

## Case Study

### Torfaen Food Resilience Partnership: Straight to Silver

The Torfaen Food Partnership was established in January 2022 and became a member of the Sustainable Food Places network in June 2023. Just over a year later, by July 2024, the partnership had been awarded the prestigious Sustainable Food Places Silver award, recognising the county's pioneering work in promoting healthy and sustainable food.



Torfaen's ascent from its establishment to a coveted Sustainable Food Places silver accolade has been swift and rapid. Rather than climbing the Sustainable Food Places awards ladder, Torfaen has managed to go straight from membership status to Silver, by-passing the bronze award.

Let's take a closer look at the partnership's achievements and how it's managed to achieve so much in such a short space of time.

## The Partnership

Driven by the [Torfaen Food Resilience Programme](#), the partnership aims to create growth in Torfaen through the lens of food by increasing the amount of locally produced affordable food available whilst also supporting sustainable ways of tackling food poverty.

The Torfaen Food Partnership and the wider work of Torfaen County Borough Council's Food Resilience Programme is led enthusiastically by Sam Evans, the County's Food Resilience Programme Manager and a team of three energetic individuals, all of whom are fiercely committed to creating a better food future for the people of Torfaen.

The Partnership is made up of Steering Group that includes:

- Torfaen County Borough Council
- Torfaen Voluntary Association
- Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
- Bron Afon Community Housing
- Tasty Not Wasty
- Trussell Trust
- Fairshare Cymru
- Zero Waste Torfaen
- Torfaen School Catering & Dietitians
- National Resource Wales

During the last two years, the partnership has co-created a [food charter](#) that aims to improve the health and wellbeing of residents and create a more vibrant, connected and resilient future. It also developed a clear vision and strives to develop a sustainable and fair food system that provides affordable and healthy food for all.

The Torfaen Food Partnership believes that everyone in Torfaen should have access to healthy, tasty and affordable food. By promoting its Good Food Priorities, it wants to ensure that healthy, sustainable and ethical food are an integral part of a thriving local economy.

The partnership's Good Food Priorities are:

- Health
- Community
- Jobs
- Education

- Future

Being embedded within the County Borough Council, the Food Resilience team has been strategic in the way it's aligned its plans with relevant well-being objectives and integrated its activity into the county's wider strategic plans.

The team's noted that it will achieve Well-being Objective 3 by tackling inequality by focusing on early identification and prevention activities that support people to live independent and fulfilling lives. Well-being Objective 6 will be achieved by making Torfaen a great place to do business by working with local employers, encouraging new business start-ups and entrepreneurial activities

Funded through Shared Prosperity, the Food4Growth project which hosts the Food Resilience team and its wider work, has made further commitments to achieve the partnership's aims in various ways including:

- Hosting an annual Torfaen Food Summit event
- Providing Community Food Scheme grants for third sector groups and schools to develop sustainable solutions to food access to alleviate poverty
- Providing grants to local businesses to enable them to add value to existing produce or diversify. Create a community food distribution centre to reduce food waste, redistribute surplus food and increase the market for local food sales.
- Co-creating a Food Strategy with the Borough

#### **A great example of partnership in action: Torfaen Food Summit**

More than 200 local residents, businesses, and community groups took part in the first Torfaen Food Summit that took place at Blaenavon Workmen's Hall in February 2024.

During the day, various interactive workshops and network meetings were delivered. An 'expo' area was curated, showcasing the work of community support groups, local food business, specialist organisations and community activities. Cooking and budgeting workshops were delivered and a partnership community meal was provided by steering group members, Tasty Not Wasty.

More than 200 people attended, representing organisations from across the county, highlighting the food-related work being delivered across Torfaen. Businesses, community groups, organisation were all glad of the opportunity to learn more about Torfaen's huge range of activity, sharing knowledge and making connections.

*"It's been great – I enjoyed meeting like-minded people, connecting with new folk and businesses. It's just lovely to see how everyone is connecting and starting to work together within the community and beyond."* James Morris, Owner of Ty Poeth Farm

## **Impact**

As part of the partnership's commitment to achieving its Good Food Goals, two of its areas of focus are (1) the Community and (2) local businesses. It's supporting work in both areas by providing grants to establish, develop and enhance projects across Torfaen.

Community Food Scheme Grants: Providing Community Food Scheme grants for third sector groups and schools to develop sustainable solutions to food access to alleviate poverty

- Total grants awarded 2023/2024: £115,399
- 12 Community Groups supported
- 2992 number of people reached
- 51 Volunteering opportunities supported

- 5 Number of amenities / facilities created or improved

Local Business Grants: Providing grants to local businesses to enable them to add value to existing produce or diversify.

- Total grants awarded 2023/2024: £67,498
- 5 Local Businesses Supported
- 54 People attending training sessions
- 9 Jobs Safeguarded as a result of support
- 3 Number of enterprises adopting new to the firm technologies or processes

### Focus on Business

Torfaen is pioneering in its work with local businesses and is leading the way within the Sustainable Food Places network in Wales in the way it's supporting the growth of the local food economy. Here are some examples of the way the Food Resilience team is supporting its business network and a first-hand account from one of the officer's delivering the work.

#### **Lisa's story: Supporting businesses in Torfaen**

*I joined the Torfaen Food Resilience team as the Food Development Officer at the start of 2024. As a result of previous Rural Development programmes, the team had already forged relationships with some food producers and retailers in Torfaen that had previously received grant funding through Food Development Grants. The team mapped and contacted farmers in Torfaen and established the Torfaen Farmers' Network, however we acknowledged that this was a very small "snap shot" of the Food Business Network as a whole, so we faced the challenge of "How do we cast the net wider, how do we engage with local food producers and businesses, how can we strengthen this network, working together to really start to celebrate and shout about what Torfaen has to offer?"*

*The Food Summit, for us, was pivotal in achieving this and helped us gain recognition for what the team can offer food businesses in Torfaen. Through word of mouth and a robust partnership approach, on a cold February day we welcomed over 200 people through the doors of the Workingmen's Hall in Blaenavon.*

*The morning business workshop was a great success and provided an informal and welcoming space to share challenges, ideas and ways of working to support one and other in the future. It was great to see so many exchange contact details and to see those working partnerships really start to flourish – those conversations continued throughout the remainder of the day.*

*What we achieved at the Summit, the first Food Summit to be held in Torfaen, in just those few hours, was the beginning of a solid, supportive, diverse and knowledgeable food business support network. More importantly, perhaps, were the relationships that were formed with colleagues across the borough who turned up to show their support to us as a team, to the wider community and to each other. Representation from partners and organisations included those from health, employability, education, training, housing, environment, communities, and financial inclusion. Proving that food and all it encompasses brings so many of us together to work to reach various shared goals.*

*It was further evident just how much these relationships had grown and how wide word had spread when our latest round of grant funding went live for applications in March. From five local businesses our contacts grew to 37 in just a matter of weeks. We received 21 business applications requesting support through our food development grant from various food producers and businesses.*

*We are now supporting 14 local businesses (including seven local farmers) through our recent Food Development grant scheme, aimed at supporting local food businesses that have innovative ideas for adding value to their produce, diversifying their current operations, and creating new, sustainable food networks and supply chains.*

**Lisa Baulch, Food Development Officer, Torfaen Food Resilience team**

Here's a snapshot of some of the businesses that Lisa's working with that have recently received grant funding, becoming members of Torfaen's Food Business Partnership network:

### **Box'd Bar and Pizza – Trevethin, Pontypool**

**Background:** The concept of Box'd was derived from 2 family & community orientated individuals, both of whom share a passion for food and a desire and motivation to try something different. Having explored various food outlets to start their business they successfully established themselves in 2023, operating from Cwmbran Town Centre from a converted rustic horse box. The target market quickly increased to incorporate catering for local & charity events and private functions. As their brand and reputation grew, it became evident that they could no longer meet the ever-increasing customer demand from their original location and as a result embraced the challenge of scaling-up their business earlier this year, securing a 5-year lease at a permanent shop front site in Trevethin, Pontypool.



*“At Box'd we pride ourselves on our values and continuous efforts to support the local farming industry and our local community and where possible, making every effort to source all of our ingredients locally. We have established an excellent working partnership with Ty Poeth Farm who provide us with meat products and fresh produce and continue to explore other avenues to source locally where possible.”*

### **Summary of support through Food Development grant:**

- Equipment: Essential to meet growing demand and increase productivity, sales and turnover and reduce energy costs.
- Marketing/Events equipment: For use at local events, pop up educational sessions, local and regional Food events.
- Staffing costs: 1 x P/T staff member to meet customer demand, supporting restaurant, community & events partnership delivery. Increased staffing will reduce pressure and increase capacity for other members of the staffing team to focus on other aspects of business and product development and growth.
- Contribution towards food trial products: Thinking creatively & innovatively, working closely with local farmers to reduce waste and explore menu options to incorporate bi products that are currently disposed of-

**Commitment to Torfaen's Key Food priorities:** This project contributes towards all 5 of Torfaen's key food priorities, Health, Jobs, Education, Future and Community.

*“We believe that our community is at the centre of the success of our business, raised in Trevethin and having faced various challenges of our own before becoming successful in business we are eager to “give back” to our local community and play an active role in raising the profile of Trevethin and its unique community spirit and determination to improve the lives of all that work and live here and the surrounding areas”*

As Trevethin is still ranked within the top 10% in the Welsh Index of Deprivation, this project will aim to work with key services to positively impact, health, access to services, employment & training opportunities and to instil a sense of community pride for a community who have been both welcoming and supportive in helping to achieve their success to date. Box'd have established working relationships with local parenting groups, employment & training projects and women's aid, all of whom will be using Box'd as a community hub base on a weekly/monthly basis.

*“We are dedicated to supporting families in crisis and to help tackle food poverty in Trevethin and throughout the borough. Our previous initiatives have included DIY pizza kits, providing families with dough and ingredients to create their own healthy pizzas at home. During COVID and operating from a garage at the time but eager to help, we aimed to support 100 families across the borough who were experiencing food poverty. Such was the demand that we provided over 1000 families across the borough with DIY pizza Box'd kits. We are eager to continue to*

provide initiatives such as this to promote healthy and affordable eating at home and to support tackling food poverty”.

### The Cookes Bake, Cwmbran

**Background:** A family run bakery located in Cwmbran, specialising in sourdough also offering a variety of other daily, freshly baked pastries. The Cookes have a regular spot in Cwmbran Town centre and attend several local markets and events throughout the year. They bake to order to minimise waste with any left-over stock given to local food projects for distribution. Working closely with Zero Waste Torfaen they have introduced a “pay as you feel” scheme with all funds raised donated to local charities. They also offer collection and delivery every Friday.



*“We are passionate about Sourdough – we use a traditional starter that is now over 4 years old who we affectionately call ‘Scooby’. We have worked hard to increase the popularity of Sourdough in our area, we try to offer tasters as often as possible and through social media and speaking to customers when they visit us to give as much information about the making of Sourdough along with the health benefits as we can. We are firm supporters of ‘Real Bread Campaign’ who are trying to tackle the promotion of real bread, calling for improved loaf labelling and marketing laws in the UK – so customers know that Sourdough means genuine Sourdough.*



*We believe that sourcing the best quality ingredients is incredibly important for a business like ours, for many of our customers our bakes are their weekend treat, maybe a few extra calories but its vital that they are aware that they are well sourced ingredients of great quality. Some examples are, we use Organic Flour from Shipton Mill, Callebaut Chocolate and local eggs, and honey. We always speak to our customers about what’s in our bakes, how they are produced and promote that we bake fresh on the day”.*

### **Summary of support through Food Development grant:**

- Renovation of kitchen & update of equipment: This will increase capacity and productivity providing the opportunity to expand current product range and wholesale market.
- Upgrading current stall set up: Creating a more efficient workspace and capacity to sell a wider product range.
- Marketing: Branded uniform, signage, and leaflets to further promote the business and maintain a professional business image/brand.

**Commitment to Torfaen Key Food priorities:** This project contributes towards all 5 of Torfaen’s key food priorities, Health, Jobs, Education, Future and Community

*“For us, being part of our local community was paramount to us as a business. We currently work with a few local independent businesses including Zero Waste Torfaen, BeeKind Risca, Queen Bee Honey Co, Llantarnam Grange Café. We have future plans to work with Box’d Bar & Pizza, Ty Poeth Farm & Coffi Kitoko through wholesale opportunities.*

*We regularly support local events in our area, whether that is a raffle prize or offer to supply the refreshments – This has included our local green community group (Llarcs) who regularly put on events to promote children celebrating the outdoors and people spending time in the community together. We feel we have solidified our position in the community as a business who cares about their community and is willing to help”.*



### Ty Poeth Farm, Pontypool

**Background:** Operating across five farms in Torfaen and Monmouthshire, the farming enterprise focuses mainly on beef, pork, lamb, and poultry. Ty Poeth Farm has its own facilities for slaughtering and processing poultry, ensuring quality control every step of the way. All produce is primarily sold at their on-farm shop. Additionally, they supply



local businesses such as the Blaenavon Heritage Railway, Box'd & Bar Pizza, and the Star Pub, as well as workplaces across Bristol through client relationships.

They offer a variety of products including bedding plants, perennials, and vegetables, available at the farm shop, artisan markets, and during pick-your-own events held on the farm. They regularly participate in artisan markets throughout South East Wales, including Blaenavon, Pontypool, Tredegar House, and Caldicot Castle.

Throughout the year, Ty Poeth hosts a range of events, such as the two-week Easter extravaganza, a May Day open day, and multiple pick-your-own strawberry and raspberry days. The pick-your-own events for utilise a hydroponic system. They also offer a mixed sunflower and wildflower fields, as well as a vegetable patch. Future plans include outdoor cinema festivals in collaboration with local businesses. They also run a pumpkin festival, and a Christmas on the Farm experience, complete with options to purchase Christmas meat and produce hampers as well as supporting local community food projects, sharing excess produce.



James has played an active role in supporting the work of the Torfaen Food Partnership and The Food resilience team, he attended our Food Summit in February and said, *"I enjoyed meeting like-minded people, connecting with new folk and businesses. It's just lovely to see how everyone is connecting and starting to work together within the community and beyond"*.

#### Summary of support through Food Development grant:

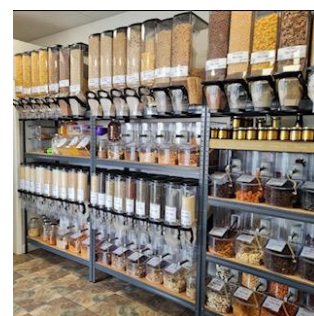
- Introduction of on-site portable catering unit: Expanding the provision of our farm shop offerings but also provide space for other local businesses to showcase their products, creating a vibrant hub for visitors and supporting local entrepreneurs.
- Cultivating of event seeds: Sunflowers, strawberries, and pumpkins. By investing in the cultivation of these crops, we aim to meet this demand more effectively while providing engaging experiences for visitors to our farm.
- Expansion of on farm infrastructure: Installation of two polytunnels to aid with unpredictable weather, creating a controlled environment for cultivation, safeguarding crop yield and ensuring a consistent supply of fresh produce to meet market demand.

**Commitment to Torfaen Key Food priorities:** This project contributes towards all 5 of Torfaen's key food priorities, Health, Jobs, Education, Future and Community

*"We aim to support our communities to have access to a range of resources that enables them to take more control of their food choices. Through opening our farm to the public, we are connecting people back to where their food comes from"*.

#### Zero Waste Torfaen – CwmbranBackground:

A zero waste refill shop situated on the outskirts of Cwmbran Town Centre, community focused and providing a warm welcome to all. Zero Waste aims to offer a wide range of local products as an alternative to the plastic wrapped shopping purchased through supermarkets. They value themselves on their commitment to sustainability, sourcing locally wherever possible, plastic free on a circular refill basis. Refills include dried foods such as cereals, pasta, rice, herbs & spices, oils & vinegars plus also fresh items such as local milk, butter, eggs, bread and cakes. They also work with British suppliers of refillable liquids such as household cleaning supplies, shampoo and conditioners and lots more. Customers can buy as much or as little as they need.



#### Summary of support through Food Development grant:

- Marketing & Advertising: Although trading for nearly 5 years Zero Waste is not in a central location in Cwmbran, marketing & promotion will raise awareness and encourage new customers.
- Rental of a large storage unit: To buy items in bulk is more cost effective, an offsite storage unit is needed to store large bulky items as space is limited in the shop.
- Purchase of a larger fridge: Increase milk offering and develop a wider range including locally produced kimchi.
- Purchase of a freezer: Offer locally produced ice cream and sourdough, supplied through the Cookes Bake on a daily basis, ability to freeze items to extend shelf life and retain freshness and quality.
- Community Family Food initiative: Providing 20 packs to local families throughout the Summer holidays including ingredients and recipes to cook at home. The packs will also include refillable containers to encourage families to return and refill items.

**Commitment to Torfaen Key Food priorities:** This project contributes towards all 5 of Torfaen’s key food priorities, Health, Jobs, Education, Future and Community

*“We are all about sustainable shopping and food sourcing using local, plastic free, circular system to avoid waste and miles. Reduce, reuse, refill. Our number one priority has always been always will be to educate. I think education is the answer to the world’s problems but doing so in a way that doesn’t discriminate, alienate, or belittle people.” – Lauren, Zero Waste Torfaen*



Lauren is a member of the Torfaen Food Partnership Steering Group. Zero Waste Torfaen supports our Community Food Support groups with food donations & is working with local Schools to enable them to run refill stations as part of their community support projects.

### [Himalayan Bites – Cwmbran](#)

**Background:** Himalayan Bites, a new start up family run business, offers an enticing array of authentic Nepalese cuisine, featuring a rich blend of flavours ranging from bold and spicy to subtle and mild. Their menu showcases staple dishes such as momos, syaphaley, curries, and pilau rice, each crafted with care to capture the essence of Nepalese street food culture. As a mobile business and street food stall, Himalayan Bites specialises in bringing the vibrant tastes of Nepal to festivals and events. They pride themselves on delivering an immersive culinary experience, with freshly prepared dishes available for pre-order and delivery or collection every weekend. Himalayan Bites is passionate about preserving the authenticity of Nepalese cuisine, honouring Nepal's culture and traditions by using top-quality ingredients and traditional cooking methods. They take pride in offering unique spice blends, perfected over years of experience with some of their spices come straight from Nepal, giving their dishes that unique taste you won't find elsewhere. Cwmbran boasts the largest Gurkha veteran population in Wales, there exists a palpable longing for the tastes of home within the community.



*“The introduction of Himalayan Bites's food stall presents an opportunity not only to satisfy the culinary desires of the local Gurkha community but also to introduce the vibrant flavours of Nepal to a broader audience in Torfaen and its surrounding areas”. – Chhimi Llama*

### **Summary of support through Food Development grant:**

- Marketing & Promotion: Leaflets/banners to promote business and for use at local street food events.
- Gazebo & Portable cooking equipment: To be utilised at “pop-up” street food market and community events.
- Tailored 1:1 specialist business support: Delivered over 8-10 weeks to assist with any set up queries, long term sustainability, future business growth and financial forecasts.

**Commitment to Torfaen Key Food priorities:** This project contributes towards all 5 of Torfaen’s key food priorities, Health, Jobs, Education, Future and Community.

*“Himalayan Bites promotes healthier, delicious and wholesome food cooked at home. Additionally, Nepalese dishes are also known to be one of the healthiest cuisines amongst the South Asian nations. Himalayan Bites can increase accessibility and provide more opportunities for other small start-up businesses to grow, cook and eat good food. They aim to improve access to low-cost healthy food supporting our communities to have access to a range of resources that enables them to take more control of their food choices.”*

### **What next for Torfaen?**

Building on the work already being done by the Torfaen Food Partnership, the team is now looking forward to its next phase and expanding its initiatives to further support local food production, enhance food education, and strengthen community ties.

“By supporting more local farmers and food businesses, we aim to boost the availability of fresh, affordable, and sustainable food. Additionally, through workshops, school programs, and community events, we will continue to educate residents about the benefits of healthy eating and sustainable food practices,” says Sam Evans, Food Resilience Programme Manager at Torfaen County Borough Council.

“Strengthening community engagement remains a priority. We plan to foster stronger connections within our community by hosting more events like the annual Torfaen Food Summit and expanding our support programmes. Promoting sustainable practices is also crucial; our commitment to reducing food waste and promoting ethical food sourcing will guide us towards a greener future,” continues Sam. “We are also dedicated to achieving the Gold Sustainable Food Places award. Building on our Silver award, we will continue to innovate and lead in sustainable food practices. Together, we will build a resilient, vibrant, and sustainable food system that benefits everyone in Torfaen.”

For more information on the work being done by the Food Resilience Team in Torfaen, please contact Sam Evans, Food Resilience Programme Manager at Torfaen County Borough Council: [Samuel.Evans@torfaen.gov.uk](mailto:Samuel.Evans@torfaen.gov.uk)