

Case Study



Pobl Tir Môr: Accessible local Veg Box project in Pembrokeshire



Key words: Food, sustainability, health and well-being, creative methods, local business

What is Pobl Tir Môr?

Pobl Tir Môr was set up with co-production at its heart. Founder Dilys Burrell was frustrated at how little social and environmental change can be achieved solo as a freelancer, so she sought out like-minded people and joined forces with Ben Manning and Louise Rigby-Williams to set up Pobl Tir Môr (People Land Sea). Their aims are to connect people with their land, rivers and sea; join up different types of people and organisations; and involve community members in the decisions and projects happening on their doorsteps; to increase community well-being.



What is the 'Archery and Veg!' project?

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Start date

November 2023

Key parties

Pobl Tir Môr
Underwood Farm
VC Gallery (Pembroke Dock)
Primary School's Family Support Officer
Community members



What has been done?

Pobl Tir Môr director Dilys Burrell was in touch with Underwood Farm, a local organic grower whose veg box scheme she was subscribed to. She'd been considering how to contribute to their sustained income while benefitting the broader community.

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The growers care deeply about their produce, and want their food to get to local people who will appreciate it and the care that's gone into it, but they're busy growing and don't have the time to build these relationships. A broker or intermediary can connect growers with different types of customers in their local community. Community members can enjoy organic vegetables that support their health; the grower gets to see people enjoying their produce, and the value it adds to people's life. The project could add some guaranteed income in one of the growers' early years of trading, contributing to their sustainability and longevity as a local community business..

The first phase

The project started in November 2023 with a small amount of funding and a tight turnaround of a few months, to explore people's access to, and potential engagement with, a local veg box scheme.

The first gathering took place at a local community-run coffee shop in Pembroke. Professor Angelina Sanderson-Bellamy of Bristol University travelled down to meet people interested in the project, and to speak about local food systems. A group of participants then got together at the VC Gallery in Pembroke Dock to kick off the project, and got to know each other while taking part in an introduction to archery. The participants were a mix of regulars from the VC Gallery, parents from the local primary school via the school's Family Support Officer, and other community contacts from across the partners' collective networks.

Alongside discussions about veg boxes, the archery activity was offered to encourage people to get together; everyone loved the archery so it became a regular feature in subsequent events. Those included cooking a shared meal, activities including food, and of course more archery; along with informal discussions and idea-generation around the access to locally grown vegetables, and how to help people use veg from the veg boxes.

The project participants collectively decided to:

- make videos and info cards with visuals about what veg is in the box
- develop veg box recipe ideas and suggestions on how to use the veg

They also agreed how much the subsidised cost should be (£4 per week); and along the way, they learnt about sustainable food and organic veg growing.

The project employed a range of creative approaches, including drawing and graphic recording, live note taking, and lots of visual communication in the project information and posters.



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The first round of funding was sufficient to subsidise 3 veg box subscriptions for 30 weeks; provide some staff support time to set up the provision; and fund the information materials the project group collectively decided on. The project gathered feedback from the initial phase and used the information to apply for further funding.

The next steps

Project developments included planning visits to the veg box grower's farm, which was challenging due to weather and accessibility factors – in the end only 1 farm visit was able to happen, but when poor weather prevented another visit activities were arranged at the VC Gallery community hub, to enable the group to get a feel for what happens on the farm. They also cooked together, and visited a local agricultural show (the Pembroke Town and Country Show in Lamphey), as well as Pembroke Soup (a charity event that connects members of the public to community projects around a bowl of soup). One of the parents from the local school had been a chef so demonstrated preparing and cooking veg at an event, using the VC Gallery's catering kitchen.

During the course of the project, 6 households accessed the 3 subsidised veg box subscriptions. People joined and dropped off; some couldn't afford the cost, others found it was too much veg for them every week. Deliveries were carried out by Underwood Farm and by Dilys, which led to doorstep conversations and rich insights about what people use, what they like or don't like, and generally how it's going - building relationships one conversation at a time.

The project secured funding during the course of its development:

- £3,000 from the Pembrokeshire Local Food Partnership
- £1,000 from WWF to put on a Big Green Event (which included archery!)
- £4,000 from the Doing the Small Things Fund, a small grant scheme delivered by Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS) as part of the Active Citizenship & Engagement (ACE) project, with funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF)

A year on at time of writing, the project is still providing 2 subsidised veg boxes. People have left the veg box scheme, and new people have joined. Donations of money have been received, to support more subsidised subscriptions. Further funding will be accessed for ongoing project delivery and development.

Numbers

- £8,000 raised overall, to deliver the project over 24 months
- 12 project events
- attended by 45 community members
- 3 veg box subscriptions subsidised for 30 weeks
- 6 households accessed subsidised veg boxes
- 3 conversations between the growers and veg box recipients



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Real impact

People are really keen to make a contribution. They want to be included and asked their opinion, but they also want to feel part of things in a meaningful way - for example colouring the hand-drawn artwork for the events; helping set up and tidy up, not just arriving for when the event starts. They don't want to receive a free veg box, they want to be able to make a contribution of a suitable amount for their budget.

The value for the people taking part is immediately obvious in terms of creating new social connections, and doing things they wouldn't normally do. People got involved who you wouldn't typically expect to be keen on discussing vegetables! It's the power of working with a local organisation (the VC Gallery), and a local group of people who cross paths regularly - there's trust there already to build from.

Dilys still sees all the people who got involved in the project. The positive relationships they've built have led on to other things: for example, a young mum from a previous co-produced carers support project got involved in the veg box project, and is now at the VC Gallery every Monday cooking with them. It's made a difference to people's lives on an ongoing basis.

Involving the arts, and visual activities and materials, allows for more depth of engagement. A young artist came along to illustrate the events and people loved it.



"It has been an amazing experience to be part of the veg box project, culminating in me making recipes and cooking the veg in my box (after a slow start of just generating compost!) and making some new (and old) friends. Really looking forward to being involved next year, and my heartfelt thanks to you!"

"I have thoroughly enjoyed the veg boxes, the wide selection of veg is beautiful!"

"The veg box project has had a dramatic positive effect on me."



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Challenges

Limiting factors:

- project members and partners' capacity, or illness
- the weather for outdoor activities
- accessibility for visiting the farm with mobility aids and wheelchairs (the team researched hiring matting from the National Park, and a nearby farm has a disabled toilet, but in the end poor weather on the day of the planned visit meant they brought the farm to the VC Gallery - with produce and illustrations of life on the farm)



The biggest challenge of all for the project: funding and resourcing. The funding ends, and everyone wants to keep going with the project. Not all of the ideas have happened yet, but they're still on the list for the future!

The challenge for project leads: the intensity of co-production over a period of time. It's important to recognise that it is tiring to hold the project, the partners, and participants, to make things happen, while running a business or doing other work alongside, and also life! You have a sense of responsibility when you give the impetus to a project of this kind - you don't want to let people down, and you want to act on all the ideas, but there's only so much time and capacity.



Key learning

The recipe: feed people
+ propose something interesting to do (like archery!)
+ have some discussion points in mind
= informal but informative chats take place
around the activities

Why is this co-production?

Valuing assets

The project was built on the local actors, relationships, and skills (e.g. growing, art and creativity, archery, cooking); as well as the community venues with a cafe (West Gate Creative Hwb) and catering kitchen (the VC Gallery).



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Building networks

The project connected the local grower, the primary school through their Family Support Officer, the VC Gallery as a well loved and used community venue, volunteers and local community members who are regulars at the VC Gallery, people involved in previous projects, and additional community members reached through everyone's local networks and word of mouth. It brought together people who might not otherwise have met, especially the grower with their new local customers.

Outcomes focus

The project was co-produced from within the community, involving all the actors in the decision-making and planning, as well as the hands-on delivery. The continuous conversations with participants were key to gathering insights and shaping the development. People learnt about sustainable food growing, developed their skills in using and cooking vegetables, grew in confidence and expanded their social networks.

Developing relationships

While the project started by building on existing relationships within the community, it led to the development of new ones between all the parties involved, and positive outcomes on all sides.

Being catalysts

The project involved participants in the decisions and choices at all stages. They came up with many ideas to implement (some of which are on the list for a future phase).

The accessible Veg Box project (affectionately known as 'Archery and Veg!') is rooted in co-production ethos and values, and is a strong example of what is possible when actors embedded in their local community build on their existing connections and relationships to create positive outcomes for everyone involved.

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Links

- [Pobl Tir Môr community projects](#)
- [The VC Gallery](#)
- [Underwood Farm](#)

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