

# NEWSLETTER



January 2022

## Dear Friends and Supporter

The 6 months or so since the last newsletter have flown by and a lot has happened. One of the biggest changes was that after camping in a shared office in a church for 8 years, **we have taken on our own building**. It is across the road from where we were in Pontypridd, in the town centre. There is a shop front where we are showcasing and selling products made by our borrowers and self-reliant groups, a large meeting room where we are running workshops and events, an

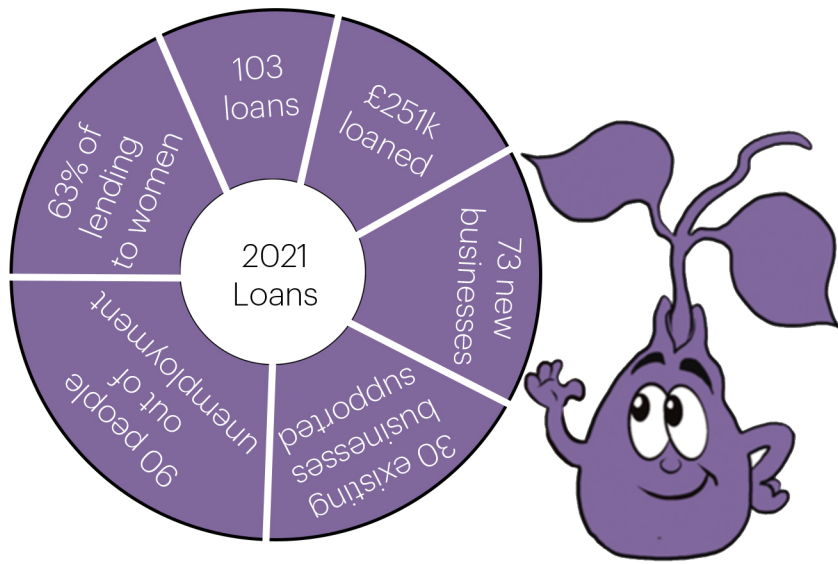
office and kitchens etc. It has provided much needed storage space for all our course materials, papers etc and a meeting hub for our team, our self-reliant groups and others. The local community have been interested and welcoming – and pleased to have another independent shop in Pontypridd. We had an opening day at the beginning of November – and everything to get us there was done by our borrowers or local small businesses (carpet by **Brian Glover**, signage and internal

wallpaper by **Touch Graphics**, telephone and wifi by **Cardiff Computers**, carpentry by **Y Gweithdy**, shop design by our SRG members, balloon decorations by **Sam Noble** and cakes served at the event by **Miss Tilley's** and **St Catherine's café**). We have plans for activities there throughout the year. The owners of the building have been very generous – because they wanted their building to continue to be something positive in the town centre.



In August we received a further generous donation from the Moondance Foundation which has topped up the Purple Moon Fund and enabled us to meet the high demand for loans. The infographic on the next page shows a summary of our lending for 2021, and there are some stories included in this update too (many more on our website).

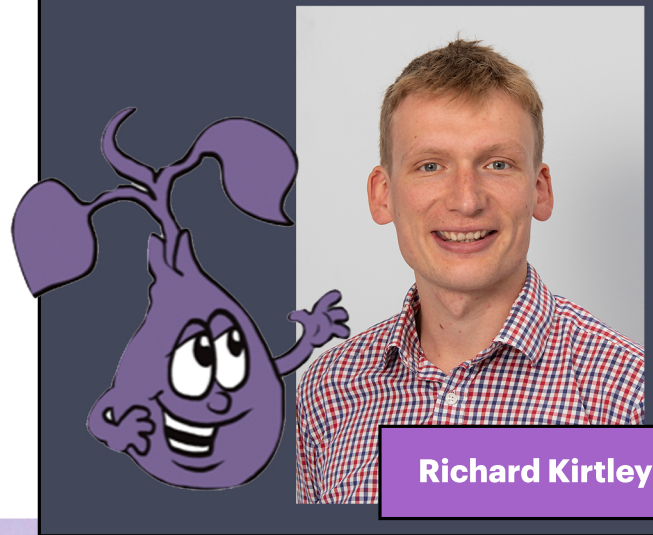




We have also entered an exciting new partnership with Plend, a new Fintech company who have built a new credit underwriting engine which blends data from open-banking and credit bureaux to produce a score which is much more meaningful than standard credit scores and is aimed to help people who struggle to get affordable credit by

analysing them in a much fairer way. From our point of view, the system is going to give us much better data about our clients and will hopefully enable us to make better informed loan decisions, and could in the longer term, increase the volume of loans we are able to make without losing the critical personal interaction with our clients.

A donation from an individual has enabled us to start to lend across the border and this month **Purple Shoots South Yorkshire** is launching, run by **Richard Kirtley** based out of the Cubo Offices in Sheffield. We are also building a partnership with the **Single Mums Business Network** (started by Purple Shoots borrower Julie Hawkins) seeking to raise funds specifically to support members of their network (which is UK wide). So we are beginning to implement our scale-up plan – although we are still seeking funding to support it. We have some social investors who are looking to help, but **we need more!**



**Richard Kirtley**



(Lara's Café) run by an SRG which includes some people with additional needs; there are also two new SRGs and some courses planned. This is all led by our **Sam Coles**. In Treherbert, led by our **Steve Crowley**, we have launched a new initiative with funding from **Pen y Cymoedd Wind Farm Community Fund** in partnership with **Welcome to our Woods**, aiming to enable some of their business ideas and opportunities to happen.

Our self-reliant groups have been restarting and rebuilding and we have a number of exciting new projects happening. We ran our first **"Peaced Together"** course in the summer and this has been followed by several others across South Wales. The first one in the West Country starts this month. Each course so far has then led on to a new SRG as groups have built relationships and come up with ideas together. In Barry, we have partnered with Barry Uniting Church to create a community hub in their new building at Barry Waterfront. We have a new Community café



**Sam Coles**





**Steve Crowley**

Two new SRGs have started there and more activities are planned. We have also just launched a new project in Aberdare in partnership with **Wales Co-operative** and **Aberdare BID**. The project vision is to enhance community wealth generation in the Cynon Valley. Our part in it, led by our **Phil Burkhard**, is enabling social enterprises and community organizations to apply for grants (which are available within the project), providing some food and craft workshops (aiming at developing SRGs), a Be Your Own Boss workshop (to encourage new businesses) and offering an online skills assessment for gamers (via the Game Academy – a great social enterprise we met on the Boost programme).



**Phil Burkhard**

In the Autumn we were successful in winning a place on the Incubator programme with the Cinnamon Trust which will help us with our scale-up plans, especially with our partnership ideas with churches, replicating and building on what we have been doing in Barry and with other churches so far.



Cardiff Christmas Market came round again and we had the most successful one ever, with takings of almost £6000 for our SRG members and borrowers, including the sale of more than 40 wooden reindeer!

### Some Stories

#### **Giulia Simmonds - Alchemy Skincare, Hair and Aesthetics at The Glanfa Surgery, Bangor**

Originally doing hair & beauty with all her qualifications before starting a family, Giulia was widowed and suddenly a single Mum with 4 children, so she needed employment where she could control the hours. Having completed her aesthetics qualifications which she really enjoyed, she decided to combine that with her hair & beauty skills and start a business of her own. Having spent her whole life in Bangor she was pleased to find a room at the local surgery that

was convenient to the schools and also close to her parents for child care duties!

To start a business, Giulia needed funding to enable her to pay the initial room rent, to get all the equipment she needed & also the stock for her products. Having had a period of looking after her family, caring for her husband prior to him sadly passing away, her finances were not suitable for any traditional lender to be able to assist.

With Purple Shoots help Giulia was able to sign a lease on 26th October 2021.



**Giulia Simmonds**



“  
I’m not rich by any means, but at least I can smile at Christmas when it comes.”

**Crystal Gregory** says:  
“A year ago, I couldn’t afford Christmas. I was struggling to get by on UK welfare. It’s not much. I could make it, but just barely. I scrimped for a few Christmas presents, but that meant going without some things for me.”

Now, this year, I am working part time and have my own small business too. I’m not rich by any means, but at least I can smile at Christmas when it comes. I can afford to buy Christmas gifts ahead of time. And looking forward to it when it comes.

How did I get here? In part, to the generosity of the Purple Shoots People, Monmouthshire Housing Association and Business Wales, who helped me to plan a small business and funded it to make it a reality. Thankful. And now, if you know of anyone who is in poverty or just at the line, let them know there’s a way out.

And if you ever wonder why micro-businesses are so powerful, it’s because of this: they can change communities and families’ destinies by lifting them out of poverty.”



## Hilary

Hilary has a 25 year business/legal career history in the private, public and community sector during which she built up considerable expertise in people development. During that time, she also suffered for 12 years in an abusive relationship with her partner. Finally escaping that left her in very difficult financial circumstances – mortgage arrears and debts left by her partner and suddenly becoming a single mum made it hard for her to keep working. She was then diagnosed with cancer and had a lengthy enforced time not working whilst she underwent treatment for that.

Having recovered from cancer, she decided to try to build a business for herself which would work around her children and use the

considerable talents she had, – a leadership and mindset consultancy for business owners and entrepreneurs. She won a few clients straight away but then the pandemic hit and opportunities to network and develop her business disappeared – and she was again reduced to struggling on benefits, whilst still trying to get rid of her legacy of debt.

With the ending of lockdown restrictions, Hilary tried to start again, but she needed some finance to help her with her marketing and networking so that she could develop the customer base to make her business work. In spite of her skills and career history and the evidence of initial success when she started her business, all the funders she approached saw was her poor credit score and her debts.

Hilary found Purple Shoots through the Single Mums Business Network, run by Julie Hawkins (also a Purple Shoots client). Purple Shoots took a

different view – recognizing her entrepreneurial spirit, her resilience and her determination, and offered her the small loan she needed.

Hilary’s business is now fully open for business again and Hilary is steadily building her client base. The business is providing her with a growing income, enabling her to repay her old debts and to build a good life for her and her children.



PURPLE  
SHOOTS



