

Transition Bro Gwaun Surplus Food Project & Community Cafe



Community Survey - Summer 2016

About Transition Cafe in Fishguard

At the time of the survey, Transition Cafe had been open for 3 years. Since June 2013, the cafe has built up a loyal customer base of local people, and attracts many people from further afield who want to find out more about a community approach to reducing food waste and cutting carbon emissions. The cafe has visitors from all over the UK - all over the world. Our visitors book, Facebook and Trip Advisor show a high rate of satisfaction both for the food we serve and the aims of the project. These are, to provide a model of good practice and to develop information and activities which encourage our community to waste less.

Our project has built good links with many local organisations. Schools and youth groups use us for education and work experience; local groups meet in the cafe; we take part in many community activities and provide buffet meals for a number of community events. We also share the surplus food we collect with other local groups helping them to save money and spreading our message that it's OK and safe to eat surplus food.

Why a survey?

Despite this high level of community engagement and a good deal of media coverage, we were aware that there were still people who were choosing not to come to our cafe. Uncertainty about what we do – are we a food bank or what? – and confusion about 'Use by', 'Sell by' and 'Best before' dates (and whether it's safe to eat this 'out of date' food) seemed to be preventing some people from engaging with our project.

We are also aware of evidence that, while food waste from the retail sector has reduced significantly over the past few years, that waste from people's homes remains stubbornly at about 50% of the total UK food waste i.e. 7 million tonnes per year. Clearly while some people are careful not to waste food, many are not. We wanted to find out more - to see what local people thought about food waste and our project and what might encourage them to waste less.

Using part of a Big Lottery - Awards for All grant, we produced a questionnaire (see appendix 1) which was taken by volunteers and sessional workers to a wide range of organisations and events across North Pembrokeshire during a 3 month period from May to August 2016. We then commissioned a local market researcher to develop and carry out an evaluation of the responses.

The findings of this survey and our thoughts on the way forward are outlined in this report.

Chris Samra, TBG Director

Transition Cafe Survey - Where and Who?

During the summer of 2016 a survey was carried out to determine peoples' experiences, perceptions and awareness of Transition Cafe in Fishguard, its ethos, purpose and activities. In a broader sense, the survey sought to identify peoples' attitudes towards surplus food.

At various locations across Pembrokeshire 283 questionnaires were completed. Most of them were completed in the Fishguard area, and some in the cafe itself. Some were obviously locals and fairly regular customers, whilst others were visitors to the area. There were also many who had never visited the cafe and had very little awareness of it, its aims and objectives.

Locations and groups where surveys were completed:

- 'What's in it for you' – a showcasing event of local community groups
- Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services - community awards event
- Fishguard Agricultural Show
- Fishguard Folk Festival
- The Really Wild Food Festival,
- The Friendship circle, Fishguard
- University of the 3rd Age, Fishguard
- Transition Cafe, Fishguard
- Farmers Market Fishguard
- Ysgol Bro Gwaun (aged 16-18)
- Point Youth Club, Fishguard (aged 16-25)
- Fishguard Community Forum
- Henner Womens Institute
- St. Mary's Church, Fishguard
- Pen y cwm residential caravan park
- Clarbeston Road Theatre Group
- A small group of Tenby residents



Who completed the survey?

There was a wide cross section of ages, although many did not give their personal details. Of those that stated their age, (111 respondents), almost half were over 55 years old and only 14 people were under 25.

Interest in surplus food

Many were keen to receive further details about the cafes' activities, groups and events, and expressed an interest to learn about various topics relating to surplus food.

Survey results and discussion

Have you visited
Transition Cafe?

People were initially asked whether they had visited the cafe. Just over half of the sample, **155** respondents (55%), said **“Yes”**.

If YES, what do
you think of it?
Describe in a few key
words.

The **155** respondents who stated, “Yes”, they had visited the cafe, were then asked to describe what they thought of it.

Whilst there were a wide variety of comments, many of them focused on the positive concept/ethos of the cafe or the food itself.



Just over one-third of this sample (37%), made comments relating to how much they liked and respected the objectives and overall ethos of the cafe (*left*). One respondent wrote,

“An excellent initiative, highlighting how food waste can be reduced through good practise and education”.

Many of these respondents who had visited the cafe made comments (43%), about how much they liked the food itself (*right*), and another commented,

“Happy to support a great ethical hardworking movement. Food is awesome, delicious without fail, even when ingredients are limited.”

Some customers, (17%), made comments regarding the value for money, thinking it was a “Good price”, “Good value” and “Affordable”; “A great little place with quality food at a good price”



If YES, what do you think of it? *continued*

One quarter of those who had visited the cafe made general non-specific comments, such as they found it “Very good”, or “Lovely”, “Brilliant”, or “Nice”.

There were many comments regarding the atmosphere/ambience, with over one-third, (38%), applauding the “Friendly”, “Welcoming” and “Relaxed” nature of the cafe.

A further 13 people made comments about the décor and layout of the cafe, some citing it as “Open” or “Bright” and “Smart”.

A few customers commented that the cafe was clean, and several thought it was generally “Interesting”, “Different”, “Creative” and “Unusual”.

There were a handful of other compliments made about the cafe; one person commented on how well the cafe understood food intolerances, whilst two liked the information board. One person found it “Inclusive” and another “Child-friendly”.

There were only three negative comments made about the cafe by those that had visited, and these were as follows;

“A bit basic.”

“Frontage could be more inspiring and encourage people to come in.”

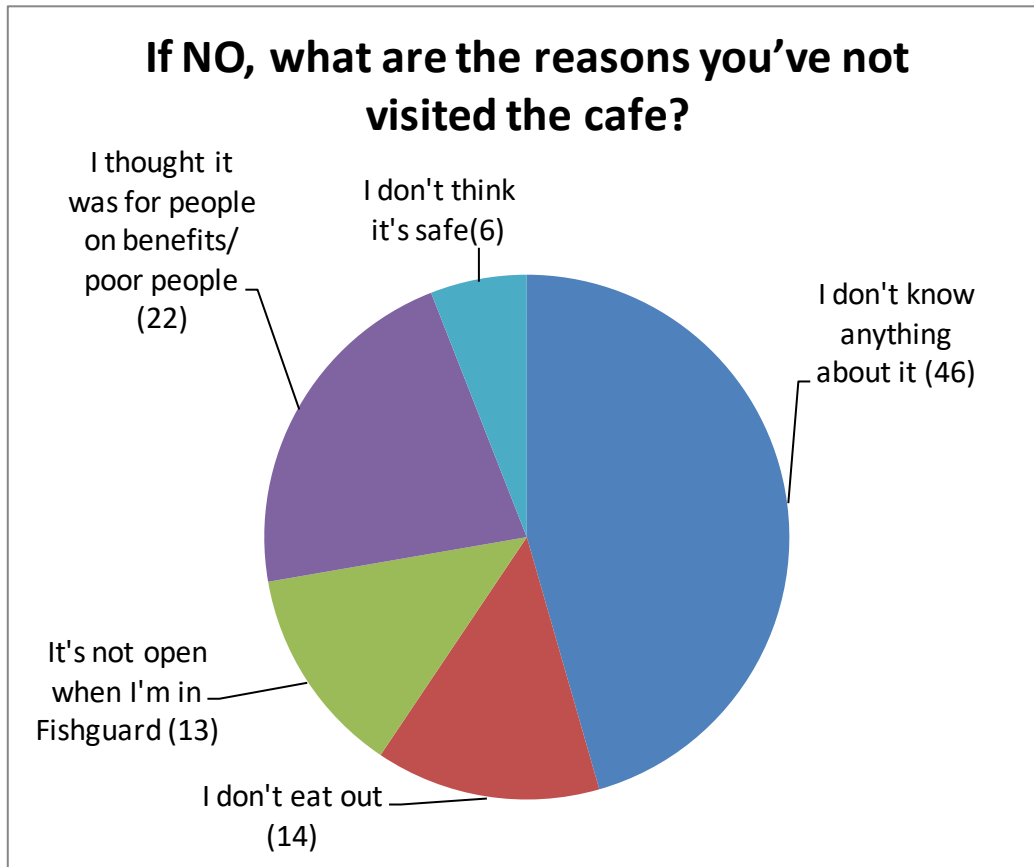
“Wish they would open more.”

Another had their preconceptions challenged, “Not what I thought it would be - for people short of money.”



If NO, what are the reasons you've not visited the cafe?

Those people who had not visited the cafe (of which there were 128) were asked to indicate the reasons why. They were asked to tick any of the five options that applied, and were also invited to make further comments if necessary.



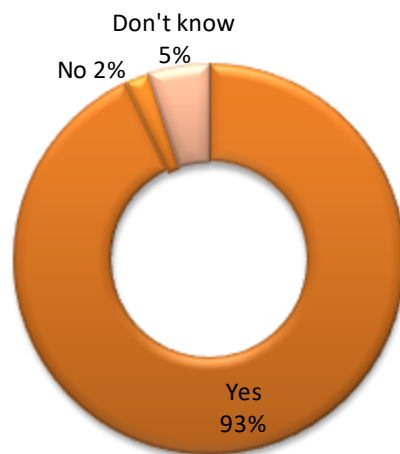
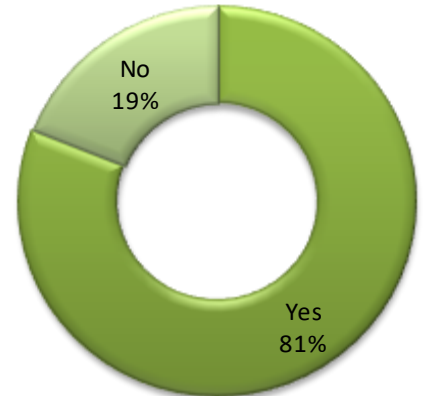
There were a few other comments, which mainly related to the fact that some respondents were never or “not often” in Fishguard, or were simply visitors. This applies to approximately 19 of the other reasons stated, of which there were 42 in total.

A few other people stated that they simply had not had time or had, “Not got round to it”. Three respondents said they had recently moved to the area. There was a wide range of other reasons, each cited by one person respectively, including;

“No transport” “Not sure what to expect” “Thought it was young people”;
 “Focus point for less-abled” “I like good coffee” “I’m a fussy eater”
 “I have food allergies” “Would need to be open in the evening”
 “Should not look like a community centre for the less privileged”.

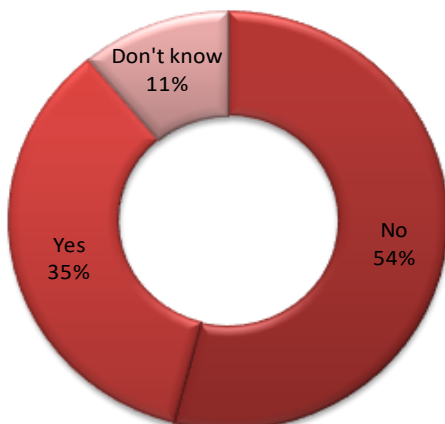
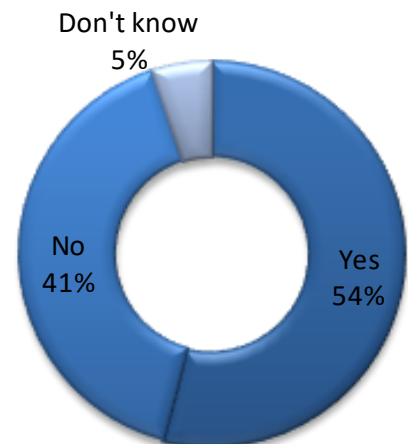
We then asked a series of questions relating to food waste

Did you know that the main purpose of the cafe is to reduce food waste?



Do you think we need to be concerned about food waste?

Would you like to learn more about how to save money on your food bills and reduce food waste at home?



We're running workshops on these themes in the next few months.
Would you be interested?

Are there any particular topics you would like to learn about?

When asked if they were any particular topics they would like to learn about, there was a wide variety of responses from those who had stated “Yes” to the previous question (98 people). Of the suggestions made, the most popular were based on cooking and recipe ideas, particularly focused on ideas and recipes for cooking, “With leftovers” or, “To reduce food waste”. A couple of people stated they wanted to learn how to, “Save money on food bills”.

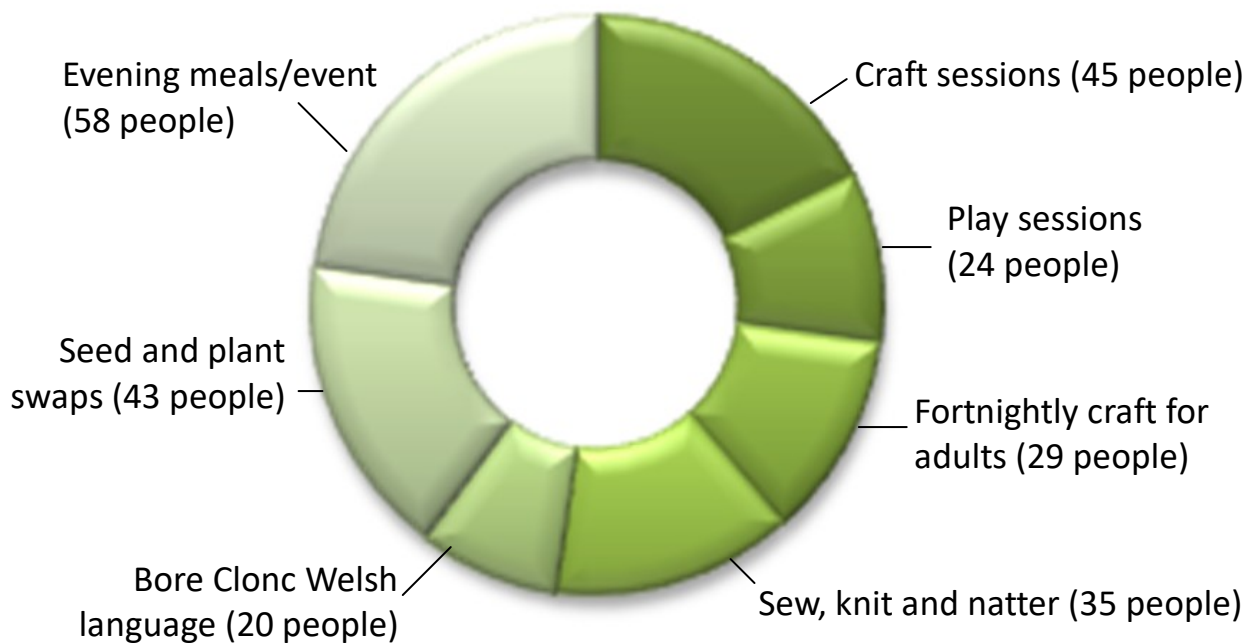


There was also interest in learning about different ways of preparing food, and in learning particular skills, including; “Vegan cookery”, “Pickling and jam making”, “Sprouting”, “Juicing”, “Baking bread” and, “Wild food/foraging”.

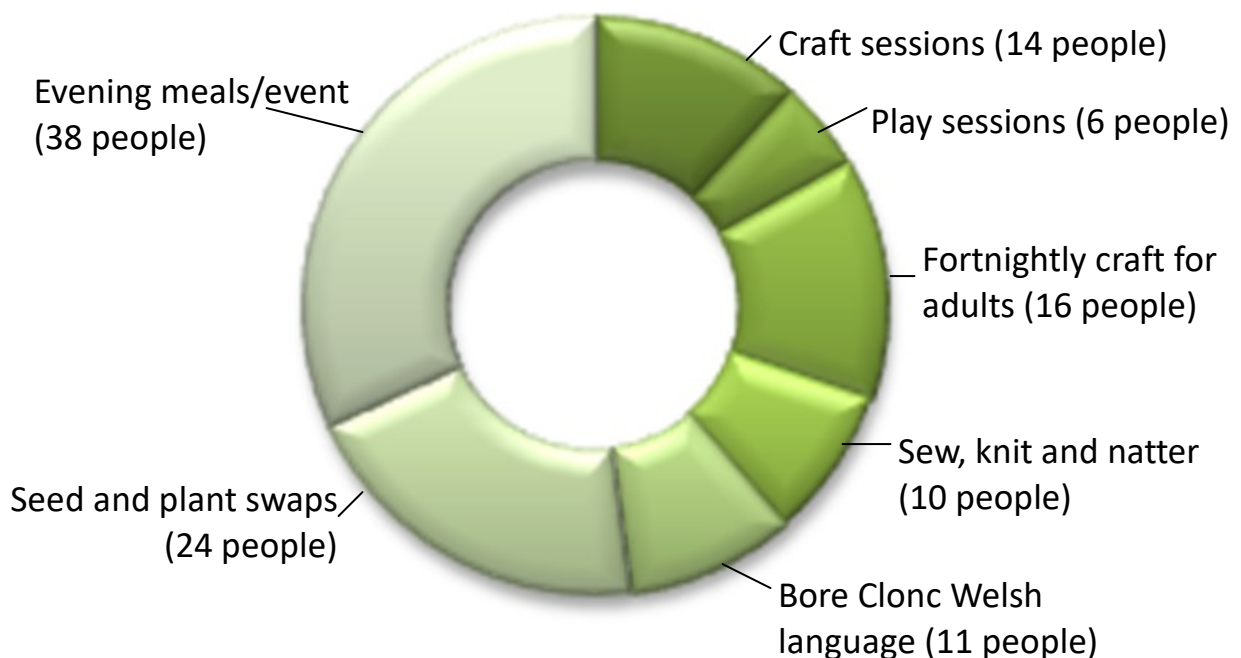
A couple of people wanted to learn how to, “Understand dates on foods”, whilst one person suggested, “Getting young people to learn about real cooking”. Another person was interested in, “How to promote food waste with local communities and schools”. There were various other random suggestions, including, “Sewing/craft”, “Welsh language”, “Conservation”, “Information on ethical/eco products” and “Biomass boilers/renewable energy sources”.

Did you know the cafe puts on a range of activities and events? Respondents were shown a list of activities and events held at the cafe. They were then asked to indicate which, if any, they were aware of, and which they would like information about. The results were as follows;

Activities and events - known about:



Activities and events - interested in finding out about:



Did you know that the cafe is available for other groups to use e.g. for community group meetings, social functions like evening suppers; birthday parties; folk jazz festival sessions?

When asked if they knew that the cafe was available for other groups to use, well over half of respondents (59%) did not, whilst just over one quarter (27%) did. The remainder declined to respond.

Do you have any comments or suggestions about how we can involve people in reducing food waste?

Finally, when asked for any comments or suggestions on how to involve people in reducing food waste, approximately 32 people responded with suggestions. Eight people suggested more advertising/leaflets/posters/Facebook, whilst five people mentioned engaging schools and local groups. A further two people specifically suggested getting younger people involved. There were many other comments and ideas, each made by one person respectively, including;



The Way Forward

Our survey shows that the overwhelming majority of people we spoke to thought food waste was a concern. Many saw Transition café as a valuable community resource addressing this issue and want us to do more. So we'll use these findings to seek funding to recruit more volunteers, employ more staff and extend our services to encompass many of the suggestions that were made.

But it has also confirmed that a considerable number of people either don't know much about us or hold misconceptions or negative views. Unfortunately, the fact that most surplus food projects focus specifically on addressing food poverty means that some people don't use the café because of the stigma of food poverty. Anecdotally we've been told of comments like 'You don't want to go there or you'll be seen as poor', or 'you'll be taking food from the needy'.

So a key focus for us will be to promote ourselves better and to highlight that reducing waste should be everybody's business. Making good use of surplus food is a safe, sensible and cost effective way for us all to play our part in conserving valuable resources and reducing carbon emissions.

We also need to widen our focus from just making use of surplus food from shops and supermarkets to helping people to reduce food waste in the home – still by far the biggest area of food waste. 'Almost 50% of the total food thrown away in the UK comes from our homes' (WRAP, 2016, <http://wales.lovefoodhatewaste.com/content/facts-about-food-waste-1>).

How We'll Do This

- **Develop Transition Redistribution of Food (TROF)** - to enable more organisations to use the surplus food that supermarkets and stores are now happy to give to local community groups and charities. We'll look for more groups to share our knowledge, skills and resources with, so they can set up schemes which will demonstrate to all their members the benefits of using surplus food and just how delicious meals made from it can be.
- **Get our message out to a wider audience** - promoting ourselves more e.g. at food festivals, agricultural shows, community and environmental events. We find that fun activities work best to help the general public understand what we're about - like our 'food life' game. Bowls of snacks, some just bought and some well beyond their 'best before' dates - which are which? Most people are amazed that they can't tell the difference. We also give out



How We'll Do This *continued*

tasters of our Sunrise Surprise cake, asking 'what's the secret ingredient?' (It's tinned tomato soup - beyond its 'best before' date - but even a visiting WI group couldn't guess what it was!)

- **Initiate educational activities and events** that help people to learn how to make best use of food and to waste less e.g. Ready, Steady Cook demonstrations; using leftovers and preserving workshops; sessions on understanding food labelling and saving money on food bills; sewing and mending groups; and Funky Junk craft activities.
- **Improve our publicity and marketing and develop our use of social media** so that more people hear about us, understand our message and get new ideas for reducing waste.
- **Move on** - exploring new ways in which we might use some of the most wasted foods. We get mountains of bread that even we can't use - so we're fascinated to learn that you can use bread to make beer (see www.toastale.com) And we're rarely short of root vegetables and get huge gluts of fruit and veg in late summer – how about setting up social enterprises making pickles, preserves and vegetable crisps from all this excess surplus?

Latest News — December 2016

We have recently learned that our cafe building is scheduled to be demolished for a new road scheme in September 2017. Officers of Pembrokeshire County Council have committed to work with TBG to enable us to progress with and develop our current operations. So we are expecting to secure a new base from where we can continue to develop the plans in this report.

Keep in touch with what we're doing and where we're going!

<http://transitionbrogwaun.org.uk/> and on [Facebook](#)

Contact us at: transitioncafe@fishguard@gmail.com

Report by Corinne Castle, Chris Samra and Aeron Knapp-Fisher, November 2016