

Cyngor Cymuned Llansteffan & Llanybri Community Council

Meet & Eat Project Report - April 2023

In September 2023 Welsh Government encouraged Welsh counties to provide Warm Places over the winter months to support people who may be struggling with their heating bills and food costs. Welsh Government provided local authorities with funding to support community projects.

Carmarthenshire County Council supported communities with identifying potential Warm Places and were providing financial support where appropriate. The total amount of funding to be distributed by Carmarthenshire County Council was £180,000. However, the funding was only available for spaces or venues which wouldn't otherwise be open to the public – village halls, meeting rooms, churches and chapels etc. This meant that these venues would have to put on the heating and provide additional services such as refreshments/entertainment/activities for the users. These services would have to be delivered by volunteers from the community. The funding was also available to established venues such as cafes or pubs who planned to extend their opening hours to offer a Warm Place.

In our communities of Llansteffan and Llanybri we had four venues which were already providing a Warm Place, refreshments, entertainment, internet and were able to act as a hub for further support and information. They were The Village Stores Café, the Castle Inn, Inn at the Sticks and the Farmers Arms. As they were already providing warm places, the Council was not able to apply for funding to make them “official” Warm Places. These four businesses were also facing eye-watering increases in their running costs, taking them to the brink of viability.

Consequently the question was asked: ***As a Community Council, should we be considering plans which could support all individuals and families, and local hospitality hubs in the absence of external funding?*** The Council agreed that a Plan would be appropriate and beneficial to the whole community.

The Meet & Eat Project was agreed in the November 2023 meeting and Councillors Caroline Curtis, Jim Laws and Carys Jones were tasked to provide and execute a Plan which could offer support across the community – benefitting both members of the public and the local businesses, and using funds which had been ring-fenced for the whole community's advantage.

The Proposed Project Outline was as follows:

- 1: The Community Council identifies funds which have been ring-fenced “*for the benefit of the whole community*”, comprising income from filming and donations from the Cockling Industry. These monies have been set aside over some years in the expectation that a project could be developed which would be a “good fit” for the benefit of all. The total amount of these monies currently ring-fenced within the Council's bank account stands at £8,575.
- 2: The Community Council designs a voucher system which would enable local residents to spend a token in any of our four Warm Places. A £5 voucher would entitle the resident to food and/or tea or coffee/soft drink to the value of £5. The voucher would then be redeemed by the business from the Meet & Eat Fund.

The Framework and Detail of the Plan follows. The Framework is set out as in the initial agreed proposal. All proposals are measured against the execution of the Plan - noted in red.

The Community Council issues vouchers with counterfoils to the four businesses:

The Community Council had 1000 vouchers printed which were issued to the four businesses accompanied by a Voucher Record Sheet for completion by the proprietors.

The resident requests a voucher in an outlet:

Residents requested a voucher when ordering food/tea or coffee/soft drink.

The resident completes the name and address section of the voucher:

Resident provided name and address on each voucher. Voucher was checked and countersigned by proprietor.

The resident receives a £5 discount on food/tea or coffee/soft drink:

Resident received £5 discount on food/tea or coffee/soft drink.

Vouchers can not be used on alcoholic beverages:

Vouchers were not available against alcoholic beverages.

At the end of each week the business submits the spent vouchers and counterfoils to the Clerk:

Every two weeks the Clerk checked the Voucher Record Sheet and collected the Vouchers. The Clerk and a member/members checked the validity of each Voucher for residential address. The businesses were reimbursed by cheque to the value of the vouchers submitted.

The Community Council reimburses the business to the value of the verified vouchers:

The Community Council reimbursed the businesses by cheque to the value of the verified Vouchers submitted. The payments are listed in the Payment of Accounts section of the Council's monthly minutes.

Each business offers activities to suit their own accommodation. Days and hours when the vouchers are available may differ from business to business:

Some businesses provided the vouchers during all or any opening hours, some limited the Vouchers to exclude certain days or times. All businesses continued to provide existing resources and activities on demand - e.g. TV, Internet, Quiz, Meeting Spaces etc. No additional resources were offered.

All residents of Llansteffan and Llanybri parishes will benefit from the funds put aside for the whole community:

All residents of Llansteffan and Llanybri were offered the opportunity to benefit from the funds put aside for the whole community. Fliers were printed and distributed to every address in both parishes, and the scheme was publicised on social media.

All local residents can benefit from discounted hot food/tea or coffee/soft drink:

All residents of Llansteffan and Llanybri were offered the opportunity to benefit from discounted hot food/tea or coffee/soft drink.

All local residents can benefit from a Warm Place:

All local residents were offered the opportunity to benefit from a Warm Place.

Businesses can provide TV, internet, games, hobby sessions at nominated times:

Businesses continued to provide TV, internet, and their usual offers or activities.

Businesses can benefit by drawing in customers who may not usually use their services:

Businesses reported drawing in customers who did not usually use their services.

Residents who spend over and above the £5 voucher value can further benefit the business:

Businesses reported that many clients spent over and above the £5 voucher value which supported their business.

Residents who would not usually socialise can be encouraged to meet their friends:

Business reported that some residents who did not generally socialise joined with friends or family on more than one occasion.

Residents can maintain or improve their mental health/wellbeing by engaging with others and sharing experiences:

All local residents were offered the opportunity to improve their mental health/wellbeing by engaging with others and sharing experiences. Businesses reported visits from individuals who might otherwise have been isolated.

Residents can collect further information and advice from the four outlets on other benefits to which they might be entitled:

This was not provided per se. However, such information was available on the internet in all the outlets.

Only residents of Llansteffan and Llanybri parishes can benefit from the scheme:

Proprietors were provided with a map and information on the community boundaries. Each Voucher was checked for a legitimate address within those boundaries. The Vouchers were then further checked by the Clerk/members.

Measures must be put in place to certify that non-residents of the two parishes can not take advantage of the scheme:

It was made clear on the literature and social media that non-residents of the two parishes could not take advantage of the scheme. Each Voucher was checked for a legitimate address within the community boundaries. The Vouchers were then further checked by the Clerk/members.

It may be necessary to limit the number of vouchers per individual/family per week at the outset:

This proved not to be necessary. The vouchers were not disproportionately claimed by any families or individuals. The vouchers were claimed from the outset at a rate that indicated that the scheme could be sustained for at least two months.

It may be necessary to limit the number of vouchers per business per week at the outset:

This proved not to be necessary. The vouchers were claimed from the outset at a rate that indicated that the scheme could be sustained for at least two months.

The vouchers could all be used up before the end of the winter months:

The project found its own longevity according to demand. The vouchers were claimed from the outset at a rate that indicated that the scheme could be sustained for at least two months.

£5,000 would provide 1000 x £5 vouchers:

£5,000 was allocated and 1000 x £5 vouchers were provided.

Vouchers would be available Mondays to Fridays:

The Vouchers were made available by the outlets at days and times of their choice.

These would be distributed through discussion with the four businesses:

The Vouchers were distributed according to demand.

If a business only wants to offer the scheme one day a week, it would require fewer vouchers than a business which wants to offer the scheme five days a week:

One outlet did not open every day and consequently used fewer vouchers than the other three outlets.

It would be up to each business to decide if they wish to offer additional benefits, e.g. free tea/coffee, specific £5 meals, family after-school teas, or hobby sessions:

Each business was free to offer additional schemes. However, they reported that this was not necessary to attract customers to benefit from the scheme.

The scheme must be available to everyone in our community:

The scheme was made available to everyone in our community. No proof of need was required. It was deemed inappropriate for customers to have to identify themselves as in need of support - on either financial, health or social grounds.

No-one should feel they are taking charity or asking for support:

No-one was required to identify themselves as in need of support or charity. The customer responses illustrate that the scheme raised morale in general.

The scheme must be promoted as being of mutual benefit to users and businesses:

The potential for mutual benefit to users and businesses was made clear on the fliers and social media. Customers felt they were supporting the community by supporting local businesses and services when participating in the scheme.

The scheme must be properly advertised through leafletting, posters and social media:

One thousand fliers were printed and distributed. Posters were placed in all four outlets. The scheme was publicised on social media by the Council and the outlets.

A small budget must be made available for printing vouchers and promoting the scheme:

A budget of £250 was made available for printing vouchers and promoting the scheme. The actual cost was £212.

The project must be monitored to measure success/failure. Assessment methods have to be in place to accurately record the benefits experienced by both users and businesses:

Each Voucher had a "customers' comments" section on the reverse. 89 customers responded. Response Surveys were provided to the businesses.

Is the Community Council prepared to consider expenditure on this project?:

The Community Council agreed expenditure on this project. Before implementing the project the Council sought advice from One Voice Wales. There was no objection from One Voice Wales and its legal department provided no reasons why this scheme could not be lawfully implemented.

How much will the Council agree to spend? (Proposal £5,000?):

The proposal of £5,000 was agreed.

Is requiring name and address on voucher sufficient to protect against non-parish members claiming the discount?:

After consultation it was agreed that business proprietors were familiar with a high percentage of community residents. It was made clear on the promotional literature that customers may be asked for proof of their residential address. Any further requirement was agreed to be too cumbersome for staff. The data shows that five vouchers out of one thousand were used by non-residents of Llansteffan & Llanybri (0.5%). These were identified early in the scheme and did not re-occur.

How will the project be monitored?:

The project was monitored by manual checking of Vouchers, scrutinising the Voucher Record Sheets, collecting address and age-range data and collating responses.

Is the Community Council content for the three councillors and the Clerk to progress the project?:

Councillors Laws, Curtis and Jones and the Clerk progressed and monitored the project.

Can the project be put in place for delivery on 2nd January 2023 until March 31st?:

The project was delivered between 2nd January and 15th March 2023.

APPENDIX 1

MEET & EAT PROJECT USE STATISTICS

Dates: 3rd January 2023 - 15th March 2023 (11 weeks) (73 days)

Total vouchers used:	991	
Number of individual users:	304	
Used by Llansteffan residents:	605	(61%)
Used by Llanybri residents:	386	(39%)
Farmers Arms, Llanybri:	374	(38%)
Inn at the Sticks, Llansteffan :	49	(5%)
Castle Inn, Llansteffan:	281	(28%)
Village Stores, Llansteffan:	287	(29%)

Vouchers used by various age groups (not required - 921 responses):

2 - 10:	71	(7%)
11 - 20:	122	(12%)
21 - 35:	141	(14%)
36 - 50:	163	(16%)
51 - 70:	234	(24%)
Over 70:	190	(19%)

Highest number of vouchers used by individuals:

1 x 33 vouchers	(3 vouchers per week)
1 x 31 vouchers	(2.8 vouchers per week)
1 x 20 vouchers	(1.8 vouchers per week)
1 x 17 vouchers	(1.5 vouchers per week)
1 x 16 vouchers	(1.5 vouchers per week)
3 x 15 vouchers	(1.4 vouchers per week)
2 x 14 vouchers	(1.3 vouchers per week)
3 x 13 vouchers	(1.2 vouchers per week)
2 x 12 vouchers	(1.1 vouchers per week)
3 x 11 vouchers	(1 voucher per week)

18 users used 286 vouchers (29% of total vouchers used)

Number of residents who used vouchers 11 times or more: 18 (6%)

Number of residents who used vouchers between 2 times and 10 times: 167 (55%)

Number of residents who used vouchers once: 119 (39%)

(PLEASE NOTE: The data gathered from the Vouchers and Record Sheets is protected and will be destroyed on complete closure of the project.)

APPENDIX 2

Meet&Eat Scheme - all comments from Vouchers - 89 comments

(sic.)

Wonderful idea! Thank you.

Thank you!

This really helps people get out to socialise and particularly older people.

Gwych!

It's essential! Thank you!

Great scheme.

Great scheme!

Very fab for local businesses!

Excellent initiative.

Fab idea, well done Com Council.

Brilliant concept - great for people who need comfort and warmth.

Great to support local people and businesses.

Wonderful food. Loved it!

Excellent scheme.

Love it and delish food - thanks!

Great!

Wonderful idea.

Superb!!!

Fantastic initiative to support people during this difficult time.

Getting the kids out and about locally.

Amazing.

Thank you very much.

Thank you - greatly appreciated.

Amazing.

Thank you.

Diolch yn fawr!

Great idea.

Amazing.

It were lovely to take * out for a meal.

Amazing.

Amazing.

Amazing.

Great scheme supporting local businesses and for people locally who may be struggling.

Wonderful scheme to support the lonely, vulnerable and the fuel poverty - furthermore promotes wider social interaction and businesses at this difficult time. Diolch.

Amazing.

An excellent scheme especially when some of the pubs/shops are willing to deliver to less mobile people. Excellent food and service - thanks.

Amazing.

Amazing.

Amazing.

Amazing.

Really good idea - supportive of people struggling - builds community.

Diolch yn fawr!

Fab idea. Will really help make a difference to normal people who are struggling. Thank you.

Always so good.

Brilliant.

Brilliant idea!!

Great!

Good!

Lovely - thanks!

Thank you.

Diolch yn fawr iawn!

Much appreciated! Prompted a meeting of close friends in the shop cafe.

Thank you very much for tasty sandwich and coffee.

Fab.

Excellent scheme.

Fab.

It is lovely to come out with friends and support local businesses. £5 is a great amount/incentive. One slight issue: it is a little prone to abuse.

Wonderful.

Fabulous idea. Thank you!

Fantastic.

Really good. It was nice to meet up with friends from village and have food together.

Love it. Thanks.

Brilliant - first class tea and welcome. Supporting local businesses is an excellent use of the money.

Wonderful afternoon tea.

Lovely cakes and chocs.

Lovely welcome and very good coffee and cakes.

Really enjoyable committee meeting with very good cakes, coffe and tea - warm welcome.

Brilliant idea.

Very good. I like the idea a lot.

Great scheme.

Brill.

Cynllun gwyh i gefnogi busnesau a theuluoedd lleol. Diolch yn fawr iawn.

Cynllun ardderchog i gefnogi teuluoedd mewn amseroedd o gostau byw anodd.

Brilliant.

Fab scheme.

Love this scheme.

Keep it going.

Do it next year.

Amazing.

Amazing.

Amazing.

Amazing.

Amazing.

Diolch yn fawr iawn!

Thank you!

Great for us.

Wonderful!

Brilliant! x

Excellent.

Excellent.

Think it's brilliant.

Sgîm gret - diolch.

Great scheme.

Great scheme.

This has been a fantastic initiative - great job!!

Thank you again, evening of eating and chatting with the kids, minus the technology.

Great scheme that let me eat in the pub with my parents in the warm.

Ate with my parents tonight and played darts with dad after food.

Great scheme.

Superb idea.

What a brilliant idea to bring the community together and help local business.

Slava Ukrain!

Great scheme.

Great scheme.

Good for families.

Great.

Thank you - fantastic initiative.

A very thoughtful idea. Much appreciated. Diolch.

Great scheme!

Great scheme.

Brilliant scheme. Thank you.