



# Brighter Futures

OUR ENERGY SAVING, COST CUTTING, & ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENTS UPDATE



## Background

Our charity is located in an old public house within the most deprived ward of Wales, we formed in 2018 as a response to the need for a joined-up approach to tackling local issues in a sustainable and resilient manner.

Initial seeds were sown as small number of community led groups supporting different sections of our community joined forces after years of struggling on with very limited resources and little support, over time these groups took small steps towards appreciating and understanding each other's needs which developed a foundation for mutual support and closer partnership working.

A new consortium that could provide a "strength in numbers" approach to tackling local issues together was born with encouragement from the Steve Morgan Foundation.

The groups worked together to identify a potential facility that could house a number of groups and activities that were scattered around the town and reduce long term core running by sharing resources, an old pub called the Liverpool Arms which had been a blight on our community and cause for significant concern for the police and local authority was shut down by the courts just weeks before the consortium was born that caught our attention.

In a scene reminiscent of the 1984 movie Ghostbusters, the group's leaders attended a viewing of the facility and it reminded us when the ghostbusters discuss the building they are viewing to renovate into their headquarters and how it is totally unsuitable and should really be condemned, only for another team member to slide down a fireman's pole say "this is great, lets sleep here tonight!"

However it was decided that despite the amount of work involved, this was a significant statement to make, showing that "rag tag" collective of community groups in the most deprived area in Wales could come together and take on the redevelopment of the worst public house in the town and transform it into a beacon for a Brighter Future on a shoe string budget by involving the whole community in the works, from police officers and school teacher to local traders and young people all providing their time to bring the building back to life.

This became our Brighter Futures Facility!



## Organisational Development

Our first step was to create our 3 year development plan, we set ourselves modest, achievable milestones and worked on each item in small groups, this freed up valuable volunteer time for organisational development to take us from a rag tag network of community groups, just stumbling and clambering to support our community during difficult times, then armed with just best intentions and passion, but very little in terms of strategy and governance to becoming a quality marked registered Charity, where governance improvements have been prioritised alongside remaining grounded and community led.

Our development journey stuck to the principles we set ourselves of staying on track (T.R.A.C.K) by becoming:

- Transparent
- Regulated
- Accountable
- Compliant
- Knowledgeable.

We undertook training and personal development and accessed support from organisations such as Sported and the Cranfield Trust ensuring it is local people who are engaged and empowered to make the changes they wanted to see.



## Highlights

1. We completed the Charity Excellence Award.
2. We became a single entity, one charity from 7 groups.
3. We undertook a number of self assessments based on standards from IIV, IIP, Trusted Charity and Green Dragon.
4. We developed a host of new, relevant and policies and procedures with guidance from WCVA.
5. We developed a new online hub to enhance transparency and accountability to our stakeholders.
6. We registered as a data controller with the ICO and improved our data protection systems.
7. We fully redeveloped or training systems and updated all employees qualifications.
8. We consulted with members of our community and used feedback to change and adapt
9. We reduced core running costs by sharing resources and eventually amalgamating.
10. We increased our board of Trustees with skilled people who had longstanding links to our community.

## Facility Development

We were able to make a start on building improvements works quickly due to the solid response from volunteers in our community, alongside this the Steve Morgan Foundation enabled us to employ a facility caretaker to lead on room by room improvements.

With Further Capital investment coming from the Welsh Government and the TrustHouse Foundation amongst others for essential works, the 7 local groups began using the facility to engage with over 300 local people per week and provide an engagement point for other support agencies to link with many of those individuals that required support but would normally be hard to reach.

As works progressed we identified the need to significantly reduce the running costs of the facility for long term sustainability, we developed our Energy Efficiency Plan (website link) and slowly worked to upgrade to energy efficient equipment and push hard to adjust the energy use culture within our team.

This reduction in running costs has provide long term sustainability for each group through using a physical asset and shared resources to drastically reduce the day-to-day financial costs of running voluntary activities.

Almost all works are now complete on our facility, below are a number of significant milestones to highlight the impact of the CFP capital investment and revenue investment from other funders.



## Highlights

1. We have transformed a 19<sup>th</sup> century building from an eyesore with an energy performance certification of “G” to a flagship community facility a current energy performance of “A” (and we hope to achieve Net Zero by the end of 2022).
2. We have purchased our building as a long-term community owned asset which has been redeveloped by involving the community in its design and repair.
3. We have reduced the core costs of local community action by removing the need for every group to be individually administrated.
4. We have reduced our energy (electricity) usage by 82% in 12 months through changes such as renewable technology use, A rated equipment and culture change.
5. We have achieved the Platinum Award for our “green pledge” and won the best entrepreneurial charity award.
6. We have been able to use cost savings to free up resources and develop a new Community & Repair Café which both generate a small income stream by recycling and reusing.

## Energy saving and production

With Further Capital investment coming from the Welsh Government and Gwynt Y Mor we installed our solar panels and batteries formed a significant part of our energy efficiency plan and to date (as of Aug 2022) our 'power used' every quarter compared to the quarter of Aug 2021

Q1 we used 3,739kWh (pre Energy saving plan) - 0% (baseline)

Q2 we used 1,594kWh - 42.6% Compared to Q1

Q3 we used 1,299kWh - 34.7% Compared to Q1

Q4 we used 670kWh - 17.9% Compared to Q1

So, we are currently using 82.1% less electricity than we did prior to our EEP (Energy Efficiency Plan) This despite running more activities for more people and running a new Community Café, Repair Café, and various other groups.

With the groups combining into one organisation and providing a joined-up approach to supporting our community we have reduced core running costs in excess of 50% compared to 2017/18 and expect these costs to reduce further of the coming 24 months, with a projection of circa 70 - 75% total reduction by 2025.

The reduction in costs has happened despite us increasing use of the building (being open more often and providing more meals, a repair Café and Weekly Community Cafe).



## Our Top Tips

1. Check your old energy bills to establish a clear start point (note down how much you are using in Electricity or Gas) ideally using around 12 months' worth of readings.

We have put our spreadsheet online which you can download and use to record your meter readings, this might be useful to see trends and changes in your usage).

2. Make a plan

Some energy saving changes are quick and easy, but others will take time, planning and money. Think ahead and work out what you can afford to do and when, so energy upgrades aren't a shock to you or your budget.

3. Engage your team

Everyone in an organisation can play a role when reducing energy use. Get your team involved in energy saving efforts from the start, This way they'll be more likely to take it seriously and make it the norm.

4. Check for items you can switch off.

It will seem obvious, but we found a number of items were often turned on even though we were not using it.

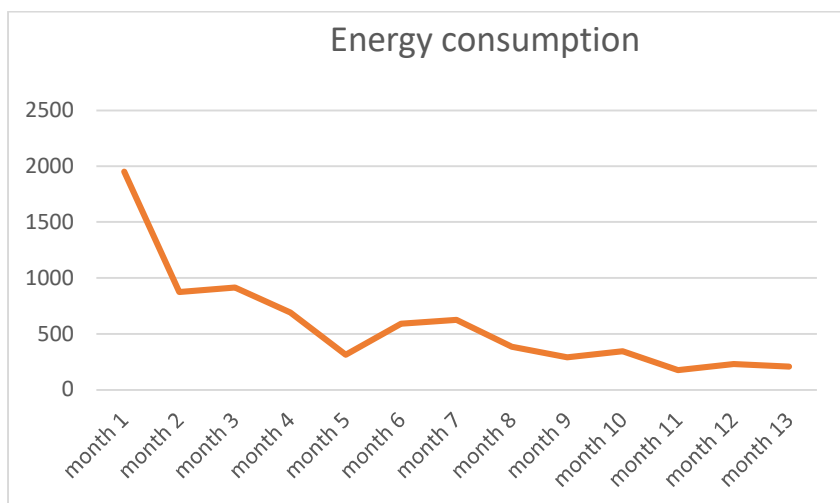
(We are now at the point where when our building is closed, only our fridge freezers, CCTV and alarm systems are using power)

5. Invest in new equipment

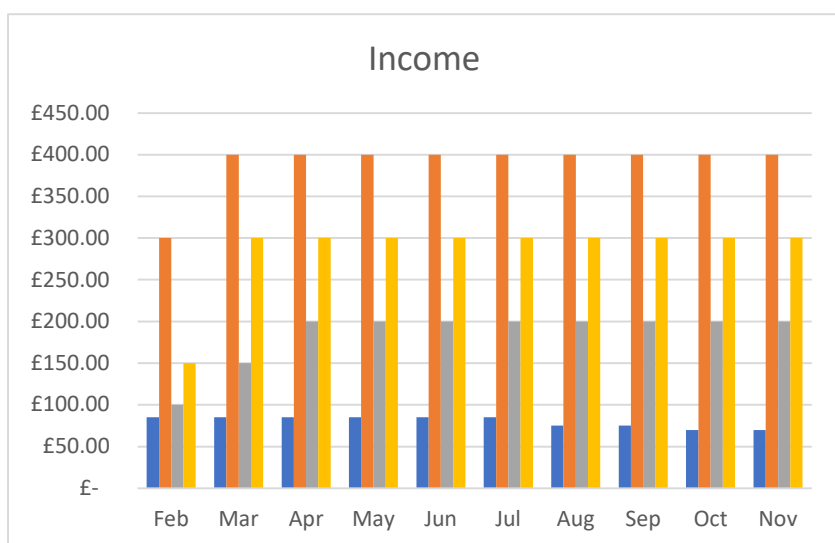
Changing to energy efficient equipment and using renewable energy sources is essential, even small inexpensive changes can make a big impact.

## Enterprise development

With investment coming from the WCVA we formed a new project to test out ideas for sustainably generating income and reducing costs, we focused on 2 areas of potential sustainability, energy saving and income generation, energy saving as mentioned above helped us drastically reduce our use of gas and electricity as detailed in the graph below.



Income generation has been trailed through a number of new activities, these included fundraising events and collections, a community café, recycling / upcycling, facility rental and service charges. We have been able to develop knowledge, improve skills and secure tools we need to secure additional funding and vastly diversify our income potential through providing additional activities which will generate a return beyond the projects 12-month life, feeding into our wider sustainability goals and ensuring our core running costs are minimal if not zero. To date we have been able to generate over £8600 in unrestricted income alongside our energy savings during our TRSF project.



## Highlights

Our works completed with a significant impact in lowering costs, in turn freeing up our resources to better engage with the local community and enhance our ability to tackle local issues that people have told us are important to them, our freed-up resources have key to us grasping new opportunities that will ensure we are resilient and able to support our community in the long term.

We are confident we can have a wider impact by sharing our story and strategies with other organisations across Wales and England, already a number of other community groups and charities have made contact with us to request guidance and share our experiences alongside three large funders who wish to share our journey with organisations they provide grant funding too, for this to happen we are currently creating a very short “story” of what we have done and top tips for other groups.

Finally, we are very proud that our work is reaching out not just to groups but also stakeholders, we have had 5 visits from WS / Welsh Ministers, 2 MP’s and HRH Prince William, while recently also invited to attend an event with HRH King Charles at his Welsh Home.

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*Our journey is far from over, our new priorities are:*

*To continue reducing costs related to activities without reducing quality.*

*Increase our ability to generate income through enterprise while keeping activities free.*

*Improve connections with other groups in Rhyl to enhance opportunities to change people's lives.*

*To engage, support and develop the next generation for community leaders to take on future community action.*

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## DO YOU WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

**We have created a new section on our website with all the tools and documents we have used over the past year to help us make savings and generate income, everything is free for you to download and use for your own group:**

[www.brighterfuturesrhyl.co.uk/energy](http://www.brighterfuturesrhyl.co.uk/energy)



### **What we have done**

Installed Solar with batteries (battery storage is essential)

Installed various insulation to walls and roofs

Purchased A rated fridges and freezers

Fitted low flow water taps and toilets

Created water collection systems

Installed automatic LED lighting

Air Source Heat Pump

New double glazing

Sealed air leaks

Replaced doors

Heat recovery system

Induction hob and oven

Installed draft proofing

Trained our staff and volunteers in energy saving

### **Others changes:**

Staff bicycle

Created allotments to grow food for our projects

Joined fareshare for additional food resources

Tracked usage everyday and targeted energy spikes

### **Future Energy Plans**

Internal wall insulation

iboost water heater

Additional Living walls

Log burner install

Research new technologies

Empower the next generation