



URBAN

FOUNDRY

Impact Report
2020

October 2020

Certified

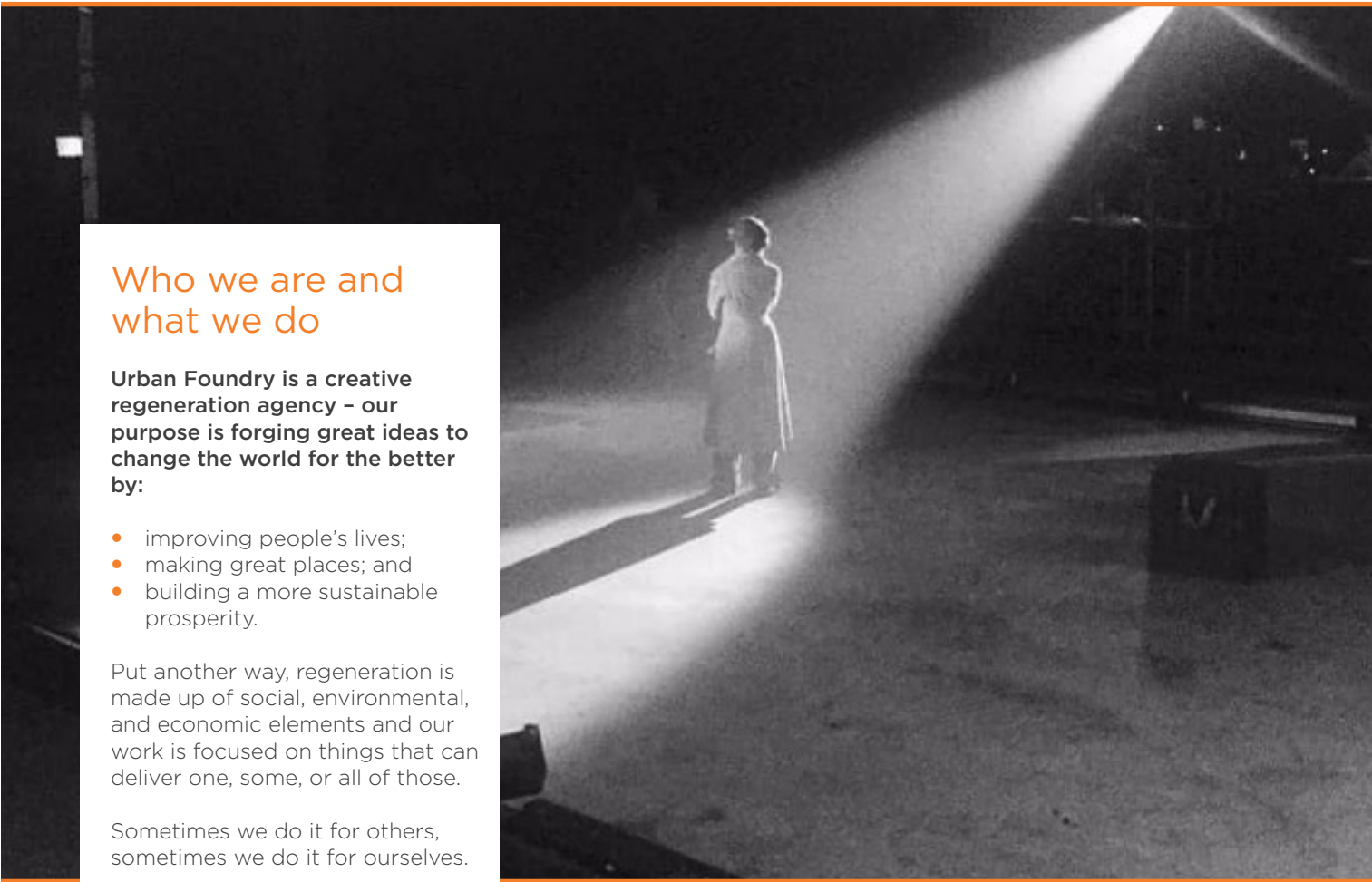


Corporation



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Who we are and what we do

Urban Foundry is a creative regeneration agency – our purpose is forging great ideas to change the world for the better by:

- improving people’s lives;
- making great places; and
- building a more sustainable prosperity.

Put another way, regeneration is made up of social, environmental, and economic elements and our work is focused on things that can deliver one, some, or all of those.

Sometimes we do it for others, sometimes we do it for ourselves.

Mission

To achieve our vision, our mission is to combine:

- our creative thinking;
- our expert, multi-disciplinary knowledge and understanding (theory); and
- our entrepreneurial approach and our experience as 'doers';

...in order to...

- make great ideas happen (whether we're doing them for ourselves or helping others to do them);
- ensure those great ideas last (in other words that they're sustainable, in the broadest sense of the word); and
- better understand and articulate how those great ideas have made a difference (in other words their impact).



Being a BCorp

In August 2018 Urban Foundry became a certified BCorp – the first in our home town, and only the third in our home country of Wales.

We've always been driven by purpose, and we have always done our best to be ethical and transparent in what we do.

We are proud to be part of a group of businesses across the world that believe, like we do, that business can and should be a force for good.

We have legally enshrined our commitments to a wider definition of 'value' into our governing documents.

That means that we are formally committed to considering the impact of our decisions on our workers, customers, suppliers, community and the environment.

Part of the commitment of becoming a BCorp (amongst other things) is to complete an annual impact report. This is our second – we will produce them annually from now on.



"We dissect all our projects to ensure they boost the environment, community or people. We're also an accredited Living Wage Employer so there's a feeling of fairness and equality."

Tara Tarapetian, Urban Foundry

Our BImpact scorecard

We took the B-Impact test again recently to see how far we've progressed since our initial accreditation. There were several new categories, but we were pleased to see our overall score rise.

Note that, unlike our previous score featured in last years' report, this one is unverified (the independent B-Lab re-accredit all BCorps every 3 years); our renewal is due in summer 2021 and we'll include our verified scores from that process in our next impact report in late 2021.



Impact Area Scores

Governance



Customers



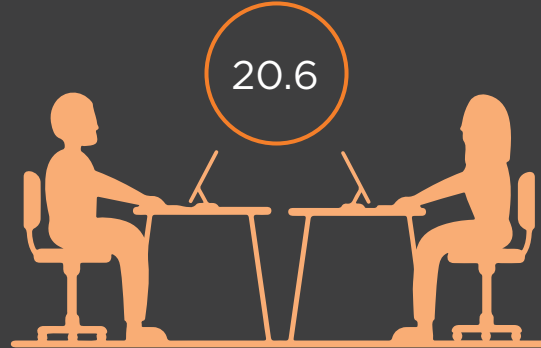
Environment



Community



Workers



Our values

We articulate our values in terms of the things we will always do, and the things we will never do.

Discussing and understanding these values are a key part of the induction for anyone who comes to work with us, whether it's as a member of staff, on a temporary placement, or as an associate who delivers work to support us.

We will always:

- be friendly, kind and respectful in our dealings with everyone;
- do our best to support the wellbeing of everyone who works for us;
- give our best effort to deliver the highest quality service we can for the people we work with and for (which includes delivering on time and in budget);
- be aspirational and positive – seeking to achieve the best outcomes we can and to add value to people we work with at all times, whilst remaining grounded and realistic;
- support each other in our work – maintaining a team approach at all times;
- pay at least a living wage and do whatever we can to procure services from others who do the same;
- maintain the highest standards of integrity – being honest, trustworthy, and transparent in our work (including transparent charging/billing and paying people on time);
- encourage collaborative/cooperative approaches;
- be clear in our decision-making and communication;
- be as environmentally friendly as we can by reducing, reusing and recycling and from time to time carbon offsetting what we can't avoid;

- uphold the highest standards of equalities and expect the same of those we work with;
- be tolerant towards and learn from our mistakes (including recognising that we will make them) and minimise the chances of them occurring again insofar as we can;
- continually seek to improve what we do and continually look for new and better ways of doing what we do (innovate);
- maintain an environment that means we have fun doing what we do; and
- seek to work with and encourage others to do business in the same way (especially promoting/working with other BCorps wherever we can).

We will never:

- knowingly deliver less than our best to the people we work with and for;
- have an environment that is unpleasant to work in (whether for our staff or those we work with/for);
- deliver cynical approaches to 'doing good' (e.g. those that are only really focused on achieving good PR and nothing else);
- knowingly support, court, work for, or procure services from anyone whose ethos and/or activities seriously conflict with our values (unless in procuring us they are actively trying to change that);
- make promises that we can't keep/renege on agreements we have made;
- have 'hidden charges' for our work;
- allow our passion for delivering good ideas to override our pragmatism – we want to be aspirational, but we always remain grounded and practical and not do 'pie in the sky' work that will never happen;
- be knowingly wasteful; or
- seek to cover up or blame anyone else if we make a mistake.





"It's nice to feel like I'm working with real human beings who do the right thing for the right reasons. Importantly, they practise what they preach! As a public body under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act it's great when we are able to procure our local BCorp as it addresses the goals we are working towards. These are the companies that are delivering living wages, using local supply chains and that means more of our money staying locally, amongst all the other good stuff that they do."

Fran Rolfe, Sustainable Places Officer for Natural Resources Wales

Why we do what we do

Some of our work with our clients involves developing a clearer understanding and articulation of the problems they are seeking to address, defining the changes (outcomes) that they want to achieve, and helping them to establish how to deliver that change and measure and evaluate their success in delivering impact. We have applied a similar approach to our work.

Needs

By its nature, regeneration is eclectic – it requires a multi-disciplinary approach and there are no two projects that are exactly the same. But there are commonalities, which are what led to us forming the company, which are:

- inequality and deprivation in many communities;
- unsustainable places;
- a fledgling social economy with significant scope for growth;
- a third sector more generally that has varying degrees of resilience;
- lack of specialist knowledge of how places and spaces work to inform regeneration decisions;
- lack of capacity – resources, time, knowledge, and experience to make change happen / make it last (a lack of civic 'entrepreneurialism');
- relatively weak partnership approaches and an over-riding 'state first approach to change;
- complex interactions between various issues/stakeholder groups that are not easy to resolve;
- causal relationships between people, place and prosperity that are relatively weakly addressed in regeneration and under-theorised/ evidence-based where they are adopted;
- poor relation of need to desired impact guiding approaches; and
- relatively weak capacity for understanding and articulating the impacts of changemaking projects

The outcomes we seek to achieve are those that we articulate in our overarching vision, namely:

- Improving people's lives;
- Making better places; and
- Building a better prosperity.

Our impact in the last year

In addition to updating our BImpact scores, in our last impact report we also said we would:

- **further expand our street markets social enterprise, and so we have:**
 - added Glynneath Market as a monthly early evening market, and established a series of monthly street food events at Swansea University's two campuses;
 - presented our work to regional economic development forums convened by Welsh Government and we were subsequently commissioned by Welsh Government to produce a 'best practice' guide for developing street markets;
- **work towards integrating more efforts to tackle climate change into all our work and so we have:**
 - worked with Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) on establishing the Wales Green Infrastructure (GI) Fund and with NRW and Swansea Council on establishing a GI Strategy for the city centre as well as the early stages of a GI strategy for the wider county of Swansea;
 - signed up to the B Corp Climate Collective (www.bcorpclimatecollective.org) and pledged to achieve 'net zero' by 2030, although we will aim to get there before that;
- **continue to encourage others to deliver changemaking projects, and so we have:**
 - delivered more of our 51.6 events, with events focused on community green infrastructure, and a second event with Artist Hilary Powell who talked about her 'Bank Job' arts initiative in London that raised funds for local causes and forgave £20,000 of predatory debt by selling artworks based on bank notes;
 - talked about ethical business as part of the Global Enterprise week events for University of Wales Trinity Saint David's business school via the Big Ideas Wales Role Model network;
 - given a free talk to the Chartered Institute of PR SW branch 'social' about our street markets project and doing 'social media on a budget' for a social enterprise and achieving positive social, economic and environmental impact as a result;

"The Regeneration Swansea Visioning workshop was expertly facilitated using the theory of change approach. This approach enabled everyone to engage and put their thoughts forward and it was a very enlightening workshop."

Phil Holmes,, Head of Planning and City Regeneration for Swansea Council



- **build on our hugely successful Unit Nineteen initiative to establish more of a culture of Meanwhile Uses as an approach, and so we have:**
 - secured the longer-term future of the Unit Nineteen pilot pop-up space with a new venue to open in 2021;
 - worked across south west Wales to establish Meanwhile Space initiatives with funding support secured from Welsh Government who are backing our approach;
- **make more and better links with other changemakers, and so we have:**
 - supported the development of a Living Streets group for a suburban ward in our home town, providing professional input on a range of ideas on creating people-focused places;
- **continue to support a partnership approach to changemaking in our local area, and so we have:**
 - supported the Swansea Poverty Truth Commission through our Director serving on its steering group, which raised funds for and appointed a coordinator in April 2020 – the Commission is currently being formed and the Steering Group will then step back to let people with lived experiences of Poverty take it over and set its direction;
 - continued our involvement as invited members of the Regeneration Swansea partnership;
 - participated in round table discussions hosted by the 4theRegion business membership organisation, focusing on creating more people focused public realm in our home town of Swansea as well as in Milford Haven, West Wales;
- **continue to have fun in doing what we do:**
 - and we have!



“We can’t put in to words how important the work of the Urban Foundry team and in particular the Marina Market has been to our development as a business.

Their work provides such an important platform for small businesses to get out there and give it a go. They have without doubt contributed to many businesses finding their voice and development. Their contribution to the local economy on a small business scale is brilliant.

The Marina Market gave us much needed income, confidence and a perfect testing ground for what we do way back in August 2014.

A special thanks to Ben Reynolds and his team who masterminded the whole thing and to Tara who somehow every week keeps 40+ independent small businesses happy and organised.”

Little Valley Bakery



As well as that, we have:

- worked with MGB – a local PR and marketing firm (and our former office-buddies before our move!) – on a brand identity to encourage Active Travel in our home town;
- conducted a small study to review the potential to develop community facilities through the refurbishment of a local school hall and gymnasium;
- worked on projects across the UK seeking to support young people's financial capability for the Money and Pensions Service;
- pulled together stories of change to help the Swansea Poverty Food Network articulate the impact of its funding;
- delivered a workshop for Swansea YMCA to help them to better understand and articulate their impact;
- conducted a study to inform the development of a place-marketing brand for a historic town in west Wales;
- conducted a feasibility study for the redevelopment of community facilities in a local park;
- proudly seen Amy Murray, who worked with us through our Academy, get awarded her PhD and subsequently secure a full time job at Swansea University's Centre for Innovative Ageing – congratulations once again to Dr Murray!;

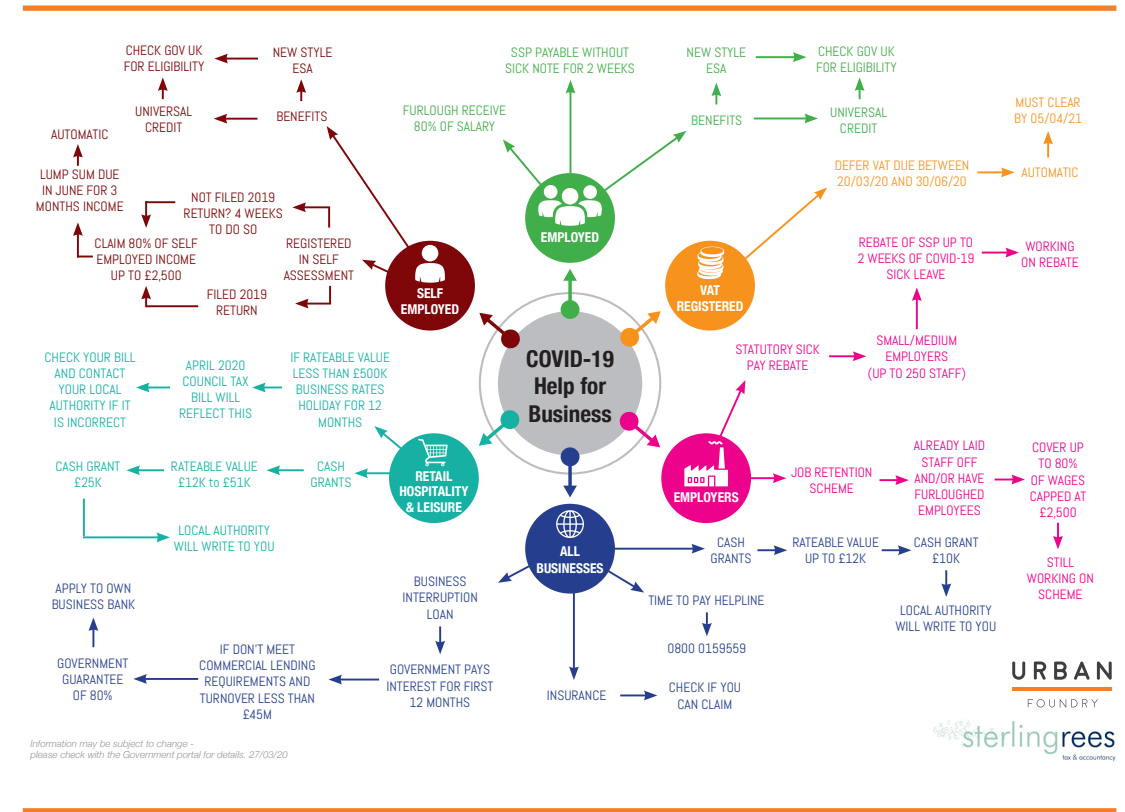
- celebrated BCorp month by promoting what it is to be a BCorp, some of the things we do, and why we think others should do the same, which prompted discussions with some BCorp-curious companies in our local area...

... and then the world turned upside down.

Covid19

We, like many businesses large and small, suddenly had no idea what the future would hold, whether we could survive through it as a business, and also with real worries about the health and wellbeing of our team, their families and friends, and all the people that we work with and for.

Like everyone else, we had to do a lot of very quick planning and thinking – in doing so, everything was driven by doing all that we could to look after the people who work for and with us, and those who we support through our work.



So, the next part of our impact report summary for 2019-20 is shaped by how we have responded to that crisis as best we can as a very small company:

- the health and wellbeing of our team was our number one goal – that includes people keeping their jobs, so our principal financial priority was to keep those who work with us employed until we could get out the other side;
- we established a clear principle that the people working for us were not ‘working from home’ – rather that they were attempting to work at home during a crisis of unknown duration and severity with a huge range of conflicting pressures and worries – we understood that it would not and could not be ‘business as usual’;
- we regularly checked in on one another’s wellbeing – like all businesses we invested in video conferencing software to keep in touch, and we made that freely available to all staff to use as they wished outside of work time for keeping in touch with their own family and friends (only once did one of us inadvertently gategcrash

- someone else’s family quiz!);
- when we briefly utilised it, we paid 100% salaries for all staff that were furloughed, making up the difference between the Government Job Retention Scheme and the normal full salary with pension;
- our offices closed in March (and remain so), but we continued to pay our cleaners throughout the period;
- we continued our retainer agreements with our small suppliers at their pre-COVID levels;
- we made suspended purchases from some of our key suppliers;
- we paid all invoices we received from any small businesses immediately on receiving them rather than using the full payment terms period (although we usually do this anyway);
- we successfully concluded all work, including some that was severely disrupted, whilst remaining within budget for all our clients – we did not have to cancel anything (if we do say so ourselves that was no small feat for a micro-business like us during such circumstances);
- we developed a free to use infographic (which we kept

updated as information changed) to support businesses in COVID19, working in partnership with Sterling Rees – a local accountancy firm – and drawing from something similar we’d seen in England (it was reproduced with credit to the original) and we kept that updated as the support evolved and changed and promoted it as best we could to help business owners navigate through the confusing early stages of lockdown; and

- we repurposed abortive funds from projects that could not be delivered due to the COVID19 lockdown and we developed a website to support small artisan food and drink providers – initially for those that would otherwise have attended our street markets initiative, but expanding it to any small food and drink businesses, creating www.southwalesfoodanddrink.com as a free resource.

But, despite the confinement to our homes, and the loss overnight of all our events, we’ve actually still been very busy, and we have delivered the following in that time too:

- we worked with Wood Knowledge Wales to develop their Forest National Centre concept for embedding timber built construction in Wales as part of a green recovery – locking carbon into building, reducing carbon input in the building phase, and creating new jobs. Our work directly led to them securing significant six figure funding to enable them to test and scale their approach;
- we supported a social enterprise to develop proposals for an environmentally focused hub and co-working space in the Welsh Valleys, which has attracted six figure capital funding support from Welsh Government as a result;
- we contributed content for the revised edition of the ‘Community Works’ book (due for publication in 2021);
- we delivered training in placemaking for a local community Council;
- our Director was invited to sit

- on the board of Oriel Science – developing a ‘science gallery’ project that we helped Swansea University to establish as a ‘pop-up’ in 2016 into a permanent addition to the town centre, to open in 2021;
- we evaluated the approach of local Councils for Voluntary Services to better understand and communicate the significant work of the voluntary sector in COVID-response;
- we have published several ‘post-COVID manifesto’ pieces focused on ‘building back better’ from COVID19;
- we were invited by Welsh Government officers to participate in their regional economic forum for south west Wales, which is focused on COVID19 economic regeneration response and recovery – through that forum we work alongside local authority economic development professionals and that has further strengthened an approach to meanwhile and pop-up urbanism approaches as part of the recovery; and
- through careful management we are pleased to say that we have managed to safeguard our markets

project, which made a full return in August 2020 following an absence of 4 months of lockdown and in challenging circumstances with social distancing requirements, but continuing to support small traders in a Covid-safe way.

Connecting you with local artisan food and drink producers in the South Wales area

If you're looking to order from local suppliers of food and drink in South Wales you can search here for produce, dietary requirements and by delivery and collection availability.

SHOP NOW >



FISH AND MEAT



FRUIT AND VEG



BAKED GOODS



DAIRY AND EGGS



DESSERTS



TAKEAWAY



PRESERVES



DRINKS

"I would like to thank the team at Urban Foundry for their excellent work in producing a Process and Impact Report for the Swansea Food Poverty Grant 2019/20. The Covid-19 pandemic made this an especially challenging task, not only due to the challenges of working during lockdown, but also that this was a very difficult time for the grant recipients in meeting the demand for food support. The report has informed future plans for collaboration and establishing a Swansea Food Poverty Network."

Anthony Richards,
Poverty Prevention and
Strategy Manager for
Swansea Council

Goals for our next year



Much will depend on Covid19 restrictions, but by this time next year we hope to have:

- established a standardised approach to Meanwhile Spaces in Wales and established new and different town centre uses;
- established at least one new enterprise ourselves to create jobs, linked with the above empty spaces initiative;
- developed the South Wales Food and Drink website to further support local food and drink businesses;
- re-established sessions through Big Ideas Wales to encourage young people to pursue purpose-driven business as a career option;
- establish viability with National Museums Wales and Natural Resources Wales of rainwater harvesting/rain gardens for the building in which our offices are located;
- continued to support local initiatives with pro bono support;
- 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;
- undergo our first formal 3-year review by BLab in August 2021; and
- carry on having fun in doing what we do.

