

Local Produce Markets: Fostering a Thriving Local Food Economy in Wales

Introduction

Local produce markets have the power to transform the way we grow, sell, and consume food in Wales. By providing a direct connection between small-scale producers and their communities, these markets not only support the growth of local businesses but also contribute to a more sustainable and resilient food system.



In recent years, there has been a growing interest in local food production and consumption across Wales. Consumers are increasingly seeking out fresh, high-quality produce that is grown close to home, while small-scale farmers and artisanal producers are looking for ways to diversify their income streams and connect with their customers face-to-face.

Local produce markets offer a solution to both of these needs. By providing a regular, centralised location for producers to sell their goods, these markets make it easy for consumers to access a wide variety of locally grown and crafted products. At the same time, they give small-scale producers a valuable opportunity to build relationships with their customers, tell their stories, and receive direct feedback on their products.

Beyond their economic benefits, local produce markets also support key Welsh Government policies around sustainability, health, and well-being, such as the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. By shortening supply chains, these markets can help to minimise packaging, waste and carbon emissions associated with long-distance transport. They also encourage consumers to eat more fresh, whole foods, rather than ultra-processed products, contributing to improved public health outcomes.

Moreover, local produce markets serve as important community gathering places, fostering a sense of connection and social cohesion. They provide a space for neighbours to meet, chat, and build relationships around a shared love of good food and local production, as is evidenced by the way people hang around to socialise, well after they've finished shopping.

This guide is designed to help vegetable growers, stakeholders and communities across Wales to establish and run successful local produce markets. Drawing on the expertise of seasoned growers, as well as a case study from thriving market Newport Local Produce Market, it provides a step-by-step roadmap for setting up and managing a vibrant, sustainable market that supports local producers and meets the needs of the community.



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Why start a local produce market?

1.Supporting local businesses: Local produce markets provide a direct sales outlet for small-scale farmers, artisanal food producers, and craftspeople. By selling at the market, these businesses can increase their visibility, build a loyal customer base, tell their story and generate a reliable source of income with the benefit of better sales margins by selling directly. For example, the Newport Local Produce Market Pembrokeshire, has helped other small businesses in the area thrive by providing them with a consistent, regular platform to sell their goods, such as the local cafe.

2.Strengthening the local economy: When consumers buy from local producers, more money stays within the community. This creates a multiplier effect, as those businesses and their employees then spend their earnings locally, supporting other businesses and services. In this way, local produce markets can contribute to job creation and economic growth. A study by the New Economics Foundation found that every £1 spent at a local food market generates £3.70 for the local economy, compared to just £2.50 for every £1 spent at a supermarket.

3.Enhancing food security and resilience: Local produce markets help to create a more diverse and resilient food system. By supporting a network of small-scale producers, they reduce dependence on long supply chains and imported foods, which can be vulnerable to disruptions. In times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the floods in Spain, having a strong local food system can ensure that communities have access to fresh, nutritious food.

4.Promoting sustainability and reducing environmental impact: Local produce markets typically feature foods that are grown or produced nearby, reducing the distance that products travel from farm to plate. This can help to minimize carbon emissions associated with transportation, as well as packaging and waste. Many local producers also use environmentally friendly growing practices, such as organic, agro ecological and/or regenerative agriculture, further contributing to sustainability goals.

5.Encouraging healthy eating and food education: Local produce markets can offer a wide variety of fresh, whole foods, making it easy for consumers to access nutritious options. They also provide an opportunity for consumers to learn about where their food comes from, how it is grown, and how to prepare it. Many markets feature educational activities, such as cooking demonstrations or farm tours, that help to build food literacy and encourage healthy eating habits.

6.Creating a sense of community and place: Local produce markets serve as gathering places where people can connect with their neighbours, learn about local issues, and celebrate their shared cultural heritage and language. They often feature live music, arts and crafts, or other cultural activities that contribute to a sense of vibrancy and place. For example, the Riverside Farmers' Market in Cardiff has become a beloved community institution, attracting thousands of visitors each week and serving as a hub for local activism and engagement.



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How to set up a local produce market

1. Choose a consistent day and time (e.g., weekly) that works well for the location and potential customers. Consider factors such as local work schedules, school hours, and tourist patterns. For example, Newport Local Produce Market found that a weekly market on a set day helped establish a regular shopping routine for customers. Llandovery Farmers Market runs monthly.

2. Identify local stakeholders, such as town councils, green groups, and interested citizens who can help support the market. Engage with them early on to build a strong foundation of support. In Newport Pembrokeshire, the town council's full backing was crucial to the market's success plus there's a market manager coordinating and facilitating.



3. Secure a visible outdoor location, preferably in a market street or square. An outdoor setting helps to create a vibrant, engaging atmosphere and attracts passing foot traffic. Newport's market benefits from being located in a public space with a road closure on market day, making it highly visible and accessible. Haverfordwest Farmer's Market is weekly in the town square.

4. Engage with local business owners to address any concerns and emphasize the potential benefits of increased footfall. Be respectful of their needs and work together to create a mutually beneficial arrangement. Actively encourage local businesses to be vocal and supportive, recognizing that their buy-in was essential from the beginning to allay fears and build relationships.

5. Ensure that the market focuses on locally produced goods, such as vegetables, bakery items, cheese, drinks, meat, eggs, dairy, preserves, and local crafts. Consider limiting the number of stalls for each product type to maintain a balanced offering. Success can be achieved by having enough stalls to provide the staples for a weekly shop, the emphasis being on food production with just a handful of high quality craft stalls.

6. Consider seeking grants or subsidies from the town council to help with initial setup costs, such as stall equipment and market management. This support can be instrumental in getting the market off the ground and ensuring its long-term viability. Newport's market benefited from the council's willingness to invest in the necessary infrastructure and management.

7. Establish clear guidelines and expectations for stallholders, including a requirement for consistent attendance and a commitment to collective responsibility. This helps to create a reliable, high-quality market experience for customers. Emphasize the importance of stallholder commitment, attendance and engagement from the outset.



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8.Create a welcoming, engaging atmosphere that encourages customers to linger and socialize. Consider incorporating live music, cooking demonstrations, or other interactive elements. Market days can be seen as events, with activities and experiences to draw in customers and encourage them to stay and explore.

9.Work with the local council to ensure that necessary logistical arrangements, such as road closures and signage, are in place. This helps to create a safe, accessible environment for customers and stallholders alike. In Newport, the council's willingness to close the road is key to the market's smooth operation. Pembrokeshire County Council promote the Haverfordwest Farmers Market on their website.

10.Continuously evaluate and adapt the market based on feedback from customers, stallholders, and local stakeholders though be aware that it may take time to embed the market in the local community. Be open to new ideas and approaches that can help the market thrive over the long term. Newport's market has continued to evolve and improve over time, thanks to ongoing engagement and collaboration among all involved parties.

Benefits for producers:

- Diverse outlet to sell specialist products that wouldn't necessarily go in veg boxes, e.g., asparagus, artichokes, etc.
- Opportunity to reach new customers, including tourists during holiday months, while maintaining year-round support from locals
- Opportunity to sell gluts, "wonky" or leftover produce, and in turn, unsold market produce can go to other customers eg box scheme (creating a circular economy)
- Contributes to the local economy, keeping money within the community
- Direct route to end customers and increased visibility; the chance to tell the business story and receive feedback
- Better sales margins by selling directly
- Flexibility to increase or decrease sales; improved agility with flexibility
- Potential to build a loyal customer base and generate reliable income
- Reduced need for packaging and long-distance transportation, supporting sustainability goals
- Chance to educate consumers about growing practices and products
- Potential to attract existing conventional producers who are selling everything out to wholesalers or bulk to develop local supply enterprises as well. Milk stands on dairy farms are a good example of how this is all ready being tried.
- Bringing farm produce to local markets could develop extra income opportunities for additional family members within existing farming families. Bolt on local enterprises, which sells local, whilst still allowing the main business to sell out.



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Considerations:

When establishing a local produce market, there are several key factors to keep in mind to ensure its success and longevity:

1.Consistency: As demonstrated by the Newport Local Produce Market and Haverfordwest Farmer's Market, consistency is crucial. Holding the market weekly helps establish it as a regular shopping destination rather than a one-off event. Stallholders should commit to attending regularly, as this builds trust and loyalty among customers.

2.Stallholder commitment: The success of a market relies heavily on the dedication of its stallholders. Stallholders need to be engaged, take collective responsibility for the market's operation, and be prepared to invest time and effort, especially in the early stages.

3.Balance and variety: A thriving market should offer a balanced mix of products, focusing primarily on food but also including some high-quality crafts if appropriate. Newport's market found success by having enough stalls to provide the staples for a weekly shop while maintaining a diverse range of offerings including just a small number of high-end craft stalls. Denbigh Farmer's Market, although monthly, offers just one stall of each type of product so as to ensure customers can do a good shop but also that it's viable for producers to attend without competition.

4.Location and visibility: Choosing the right location is key. An outdoor setting in a central, visible area, such as a market square or pedestrianized street, can help attract customers and create a bustling atmosphere. Newport's market benefits from its location in a public space with a road closure on market day and Haverfordwest Farmer's Market is located in the centre of town.

5.Council and community support: The backing of the local council and community is essential. In Newport, the town council's full support, including the provision of infrastructure and road closures, was instrumental in the market's success. Engaging with local businesses and residents to address any concerns and build support is also crucial.



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Case study

Newport Local Produce Market Pembrokeshire; A thriving Community Hub

Newport Local Produce Market in Pembrokeshire has become a shining example of how a well-run market can transform a community. With the full support of the town council, the market has flourished in its visible, outdoor location, benefitting from a road closure on market day to create a safe, pedestrian-friendly environment.



The market manager and stallholders have worked hard to engage with local businesses, ensuring their buy-in and support from the outset. Stallholders are committed to attending regularly, creating a consistent, high quality offering for customers. The market emphasises locally sourced food products with a balance of staples and speciality items, as well as a carefully curated selection of crafts.

Market days are seen as an event, sometimes with live music and interactive activities, which creates a welcoming, engaging atmosphere that draws in residents and visitors alike. The result is a thriving community hub that supports local producers, boosts the local economy and enhances the social fabric of the town.

The cafes

Pwnk owner/manager Jana described how Monday-market day is their busiest day of the week now all year round, busier than the weekends. Because of this she employs extra staff on Mondays to cover the influx. It's her strongest day of the week for takings and is now why they always open every Monday, even in the winter, when they close on other week days.

Andrew Manager at **Blas** notes the need for extra staff on Mondays now and in the tourist season, the road closure for the market 7am-2pm allows them to set up tables and chairs outside on the street, offering not only extra seating but adding to the gaiety and atmosphere of a thriving market. He says during summer markets they often have a queue out of the door as the market has become a draw for tourists returning to the area who know this is the place to purchase quality local produce. Andrew feels the strength to them is that the market is weekly and so is now established in the psyche of the local population as to being a reliable shopping venue. This further feed into the work of the cafes, as even in the down season, on a wet Monday, locals will still come to town to shop, which means it well worth the cafes opening that day.

The Shops

Nathan, manager at the **Spar** feels the market works because it is a weekly event. They know they are going to be particularly busy on Mondays as people will shop in the store for other groceries and sundries when they have finished in the market. They don't find the closure of the street has any significant impact on sales as there is little available regular parking in the street anyway and the



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market draws more people to the town than the lost street parking would ever accommodate. Nathan also drew on the fact that the market organiser/installer and the traders have been good at making sure that access to the 'bricks and mortar' businesses is not restricted or impeded and the regular footfall flows as usual.

Paul, owner/manager of the **butchers shops** is possibly the business that could see the most competition from the market as he also sells veg and the market does have a local meat producers stall. Paul is upbeat about the market and the crowd that the market can pull in on a Monday. He didn't see a huge competition between the market veg sales against his as they have a different range and products with the market trader's being local and organic. His shop is also there six days a week versus the five hours the market is trading.

Alison, manager, **Coast and Country Holiday Cottages** is fantastically positive about the impact of the market on their business. She sees it as a real draw to the town and that the town has in many ways thrived in recent years partly because of it.

Alison explained that they write and print about the market in all their prospectuses as a selling point to potential visitors and also mention the time and date in the telephone welcome they give to all the guests.

Customer feedback

"It's reliable- customers buy their weekly veg from us as we are always there.

Customers enjoy the provenance, super fresh, very local, organic, ethical, circular economy being common buzz words and phrases.

Lots of people also expressed the joy that shopping this way brings, as it's so communal and people get to gather and chat whilst shopping- something that is less and less common in conventional supermarkets."



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Conclusion: Unlocking the Potential of Local Produce Markets in Wales

The case for local produce markets in Wales is compelling. As this guide has demonstrated, these markets offer a wide range of benefits for producers, consumers, and communities alike. By providing a direct sales outlet for small-scale producers, markets help to support local businesses, create jobs, and keep money circulating within the local economy. They also contribute to environmental sustainability by reducing food miles and packaging waste, while promoting healthy eating and food education.

Moreover, local produce markets serve as vital community hubs, bringing people together around a shared love of fresh, locally sourced food. They create a sense of place and identity, celebrating the unique products and traditions of a given area. As the Newport Local Produce Market case study illustrates, a thriving market can become a source of pride and engagement for the entire community.



However, establishing a successful local produce market requires careful planning, coordination, and commitment from all involved parties. From choosing the right location and securing necessary permissions to recruiting dedicated stallholders and building community support, there are many factors to consider. By following the step-by-step guidance outlined in this document, and learning from best practices like those demonstrated in Newport, communities across Wales can unlock the potential of local produce markets.

The benefits of local markets extend far beyond the immediate economic and social impacts. By supporting small-scale, sustainable food production, these markets contribute to a more resilient, diverse, and equitable food system.

They help to reconnect people with the sources of their food, fostering a greater appreciation for the skill and hard work of local producers. And they offer a compelling alternative to the globalized, industrialized food system, demonstrating the value of short supply chains and face-to-face relationships. As Wales looks to the future, local produce markets have a vital role to play in building a more sustainable, prosperous, and connected food economy. By empowering producers, engaging consumers, and strengthening communities, these markets can help to create a food system that works for everyone. The potential is vast – it is up to all of us to seize the opportunity and make it a reality.



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This guide can be used as a resource for town councils and local authorities looking to support the development of local produce markets in their areas.

Here's how:

1. Strategic alignment: The guide highlights how local produce markets contribute to key policy objectives, such as economic development, environmental sustainability, public health, and community cohesion. By aligning market development with these strategic priorities, councils and authorities can build a strong case for investment and support.

2. Practical guidance: The step-by-step advice on setting up and running a successful market provides a clear roadmap for councils and authorities. From identifying suitable locations and securing necessary permissions to engaging with stakeholders and promoting the market, the guide offers practical insights that can inform decision-making and resource allocation.

3. Best practice examples: The Newport Local Produce Market case study serves as an inspiring example of what can be achieved with the right support and collaboration. By showcasing the positive impacts of a thriving market, the guide can help councils and authorities to visualize the potential benefits for their own communities.

4. Stakeholder engagement: The guide emphasizes the importance of engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, including producers, local businesses, community groups, and residents. By providing a framework for consultation and partnership-building, the guide can help councils and authorities to secure buy-in and support for market development.

5. Capacity-building: By highlighting the various roles and responsibilities involved in setting up and running a market, the guide can help councils and authorities to identify and develop the necessary skills and capacities within their teams. This might include training on event management, business support, or community engagement.

6. Funding and resources: The guide's insights on funding and resource requirements can help councils and authorities to plan and budget effectively for market development by identifying potential sources of support, such as grants or sponsorships.

Quotes/testimonials

"My observation over several decades of working with Farmers Markets as well as every other market outlet indicates that when FM products become successful then high street retailers are prone to take them up themselves to the benefit of everyone." (Peter Segger, Blaencamel)

"Most markets I attend have their own micro communities evident in the way people hang around to socialise long after they have done their shopping. It can also benefit other businesses open around the market area." (William, Black Mountain Itals)



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“With our market people know they can come and only find top quality local producers. Our farmers market is building a really lovely community and people comment on it.” (Liz & Chris Kameen, Vale Grocer)

“I believe that once producers of all types of food start to sell in their local community they will benefit from the same positive feedback as we have and with greater connection, understanding and respect from the community they will take greater care of and pride in their natural resource base and production systems.” (Lyndall Merry, Bryn Celyn Gardens)



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