



# Impact Report: 2021

Published: January 2022

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## Introduction

Welcome to our 2021 Impact Report...with a bit of a difference.

It's been a bit of a year ... once again! Starting off with another lockdown and with continued restrictions limiting what we can do (particularly with our placemaking work, which necessarily needs activities that require people to be out and using places). But the vaccine brings hope for a much brighter future and we're anticipating a return to some semblance of normality in 2022.

At the time of writing, whilst regulations permit it, we're still playing things as safe as we can, and we have not yet returned to our offices. Our staff continue to work at home and there remains a great deal of uncertainty, albeit things look decidedly more positive than they did the last time we wrote one of these reports.

Impact reports are part of being a BCorp – something that we secured certification for in 2018, and something that under normal circumstances we'd have been reaccredited for every 3 years. A combination of the pandemic and lots more people becoming BCorps (which is good to see!) means there's something of a backlog, so our reaccreditation submission is in, and we are in the queue. We hope that our recertification will now be concluded in 2022, which means we'll have to report on the outcome of that in our next Impact report rather than this one as originally planned.

As we reported in our 2020 report, our primary focus during Covid has been to keep our staff employed and to look after their wellbeing and also to divert all resources we can to supporting the people we work with and for. That means that this is a less flashy report than the 2019 and 2020 reports were.

This is also a necessarily truncated report for the same reasons – we've kept it very brief to keep our management and staff resource focused on keeping everything going. We hope to be able to go to town a bit on the next one!

Perhaps in future we'll retrospectively make this one look prettier and embellish it a little, but for now, all our resources are unapologetically focused on the 'front lines' of what we do.

If you have any questions or queries about what we've been up to during this reporting phase, then please do let us know and we'll be happy to answer them as best we can.

For all that it's been another tough period, we've still managed to achieve a lot and the report provides some brief details of what we've been up to during the 2021 calendar year.

Here's to the 2022 report being one of a post-pandemic world where we can return to the things we miss – mostly being with other humans in-person on a regular basis, not least our colleagues, but also learning a few lessons from this period, which has hopefully focused us all on how we might make a better world to return to.

Not doing business as usual has always been something we've proudly aspired to - we're hopeful that becomes more of a norm for everyone in 2022 and beyond in a post-pandemic world.

In the meantime, continue to stay safe and look after one another.

## About us and our purpose

We are a creative regeneration agency, working with people to forge great ideas to improve the world for the better – improving people’s lives, making better places, and building better businesses.

We do that, by combining creative thinking, a strong understanding of how and why urban places work, and a pragmatic and socially entrepreneurial approach to delivery. It’s the combination of those three things that makes us different.

We do that for other people, as well as creating projects for ourselves. What it looks like in practice is helping people to make good ideas happen, helping to make good ideas last, and demonstrating how good ideas are making a difference.

Nobody has a monopoly on good ideas, so we work with a wide range of people, from small-scale community initiatives to third sector projects, initiatives with private businesses and universities, through to country-wide (and sometimes smaller) schemes with various public bodies from central and local government.

And underpinning it all are our values – in pursuing our purpose, we seek to be good corporate citizens. We are, none of us, perfect, so there’s always room for improvement, but for us being impactful doesn’t just mean ‘not doing bad stuff’ (nobody should be doing that), it means actively doing good stuff – something that goes beyond sustainability and is regenerative.

Delivering impact is at the core of who we are and what we do – for us, it’s through urban regeneration that we do it. It isn’t an add-on to our day to day activity, or something we’ve discovered or woken up to. It’s been in our DNA since day one when we were founded back in 2004. It’s who we are, who we have always been, and who we always will be.

Hopefully this report gives you a bit of a flavour of what that looks like.

## Impact summary

You can view our current BCorp scores on the BImpact website here: <https://www.bcorporation.net/en-us/find-a-b-corp/company/urban-foundry-ltd/>

As part of the recertification process we have recently taken the test again and we anticipate an increase in our score, but this will be formally assessed by BCorp in 2022. For now, our original score is still what's showing.

Some of what we've been up to in 2021:

- we established PopUp Wales with the first 4 spaces secured at the end of 2021, with two of them up and running in the final 2 months of the year, one as a popup Christmas store with an independent Welsh craft business, and the other as a popup refill shop, followed by an art gallery exhibit showcasing the work of local artists – trying to do that in the early stages of a post-Covid world has been very challenging, but we are confident that as restrictions further ease we have a strong model to build on;
- we took the first steps to establishing our own permanent venue, with a lease secured and preparatory work undertaken to establish a social enterprise café and venue – we are in the midst of staff recruitment and in an exceptionally challenging recruitment as well as a very tough trading environment for hospitality. We aim to open in early 2022, it'll be tough but it's part of the wider recovery and something we feel we should do. More on that in the next report;
- we completed a feasibility study for the Glynneath Welfare Park to support bids for funding to improve the community facility – it will support future bids for funding;
- we delivered a feasibility study to explore the development of the Ostreme Community Centre in Mumbles, Swansea, which built on prior work we undertook for the Community Council there to develop a regeneration strategy for the local area;
- as a result of our work, both street markets and popup/meanwhile space have been incorporated into the programme for Welsh Government with corresponding funding incorporated into its Transforming Towns funding stream, we were also commissioned by Welsh Government to produce best practice guides on markets and popup spaces;
- we helped the Penllergare Trust community woodland project to establish a marketing strategy for their work;
- we delivered a series of training sessions for the staff of Pobl Housing Group on a series of topics, including Theory of Change, measuring impact, placemaking, and green infrastructure;
- we undertook a study of a nearby community for Natural Resources Wales to explore how the public realm might be made more pedestrian and cycle friendly;
- we delivered a report for Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council to explore how their key settlements could improve their urban design to become more sustainable places;
- we conducted a community engagement exercise for the Taliesin Arts Centre to engage different sectors of their audience, notably older people, to improve understanding of their audience's interests;
- we built on our prior work for Natural Resources Wales that sought to better connect the city's eastside with its more urbanised west with improved pedestrian and cycle connections, by conducting a feasibility study for them to establish a pedestrian footbridge

on part of the Crymlyn Bog nature reserve to improve accessibility whilst preserving its environment;

- we produced a feasibility study for Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council to explore the viability of establishing a Library of Things to promote a repair and sharing service locally;
- we delivered evaluations for three separate Councils for Voluntary Services to better understand and articulate the positive impacts that their Covid support delivered, with worth for Swansea Council for Voluntary Services (SCVS), Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Services (NPTCVS), and Bridgend Association for Voluntary Organisations (BAVO);
- we were delighted to win the contract to deliver the marketing for our home city's shopping mall, which is owned by the Coal Miner's Pension Fund – we had previously conducted a series of small scale popup activities in the venue, using local artists and voluntary organisations for paid opportunities. Our successful pitch built on that premise, centralising local, sustainable activities at the heart of the marketing approach for the centre to contribute to their brand values in supporting key SDGs around sustainability and local sourcing particularly – the work also created a new role with the company, to deliver external events, and we are delighted to have appointed a former intern who came to us via our Academy, Obaidah Sbeitan who started right at the end of the year – we're looking forward to working with her;
- we conducted a scoping study to secure the future of our city's Dylan Thomas Centre as a central hub for the UWTSU, one of our city's two universities;
- we conducted a feasibility study for Dove Workshops, to explore creation of a social enterprise to deliver small scale 'odd job' style support services to communities in their local area;
- we worked via the Wales Cooperative Centre (now called Cwmpas) with Elysium studios – a non-profit artist studio and gallery initiative – to secure their longer-term future as they seek to move from their current temporary accommodation to something more permanent, supporting them with mentoring as they consider building and funding options; and
- after a further enforced break over Christmas 2020/1, we brought back our markets at Uplands, Marina, Mumbles, Glynneath and Port Talbot, rebuilding audiences and supporting local traders and former markets volunteer Susie Johnstone joined our team as our markets manager, overseeing the Swansea Bay Street Markets project and helping us to re-establish the markets in a post-Covid world with lots of uncertainty.

Throughout the pandemic, we have:

- retained staff at 100% pay, even when we briefly had to use the furlough scheme;
- provided continued access to the company Zoom pro account for personal use to help people keep in touch with their families during the lockdown periods;
- retained (for now) a home working policy – whilst regulations at the time of writing allow us to return to our offices, and we are missing seeing each other, it is currently an unnecessary risk for everyone's health whilst Covid variants of concern continue to circulate;
- continued to cover any costs related to people working from home;
- continued to lease our offices, which provide an income stream for our local museum where they are located;

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- continued to check on our staff wellbeing regularly;
- continued contributing our time for free to government-convened meetings seeking to build back better from Covid in our local area; and
- continued to pay all of our small suppliers as soon as we receive their invoices, rather than using the full payment terms (though we usually do this anyway).

## Progress since our last report

In our 2020 Impact Report we said that by the end of 2021 we would have:	Here's how we did:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• established a standardised approach to Meanwhile Spaces in Wales and established new and different town centre uses;</li> <li>• established at least one new enterprise ourselves to create jobs, linked with the above empty spaces initiative;</li> <li>• developed the South Wales Food and Drink website to further support local food and drink businesses;</li> <li>• re-established sessions through Big Ideas Wales to encourage young people to pursue purpose-driven business as a career option;</li> <li>• establish viability with National Museums Wales and Natural Resources Wales of rainwater harvesting/rain gardens for the building in which our offices are located;</li> <li>• continued to support local initiatives with pro bono support;</li> <li>• developed our impact reporting to align more directly with both the Welsh Government's Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and also the SDG goals and to establish additional metrics to complement our qualitative reporting;</li> <li>• undergo our first formal 3-year review by BLab in August 2021; and</li> <li>• carry on having fun in doing what we do.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We did it! Now up and running in Swansea and Bridgend and, despite a slow Covid-enforced start, with the first spaces now established right at the end of the reporting period (more on that in our next report!);</li> <li>• We have secured our first space, and it's nearly ready to open as a social enterprise café – it has been leapfrogged by the above due to Covid, but it's on its way and will open in early 2022;</li> <li>• South Wales Food and Drink continued to play a role with further enforced lockdowns over Christmas 2020/1 with more entries from local food and drink suppliers;</li> <li>• Covid dictated that the reintroduction of our Big Ideas Wales sessions was very modest, but we have now restarted these sessions, initially online, but with more to come as we return to more in-person delivery;</li> <li>• the rain gardens initiative didn't proceed as funds got diverted to other projects, but we are going to do this at our new social enterprise venue once it's established, so it will reappear in a future impact report;</li> <li>• we have continued to do this (see summary in main section of report);</li> <li>• our resources have continued to be diverted to Covid-related changes and survival, with the new Omicron Covid-variant announced at the end of 2021 suggesting we aren't out of this yet, so all non-essential work has been pushed back to 2022. We will though look to do this next year and it will feature in our next reporting period;</li> <li>• a backlog with BLab meant that our reaccreditation (along with lots of other people's) has been pushed back, so will now take place in 2022 – we'll report on it in our next report; and</li> <li>• despite Covid continuing to wreak havoc for much of this reporting period and causing continued uncertainty, we still managed to have fun!</li> </ul>



## Goals for the next year

By the time we next complete an impact report we aim to have:

- re-accredited as a BCorp, increasing our score;
- opened a social enterprise venue, creating new jobs for our local area, all paid at least at the Real Living Wage and providing opportunities for other organisations;
- created a Library of Things through PopUp Wales;
- expanded the PopUp Wales initiative more generally;
- further developed our work on Green Infrastructure to make urban areas work with nature rather than against it;
- re-established our 51.6 series of talks;
- continued our Academy working with our local universities and doing more to support students to remain in the city, reducing the 'brain drain' of graduates leaving the area after completion of their courses;
- continued to support the Swansea Poverty Truth Commission as it moves into its delivery phase;
- continue to use the platforms we have to encourage others to accredit and support the wider adoption of the Real Living Wage;
- created more local employment opportunities directly by expanding our team;
- begun to expand our shareholding and added a new Director to move away from single person ownership;
- built relationships with other Wales-based BCorps;
- contributed further to a wide range of projects in our community that align with our purpose; and (as always)
- still having fun doing what we do.

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*"I just wanted to say a massive thank you for the BCorp Q&A you recorded with me. We have had some excellent feedback from our students, with many inspired to research Urban Foundry and BCorps as a result of your video. Thank you again for working with Nottingham College and for the support you have provided."*

*Madeleine Penkett, Work Placement Officer, Nottingham College*

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