



making a difference
Social Enterprise in Carmarthenshire



 **Wales Co-operative Centre**
Canolfan Cydweithredol Cymru


Cymarthys Gysparwethus Gynhybidiol Cy. Cym.
Carmarthenshire Association of Voluntary Services

Many communities in Carmarthenshire face problems such as lack of public transport, the closure of local facilities, limited access to childcare services or a shortage of affordable housing.

introduction



But across the county, people are deciding that things can be different and are making things happen. New initiatives from a national, regional and local level are encouraging people to plan for their own communities. People are opening community centres; setting up child care clubs; starting food co-operatives and village shops; establishing community land trusts for social housing and developing environmental projects.

In the process, people are beginning to take ownership and control over how their local services are run.



the social enterprise solution



The answer to many problems in Carmarthenshire may lie in social enterprise.

A social enterprise is a community business which achieves its social aims through trading activity. Based on the principles of co-operation, its surpluses are not given to individuals but are put back into the business. It democratically involves its users, staff and local community in the running of the organisation and is accountable to local stakeholders and to the community where it is located.

Above all, social enterprises use co-operative principles such as openness, honesty, social responsibility, self-help, equality and solidarity to guide the way they are set up and what they do.



How can a 'social enterprise' approach provide a solution to the issues faced in Carmarthenshire?

Renewable energy	Communities can join together to tackle environmental problems, for example by setting up community recycling schemes and renewable energy projects.
Community centres	Residents can open new community centres or redevelop old ones, providing a valuable community resource and a focal point for local activity.
Local shops	Where the private sector thinks a local shop is no longer viable, residents can take it over themselves and run it as a not-for-profit enterprise, often using volunteers.
Community transport	Where public transport is not available, communities can club together to run their own bus service or create a car sharing scheme.
Childcare	Childcare social enterprises bring together parents who collectively own their own nursery employing professional staff so they can go out to work.
Affordable housing	Community Land Trusts can buy land and build houses that are owned by local groups.

social enterprise in action in Carmarthenshire



Pwll Pavilion

The original Pwll Pavilion was a pre-fabricated building overlooking the Burry estuary in Llanelli. In 2002, the derelict area around the Pavilion was transformed into a coastal park and local volunteers decided to build a new centre for the community.

Local people raised £350,000 including grants from Carmarthenshire County Council and the Millennium Lottery fund to build the new centre; but now the Pwll Pavilion is a valuable local resource. A café generates income to pay the running costs whilst the second floor is used for many diverse activities. The Pavilion was recently commended by the Civic Trust as a project that has made a valuable contribution to the quality and appearance of the local environment.

Angharad Jones from Carmarthenshire County Council says: "The Pwll Pavilion is an example of how local people can develop facilities for the benefit of their communities. The hard work of everyone behind the idea should be commended."

Sundance Renewables

Sundance Renewables was formed in 2002 so that people in Carmarthenshire could use clean bio-diesel fuel and learn about practical ways to use wind and solar power.

In 2004, Sundance Renewables opened the UK's first not-for-profit biodiesel plant in Capel Hendre, where it makes renewable fuel from used vegetable oil. The fuel is used by individual motorists as well as organisations such as Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, Carmarthenshire County Council and the Environment Agency.

Sundance Renewables is also a valuable source of information and advice for anyone who wants to use clean energy sources such as wind and sun and offers an advisory service for community groups and small businesses wanting to build their own facilities using renewable energy.



Sundance Renewables opened the UK's first not-for-profit biodiesel plant in Capel Hendre, where it makes renewable fuel from used vegetable oil sourced from small businesses, schools and community organisations.



social enterprise in action in Carmarthenshire

Llanelli Credit Union (Saveeasy)

In 1997, a team of volunteers established a credit union for Llanelli called Saveeasy Credit Union.

Credit unions are financial co-operatives which are owned and controlled by their own members. They offer a convenient place to save money and provide low-cost loans when needed.

Since it opened, Saveeasy Credit Union has become a vibrant and active credit union with a strong community focus. It has grown strongly and developed an ethos of sustainability. It has over 2500 members with savings close to £1 million.

In 2005, the Credit Union joined forces with the Post Office and now has collection counters at two local post offices. In addition, Saveeasy has also opened the first Welsh support centre for the growing Polish population, offering advice to help them integrate into the community.

By focusing on the practical needs of local residents, Saveeasy has gained a valued place at the heart of the community.

Bryn Stores, Brechfa

In 2004, Bryn Stores in Brechfa – the only shop within seven miles along the Cothi valley – was facing imminent closure. At a meeting in the village, residents decided that the community itself should take over the shop.

Running the shop is something which has involved everyone. Donations from residents covered the start-up costs and 40 volunteers now staff it. As a result, Bryn Stores has become a focal point for community activity and has given many residents a chance to be actively involved in village life.

The shop has become an exemplar of social enterprise and has won a number of awards, as well as attracting national media coverage.



Local people of all ages and backgrounds get involved with projects.



help and support in Carmarthenshire



The Wales Co-operative Centre and Carmarthenshire Association of Voluntary Services (CAVS), in partnership with Carmarthenshire County Council and other agencies, provide specialist support to groups who want to set up a social enterprise in Carmarthenshire.

Established in 1982, the Wales Co-operative Centre supports the development of co-operatives and social enterprises as well as tackling social exclusion and bringing economically inactive individuals back into the world of work. Its team of business advisors work right across Wales, empowering individuals and communities to take control of their future and establish businesses which have social and ethical goals as well as sound economic objectives.

Carmarthenshire Association of Voluntary Services (CAVS) is the county voluntary council and currently celebrating over 10 years of activity in the county. It provides help and advice to voluntary organisations, individual volunteers and community groups in Carmarthenshire enabling them to work more effectively. By working in partnership with other organisations in the county and by responding positively and imaginatively to changes in the third sector, it aims to strengthen and empower communities to take responsibility for local development.

Working in partnership, CAVS and the Wales Co-operative Centre provide a range of free services which help ensure the success of individual projects.



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They can:

- Provide advice on business planning
- Help with the legal side of setting up a new social enterprise
- Provide training on a huge range of subjects such as marketing, managing financial accounts and recruitment as well as on areas specific to the social enterprise sector
- Help find sources of funding appropriate to a group's activities
- Facilitate networking between groups who have similar interests
- Circulate information of interest to voluntary and community groups



interested?

If you're interested in developing a 'social enterprise' and getting something started in your community, please contact:

Carmarthenshire Development Officer
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Email: carmarthen@walescoop.com
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CAVS
Ty Carwyn, 3 St Peters Street
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Tel: 01267 236367
Email: admin@cavs.org.uk
Web: www.cavs.org.uk

Helen Watts
Hidden Dragon
Carmarthenshire County Council
Tel: 01554 742344
Email: hmawatts@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

For information on other local and national agencies that can provide help and advice for social enterprises please contact CAVS on 01267 236367

Community Bureau
Carmarthenshire County Council
Tel: 01269 590216
Email: grants@carmarthenshire.gov.uk



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To request a copy, please telephone 029 2055 4955.