able to focus on developing dishes with added kale, chard and spinach as these leafy greens with high micronutrient values grow well in Wales.

Total value of produce purchased by CHF from Welsh growers was £34k.

CHF provided additional grants (not included in the BLFF projects) of up to £5k for growers who applied.

All growers completed the Farming Connect Suppliers standard.

The total volume of Welsh vegetables purchased by CHF for both projects is 18 Tonnes.

Welsh Pizza Sauce Base

In light of the availability of plum tomatoes, spinach and chard at Langtons, Crickhowell it was decided to develop a Welsh tomato base (suitable for pizza's, Bolognese etc) with added vegetables.

- Recipe 1 – Tomato Sauce with 40% Welsh Tomato
- Recipe 2 – Tomato Sauce with 35% Welsh Tomatoes & 10% Spinach
- Recipe 3 – Tomato Sauce with 30% Welsh Tomatoes & 20% Spinach
- Recipe 4 – Tomato Sauce with 35% Welsh Tomatoes & 10% Chard
- Recipe 5 – Welsh Beef Bolognese made with Recipe 3 Tomato Sauce
- Recipe 6 – Cauliflower Cheese made with Welsh Cheese
- Recipe 7 -Cauliflower Cheese made with Welsh Cheese & 10% Chard (The addition of the Chard made the sauce Salmon Pink in colour)
- Recipe 8 – Cauliflower Cheese made with Welsh Cheese & 20% Chard (The addition of the Chard made the sauce Salmon Pink in colour)
- Recipe 9 – Cauliflower Cheese made with Welsh Cheese, Welsh Cauliflower & 10% Spinach

The recipes were developed by Authentic (Hirwaun) and compared to existing products. Except for Recipe 1, the nutritional results were in line with expectations.

The addition of Welsh grown spinach and chard boosted the iron and zinc values of the Cauliflower Cheese meal.

Recipe 5, the Welsh Beef Bolognese meal also performed well with added spinach and chard.

The product development at Authentic demonstrated conclusively that with the correct supply chain infrastructure, Welsh grown vegetables could be used as key ingredients to make kitchen prepared multi-portion meals that met nutritional and commercial targets.

Welsh Meatballs

The conclusion of the new product development was to concentrate on a

- beef meatball with added Welsh vegetables
- beef meatballs in a multiportion sauce that contained the added Welsh vegetables
- lamb meatballs with lower % of lamb, added pea protein, and Welsh veg
- lamb meatballs with lower % of lamb, added pea protein, in a multiportion sauce with added Welsh veg
- A meatball/ marinara style sauce was developed with added spinach, chard and kale.

School Engagement

Another critical outcome of the BLFF project, that aligned well with the proposed changes in primary school nutritional standards, was the importance of marketing the meals and vegetables to the target audience of the children, their parents & guardians and school catering teams.

After dialogue with local authority caterers, face to face engagement activities were thought to be the best initial approach. With further education materials delivered by Cynnal Cymru (NatureWise) and developed by Food Sense Wales/Dr Amber Wheeler.

Working with the catering teams and schools at Caerphilly, Torfaen, Swansea and Carmarthen, a series of engagement events were used to introduce children and their parents/guardians to the new recipes.

These engagement events found that:

- Macaroni with Welsh Cheese and Wholewheat Pasta: moderately positive reception, leading towards favourable.
- Welsh Butter Chicken Curry: Overall positive feedback and high satisfaction
- Lamb Meatballs with Wholemeal Pasta and Tomato and Spinach/Kale Sauce: Consistently negative and highly polarised feedback, often triggering strong dislikes.
- Welsh Beef Lasagne Topped with Welsh Cheese Sauce: Extreme polarisation, either rated excellent or terrible.
- Plant Based Ravioli with Tomato and Basil Sauce: Distinct split in consumer perception, whilst it received high praise from some, it faced strong rejection from others.
- Cauliflower Cheese with Welsh Cheese Sauce: Generally positive and consistent reception, particularly in its visual appeal and taste.
- Chicken Meatballs with Wholemeal Pasta and Tomato and Spinach/Kale Sauce: Consistently negative feedback, often triggering strong dislikes.

Although CHF have numerous years and examples of school projects, the company had not engaged with children, teachers, caterers and parents in this capacity. Through the BLFF project, CHF was able to engage with some 500 pupils across schools in Wales.

A project legacy is that CHF have employed a colleague (July 2025) who will be a dedicated school engagement officer, with knowledge of the supply chain, nutrition and as a former Welsh rugby international has personal experience of the importance of good nutrition.

Environmental Impacts

A legacy of the projects is the continued dialogue on reduced environmental impact across the supply chain. NFU Energy were commissioned to conduct a carbon audit, this underlined the difficulty and cost required to complete a full Life Cycle Analysis across all CHF/Celtica farm suppliers.

The project leaders continue to be in dialogue with industry partners, such as Hybu Cig Cymru and will continue to work in partnership with stakeholders to establish the true carbon impact of supply chains.

Through the BLFF project group, CHF worked with BIC Innovation to determine the environmental impact of the organic broccoli against conventional frozen broccoli. The life cycle assessment by Swansea University demonstrates that the organic broccoli could have 66-83% lower carbon emissions due to the elimination of large transportation distances and lower production impact. The study also concluded that due to the absence of fossil fertilisers (N2O fertiliser emission) and reduced need for fuel and refrigeration contribute to a lower carbon footprint in organic veg when compared with standard grown veg.

Cardiff Council and Cardiff and Vale Public Health Dietetics Team

This project succeeded in setting up a Food Hour in schools so that every child has the opportunity to spend (a minimum) of one hour a day in school “with food”; to share nutritious meals, learn about food and learn through food. One of the main aims was to increase the uptake of UPFSM in the pilot schools. 6 schools were worked with and wide-ranging collaboration consisting of many partners including Families First, Size of Wales, Curriculum Team, Cardiff Council, Trees for Cities, Castell Howell and Veg Power.

They met all the project targets which were:

- Create a School Food Hour working group made up of representatives of stakeholders within the school food ecosystem including children.
- Create a costed blueprint for a model of provision which could be rolled out across Wales - based on research, mapping of existing national and local initiatives and tools and a gap analysis
- Develop a pilot in 5 primary schools in Cardiff across the Foundation Phase and year 6 using a mix of national tools (e.g. NSFL, cross sector food partnerships, Veg Power, Size of Wales) and local agencies to inform a template for provision
- Build the case for this approach including independent evaluation of pilot, mapping Government policy and legislation and social return on investment.

The project leads report that the Food Community of Practice “provided valuable opportunities to share best practices, celebrate the achievements of others, and gain insight into a range of innovative projects being implemented elsewhere”.

Looking ahead, additional work for the wider dietetic team has been sourced with the Ely &

Caerau Children's Centre through partnership engagement - they are eager to upskill staff and utilise dietetic expertise and possibly the Food Hour framework, to embed key nutritional messages within their provisions. Links have also been established with other schools in the cluster such as Cardiff West Community High School, who would be keen to be involved if the Food Hour were to incorporate a secondary school provision, and the cluster Welsh Medium schools and church schools have also enquired about their potential involvement with Food Hour.

Future Plans & Recommendations post March 2025 (funding dependent) include:-

Short-term

- Embed Four principles into current cluster of schools
- Catering/ lunchtime assistants to support the Food Councils
- Create a School Food Hour steering group made up of representatives of stakeholders, including partner organisations, Head teachers and trained Food Hour staff and to include pupils. To encourage the roll out of Food Hour through continued co production.
- Create a pupil handbook
- Get Cooking with numeracy- for parents.

Medium-term

- Increase Food Hour provision to expand into 4 clusters areas.
- Adapt the toolkit for progression across the year group/ learner need
- Include more schools in the pilot Cluster area including Welsh Medium Schools and ALN provisions
- Create a costed blueprint for a model of provision which could be rolled out across Wales

Positive outcomes:-

The project has won two catering Awards. July 2025: LACA Awards for Excellence - Nan Berger Memorial Award and October 2025: Foodservice Cateys – Education Caterer of the Year.

Consultation headlines:

- 100% of pupils reported the Food Hour as a good programme.
- 100% reported they would like to take part if the Food Hour started in their school
- 100% of staff thought a Food Council would be a welcomed addition to their after-school club provisions

Resource Development

Nutrition Skills for life - In partnership with Size of Wales, the Food Hour pilot incorporated staff training on sustainability and deforestation. Additional resources were added to the Community and Nutrition Level 2 teaching, including school-specific strategies and local initiatives.

Seasonal Sessions- , developed as part of the Food Hour package, each session combines activities from the four Food Hour principles: Nutrition Education, Cooking, Sustainability, and Growing, and can be delivered as a full day or standalone activities. Each session includes an activity booklet to encourage home and school involvement.

97.5% of pupils enjoyed the seasonal session 90% of pupils reported learning something new

Toolkit, developed through consultation with staff and pupils, the toolkit offers flexible resources aligned with the Welsh Curriculum. It includes activities across four key principles—Nutrition Education, Cooking, Sustainability, and Growing—many of which overlap to support varied delivery styles. Each activity comes with lesson plans, instructions, and materials for classroom or outdoor learning, adaptable to different pupil abilities and timetables. Additional resources from Veg Power’s national programmes were included.

Overall headline outcomes:

X6 primary school, 210 children

Staff

- 100% Increased knowledge and skills of the 4 principles
- 100% Increased confidence to deliver the FH
- 100% Increased knowledge and confidence to align the FH to the new curriculum and how to implement it

Pupils

- 92% Increased knowledge and skills of the 4 principles
- 98% Engaged in the curriculum in a fun way
- 90% Tried a new food

Parents

- 100% Increased knowledge and skills: healthy eating, budgeting, practical cooking skills and healthy snacks.
- Other outcomes
- Home-school engagement: 100% attendance from all parents
- Uptake of school meals due to Food Hour

Carmarthenshire County Council

Carmarthenshire County Council's 'Future Gens Menu' for schools aimed to redesign school menus to incorporate fresh, seasonal Welsh produce. Despite delays in recruitment and commissioning, the project achieved most of its targets, including establishing a food waste monitoring system, training Carmarthenshire catering staff, reducing the Carbon Footprint within primary school meals and creating the template for expansion into all schools in Carmarthenshire and beyond. One key deliverable, the Primary Recipe File, still in progress and due to be released in stages in line with the school term times.

The initiative supported the employment of 2 FTE roles, both of which have continued since the projects end. The project has also brought back £34,000 into the Foundational Economy and set the foundation for a further £40,000 to be put directly into the farm operations at Bremenda Isaf Farm and £1.4m annually into Primary Agriculture (food production) in-line with the new school menu expansion across all primary schools in Carmarthenshire.

The project fostered collaboration with organisations such as Food Sense Wales and Farming Connect and introduced the UKs first “Public Land to Public Plate” model, serving food from the County Farm to local schools and directly employing horticultural staff. The project has supported ‘Food Sustainability Training’ for Catering Staff and Management in Carmarthenshire County, with Carmarthenshire County Council noting that one of the key positive outcomes has been the cultural shift in mind-set of catering staff who now, with the local authority, share a purpose and mission for further development.

It has continued beyond its initial funding period and is now scaling up to serve all primary schools in Carmarthenshire, with plans to deliver 2.1 million meals annually. Lessons learned include the importance of co-production and contingency planning. The project is seen as a scalable model for other Welsh local authorities, with strong potential for broader impact across the foundational economy.

Positive outcomes:-

- Supported the employment of 2 FTE roles both of which have continued since end of project.
- £34,000 brought back into the Foundational Economy and foundation set for a further £40,000 to be put directly into the farm operations at Bremenda Isaf Farm and £1.4m annually into Primary Agriculture (food production).
- The project introduced the UKs first “Public Land to Public Plate” model, serving food from the County Farm to local schools and directly employing horticultural staff and fostered collaboration with organisations such as Food Sense Wales and Farming Connect.
- The project supported ‘Food Sustainability Training’ for Catering Staff and Management in Carmarthenshire County, resulting in a cultural shift in mind-set of catering staff who now, with the local authority, share a purpose and mission for further development.
- Collaboration with other FE projects, such as Welsh Veg in Schools, long-lasting networks.
- Innovative supply chains and new ways of working established and functional.

Cookalong Clwb

The Preservation Society’s Cookalong Clwb project set out to boost kitchen confidence, reduce food waste, and improve food education among families and schools, initially targeting 100 families but ultimately reaching over 2,000. Through a mix of online and in-person sessions, Cookalong Clwb empowered children and families to try new foods, develop practical cooking skills, and bring positive changes into their homes. The project

expanded its reach from Monmouthshire to Newport, Swansea, and the Wye Valley, and gained national recognition after winning a Food and Drinks Award in 2024.

A standout achievement was the “Give Chickpeas a Chance” campaign, where children helped introduce a chickpea korma to all Monmouthshire school menus, supporting the county’s move toward deforestation-free food. The project also fostered strong partnerships with local authorities, schools, charities, and food festivals, and created one full-time job plus event support roles. Despite challenges with the Welsh Government’s claims process, Cookalong Clwb has become a preferred supplier for several organisations and continues to innovate, with future plans including further expansion, new campaigns on sustainable food, and ongoing work with diverse communities. The project’s collaborative, inclusive approach has demonstrated the power of early food education and community engagement in driving healthier, more sustainable food choices across Wales.

The Cookalong Clwb has a strong vision for growth and sustainability. With an additional £10,000 in funding secured from the Foundational Economy team, they plan to expand their reach into more counties while continuing their impactful work in Monmouthshire. They aim to deepen their engagement with schools, charities, and community groups through individually funded projects and are actively seeking long-term sponsorship to ensure the project’s longevity. A key upcoming initiative is a new campaign with Size of Wales focused on the environmental impact of corned beef, which has been launched at the Abergavenny Food Festival 2025. This project will explore the past, present, and future of food sustainability. Cookalong Clwb also plans to continue their work with multi-ethnic families at The Place in Newport in early 2026 and intends to bring in a professional to help navigate the complex funding landscape.

Positive outcomes:-

- The Cookalong Clwb won an award at the Food and Drinks Awards and were again finalists in 2025.
- The Cookalong Clwb now cover all of Monmouthshire County and have worked with Newport, Swansea and the Wye Valley area. Through their attendance at local and national food festivals, the Cookalong Clwb has been able to expand their work into other communities, The Cookalong Clwb moves wherever it is needed, and they have been invited to share their expertise, passion and awareness across South Wales.
- The “Give Chickpeas a Chance” campaign was designed by children in Monmouthshire primary schools and delivered by the children to the local council. With the help of the Cookalong Clwb, primary school age children have been able to enact change with their Chickpea Korma recipe being added to all school menus in Monmouthshire. Other schools in Wales are now working towards the same goal. In Crosshands, primary school children have created a brownie recipe using aquafaba (chickpea water), they have taken their recipe to Castell Howell for creation.
- Courses have been run from home and The Cookalong Clwb plans to run more when the time allows although the focus has become in-person work in schools through grants and working with Local Authorities, targeting children and families that need it the most.

Development Trust Association (DTA)

The Development Trust Association (DTA) – Assured Growing Toolbox project aimed to support small-scale vegetable growers in Wales to access public procurement opportunities. The core objective was to design a comprehensive ‘toolbox’ of resources, pilot its use, and establish a sustainable partnership model. The toolkit is designed to break down barriers, build confidence, and provide the practical tools and knowledge growers need to thrive in public procurement and beyond. The resulting toolkit includes financial planning tools (via Robert Owen Community Bank), collaboration frameworks (from Social Farms & Gardens), supply chain coordination tools, accreditation streamlining guidance, and planning support for rural enterprise dwellings. These resources are complemented by broader materials on public procurement, including podcasts, case studies, and insights from the Welsh Veg into Schools (WViS) project.

The project delivered tangible benefits including job creation (a 0.6 FTE project officer and safeguarding of a 0.3 FTE role), capacity building within DTA, and the development of high-quality, freely accessible resources. Despite delays in finalising the website, DTA pledged additional funding to complete it by September 2025. Lessons learned highlighted the importance of strong partnership alignment, adequate financial incentives, and internal staffing flexibility. Notably, the creation of a grower standards cross-compliance matrix was a standout innovation, simplifying complex accreditation schemes for growers.

Looking ahead, DTA will host and maintain the toolkit on its website, integrate it with other sector platforms, and explore scaling the communication tool via Open Food Network to support broader procurement coordination.

Positive outcomes:-

The ‘Toolbox’ includes:

- Financial Tools: produced by partner Robert Owen Community Bank
- Collaboration: produced by Social Farms & Gardens (SF&G), including how to set up collaboration agreements and tools for sharing machinery
- Co-ordination of Supply Chain: includes the communication tool between growers and wholesalers, now expanded to up to 50 growers.
- Streamlining Standards: how to avoid duplication between the accreditation schemes.
- Rural Enterprise Dwelling: SF&G advice on developing a convincing planning proposal.

The rest of the website is a suite of resources designed to provide background information and more specific advice and information relevant to anyone thinking about considering Public Procurement as a new route to market.

Food Sense Wales

Food Sense Wales (FSW) led the Welsh Veg in Schools initiative to increase access to local, sustainably produced vegetables in schools while supporting Welsh growers and strengthening supply chains. Originally aiming to supply 5–10 tonnes of veg to 30–40 schools, the project exceeded expectations by delivering 14 tonnes from eight growers to 219 schools across 7 local authorities—equating to 200,000 portions for children. This generated £34,333 in grower income and an estimated £127,034 in wider social, economic, and environmental benefits to Wales.

The project demonstrated that a small increase in school meal budgets could unlock significant local economic impact, job creation, and environmental gains. FSW has found that adding 3.3p per meal per day to the price paid by Local Authorities and Welsh Government would allow for 2 portions of local organic veg to be included seasonally and would incentivise the following benefits:

- 901 tonnes of purchased veg would provide £2.21 million direct to Welsh producers with a multiplier of 3.7 to give an estimated £8.2 million in social, economic and environmental benefit
- £555,500 investment in infrastructure leading to increased capacity to supply and increased average farm income in Wales / more resilience in the supply chain
- 74.3 FTE jobs on Welsh farms
- 50 hectares of organic veg
- 35% increase in birdlife fields
- 226 tones CO2e saving
- Reduced reliance on imports from countries at high risk of water scarcity

Despite challenges such as weather-related crop failures and timing issues, strong partnerships, innovative approaches, and continued funding have positioned FSW to scale up, with a long-term goal of ensuring 25% of vegetables used in Welsh school meals are local and organic by 2030.

Looking ahead, with continued FoEc funding for 2025/26, Welsh Veg in Schools will expand the veg, schools and wholesalers involved and replicate its model in North Wales.

Positive outcomes:-

FSW has found that adding 3.3p per meal per day to the price paid by Local Authorities and Welsh Government would allow for 2 portions of local organic veg to be included seasonally and would incentivise the following benefits:

- 901 tonnes of purchased veg would provide £2.21 million direct to Welsh producers with a multiplier of 3.7 to give an estimated £8.2 million in social, economic and environmental benefit
- £555,500 investment in infrastructure leading to increased capacity to supply and increased average farm income in Wales / more resilience in the supply chain
- 74.3 FTE jobs on Welsh farms
- 50 hectares of organic veg
- 35% increase in birdlife fields
- 226 tones CO2e saving

- Reduced reliance on imports from countries at high risk of water scarcity

Paying less than £10,000 for the price gap between usual LA price and organic price enabled:-

WViS contributing to a 20% increase in the area of land used to grow veg in Wales while the rest of the UK has seen a decline.

Menter Môn – Tech Tyfu Project

The Menter Môn vertical farming project aimed to support five Welsh growers: Snowdon Valley Farm, Tyfu'r Eryri, Fresh & Tasty Microgreens, Valley's Veg, and Micro Acres Wales in positioning themselves to supply large-scale public procurement contracts, both individually and through cooperative approaches. The project created one full-time job and a week-long student placement and enabled significant progress for each participant. Notable achievements include Snowdon Valley Farm's successful trial of a water salinity reduction device, Fungi Foods' delivery of 20,000 mushroom packets to Aldi and hydroponic salad trials for schools, and Micro Acres Wales' expansion through technical mentoring and investment. Fresh & Tasty Microgreens expanded their reach across North Wales and began supplying a Welsh wholesaler, while Green-Up Farm increased production capacity and engaged with sector standards.

The project demonstrated environmental benefits such as reduced water use and shorter supply chains, though high energy costs remain a challenge for year-round vertical farming. Lessons learned highlighted the value of early planning with growers and the potential of cooperative models for public sector supply. Menter Môn's network and understanding of controlled environment agriculture have grown, and future plans include case studies for Welsh Government, and exploring renewable energy-powered vertical farming systems to improve viability.

Positive outcomes:-

Fungi Foods & Snowdon Valley Farm

- Snowdon Valley Farm worked with Ukrainian company Adam's Water to trial a device which can break up the salinity of water and make it easier for plants like tomatoes to benefit from nutrient intake. Results have found an increase in yield from our trials, meaning more produce can be grown in one space using the device. MM continue to support Adam's Water and have introduced them to Integrated Water Services (IWS) who have been looking for a national partner for Adam's Water.
- Using equipment owned by MM, Fungi Foods have been able to produce and deliver 20,000 packets of Lions Mane mushrooms for Aldi.
- Fungi Foods are trialling the production of salad leaves for use by the public sector, growing over 750 heads of salad leaves in August to be used in schools in Gwynedd or Conwy in September and October.
- Fungi Foods are to conduct a trial run of hydroponically grown produce into schools with a Bangor University Masters Student.

Micro Acres Wales

- Micro Acres Wales have moved into a new unit space in Llantrisant and received £1,000 worth of support to be mentored by Fungi Foods.
- Micro Acres Wales have received support & advice from Zero2Five Food Industry Centre, doubling their production capacity through the technical guidance received.
- Micro Acres Wales have also received angel investment enabling them to purchase the equipment needed to start dehydrating their own lion's mane and oyster mushroom crops, this will reduce their waste output from production - whilst also giving them a new product to add to their range.
- Over the last quarter, Micro Acres Wales have been in discussion with an organisation called Seedleaves about the potential of collaborating on a bid to run a large-scale vertical farming pilot project at the Aberthaw Power Station near Barry with Cardiff Met University.

Green-Up Farm

- Green-Up Farm received equipment through the Tech Tyfu project to increase their production capacity. They primarily supply microgreens and salad crops to the hospitality sector.
- Green-Up Farm has also worked towards the Small Growers Standard which is currently being developed by Farming Connect / Lantra.

Fresh & Tasty Microgreens

- Fresh & Tasty microgreens have expanded their business in Abergele and have begun to supply microgreens, salad crops and edible flowers to 6 counties across North Wales.
- They are also now supplying to a Welsh wholesaler – M.Hughes in Mochdre, Conwy
- Due to personal circumstances, the business has relocated to Denbighshire. They are interested in supplying fresh produce to the public sector and has been introduced to Denbighshire's Food Partnership Coordinator, Myrddin Davies, and Dafydd Aled Williams to scope the possibility of them supplying fresh produce to schools in Conwy.

Menter Mon – Larder Cymru Project

The Larder Cymru project by Menter Môn successfully supported 8 Welsh local authorities, exceeding its original target, to develop new, seasonally compliant school menus that feature more Welsh produce. The project provided tailored, in-person support to each local authority, helping them address unique challenges and align with local objectives. Key achievements included menu redesigns that increased the use of local ingredients, strengthened local supply chains, and drove up free school meal uptake in some areas. The project also produced press releases, case studies and a best practice report, whilst showcasing Welsh food innovation at national events, all the while expanding the Menter

Môn Food Team and deepening sector expertise. Larder Cymru's Best Practice Report 'Welsh Food for Schools' was published in July.

Lessons learned highlighted the importance of bespoke support, the value of networking through procurement roundtables, and the challenges posed by pricing, subcontractor engagement, and varying local priorities. The project's innovative approaches such as collaborative menu design and direct engagement between suppliers and catering teams have helped drive change, though replicability varied across LAs.

Looking ahead, Larder Cymru will be working with up to three LAs to trial a street food / salad bar concept in schools, using locally grown, seasonal produce, based on best practice approaches in Malmo. They will also continue promoting Welsh produce at national events like LACA and the Royal Welsh Show, further embedding local food in public sector procurement.

Larder Cymru's Welsh Food in Schools Best Practice Report can be accessed here:-
[Larder-Cymru-A4-S.pdf](#)

Positive outcomes:-

Anglesey: Anglesey have a contracted requirement to Chartwells which states 30% of all spend on food and drink must be from within a 60-mile radius of Llangefni – this is monitored through a list of spend within the supply chain and the minimum portion size is also specified in the contract. Menus are served on a 3-week menu cycle and are standard gold compliant by the WLGA. MM has also supported Anglesey to implement school cooking sessions. The LA will be contributing to the Best Practice report.

Gwynedd: A press release will be launched to celebrate the Welsh produce which is used on the menus in Gwynedd and calling for more food producers to come forward. A video case study will also be developed, highlighting the local supply chain of potatoes in Gwynedd.

Wrexham: After reviewing and redesigning the school food menus in Wrexham, Wrexham have switched to Harlech from an English supplier. The menus in Wrexham now highlight Welsh produce to help drive the increase of FSMs.

Flintshire: A full list of Flintshire's products has been reviewed by MM, however opportunities to bring in additional Welsh produce to the menu is limited. A session will be delivered through Business Wales Food & Drink programme to discuss challenges between suppliers and cooks as well as the new healthy eating regulations in schools.

Powys: Currently in discussions with Powys cooks in schools and their suppliers.

Cardiff: UFSM has been rolled out in all year groups since the project launched. Larder Cymru has partnered with Wavehill Evaluation to conduct a survey through the ParentPay app to understand parent reception of school meals. So far 2,790 responses have been gathered and are being evaluated by Wavehill. The results will be published in the Best Practice Report.

Caerphilly: Early indication suggests that the uptake of FSMs in Caerphilly has been increased since the new menu design was introduced by MM. The new menu design has been used to show other LAs in Wales to show best practice, highlighting the importance of Welsh produce on Welsh menus.

LACA: Larder Cymru attended LACA in Birmingham last summer, showcasing the very best produce and producers from across Wales and highlight how, by buying from them, schools will shorten their supply chains, encouraging sustainability, lowering carbon emissions and supporting the economy – they attended this show with Castell Howell and Harlech Food Service.

Mentera (Formerly Menter-a-Busnes)

The Mentera project successfully delivered a targeted grant scheme supporting 52 Welsh food and drink SMEs to achieve SALSA and Micron2 accreditation. This enabled greater access to public sector markets, and helped to retain 1,119 jobs, and contributed to community resilience and the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Four filmed case studies showcased how businesses overcame barriers such as product suitability and accreditation requirements, while also highlighting collaboration with wholesalers and public sector buyers. Mentera also provide a range of apprenticeships and work placements. During the project, a sixth former was provided with work experience during the BLFF project and has now progressed to a full-time marketing trainee role, gaining insight into the accreditation processes and promotional activities.

Positive outcomes:-

- 52 Welsh food and drink SMEs supported to achieve SALSA and Micron2 accreditation.
- 1,119 jobs retained.
- An update on jobs created / retained was undertaken in the summer of 2025 and 16 businesses who received accreditation support have provided an update – results below:-
 - At the start of the project the 16 businesses employed 555 staff. In their update they reported 660 staff were employed which represents a 20% increase. They confirmed that due to the support for accreditation this had resulted in jobs being safeguarded and jobs created with an additional 105 jobs.
 - 12 out of the 16 of the businesses [70%] reported that all of their jobs had been safeguarded due to the support for accreditation received from the Welsh Government's BLFF programme.
 - Examples:-
 - **Henllan** - Micron 2 - Bakery which has grown linked to supplying the public sector including schools and the NHS alongside sales to multiple retail. At the start of the project the total number of jobs were 106, this has grown to 152 jobs.

- **Sidoli** – Salsa - ‘All 15 jobs retained and accreditation instrumental in ability to do business with Harlech Foodservice in 2025’ Stefano Sidoli 19/6/25
 - **Woosnam Dairies** – Micron 2 - 13 jobs safeguarded plus 1 new job created. A further 4 in the pipeline subject to NHS contract confirmation.
 - **Capital Cuisine** – Salsa - 3 new jobs created based on supplying Castell Howell with increased contracts.
 - Output: 3 jobs created, 10 safeguarded, total number employed 13
- Looking at the remaining 36 businesses, who have a similar profile to the first group, they employ an average of 22.4 staff which totals 806 jobs.
 - Based on data from the first group, 70% of the businesses provided evidence that all jobs had been safeguarded due to the importance of accreditation. Therefore in the 2nd group taking 70% of the 36 businesses would mean for 25.2 businesses with 564 jobs were safeguarded.
 - This provides the total of 1119 jobs retained. It is likely that this figure is higher based on the data from the first group.
 - Case studies developed showing a range of quality Welsh products made in Wales, whilst demonstrating the effectiveness of the grant funded acquired accreditations.

Case study examples from the Welsh Government Food Accreditation Grant Scheme:-

- **Country Fresh Eggs**
Won contract with Monmouthshire Council, retained Tesco contract and new wholesale customer requiring Salsa.
Output: 10 jobs retained.
- **AJ Rees & Sons**
Confirmed that due to Welsh Government accreditation grant they retained 28 staff members and retained supply to Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion Councils. Enquired about support for Red tractor accreditation.
Output: 28 jobs retained
- **Harlech**
The Welsh Government support assisted Harlech to maintain their position on the national framework for supply to the NHS which led to job creation and jobs safeguarded.
Output: 270 jobs retained / created
- Filmed case studies:
 - Henllan Bakery, Denbigh
 - Harlech Foodservice, Criccieth

- Ty Tanglwyst Dairy Bridgend
 - Mario's Ice Cream - Cross Hands (Part of the Castell Howell group)
- **Foundational Economy Benefits**
The project focused on growing locally owned businesses, which was evident from the feedback about jobs safeguarded and created through strengthening market access. This in turn helps businesses to develop and flourish. Also, they are supplying the public sector best practice in embedding fair work, helping create and enrich high skilled jobs and providing pathways for people to acquire new skills as values that are strongly promoted.
 - By improving the range of Welsh food and drink companies with accreditation, it has improved citizens access to affordable, good quality Foundational Economy goods i.e. Welsh food.
 - By helping to increase capacity to supply food produced in Wales which is therefore local food with less food miles; this has contributed to reduce carbon impacts and supported the Wales' Net Zero Plan.

PLANED

The PLANED project successfully commissioned two community vending machines in West Wales, aimed at improving access for rural communities to fresh, local produce while supporting small suppliers and promoting sustainability. Despite delays in deploying the second machine due to site and supply chain issues, both installations have engaged local volunteers, supported producers with sustainable packaging advice, and provided communities with 24/7 access to food. The first machine showed strong engagement, with 12 suppliers involved and 25 survey responses indicating an average customer travel distance of 17 miles. The second machine, installed in partnership with Foothold Cymru, is still gathering data but has already begun supporting local producers and volunteers.

The project demonstrated strong collaboration with local farms and charities, and its flexible, community-led approach ensured each vending machine reflected local needs. PLANED found the BLFF Food Community of Practice meetings valuable for sharing insights and building partnerships.

Looking ahead, PLANED aims to enhance sustainability by exploring solar-powered machines and reusable packaging. High demand suggests potential for replication in other communities, with ongoing training and marketing support provided to maximise impact. The project highlights how innovative, locally tailored solutions can improve food access, reduce environmental impact, and strengthen community resilience.

Positive outcomes:-

- The communities that have these vending machines installed have benefited from having better access to fresh produce at any time. This, in turn, supports local suppliers and small businesses, generating income for those suppliers.
- Benefits for customers: -

- Being able to access fresh local food in their own community
- Knowing where their food has come from
- Reduced food miles and/or travel
- Less packaging and single use plastics

Social Farms and Gardens

The Social Farms and Gardens project focused on developing and piloting new planning guidance for agricultural dwellings and permitted development rights in Powys and the Brecon Beacons National Park, with the goal of supporting small-scale, agroecological farming enterprises. Working with specialist consultants and a broad partnership, the project produced practical planning guidance that was adopted by both Powys County Council and BBNPA and tested through a real-world planning application at Wern Farm. This guidance has already influenced national policy discussions and is being considered for wider adoption across Wales. The project also delivered a [“How to Guide”](#) for horticultural farmers, ran training and dissemination sessions, and facilitated knowledge sharing through surveys and focus groups.

Key successes included building capacity and expertise within the partnership, supporting new rural enterprises, and delivering environmental benefits such as tree planting and regenerative farming practices. The project faced challenges around governance, resource constraints, and the complexity of the planning process, but it significantly increased understanding of planning barriers for horticultural farms and fostered stronger collaboration between stakeholders.

Looking ahead, the partnership plans to scale up the guidance, work with other local authorities and housing providers, and continue training and support for new horticultural enterprises across Wales.

Positive outcomes:-

Planning Guidance:

The project has successfully developed planning guidance by working with specialist consultants and with input from the Future Farms Steering Group, new Powys County Council planning guidance, which is available as an online resource. The planning guidance is a huge step forward and was tested during consideration of the merits of the planning application at the Post Office land site at Sarn, east of Newtown, Powys – now Wern Farm.

Testing:

A full planning application was submitted to Powys County Council on 28 March 2024 for the 15ha “Post Office” site at Sarn, east of Newtown, to support three small horticultural businesses. Under this workstream, consultants were commissioned to carry out the necessary surveys to support the application. These included a drainage (SuDS) report, Flood Consequence Assessment, Badger Survey, Ecological Surveys and Tree Assessment to identify tree and root protection zones. This has resulted in a guide list of all surveys to

consider for planning applications on-site, which will help to inform others to get the required surveys in place early in the planning application process.

Sharing Learnings:

A series of documents have been drafted, such as “criteria for land for small farms” and “notes for considerations when developing leases for farmers,” which form resources to contribute to the dissemination of the project's learnings. These dynamic documents will continue to be revised. We worked in partnership with DTAWales and Farming Connect Lantra to ensure these documents are accessible to growers.

An online survey was released in November 2023, “Planning guidance for small-scale farmers: your chance to have your say”, inviting people with a range of experiences in both agroecological growing and dealing with the planning system to review the draft guidance and attend an online focus group to share thoughts on the guidance. There was a fantastic response to be involved, with 35 responses from across Wales and one from England within under a week.

The partnership delivered a dissemination and training session in January 2025 to over 60 Local Authority Planning Officers from across Wales on the new planning guidance adopted by Powys CC.

Furthermore, we have developed a “How to Guide” to support new enterprises to interpret the guidance and prepare a planning application. This should enable a smoother process as applicants submit applications that meet requirements and horticultural farmers are able to interpret the guidance to their specific circumstances.

Through our weekly partnership meetings, the team were able to increase their knowledge of the various aspects involved in the planning application process.

The Future Farms project has been a long-term ambition for many. BLFF seed-funding this work has enabled an additional £731k to be raised to further support this important test-case and to actually deliver it on the ground at Wern Farm near Newtown.

Well Fed

Well Fed focused on developing innovative food systems to improve access to affordable, locally sourced meals in North Wales. The project successfully introduced solar-powered operations, piloted 50+ meal types to be held in their stainless steel eatTAINABLE containers, and developed meal lockers to serve communities. These innovations aimed to reduce costs, improve sustainability, and shorten supply chains.

The project met its core targets, including the creation of new food services and partnerships, and achieved a 50% reduction in utility costs through solar energy.

Well Fed is now focused on commercialising its three core services—vending, lockers, and solar energy—with plans to scale across North Wales. The project highlighted the limitations of short-term funding and the need for strategic investment in social businesses. The team is actively pursuing investment and partnerships to expand its reach and impact, positioning itself as a unique, UPF-free food provider in Europe.

Positive outcomes:-

- Meal development using the eatTAINABLE stainless containers.
- Well-Fed designed a full menu (Cooked and chilled) ready to be held (foodsafety) within stainless containers as opposed to the previous plastic. This meant new tests for heat and shelf life and customer testing. They have designed/piloted 50+ meal types as a result.
- Well Fed have established new partners in Wales and Internationally.

HOUSING / CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

Cwmpas

This project, led by Cwmpas, aimed to strengthen collaboration across Wales to accelerate Net Zero housing development. It successfully engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including Welsh Government, local authorities, housing associations, supply chain experts, and community organisations through roundtables and workshops. These sessions helped identify barriers, share best practices, and shape a “Can-Do” action plan aligned with the Well-being of Future Generations Act. A key outcome was the launch of the TAYC (Tai ar y Cyd) net zero pattern book, endorsed by 25 social landlords, with over 400 homes in development. The project also fostered communities of practice to support supply chain growth and sustainable procurement.

Despite administrative challenges and funding delays with the claims process, the project demonstrated the value of “active facilitation” in mobilising stakeholders and driving measurable action. Lessons learned highlighted the importance of modest resources to bridge the “implementation gap” and the need for continuity in funding.

Looking ahead, the project has now evolved into [TAYC](#), with ongoing oversight from a steering group and plans to scale up further. Its foundational economy focus, developing a capable, local supply chain of manufacturers and contractors continues to be a priority, with future evaluation and funding opportunities being explored to sustain momentum.

Positive outcomes:-

A series of initial meetings were held with key partners in the Developing Net Zero (DNZ) project including:

- A DNZ ‘inner circle’ roundtable with Wood Knowledge Wales, CAST (supply chain consultant), Supply Chain Sustainability School, Stride Treglown (Pattern Book consultant) to introduce the project, Actions agreed.
- Two sessions with the Minister for Climate Change SPAD and Community Energy Wales to discuss potential of UNNOS / YNNI CYMRU links with DNZ project. Actions agreed.
- A roundtable with non DNZ members that came together after the collapse of their main contractor.

Members include Hafod, Linc Cymru, Pobl, Powys County Council, Cardiff City Council, Vale of Glamorgan Council, Newport City Homes and Melin Homes. The purpose was to brief them on the project and explore collaborative opportunities. Actions agreed.

Cwmpas have held 3 workshops, in West, East and North Wales hosted by United Welsh, Tai Tarian and Clwyd Alyn Housing Associations.

The 2 purposes of the workshops were to:

- Brief members and other partners on the DNZ Pattern Book project led by Rob Wheaton of Stride Treglown.
- Provide an opportunity to interact and shape the project.
- Identify any current and previous practice we could learn from.
- Flag up particular risks and opportunities for the project.

Cyfle Building Skills

The Cyfle Net-Zero Work Experience project exceeded its targets by providing 120 electrical and plumbing learners with hands-on, low-carbon training placements, supported by 60 engaged employers. All participants completed a comprehensive programme including onsite placements, mentoring, and employability workshops, with 89% progressing into apprenticeships or employment. The project not only increased workforce capacity and improved project delivery for employers but also championed net zero awareness and carbon literacy among young people.

Cyfle's approach fostered knowledge transfer, upskilling, and stronger team culture, while also creating new jobs and building a pipeline of skilled workers for the future. Despite some administrative delays with their claims, the project's success has strengthened employer partnerships and demonstrated the value of shared apprenticeship models in supporting economic resilience and community development.

Looking ahead, Cyfle aims to expand its impact by training even more apprentices, further supporting the construction industry and Wales' net zero ambitions.

Positive outcomes:-

- 213 applications were received from potential programme candidates
- 120 programme starts have completed their onsite placement and training
- 120 candidates have completed all elements of the Workplace Experience Programme, 10-day onsite placement, a Mentoring and Employability Skills Workshop and a 1-day Careers and CV writing workshop.
- 89% of participants have gone onto an apprenticeship scheme or some sort of employment.
- 60 employers have engaged with the programme to provide onsite placements for young people.

- One candidate was even recognised at the prestigious Youthbuild 2024 Awards in London where he received an award in the 14–18-year-old category for his outstanding achievements.

NetRet Group Ltd.

NetRet Group Ltd successfully exceeded its target by supporting 24 Welsh SMEs in preparing for PAS 2030:2023 certification, positioning them to lead in retrofit and decarbonisation services. Through digital onboarding, tailored training plans, and comprehensive pre-audit support, NetRet ensured that participating contractors were audit-ready and aligned with UKAS standards. The project also facilitated supplier engagement through online briefings and direct outreach, helping SMEs understand the value of certification, and questionnaires and interviews carried out by NetRet show that the participating SMEs anticipate workforce growth. NetRet themselves were able to commission two self-employed inspector roles to support increased audit capacity. As more companies become certified and more installations need to be inspected, NetRet expect to commission further inspector roles.

The project ran on time and within budget, with strong collaboration across housing associations and framework providers. Lessons learned included the importance of early engagement with key influencers and managing expectations around supplier data.

Looking ahead, NetRet will promote success stories and expand its support through a new FE funded Renewable Membership Program, helping Welsh contractors achieve MCS or Flexi Orb certification and further strengthening the renewable energy supply chain in line with Wales' Net-Zero goals.

Positive outcomes:-

NetRet has successfully engaged with 24 SMEs:

- Digital onboarding: Assisted all participating contractors in developing their Quality Management Systems and core policies, providing structured feedback and templates aligned with PAS 2030:2023 and UKAS standards.
- Pre-audit reviews: Conducted comprehensive on-site pre-audits, identifying and addressing non-conformities to ensure readiness for formal PAS 2030 certification audits.
- Audit Readiness: Successfully prepared contractors for their UKAS-accredited PAS 2030 audits, ensuring documentation and site works meet required standards.
- Training Plans: Delivered customised training plans, including access to PLA-funded options, addressing specific deficiencies identified during the pre-audit phase.

NetRet has successfully completed the funded phase by preparing SMEs for PAS 2030:2023 compliance. Participating companies have been prepared for transition into the formal UKAS-accredited PAS audit stage.

Pre-questionnaires and interviews provided evidence that participating SMEs anticipate growing their workforce upon securing work with PAS 2030 certification.

SimplyDo – Phase 1: Social Housing

The SimplyDo Phase 1: Social Housing project successfully built on the Optimised Retrofit Programme by engaging five social housing providers and delivering seven structured work packages focused on procurement and innovation. The project identified 483 Welsh suppliers across three procurement challenges, helping to localise supply chains, support job creation, and promote decarbonisation. It also introduced innovative tools such as AI-driven diagnostics, geovisualisation using PowerBI, and a new 'Local Search' function to uncover hard-to-reach suppliers. These efforts supported Foundational Economy goals by improving access to Welsh businesses, accelerating payments, and enabling tenant-focused solutions like improved flooring and renewable energy installations.

The project retained 8 jobs at SimplyDo and laid the groundwork for future expansion into other foundational sectors, including transport. Lessons learned included the importance of aligning partner expectations, managing data limitations, and allowing more time for project initiation. Despite some variability in partner engagement, the project demonstrated strong collaboration, effective supplier mapping, and the potential for scaling its innovative approach across Wales.

Looking ahead, Phase 2 of the project is already underway, focussing on decarbonising Welsh public transport. A second evaluation will be undertaken to outline the outcomes and benefits of Phase 2 once the project has been completed.

Positive outcomes:-

5 organisations were recruited to the Welsh Innovation in Social Housing (WISH) project:

- Caredig
- Caerphilly County Borough Council
- ClwydAlyn/Onnen
- RHA
- Trivallis

Across the project the following outcomes were achieved:

- Identifying 483 Welsh suppliers across 3x procurement challenges for potential future contract opportunities which will lead to job security and job creation.
- Uncovering 36 Welsh organisations as part of the ClwydAlyn Challenge whose staff could be upskilled in terms of PAS and MCS accreditations.
- Highlighting 156 Welsh businesses that could perform the function of current UK headquartered supplier for Caerphilly County Borough Council.
- Providing access to an enhanced pool of 195 Welsh renewable energy installers to support further Foundational Economy Goods and Services.
- Providing Rhondda Housing Association with 132 Welsh organisations that could supply and install carpets and flooring ensuring that they can meet and improve the increasing demands of tenants.
- Driving faster payments for Caredig's suppliers ensuring that citizens get access to good quality Foundational Economy goods and services.

- Delivering new innovative AI-driven solutions for Trivallis to improve household liveability.
- Generating positive environmental impact through the 351 suppliers identified across the ClwydAlyn and CCBC challenges to deliver carbon-saving retrofit technologies.
- Delivering social innovation through 100% Welsh suppliers across 3x procurement-led challenges who can deliver decarbonisation technologies in line with Wales' Net Zero Plan.

WoodKnowledge Wales

The WoodKnowledge Wales (WKW) Low Carbon Timber Networks project successfully brought together over 95 organisations through 28 online and in-person Community of Practice (CoP) meetings, and 36 CoP management meetings exceeding expectations and fostering collaboration across the timber and housing sectors. The project created two new CoPs (Forest and Land Use, and Contractors), and WKW were able to employ a dedicated CoP manager in 2024 who is still employed today. This enabled WKW to strengthen its facilitation capacity and expand its network. These CoPs served as incubators for public procurement ideas, supported the Welsh Government's Timber Industrial Strategy, and contributed to projects like Tai ar y Cyd. While direct net zero impacts are difficult to quantify, the ripple effect of CoP activity has undoubtedly supported the development of low-carbon buildings and sustainable timber supply chains.

The project ran on time and to budget, with strong collaboration across sectors. Key lessons included the importance of trust, flexibility, and tailored engagement especially for small businesses with limited capacity. WKW adapted by increasing outreach and using site visits to maintain participation. Challenges such as competition within the sector and limited training pathways were addressed through strategic input into skills development and education planning, including adding sessions dedicated to training and recruitment at WoodBUILD 2025.

Looking ahead, WKW plans to expand its CoP model to include new member types and build on its forestry education network, continuing its evolution as a key enabler of sustainable, foundational economy growth in Wales.

Positive outcomes:-

WKW was able to hold:

- 12 Online CoP Meetings with 36 organisations participating (social housing developers, architects and designers, timber frame manufacturers, joiners)
- 16 in-person meetings with 95 organisations participating (social housing developers, architects and designers, timber frame manufacturers, small scale sawmillers, contractors, forest and land use)
- 36 CoP management meetings (CoP of CoPs, management meetings)
- Developed 2 new CoPs (Forest and Land Use, Contractors) and,
- Delivered 1 new CoP (contractors).

- The FE Funding allowed WKW to employ a dedicated CoP manager in February 2024.
- The CoPs have served as sounding boards for Government projects, project idea incubators and spaces to build consortia for public tenders. They have helped advance and publicise options for public procurement around net zero decarbonisation and supply of timber from the WGWE. They have worked with Government to inform and support the Timber Industrial Strategy and have collaborated with the Tai ar y Cyd project team from inception to project launch.

INNOVATION PROJECT

Cardiff Metropolitan University

The FEIN programme by Cardiff Metropolitan University has had strong impact on SMEs across Wales, particularly in the Cardiff Capital Region and Swansea Bay Area. The programme successfully engaged 34 organisations from diverse sectors (Health and Social Care, Waste Management and Recycling, Housing, Construction, Tourism, Creative Industries and Design, Food and Retail, and Community Development), delivering experiential workshops and fostering peer learning. Participants reported high satisfaction, with 94% recommending the programme and 86% noting that their learning translated into workplace improvements. The initiative led to increased innovation activity, enhanced understanding of circular economy principles, and greater adoption of fair work practices, including the Real Living Wage (RLW) (55% of companies have adopted the RLW and a further 30% intend to do so).

A suite of videos relating to the projects can be accessed here:-

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLtCROU4co6y7GpY2_K1nJr6C4G1MqAl8f

Positive outcomes:-

34 organisations enrolled on the FEIN programme; 20 from the Cardiff Capital Region and 14 were from the Swansea Bay Area. In total there were 17 from the private sector, 7 charities, 5 community organisations, 4 social enterprises and 2 public sector departments. Introductory 2-day experiential learning workshop programme – 96% of participants felt the format and peer discussion elements encouraged deeper understanding of Foundational economy concepts. 86% felt their subsequent understanding transferred back to their workplaces - where activities helped them to overcome various obstacles and engage in problem solving.

At the half-way point of the programme, 80% of participants felt the FEIN programme had extended innovation skills and enhanced their knowledge of Foundational and circular economy principles. 20 of the FEIN participant organisations completed the May 2024 exit survey. Satisfaction levels are extremely high, with 94% recommending this programme to others. 77% of participants reported that their knowledge of the Circular Economy has been enhanced by the programme, and 72% for innovation knowledge. The data collected from the exit survey reveals that 55% of respondents have adopted the Living Wage for Wales with a further 30% intending to do so.

Overall project impact:

- increase in innovation active SMEs in Wales
- increase in SMEs adopting the Living Wage for Wales and fair work practices
- decrease in the carbon footprint of SMEs in Wales
- enhanced strategic collaborative relationships between SMEs and regional public sector stakeholders
- Two MoUs agreed and signed
- Two networks established in the Cardiff and Swansea regions, including social enterprises and Cwmpas
- 17 Clean Growth/Net Zero plans for Cardiff and 7 for Swansea
- 17 Fair Work and Human Resources Development plans for Cardiff and 7 for Swansea
- 17 innovation plans for Cardiff and 7 for Swansea
- 10 referrals to WRAP Cymru support with R&D, tendering, procurement, and technical advice
- 60 offers completed for mentoring on-line support for participants
- 2 Best practice visits to innovative organisations and workplace exchange visits (CMU, SU)
- 10 workshop days completed: five per region
- 3 Mentoring support sessions for marketing via Cwmpas

Long-standing national and regional economic difficulties have constrained the growth of the foundational economy in Wales and hampered implementation by smaller organisations of circular economy principles. In line with indicator 11 of the Future Generations Act, FEIN has succeeded in growing the number of innovation active SMEs through reinforcing four key regional objectives within Wales:

- growing locally owned businesses, embedding fair work
- helping create & enrich high skilled jobs providing pathways for people to acquire new skills
- improving citizen access to affordable good quality foundational economy goods and services.
- social innovation to improve household liveability, provider resilience, environmental impact and the Net Zero Plan. the programme include the value of structured reflection, design thinking tools, and community-building methods. Partnerships with organisations like Cwmpas and WRAP Cymru enriched the programme's delivery and supported participants in developing practical solutions to foundational economy challenges. While the programme was praised for its inspirational approach, one critique noted its academic tone. The evaluation suggests strong potential for scaling up, with many participants seeking further funding and support to continue their innovation journeys. The FEIN model has proven effective in promoting sustainable, inclusive economic development aligned with the Future Generations Act.