



PURPLE
SHOOTS

JUNE 2021

NEWSLETTER

Dear Friends and Supporters



It's just over 6 months since our last newsletter and when I wrote that one, I didn't expect that we would still be in a lockdown, and still struggling with all the restrictions that involves. However, the end could be in sight now and there is definitely renewed optimism in the Purple Shoots community, with businesses forced to close all re-opening and bouncing back, as happened in the brief gap between lockdowns last summer, and a significant rise in demand for loans from new businesses starting out.

The resilience of our small businesses has vindicated the faith we put in them – many have had

to cope with great financial difficulties, missing out on all of the support offered by both Governments – and yet they have adapted, persevered and survived, spotting and seizing new opportunities for growth and also supporting the communities they are rooted in. These are the bedrock of our economy and are leading the recovery – albeit unrecognized by those in power.

We have, however, had some excellent recognition in the media with three recent TV items – one was a feature on Universal Credit and the barriers it creates for people wanting to start businesses, on the BBC Politics Wales programme and the other two were ITV Cymru Wales News

items, featuring two of our clients (and me) show-casing the value of small businesses to the economy. ITV have kindly given us the footage and these items can be seen in the video section of our website.

Our self-reliant groups, although not able to meet, have stayed connected with each other and supported each other, and are beginning cautiously to meet again.

We have received some welcome financial support from a number of sources, and another corporate donor (Duport Associates) has committed to giving us a proportion of their profits every month. We would like to grow the number of companies doing this!



A very exciting piece of news is that we have been accepted onto the Inclusive Economy Partnership's "Boost" scale-up programme, which is 6 months intensive support to help us scale what we do right across the UK. We are

already talking to a number of potential partner organizations. The Inclusive Economy Partnership (IEP) brings together business, civil society and government to tackle the UK's most pressing social and economic problems through cross-sector partnerships and is jointly funded by the Cabinet Office and DCMS, and supported by an Advisory Board of business leaders, Government ministers and civil society champions – currently including the chief executives of Nationwide, The Co-op, Unilever, The National Lottery Community Fund and UnLtd.



SELF-RELIANT GROUPS

Our groups have been held together through online activities and phone calls. We have managed to start one new group online in partnership with a local Housing Association. Miss Tilley's have set up their own independent CIC – the first of our SRGs to set up a business collectively. We continue to work in partnership with them as they grow their model through new SRGs.

The brief pause in lockdowns enabled us to run our stall at Cardiff Christmas Market – we took on additional days (17 in total) as for many of our group members, this was their first

opportunity to sell products in 2020. Although there were fewer people in Cardiff than usual, the stall did well, taking more than £4000 on behalf of many of our groups, a couple of our borrowers and even our SRG contacts in Uganda.

The team have been training to learn a course run by "Peaced Together" (from Lifeline Church in Dagenham). It is a creative arts course for women (versions for men shortly to be released!) - with a difference. Through five craft projects, it encourages women to reflect on their lives and set out on a personal journey, building confidence and tackling issues

that hold them back. We are intending to offer this in a number of locations as a way of engaging people and from there building new SRGs. The first course starts in Pontypridd on May 20th.





SOME OF OUR STORIES

Since lending began again in earnest in August 2020 (with the help of the Purple Moon Fund from the Moondance Foundation) and notwithstanding two lulls for lockdowns in November and at the start of this year, we have loaned £193k in 73 small loans, starting 59 new businesses and supporting others. Here are a few of their stories

Nettie Stewart - The Clean Queen



Nettie started her business a year ago from scratch. She had had a series of low paid and insecure jobs which had left her struggling financially and in debt. She wanted to create something for herself which she could build to create more stability for her and her family. She offers domestic, commercial and industrial cleaning across Blaenau Gwent and also works with social services to offer home help services and also with Dewis Cymru, a charity for independent living.

Shortly after having our loan, she won a major contract which has taken her business to a whole new level, necessitating some additional staff and equipment. The business is already beginning to give her the financial stability she was aiming for.

From Left to right:
Amanda Wood,
The Micro Greengrocer

Helen Flannagan,
Hamsa Healthcare

Clyne Lewis, C. Lewis & Sons



Ruth Hancock - Scentsational Cottage

Ruth is from Rumney in Cardiff and was a working Mum until a serious bout of anxiety meant that she had to give up work. As she was recovering she decided that she wanted to start working again. She is artistic and is passionate about the need for “green” products so she channelled this into developing a range of artisan soaps which are vegan as well as “green”, some of them in beautiful designs and colours as gift soaps. She got the necessary licences but knew that she needed some funding to enable her to create a proper manufacturing space (in a summerhouse in her garden) and to get some more equipment so she could manufacture on a larger scale. She is now getting bespoke orders from groups and companies for specially designed soaps and has opened a shop in Barry.





SOME OF OUR STORIES

Left to right:

Tana Huggins
- Spirited Soul

Mari Hughes - Sbwjn

Ewelina Parlinska
- Les Petits



Ian Thomas – Sparkle Pro Caravan Cleaning



When COVID-19 first hit, Ian was one of the first casualties of the economic slump. Just two months into a new job, he was laid off without furlough and left wondering how to survive the looming recession.

So with plenty of thinking time during the first lockdown, he started weighing up options: what was he good at, what caught his interest, and where could he make a difference?

Answer: professional caravan cleaning.

He cleaned his first caravan in July '20, just four months after losing his job. Within two months he'd cleaned over 75 caravans, and every single one rebooked for the next year. Soon he had pages of 5-star reviews online. Word was spreading. He even took on temporary staff, promising 16 hours a week with scope for full time work.

As Ian recalls "I didn't expect to be that busy that soon!"



Left: Tufan Calban
and his team
- Marco's Pizzas and
Burgers

Right: Sandra Webb
- Sandra's Baps



