

source: Cii



## Renovating Homes, Building Futures

The Community Impact Initiative (Cii) aims to regenerate communities through renovating empty properties. As a community interest company, Cii buys empty, run-down properties and oversees their restoration through involving and training a workforce of local people. Project participants are often those furthest from the labour market, with many having faced barriers to employment such as mental ill-health, homelessness, domestic abuse and substance addiction. Cii's construction projects offer these individuals a chance to learn and grow and make meaningful contributions to society. Throughout the project and afterwards, they are given support to improve their health and well-being, build their confidence and self-esteem, learn new skills, achieve qualifications, and make positive life improvements. Meanwhile, empty homes are returned to the housing market in an environmentally friendly and energy-efficient manner.

## The Challenge:

Combining learning and skill development with community regeneration, the Community Impact Initiative (Cii) takes an integrative approach in combatting two of Wales' biggest challenges: unemployment/precarious employment and the housing crisis.

### Tackling the Housing Crisis

In Wales, there are currently 67,000 households on housing waiting lists while 11,500 households presented as homeless in 2018-19. At the same time there are an estimated 27,000 empty properties across Wales. These properties are a lost housing resource and can blight their surrounding communities. They often attract vandalism and anti-social behaviour and can cause environmental problems, falls in adjacent property values and the general decline of neighbourhoods.



**67,000**  
households on  
housing waiting lists.

**27,000**  
empty properties.



### Tackling the Employment and Skills Crisis

Many people across Wales struggle to secure meaningful employment, often finding that they lack the skills and the confidence. Young people especially find themselves caught in the trap of needing experience to get a job, but being unable to gain experience without a job.



## The Approach:



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- Since its inception in 2016, the Community impact initiative (Cii) has renovated six properties across South Wales.
- Each renovation project lasted between 4-6 months and involved 20-25 participants from surrounding communities.
- A total of 204 participants involved so far.
- These people ranged in age from 16 to 70 and had varying backgrounds and challenging life circumstances.
- However, they all had similar reasons for joining the project, including building confidence, meeting new people, establishing work routines and accessing support that would allow them to make positive forward steps and progress.
- Of the six renovation projects, one was geared specifically towards women, and another towards individuals with experience of drug and alcohol misuse.
- Most of the participants are referred to Cii through their partner organisations including Chwarae Teg, Hafan Cymru, Calan DVS, Welsh Women's Aid, Inspire Training, Acorn Recruitment and Communities4Work.



## The Approach:



During the projects, participants learnt trade skills such as plastering, carpentry and kitchen and bathroom fitting. At the same time, they gained useful qualifications including the CSCS construction certificate and CITB's Health and Safety Awareness certificate, valid for 5 years. They were paired with a Construction Tutor and a Wellbeing Officer, who helped them build confidence, motivation, and self-esteem. In this way, the projects supported participants to learn new skills and develop a sense of community pride, while providing a meaningful stepping-stone into employment or other positive aspirations.



# Contributes towards:

## A Prosperous Wales:

- Investing in green skills that lead to enhanced and more diverse employment prospects.
- Using procurement to promote inclusive growth.
- Enabling communities to reduce emissions and use low carbon energy.



## A Wales of Cohesive Communities:

- Renovating empty and often derelict properties instills a sense of community pride, resilience, and ownership.
- Creating the conditions where people and communities can do the things that matter to them.

## The Community Impact Initiative's objectives

A better skilled workforce

More resilient communities

Better engaged communities

Improved physical spaces

Healthier community members

## A Healthier Wales:

- Supporting participants to improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- Place-making and designing-in community health and wellbeing.



## A Resilient Wales:

- Ensuring that renovated properties connect owners to outside space, are energy efficient, and are fit for the future and facilitate a green lifestyle.

## A Globally Responsible Wales:

- Investigating and implementing energy efficient working practices and systems that reduce carbon footprints, reduce energy bills to counter issues of fuel poverty, and improve participants' understanding of the importance of energy efficient practices.



# Approach

## Challenge

Not enough affordable homes in Wales to meet increasing demand, yet 30,000 houses stand empty and are a blight on Welsh communities. Meanwhile, any people in Wales are without the skills needed to secure meaningful employment.

### Prevention

- Centring prevention through renovating homes to energy-efficient standards and minimising carbon emissions associated with retrofitting
- Considering all types of fuel systems and installing solar panels where possible - preventing fuel poverty and unnecessary carbon emissions

### > A Prosperous, More Equal and Globally Responsible Wales

### Collaboration

- Collaborating with partners in the public- and third- sector to offer opportunities to those who need them most.
- Working with career progression partners such as Acorn, Recruitment and Inspire Training to help participants progress into employment.

### > A More Equal Wales of Cohesive Communities

## What next?

- Lottery-funded Climate Action Boost project investigating and implementing energy-efficient working practices and systems, reducing energy bills and carbon footprint, and improving participants' understanding of the importance of energy efficiency
- Looking to scale-up model for community regeneration

### Long Term

- Community interest company model ensures that any money generated is reinvested in the community
- Embraces a futures perspective through viewing housing as a driver of well-being and rising to the challenge of the housing crisis

### > A Prosperous and Resilient Wales

### Involvement

- Established projects designed specifically for women, and for individuals with experience of drug and alcohol misuse, as a way of combatting skills inequality
- Employing individuals who themselves have participated in Cii's construction projects
- Encouraging lifelong and work-based learning

### > A More Equal, Healthier Wales of Cohesive Communities

### Integration

- Integrative approach to skills development, and the crises in housing and empty-properties

### > A Prosperous, More Equal Wales of Cohesive Communities



# Impact: Property Success

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## Women Construct Wales Project

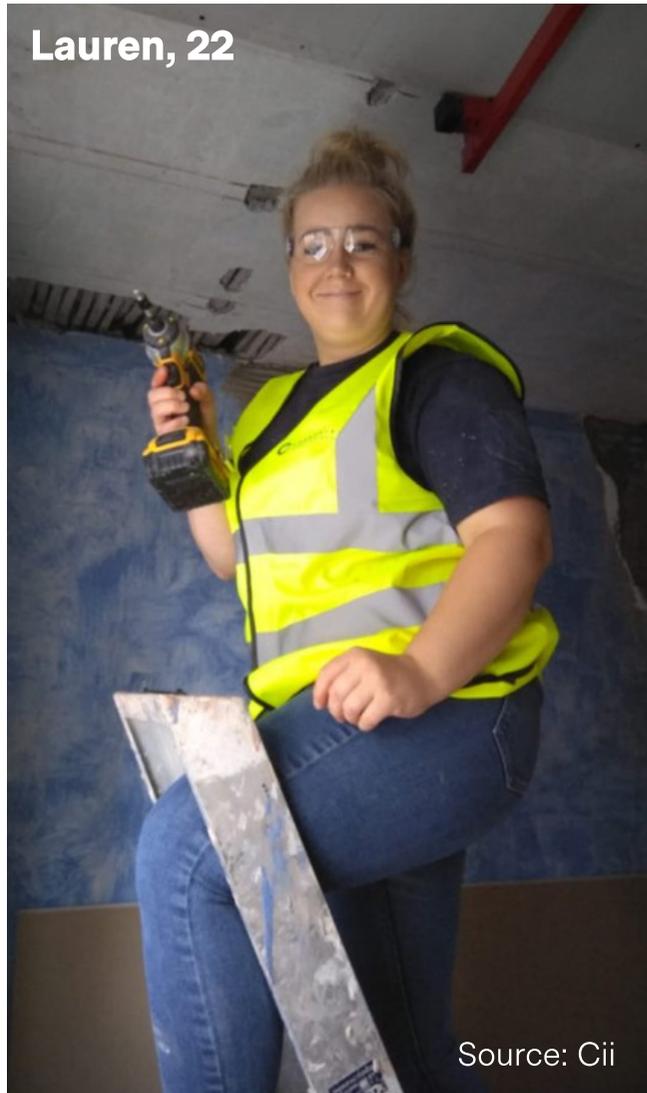
 Pant yr Heol, Neath

- In 2019, Cii purchased a 3-bed terraced house in Neath which had been empty for a number of years.
- The renovation project was geared specifically towards women; teaching them construction skills in an empathetic and supportive environment, free from intimidation and stigma.
- The 20 women involved were referred by organisations such as Chwarae Teg and Welsh Women's Aid. Many of those who participated were long-term unemployed or looking for a career change.
- Not only did the participants develop a range of skills and achieve qualifications, they also reported improvements in self-confidence, motivation and pride in being able to restore a property within their local community.
- Upon renovation completion the property was marketed and sold within a few days.



# Impact: Participant Success

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Lauren was referred to the Pant yr Heol project by her local JobCentre Plus. She had previously sought a career in health and social care, but didn't feel that this was the right path for her. Originally from Neath, Lauren attended for the duration of the project and successfully obtained her CSCS card. Lauren is now pursuing employment in the construction industry.

**"In my time on the project I have gained lots of new skills which will enable me to move forward with careers in my life. It has also given me so much confidence due to all the support and help given along the way. The Cii is an absolutely amazing organisation... they are understanding, helpful and have lots of patience when teaching!"**

- Lauren



## Impact



**95%**

**of project participants engaged for at least 4 weeks**

**91%**

**of project participants reported positive outcomes, including improved confidence and enhanced community relations and pride**



**73%**

**achieved accredited qualifications**



## Impact

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**“The Community Impact Initiative embraces the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and incorporates its wellbeing goals throughout its community regeneration and skill-development activities. In doing so we have identified and implemented sustainable development principles and ways of working that complement these goals.”**

- Trystan Jones,  
Founder and Director of the  
Community Impact Initiative.

