Cwmni Cymunedol Cletwr
Cletwr Community Company

Hwb Cymunedol Siop a Caffi
Rural Community Hub, Shop and Café

Strategy 2019 – 2024

A. Introduction

This document provides the overarching strategy for the Cletwr for the next five years. It aims to provide our focus and direction to move the business forward in a planned manner.

It grows out of the previous detailed Business Plan which provided a structure to define initial ideas in order to bid for funding.

This document does not seek to replicate the detail given in that plan for potential funders, for those wanting an in-depth community profile they are referred to the previous document available from the Company area of the website.

The development of this plan follows varied discussions held amongst the Board and with individuals, staff, volunteers and customers over the last twelve months about what they would like to happen and where the business should go next.

Ideas are plentiful and varied but given the likely changing nature of a voluntary Board and staff, it is important the business has clear overriding directions to work to, ensuring continuity of purpose and ethos. This enables us to prioritise our resources (time, money and people) in the face of competing demands and to communicate that direction to our staff and community.

B. Current context and overview

➔ Cletwr is a not-for-profit company set up in 2012 to re-establish the privately owned shop and café closed for the previous three years, and to reintroduce and revitalise local services.

Trading began in 2013 and since then with the aid of grants awarded by various funding bodies (Welsh Government, European Union, Big Lottery, Ashley Foundation and Santander) the company has build a new award winning shop and café, and offers a wide variety of services, events and activities.

None of this could have happened without the committed and substantial support of the community and volunteers fulfilling a wide range of tasks. We are also fortunate to have a dedicated staff team who enrich the work of the Cletwr immeasurably.

Our broad aims are based on the Articles of Association:

> ***"the objects of the company shall be to provide a community shop and other facilities for the benefits of residents of Llangynfelyn as well as visitors to the area, as a social enterprise"***

Over the last few years the vision for both the community and environmental aspects of our project has deepened and much has been achieved. The growth of this vision though, depends on the sustainability of the business which must underpin any other developments.

Management

Cletwr is managed by a voluntary Board of Directors who come from different walks of life and offer a range and depth of experience to the company. They usually meet monthly (excepting August and December) and maintain regular communication through email. Individual Directors also meet informally with the Business Manager and some do shifts in the shop or café.

- ➔ The shop and café are run by a Business Manager with overall responsibility for the whole business who reports to the Board, with an Assistant Manager responsible for marketing, and a Chef responsible for the kitchen.
- ➔ They are supported by a staff team of 12 adults, with five young people over 16 and six under 16.

The staffing structure and operation has been revised this year due to the vastly increased demands on the business since the move into the new build in September 2017. The draw of the new building and the busyness of the café /shop have at times been overwhelming and the new management structure is part of the way to protect staff and volunteers.

Volunteers

As well as the staff we have 59 volunteers who work shifts in the shop, do front of house in the cafe or in the kitchen, maintain the garden, do repairs, help with events, run the Welsh library and the fuel club, advise on environmental issues – the list goes on.

Some individuals volunteer on a regular basis, others ad hoc as they can. Without the volunteers the business could not offer the varied local services and products it does and the community aspect would be much diminished. It also brings extra responsibility for staff getting to know a range of people, managing expectations, ensuring inclusivity amongst volunteers, training individuals, supporting young people and volunteers with special needs.

- ➔ Volunteers contribute around 5700 hours a year, worth approximately £51,300.

Finance

The financial position is overseen by the Treasurer who is a Director on the Board. He is supported by a book-keeper and the Business Manager. Our accountants are Hobbs Accounting Services who verify our accounts annually for the returns to Companies House.

Since 2012 turnover has risen to £530k. After payment of direct costs, wages, overheads and other expenses we aim to leave a small profit.

➔ Any profit is reinvested into community activities and/or supporting further employment for the community.

Grants have been used for designated purposes such as major new building work and capital items. We have received some revenue grants for specific things such as developing events and other activities. Our grant monies are now at an end (excepting a small grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the *Storifa* which will complete in 2020).

Shop and café provision

From the outset the ethos of the company was to be as environmentally friendly as possible and to develop the local nature of the business, using local suppliers and providing local jobs wherever feasible.

➔ Our buying strategy

- ✓ to keep supply chains as short as possible, sourcing goods first locally, regionally, then throughout Wales as our priority
- ✓ to stock everyday products at affordable prices
- ✓ to offer quality produce and keep packaging to a minimum
- ✓ to respond to requests e.g. for specialist products such as vegan, non-dairy, organic
- ✓ to offer bulk ordering for individuals
- ✓ to manage supply relationships positively.

These principles, whilst maintaining our ethos, do have financial consequences. For example, having around 70 local suppliers means increased administration costs processing orders and invoices, and time from volunteers unpacking goods, filling shelves etc.

The café works to the same principles offering affordable food, usually homemade and organic where feasible, using local or Welsh suppliers. The types of menu are driven by the customer, e.g. vegan cake, breakfast, etc. Welsh coffee is promoted front of house, volunteers help with baking cakes and making jam and chutneys. We work hard to ensure as little waste as possible.

Communication and publicity

It is critical we keep in touch with our community and respond to views and requests appropriately. There are regular staff meetings and volunteer evenings; we ask for feedback in the premises on the suggestion forms and in the comments book.

We have a varied social media presence e.g. Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, Tweets; and a new web site was launched in 2018. Weekly and monthly emails are sent to volunteers and supporters.

➔ The ethos of the Cletwr itself is open and friendly and we welcome suggestions.

There are regular reports in local newsletters (e.g. Papur Pawb).

We have received several awards which also serve to publicise our services (Appendix 1). We are often asked for advice from other organisations looking to develop a community shop or community service.

Community activities and support services

The reopening of the café and shop has brought not only access to provisions and a place to have lunch/ coffee, but the development of a genuinely inclusive community. The ripples in our whirlpool touch many and we are a community which shares skills and activities, where neighbours now know each other and whose activities and events enrich our lives, mitigating against loneliness and social isolation.

The events and activities we have offered range through music evenings, nature walks, running groups, looking after your mind, yoga, art and textile displays, Welsh language books honesty library and conversation groups, book launches, IT skills, fuel club, gardening, environmental activities, provision of an electric car charger … and on. In addition to the activities organised by Cletwr we host other groups e.g. Knit and Natter, Running group, Dal Ati.

We also provide information on support and advice services, and frequently act as a liaison to find 'someone who can…' help an elderly resident downstairs; deliver newspapers and groceries to someone unwell; link people interested in similar projects and so-on. Feedback suggests all of these things have given individuals confidence, skills and friendships.

➔ We are committed to maintaining a post to organise our varied events.

C. Original vision and aims

The Business Plan 2012-19 (revised 2016) set out the values and vision of Cletwr:

- ✓ Cletwr will provide a distinctive service to local people and visitors;
- ✓ Cletwr will develop as a community hub, offering a range of social, cultural and support services that are essential to the resilience of a rural community;
- ✓ We will offer space for digital facilities and for services from support agencies that aim to tackle issues around rural isolation and poverty;
- ✓ We will support the employment of a co-ordinator who will act as a facilitator, identifying needs within the community and directing individuals towards the partners in offering advice;
- ✓ The shop will continue to provide a well-stocked, well-used facility that is an economic and social stimulus to the parish;
- ✓ We will continue to sell everyday affordable goods but also local produce, promoting local producers;
- ✓ We will provide a better designed, more efficient cafe, serving simple, high quality food;
- ✓ We will offer meeting and event facilities and a full and varied events and social programme, including Welsh classes, workshops, food events;
- ✓ The new building will act as a 'gateway' for visitors to Ceredigion by providing an introduction to the heritage of the county and will be an information hub for the Wales Coast Path;
- ✓ It will be a business with a strong Welsh identity and will operate to a high environmental standard.

We are proud to say that much of the original vision has been achieved, but it needs to be maintained and provides an ongoing blue print for the basis of Cletwr; these aims continue into our new strategy.

D. Developing strategy

1. Finance

An overriding objective is to ensure that we offer a business that succeeds financially and earns sufficient funds to maintain our aims and ambitions. Our decisions therefore about what we can support for our community must be within the context of sustainability.
We have developed tighter monitoring of our costs and will keep these under review.

➔ We are proud to have made a commitment to pay our staff the Real Living Wage.

We have also decided to keep reserves of approximately 5% of turnover as a contingency fund. The volume of business in the summer period is welcomed but it requires tight management to ensure costs balance our income.

2. Consolidation

The Cletwr business has expanded substantially over the last 5 years and is now at a point where there is a strong consensus that we need to focus on maintaining and consolidating our current high standards rather than looking at any expansion.

➔ Over the next five years we intend to keep learning about the best ways to maintain finances, resources and people.

Plans are in hand to cope with demand and we are monitoring processes and outcomes to maintain sustainability, manage expectations and pressure on staff and volunteers. We want to do what we are doing well and not seek to overreach the capacity of the organisation.

3. Completion and maintenance of building project

Our new building has been in operation for two years and initial teething problems tackled. Now the object is to maintain it to a high standard, keeping it clean and refreshed.

➔ Over the next 12-18 months we aim to complete the final stages of the build, completing the landscaping; installing the Heritage and Information Hub, a Caban and suitable surfacing at the rear of the property.

4. Professionalisation and skill development

We wish to professionalise further the running of the company, having policies and processes in place to ensure continuity in decision making, the smooth operation of the business and to support future Board and management decisions. Encompassed in our professionalisation aim is the updating or creating of policies, particularly HR, so that employees have clear contracts.

➔ We aim to provide staff and volunteers, including Board members, access to professional development as relevant to them and the company.

We wish to put in place refreshed induction processes particularly for volunteers and Board members. It is important to maintain the involvement of our young people and the experience and training we can offer them.

5. Communication

➔ We endeavour to communicate freely and clearly with the community and this document is part of that process.

The new website is working well and we aim to develop this to include links to company information.
We will develop a communications policy for internal guidance and external information to ensure clear factual messages checked for accuracy.

6. Environmental principles

➔ With increasing awareness and focus on the environment, our eco-stance has become more significant with decisions taken in the light of environmental impact.

Frequently this means a difficult balance between ethos and cost. Where this is an issue these are resolved on a case-by-case basis by the Board, using staff research and local expertise where necessary.

7. Principle of self funding

We are conscious of the overall amount we have been awarded in grants. The majority of this was for the new build which has now been used and reported on, but two funders (Ashley Foundation and Santander) awarded small grants to enable us to employ a co-ordinator to organise events and activities. We have self-funded this post for the last 12 months and we aim to maintain this.
Making funding bids is a time consuming and demanding process.

➔ We do not aim to make any more funding bids unless:
✓ It is additional to our core programme
✓ We have the space, people, time and energy to undertake it.

8. Development of community support

Whilst we offer a wide range of activities and services, one aspect of the original mission we want to develop is the support for the community in terms of access to sources of advice. We have recently established files with routes to advice in them; we need to monitor their usage and continue to check with our community what support is needed.

➔ We have a diverse population and we aim to offer varied provision to engage everyone within our rural Welsh community.

We wish to increase support for the aging and potentially isolated, and become dementia friendly. We plan to develop further training and access for those digitally excluded.

These plans also need us to maintain our volunteer support and to ensure we are proving a welcoming environment.

9. Outreach

The publicity and award success we have received over the last 6 years has meant an increasing number of enquiries from external organisations for advice. To date this has happened on an ad hoc basis; we wish to continue this but think about the best ways to offer this outreach support in a more coherent fashion.

➔ We also want to continue our support for relevant local charity organisations and where we can to contribute to relevant projects outside the locale such as the international toilet twinning scheme.

This document is intended to provide a framework for decisions, but it is dynamic and where circumstances demand it will be revised by the Board.

Appendices

1. List of awards to date
2. List of services currently provided