

Crowdfunder Stories

ISSUE 01, 2019

A publication about positivity and people who are making a difference.



All of the stories in this
magazine made their ideas
happen in one place

So, what's your idea?

Start crowdfunding



 Crowdfunder.co.uk

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Are you interested in good stories?

In the UK we are gluttons for bad news. Each day is dutifully spent, flogging ourselves with it from morning until sundown as penance for the seemingly perpetual crisis of our affairs. Scanning through the headlines, you can be hard pressed to find anything positive at all.

Yet, there are thousands of people out there doing incredible things that also deserve our attention. As a crowdfunding coach, I speak with people from all over the UK, raising money for communities, charities and businesses. These people are hugely determined to find positive and creative solutions to the challenges we face in society.

Foreword

One challenge, mental health, seems to feature rather a lot. It begs the question, is poor mental health a product of today's society? Or is this nothing new but something we are now prepared to better understand?

I myself suffer from depression, an unwelcome companion which has dominated too much of my twenties. Last year, despite careful management, my mind was beginning to boil over and in distress, I took a break from work. It was only after taking this step back from the grindstone, that I found the perspective I needed.

Firstly, I now passionately believe, that making time to do what you love is essential to our wellbeing. If you're unhappy, make some changes to accommodate your own personal aspirations.

Secondly, my work at Crowdfunder UK has shown me, we are inherently social beings, that 'no man is an island' and together in a community, we thrive. I returned to work inspired, what did I love and how might I start to apply my mantra? People, stories and a pinch of adventure. That's what it boiled down to.

The ingredients for this tonic were well within reach. The stories of those I help to raise money, are unique, rare and compelling. I resolved to travel from Cornwall to Scotland to meet with 10 favourites, who champion these same values.

With Crowdfunder's blessing, a team of friends; Freddie a filmmaker, Jasper a photographer and Bonnie a designer, joined me on my journey. We have since pulled together a magazine, celebrating these extraordinary and wonderful things happening right on our doorstep.

Good news doesn't sell – rubbish! In November, we crowdfunded this magazine and 393 people pledged their support to make it happen. So here we are, 10 stories about people who have looked at society, seen a problem and tried hard to fix it.

Happy reading, Bertie

In April 2018 Organic Blooms, a Bristol based flower farm successfully raised £32,963 from 268 supporters

www.crowdfunder.co.uk/organic-blooms

Organic Blooms

90% of the flowers we buy here in the UK come from overseas, yet among the 10% that hail from our own soil, is a flower grower with a world class product and a strong social mission.

Organic Blooms, is a British cut-flower farm based in Gloucestershire, Bristol. While producing a variety of blooms a cut above the rest, they use their social enterprise status to train and employ local people with learning difficulties and mental health conditions in the art of horticultural practices.

The social services across the UK are stretched and brilliant organisations like these are easing the strain by providing practical and longer term solutions to some of the difficult mental health problems we face.

Organic Blooms were always partially funded through social services for their work with vulnerable people but the horticultural element began to grow when what they were doing started to gain some commercial independence. We met with Jo Wright the founder of Organic Blooms who explained, "people wanted jobs, so the commercial side of the organisation started to flourish as their aspirations

grew". The traditional function of the social service system is changing, "people don't want to just sit around having cups of tea, they want jobs that will change their lives, and we responded to that".

The positive effects of working in the garden have long been known, that's why we as a nation of green fingered enthusiasts cherish our time outside getting our hands dirty. The peace, reward and complete distraction from whatever else might be going on can be wonderfully nourishing for the overstretched and stressed mind.

This was evident to me as soon as we made our way through the gates. My previous afternoon's delight of spending an entire day with a broken-down car on the A30, sloped away from my shoulders as the sunlight, birds and enticing smells washed over me like a warm and welcoming wave.

The secret garden springs to mind, the escapism that allows you to busy yourself in your own little world, the surrounding blooms providing shelter while the relentless pace of the outside world melts away behind you. It is a brief reprieve as the drone of modern life is replaced with the gentle buzzing of bees.





“people don’t want to just sit around having cups of tea, they want jobs that will change their lives, and we responded to that”.

Forget the importance of your role in your own tragedy by observing the other creatures around you, the bees and butterflies who have their own agendas. I was very amused to see that even the dogs were busy, usually taking great interest in any newcomer but not here; they had places to be, sniff and investigate, no time for me.

Because everyone is just getting on, you can’t help but do the same and when the bell rings for tea in the afternoon, you’ve really earned it. This time the tea isn’t drunk just to pass the time.

Organic Blooms have now signed a contract with Abel and Cole to enter the subscription market and very soon you

will start to see and hear more and more about them. Their need to crowdfund came from exceeding their ability to meet the current levels of demand for their flowers and so it was necessary to finance the lease of an additional 5-acre site and the build of a new polytunnel.

The Organic Blooms way of doing things means that otherwise vulnerable and isolated people have somewhere to meet, develop new skills and contribute. To feel known and pride for what you do is so important and if you aren’t able to function in a normal working or social environment then here, in this space you will be understood and made welcome. Those trainees who have gone on to become full-time employees operate in a regular contract system, so for any days unattended they aren’t paid but they will be forgiven.

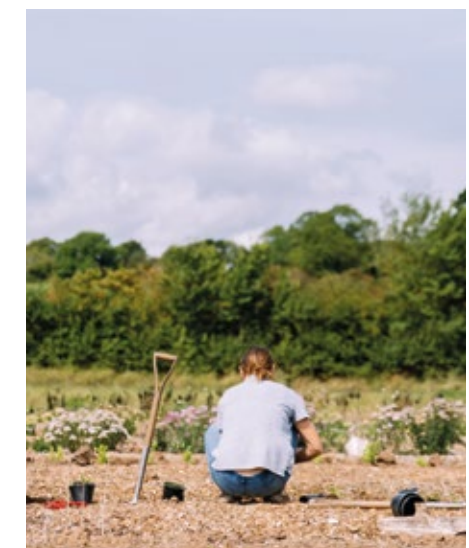
To give you a flavour of what I mean here, it’s not idleness that prevents you from attending work, it’s an inability to function on even a basic level. These patterns of behaviour prevent you from holding down a regular job, which is why a more lenient system is present here. Unless it’s yourself, a member of your family or close friend, really poor mental health doesn’t feature for a lot of us. Much of it happens behind closed doors and this can make it hard to understand.

From my experience among these 10 projects, I’ve learnt that community is important. We’re all inherently social beings and making time to partake in something bigger than yourself is good for you. Through our modern ways it’s easy to get disconnected from those around us and furthermore, all the desk jockeying we do may make us great at admin but starved from the more practical parts of life which can bring satisfaction.

While visiting Organic Blooms I was very fortunate to meet Dan, the marketing manager at Pukka Teas. Their company policy is to allow their employees a number of days a year to work on their own projects and within their community. He had chosen Organic Blooms and was considering switching down to a 4-day week to make more time for it. The lesson here for me was not to let your work define you and retain such a central position in your life. Yes, I appreciate that we all have to make money to live but are we collectively thriving here in the UK? With some of the lowest levels of productivity at work in Europe, maybe there is something in the 4-day week.

I’m delighted that so many businesses like Organic Blooms have such a story to tell, that they make incredible products while proactively trying to make a positive difference in our world. There is such a great opportunity for us as consumers to differentiate from one brand to another by understanding more about them and what they stand for. If after reading this article you’d like to get some colour in your life and to feel good about where your flowers are coming from, I couldn’t express my feelings clearly enough that Organic Blooms are worth the time; they are doing something very right.

www.organicblooms.co.uk



Images

Laura (top) supporter of the campaign who chose the ‘flower farmer for a day’ reward
 Katy (above) a Horticultural Supervisor, planting seeds
 Bertie and Jo (left), visiting the new polytunnel



In December 2017, Tap Social a brewery with a passion for #CriminallyGoodBeer and social justice successfully raised £32,779 from 305 supporters

www.crowdfunder.co.uk/tap-social-movement

Tap Social

After serving your prison sentence, now standing free out in front of the gates, redeemed for your crimes against society, what happens next?

Let's forget the crimes that have been committed for a moment and think about the ultimate aim behind any sentencing, to reintroduce a reformed person back into society who can go on to make a positive contribution. As hopeful as we may be, the reality is that this is incredibly difficult. Locked away from the rest of the world in the exclusive company of yourself, inmates and prison officers, 23 hours a day in a shared cell is unlikely to prepare you for a smooth reintroduction. While ironing out some of the creases, institutionalised and socially out of shape, are the more probable outcomes.

“There's no real support or thought as to how you might find a roof over your head, let alone employment”.

There are however, some businesses out there who are building bridges in the space between the confines of prison and the outside world. Such a business is the Tap Social Movement in Oxford, a craft brewery and community space

with a social enterprise status, working with people still serving prison sentences and with previous convictions to get them rehabilitated and back into work.

So, what does happen when you leave prison? According to Paul, one of the three Founders of Tap Social, “a lot of people are released from prison with £45 in their pocket”. “There you go, go and get on a train”, he mimes. “There's no real support or thought as to how you might find a roof over your head, let alone employment”. According to The Prison Reform Trust (2018), almost half of adults (48%) are reconvicted within one year of their release. Programmes like Tap Social are having a positive impact on these reoffending rates and providing a practical solution to get people back into employment.

We visited the brewery and spent an afternoon with Craig, a beneficiary of their programme. Maybe I hadn't done my research, I was surprised when I learnt that Craig wasn't an ex-offender but still serving his sentence. My limited knowledge of the prison system didn't extend to the fact that 'open prisons' like his own at Spring Hill, were focused on resettlement, allowing those coming towards the end of their sentence to take up supervised employment.





“I assumed that no-one’s going to want to talk to me, that they’ll be wary of me but it’s not the case”.

Tap Social have a strong relationship with Spring Hill which enables them to offer work experience and placements across a variety of roles available in the brewery. Craig had been doing a barista course in prison and an opportunity came up at Tap Social to work in the coffee arm of the business. He is now one of six serving prisoners who are working here, “this is the first time I’ve been in prison and you think that there’ll be a stigma attached to you because of it. I assumed that no-one’s going to want to talk to me, that they’ll be wary of me but it’s not the case”.

The perception of the outside world when you are in prison is completely different, it’s difficult not to segregate yourself from the rest of society and develop an ‘us and them’ mentality. A programme like this can smooth the transition and get you back into the swing of things before

your sentence ends and therefore your release back into the world isn’t from a cliff edge. Gentle reintegration helped Craig to realise that life outside prison wasn’t spent in the company of a giant sign screaming ‘prisoner’ and that the small, basic interactions he was afforded with the general public could restore his confidence.

The three founders; Paul, Tess and Amy have a professional background in the criminal justice system. They believed the steep transition between prison and everyday life to be an area which if reworked, could reduce the rates of reoffending. Timpson, the cobbler and key cutting business, was one of the first to start recruiting employees from inside prison and over the last 15 years, others have followed suit.

Tap Social were interested in exploring what other trades might lend themselves well to such a programme and based on a mutual love of beer, they started speaking to breweries. The response was good, craft beer is a booming industry and there are lots of jobs in brewing, whether that’s in the office, amongst the hops, in the warehouse or on the shop floor. They started to pitch the idea to prisons and were surprised by the response.

“Some of them were really keen”, said Paul. “We thought we would get a hostile reception by mixing beers and ex-offenders, it seemed a bit edgy. But they thought that some of the prisoners would be interested and that they’d be on board with it”.

“The craft industry is vibrant, so this is a breath of fresh air for the guys coming out of prison”.

“This is a fun and young working environment”, Paul tells me. “The craft industry is vibrant, so this is a breath of fresh air for the guys coming out of prison”.

“Not everyone is so fortunate, there are very few opportunities like this out there and considering the other placements available, Craig counts himself lucky to be here instead of “steaming old clothes in charity shops”.

Jason is the Head Brewer. He has a very black and white approach to the special arrangement at Tap Social. Like any other place “it’s just work, I’ve created strong friendships, we’re making amazing beer and people are here because they want to be”. In the midst of it all we’ve got Jason’s kids, who can’t be older than 5, hurtling around the place. In between moments of brewing wizardry, Jason is umpiring in disputes, reviewing special works of art and keeping a watchful eye on things. During the daytime before the hordes of customers arrive, this family atmosphere is very good for everyone in the workplace. Most of all those who will be returning to a cell that night and whose interaction with children is next to zero. The wonderful thing here is that young children don’t hold any prejudices, their innocence is refreshing and I’m sure their energy and simple delight in the world around them is grounding for those who work there.

The Tap Social team hope that their success in putting together such a scheme will encourage more employers to take the leap themselves. They aren’t suggesting that this is a solution for everyone but then again not everyone who ends up in prison is dangerous or a career criminal. Filling in a job application post prison is almost a sentence in itself, as soon as the ‘previous convictions’ box is ticked, that’s you out. The team here at Tap Social have learnt a great deal about how a rehabilitation programme like this can work, theirs is a valuable blueprint for others, ‘especially those in the catering sector, where there are lots of jobs available, many which could be adversely effected by Brexit’.

Tap Social is located in an industrial estate just outside of Oxford and if beer is your thing, then it’s not to be missed!

www.tapsocialmovement.com



Images

Craig (left) an employee at the brewery and our steward for the day
Paul (above) one of the three founders

SEMBLE

Community happens here.

As humans, we have always searched for a sense of belonging, whether that comes from family or from a chosen family we find through shared interests. We all want to find, to contribute and to belong to a community.

Now more than ever, there is momentum building as more and more people are looking to get involved in supporting community action. Businesses are becoming an important force for good in local communities. And that's where we come in.

Join Semble

Want to hear more inspiring stories or share your project's story? Join Semble and get the Semble Scoop:
www.semble.org/crowdfunderstories
Follow us on social @SembleUK

What we do

Semble (formerly Project Dirt) is the UK's most active platform for community projects. We help make sure that local projects get the support and funding they deserve by partnering them with brilliant businesses and volunteers.

Our platform hosts a directory of over 3,500 projects across the UK covering a wide range of causes, from mental health to food waste, from elderly isolation to plastic waste. These projects use the Semble platform to promote the work they do.

We also run community-serving campaigns with businesses that are looking to make change happen.

We know the inspiring stories created from projects and partnerships encourage more people to get involved and bring impact to life.

We've handpicked a few stories from the campaigns that we run to showcase what we do and to put some fire in your belly too.

Global movement building



Through **Outdoor Classroom Day** we encourage teachers to celebrate and inspire outdoor learning and play. 2018 saw over 3.5 million children get outdoors in more than 22,000 schools across 110 countries.

What was once a teacher-led initiative has now grown into a global movement. Semble is working with Unilever's Dirt is Good team, NGOs and local authorities around the world to make outdoor learning part of every school day.



Team volunteering



With 75% of millennials considering the potential to contribute to society when choosing an employer, there is an increasing appetite for volunteering.

Wellcome Community Action is a brilliant example of how bringing the right people together can make change happen. Semble connected Wellcome teams to diverse local projects to build long-term partnerships. Some volunteers spent their time constructing and painting a community greenhouse, while others sorted over 2 tonnes of surplus food and distributed it to charities.

"I enjoyed using hands-on skills that aren't part of the day job, plus helping to create something of value for the local community." Wellcome Trust employee volunteer.



Discover your community on Semble

Do you run a community project? Or have the seed of an idea for a grassroots campaign? The **Semble platform** is a place for you to put your project on the map through our directory and gain access to funding opportunities, tools and resources, connect with like-minded projects and promote your work.

Our team is dedicated to working with community project champions, business leaders and everyone interested in supporting local community action. We're continuously inspired and humbled by the incredible work Semblers do. Just from reading the Crowdfunder Stories, we know there are so many more local projects that we'd like to support.

If you'd like to discover your community, join Semble.

Community funding



For many community projects, getting the funding or resources they need to continue the work they are doing in their community can be challenging. Our platform is an interactive place where they can find money, people or tools they need. Increasingly, partnering with local businesses is enabling this.

We are working with Carling, the brewery, to distribute close hundreds of thousands of pounds to community groups through their community investment campaigns to support grassroots projects around the UK. And new funding opportunities are being announced on Semble throughout the year. Leithers Don't Litter is a volunteer-run anti-litter group in Edinburgh who were nominated for Carling's **Your Pint Can** campaign by people in their local area. This collaboration helped their endeavours to raise awareness about the litter problem and grow their group of volunteers.



In March 2018 a small community on the west coast of Scotland, successfully raised £29,115 from 354 supporters to renovate their village hall

www.crowdfunder.co.uk/knoydart-community-hall

Knoydart Community Hall

As the sun sets, I stand at the prow of the ferry, the expanse of the peninsula yawning before me.

The salty spray of the water jumps up to lick my face and the fathomless voice of the loch booms a greeting in tongues a thousand years old.

The munros are gathered there waiting on the shoreline, hats of cloud sitting high upon their brow, whistling a welcome.

For an adventurer sick with wanderlust, here's a ready antidote. A packet full of secrets lying intact and waiting for a hopeful escapist to discover.

Knoydart is a remote peninsula off the Western coast of Scotland with a population of 120 people and only accessible by boat. To get here we took a 45-minute ferry from Mallaig Harbour and travelled the seven nautical miles across the water to the village of Inverie.

While I'm sure the continuous awe from the outsider concerning Knoydart's remote and small population size can get a bit waring for the locals, praise is certainly due for their crowdfunding efforts. In March 2018, they raised £30,000 from 354 people to contribute to the renovation of their community hall. Considering that the size of your network is important when it comes to crowdfunding, this is an impressive feat.

What I came to discover was that Knoydart is in fact very well known and loved, yes for its beauty but also for the rich variety of events held at their hall which draw people from all over. Knoydart Hall is a space for everyone, whether it's giant feasts, great stomping parties with live music, weddings, debates or meetings, it plays a focal role.

In the dwindling hours of an August evening we chugged our way into the harbour where we were met by the open

arms of Jackie and Davie, my two contacts from the crowdfunding campaign. It wasn't long before our bags were stacked into one of the seemingly native Land Rovers and we were whisked off to our first night's supper at the House of Davie with his wife Launa. Our journey home that night to the Knoydart Foundation Bunkhouse was under the cover of total darkness. Davie had said that the nights get so dark here that he once walked right into the back of someone along the path. We, tightly wrapped in our well-insulated cloaks of ale made our way unhurriedly along the shore and through the trees, guided by a generous pinch of stars in the sky above.

Jackie, a holiday rental business owner and Davie, the Community Development Officer, were our main stewards around the village. They facilitated introductions to the numerous other residents who made up their aptly named, 'Crowdfunding Crew'. This crew spent months together, getting to know each other incredibly well in the process as they prepared for their campaign. While crowdfunding campaigns for village halls are quite common, it is rare in my experience to see one put together so well. I didn't expect to see such talent for fundraising in such a small pool of people. You may be forgiven for assuming that Knoydart



is quite disconnected from the outside world but in fact, their position means that they are no stranger to marketing themselves. The population, small as it is, is made up of a variety of lively people from different walks of life and backgrounds, who all have something to bring to the pot. Bound by their mutual love of the place, the preservation of the land and sustenance of their community is at the heart of what they do.

According to Jackie, “the hall is all hands on deck, everybody gets involved to some extent; whether you’re the person who sets up the chairs and organises the band, just paying at the door and enjoying the concert, or mopping up and picking up the rubbish at the end of the night. It gives everybody a social function and it’s just bloody good for social morale. Being part of something no matter what your ability or age, to have some kind of role to play is always good for people, everybody feels needed”.

Over the years, Knoydart has had a chequered history of ownership by absentee landlords. But as of 1999, a bid was made by the community and other partners, including the John Muir Trust, to purchase the land. Their bid was successful and the peninsula, all 17,500 acres of it, was finally secured under the charitable ownership and management of ‘The Knoydart Foundation’.

This was a distinctive moment for the Knoydart residents. Previously life here was very much in the hands of the landowner who employed them and if you didn’t work here then you probably didn’t live here. The area which has no connecting road to the mainland was lacking investment and poor custody had made it a difficult place to live. However, in 1999 this all began to change because for the first time, decisions were being made by the residents for the residents. This responsibility was taken very seriously and Knoydart is what it is today because of the efforts of every man and woman to get it there.

Knoydart is often described as one of the UK’s last great wildernesses, a relatively safe title thanks to a very large and difficult barrier of towering hills which stand between the mainland and the village of Inverie. Yet to be conquered by any road, it’s a 16 mile hike on foot to pass them. All of the village’s supplies and shopping are brought over by boat and therefore nothing stays secret for long. It’s a merry sight to see the ferry slung low in the water, bumping its way into the harbour under a heavy carriage of food and drink- always a sign of the ‘good craic’ to come.

We met with Isla; a crowdfunding crew member, owner of the Knoydart Pottery and Tea Room and resident here since she was a child. “In a small and isolated community, you need to look to each other for help and support, therefore everybody’s input counts and is invaluable.

Because we are all relative ‘incomers’ in that there is no one really indigenous to Knoydart other than the number of children born here, there isn’t really any division. If you are contributing then you are part of the community”.

“From growing up on Knoydart you learn that you are part of something bigger, that everybody matters and all voices should be heard, which gives you confidence. There are so few people here that you can end up being friends with someone who’s 80 and someone who’s 16, so it’s naturally very inclusive and we benefit from this range of perspectives and life skills”. The governance of the area is down to the Knoydart Foundation and interestingly, according to Isla, most people who live on the peninsula will be a director at some point. There are always 5 community directors and after a vote, 2 are replaced every year.

The crowdfunding campaign has covered only part of what they need for the hall and Davie is busy working with the others to find additional sources of funding. “With no other real social spaces in Knoydart, it is the centre for all of our cultural events and activities on the peninsula”. Building a hall to last will maintain the strong social bonds that make Knoydart a place like no other and insure it for generations to come.

I have never enjoyed a visit more, Knoydart’s charm and hospitality is something rare and special, there wasn’t one meal we ate alone, or a solitary pint drunk over the nights that we stayed there. Thank you to all those who we met and who fed, watered and sheltered us. There’s certainly a space for you in Cornwall should you wish to visit. Knoydart is a fine example to us all of how hard work, balance and care in a community can preserve both the people and landscape around us.

www.knoydarthall.com



“Being part of something no matter what your ability or age, to have some kind of role to play is always good for people, everybody feels needed”.

Images

Jackie (right) and Davie and his dog Bryan (Below) an evening of ale with some of the crowdfunding crew at ‘The Table’, a small outdoor pub of their own invention





A Pavlova is Born!

by Alice Straker



Art can have phenomenal effects on your psychological state, and has been essential to my own healing in recent years. A decade ago I developed anxiety/ OCD which culminated in a mental breakdown in 2016, which I have been recovering from since. Initially I used my art as a pathway to evade menacing thoughts, but lately it has been a vehicle for navigating the rocky terrain of an unwell mind. The most soothing drug I have been given, without any of the nasty side effects.

It's interesting to consider other artists who have championed art in this way. A great example is Yayoi Kusama, who has used art throughout her life to translate intense hallucinations and obsessive compulsions, into notable works such as the infinity mirrors and recurring polka dots. She states that, 'I had dark days and unfortunate times, but I overcame them with the power of art'. Another one is Edvard Munch, whose famous painting 'The Scream' (1893) came about after a psychotic visual hallucination. The process of creating this work in multiple drawings and sequences, aided the artist's resolve. My own work focuses on the subject of food, and whilst it does not suggest mania or obsession - the creative outlet has been my total salvation.

For me, the struggle to reach full recovery mirrors the process of becoming a Pavlova. An analogy which arose whilst listening to a storm - imagining my mind whirling around uncontrollably like the howling wind, like egg whites and sugar vigorously mixing in a bowl. The circular whisking motion echoes that of obsessive thoughts; loud, persistent

and exhaustive. Consistently knocking you down in your quest to turn into a robust, marshmallowy substance. It felt like an eternity as I traversed my way through vast white expanses of unstable terrain - drowning in a sticky mass of unbridled thoughts and emotions. A broken mind, conscious but unresponsive. Gradually things started to change; my presence began to thicken, strengthening into stiff, robust meringue - forming a solid mental foundation. And then the essential layers of glue and embellishments, which give this masterpiece its character. The whipped cream acts as cement between the layers of your mind and external reality, and the icing which I will continue to add too, comes in the form of dazzling strawberries and ruby red raspberries. A Pavlova is born!

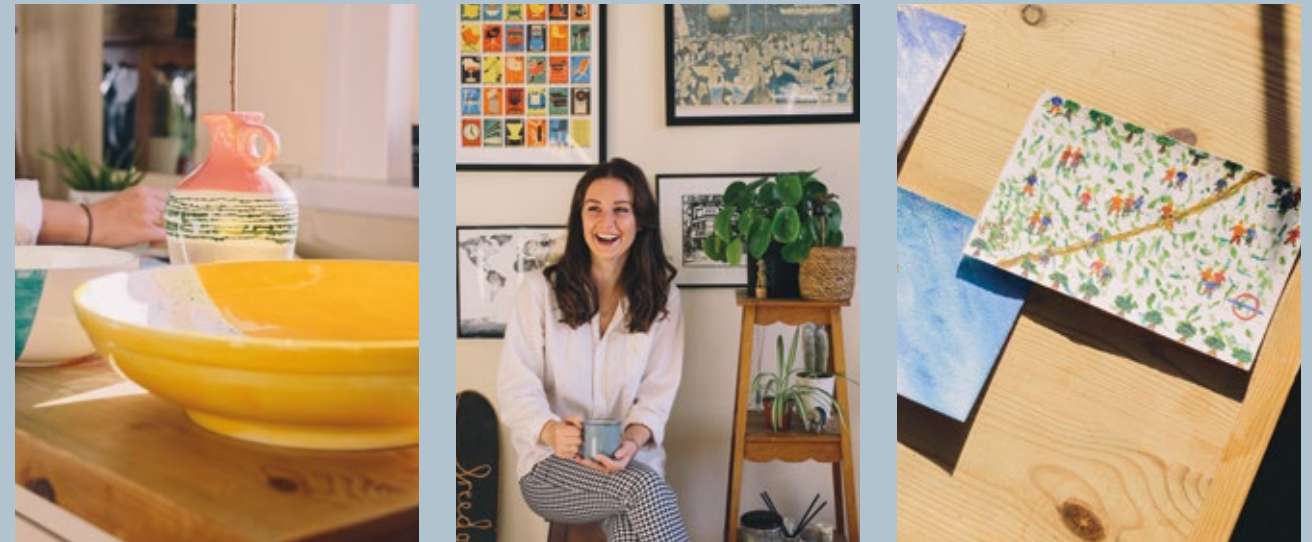
My journey has been like this process of vigorous transformation from raw ingredients to a fully formed creation. Alas with a few cracks in of course! I am only human.

If you are interested in commissioning me or interested in a work for sale, or just have a question, please feel free to contact me, I am always interested to hear from you.

www.alicestraker.com, email: alicestrakerart@gmail.com, tel: +44 (0) 7813 200784

Positive Painting

by Georgie Sefton



Oxford English Definition of 'Anxiety': *A feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome.*

Anxiety is a faceless beast and it is different for everyone. For me, anxiety does not always coincide with an uncertain outcome; it's an all-consuming feeling I get at any time of day or night, in any place and with anyone. It is a direct consequence of the eating disorder I suffered from for about 12 years. Although I am now fully recovered, I am left with a hangover - my hangover is anxiety.

I have done therapy and it is something that I wholeheartedly support. However, I have found that whilst it addresses the root cause, it does not address the immediate symptoms and cannot offer quick and direct relief - something that painting does.

Ironically, there is no certain outcome when you paint; one stroke can cause your piece to take a new direction. For someone who suffers with anxiety, this should cause worry. But for me, it doesn't.

Disclaimer: I am no Vincent Van Gogh, Picasso or Cezanne - I don't paint to create a masterpiece or influence an era of art. I paint because it allows me to escape. Escape from the stresses of daily life, my busy mind and my worries.

The more I paint, the more enjoyment I seem to get out of it. Painting started quite by accident. Work was incredibly stressful - I went home one day, sat in my garden and decided to attempt to paint an onion. Not a well known stress-relief

technique I know, but the concentration it required meant that my mind had no further capacity to wander. It was transfixed with trying to figure out how to make the watercolours blend and not bleed.

This love of painting has grown. I have spent many wonderful days over the past two years sat on beaches painting the sea, sand and cliffs on the back of pocket postcards. It serves as a happy memory and useful reminder to have a picture to look back on; to have something to remind me that worry free time exists and to have something to share with my loved ones.

I recently started painting pottery (again by accident). After another stressful time at work, I booked myself into a pottery painting class. I went alone (something I don't tend to do and was initially nervous about) and got lost for two hours; I listened to my music, I spoke to no one and I painted. When I emerged I had a fruit bowl. But more than that, I had a calm mind; I was happy.

I now paint regularly. With my boyfriend, with friends, with strangers and on my own. The time in which I paint is like Bernard's watch - it stops and I am left with a sense of calm, satisfaction and joy.

My advice to anyone else who suffers from anxiety or stress would be don't let the fact you think you can't paint stop you - start small, a postcard or a pot, but make sure you start. Life can be black and white if you let it - we read emotions as happy or sad. But as Danny Kaye said: "Life is a great big canvas; throw all the paint you can at it". (Photo credit Jimi Herrtage)

georgie@georgieseftonconsulting.com

In August 2017 a charity that takes elderly residents out on bike rides successfully raised £43,492 from 378 supporters to expand their scheme across Scotland

www.crowdfunder.co.uk/cycling-without-age-scotland

Cycling Without Age Scotland

The world outside is rich in stimulation, a playground for our five senses, keeping our minds alert and thoughts in-tune. Stepping out, breathing the fresh air deep into our lungs and drinking in every sight, smell, sound, taste and texture helps us to make sense of it all.

Naturally as we grow older, we are less robust and comfort, safety and routine become our principal bed partners, the rest of life squeezing in where it can. Care homes, while providing safety, are segregated from the rest of us. Loneliness and social isolation are two very real problems that we are beginning to recognise and it's often elderly people that suffer the most. When visiting hours are over or if they've never begun in the first place, a relationship with the world outside and consequent stimulation from it fades away. However, with the appointment of Tracey Crouch in 2018, our first 'Minister for Loneliness', we can start to explore what the solutions might be.

One of my favourite stories of 2018 was that of Cycling Without Age. This is a charity started in 2012 in Denmark by Ole Kassow and Dorthe Pederson, which sought to address these two societal problems. With the new design of a trishaw, a contraption with a bicycle at the back and a

carriage for two at the front, they were able to visit local care homes and take the elderly residents out on bike rides and back into their communities.

In the last few years Cycling Without Age has blossomed, inspiring many throughout Europe to begin their own local 'chapters' of the organisation. The pioneers behind the scheme in the UK came from the 'Communities Along the Carron Association' (CATCA), a group in Falkirk, Scotland who off the back of a successful and extensive regeneration project of the Carron river, were seeking to bind the different generations of people living alongside in the task of its guardianship.

The ethos behind Cycling Without Age is to bring elderly people who are confined to their homes back outside and into nature. By encouraging young people in the community to volunteer as 'Trishaw Pilots' we can re-connect and nurture the bonds between these generations. Their principals are to ride slowly, enable good conversations and enjoy the companionship and often songs and stories that are sung and told along the way.

CATCA after hearing of the success of Cycling Without



Age in Copenhagen, applied to the Scottish Government’s Climate Change Fund for £10,000 to investigate the potential of the scheme in Scotland. In March 2017, with the grant in hand, Cycling Without Age Falkirk was launched.

We saw this project rise to stardom on BBC THREE’s ‘Amazing Humans,’ a programme showcasing some of the world’s most inspiring individuals and heart-warming stories. They featured a student, who volunteered in Falkirk, taking elderly residents Mary and Chris out on a bike ride. 24 million views on YouTube later, they launched a crowdfunding campaign to expand this scheme across Scotland.

We met with Christine, the now Executive Officer for Cycling Without Age Scotland, who spearheaded the launch of the scheme in Falkirk and the subsequent crowdfunding campaign. “The £43,000 boost we received from crowdfunding consolidated the desire and interest for this project in Scotland. We’re convinced that the funding, which came from the crowd and which was successfully matched by Santander, made the Scottish Government sit up and listen to the people who were pledging their support. This is something that the people really wanted and Cycling Without Age Scotland is now a government funded organisation, with a remit to roll the scheme out across the country.

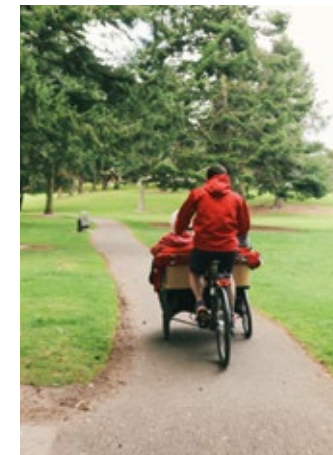
“With an International License agreement from Denmark, we approve the suitability of new chapters to the scheme and support them in their fundraising for their trishaws.” Christine has discovered that the best way to ensure a solid foundation, dedicated engagement and care among the new chapters across Scotland is for them to participate in fundraising for their Trishaws. With crowdfunding and traditional grant applications, people have to work hard to obtain a trishaw and are proud of their achievements. This helps to bind the groups together. To ensure the sustainability and active use of the trishaw’s, they are exclusively dedicated to the CWAS chapters for the lifetime of the project with regular maintenance and the highest level of safety assured.

With Christine, we visited a chapter in Perth who were the proud owners of three trishaws. This chapter was organised by one of the beneficiaries of the scheme, an 82 year old called Norman. Norman came to use the scheme after his wife, who is now living in a local care home, developed Alzheimer’s. Time spent with your loved ones, when they are unwell and in a care setting can be hard because what you can do may be very limited. Cycling Without Age offered them something that they could do together. This was a simple and positive activity they could both take part in with ease and without strain. The enjoyment of being outdoors, feeling the wind in your hair and the distraction of the goings on in the world around you, is a very uplifting experience.

As they trundle along through the parks, those sharing their path can stop to say hello. Daniel, one of the volunteer pilots we met told us that children and dogs are always curious about the eye-catching trishaw contraptions. “The minute you come down the street with the bikes, people are always buzzing to see you, everyone just wants to say hello and find out how you’re doing”. These little meetings along the way are so important for the elderly passengers who otherwise are very limited in their day to day mobility and interactions. They can enjoy seeing what’s happening out there in the world and take part. Their days become full and they have new memories to take home with them.

Norman lives in an assisted community himself, “I had been in the retirement home for a year and people were not mixing, they were just coming down for meals and going back into their flat. I thought it would be good to do something that got everybody involved. This project is about getting people out there and getting them used to the idea that they are part of the community and that they’re not forgotten about. That’s my satisfaction with Cycling Without Age, seeing the attitudes change and the faces change of the older people”.

www.cyclingwithoutage.scot



Images
 A resident of North Grove Care Home Perth (above)
 Christine (right) Executive Officer at CWA Scotland, Daniel the Trishaw Pilot with Norman (top, left)



In February 2018 Jane Beaton successfully raised £25,076 from 502 supporters to get a copy of *The Lost Words*, by Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris, into every Primary School in Scotland

www.crowdfunder.co.uk/thelostwords

The Lost Words

If I told you that words like conker, heron, bramble and dandelion were deemed no longer to be relevant to the younger generation, would you believe me?

Incredulity is usually the response but in fact it's true. In 2015, a campaign was raised by some of the UK's prominent authors to tackle the Junior Oxford English Dictionary's decision to axe these words and many like them from their latest versions.

The supposed rationale for this was that space needed to be made for new words like 'chat room' and 'blog', which are a more accurate reflection of the language used by children today. This loss however, is keenly felt by both ourselves and the environment, for if we don't attach the necessary importance to them, then their next generation of custodians won't either.

In protest of this culling of words, author Robert Macfarlane and illustrator Jackie Morris went to work on a positive solution, their aim was to reintroduce these words back into the lives of children here in the UK. The product of their efforts was 'The Lost Words' a book of poems to be read as 'spells' celebrating these words of huge cultural value and

environmental significance, bringing them back from the brink and into our care. The book, beautifully illustrated, was recognised for its approach to engaging children with the natural world and in 2017 won the Hay Festival Book of the Year Award.

The relentless and self-entitled progress of modern life is often at the expense of our environment. We, so proud of the world that we have created, are forgetful of what made it special in the first place. A little country like ours bent on development is seemingly intent on smothering the true wealth that exists here and turning nature into a novelty instead of our natural neighbour.

As these great oaks and pillars of our natural heritage come crashing down around us, it is easy to despair. Why I hold *The Lost Words* in such high esteem and wished to feature it here, is because one of us who saw what was happening made it her mission to halt these bulldozers and channel her own incredulity into action. This person was Jane Beaton, from Strathyre in Scotland. Jane, a bus driver and marketing manager for a cycling tourism company, believed the book's sentiment to be so important that she committed herself to get a copy into every primary school across Scotland.



“These are words that exist all around us, mainly things that we see every day here in the UK, most people live within a stone’s throw of those types of things”

“These are words that exist all around us, mainly things that we see every day here in the UK, most people live within a stone’s throw of those types of things. But children aren’t using these words anymore, they’re using new words about technology, gaming and other things”.

“This is inevitable but it’s concerning that the words that relate to nature and the environment around us are lost. Because if people lose the words, they won’t know about the items and then they won’t care about them”.

After reading the book Jane contacted its author on Twitter and together they started something which went well beyond their (or the book’s) original intention in Scotland. Since Jane’s success, ‘The Lost Words Movement’ has been born, others across the UK who were inspired by her efforts are now crowdfunding to get the book into primary schools in their own counties.

We met with Jane at her home in Scotland, after winding our way back from Knoydart through the Trossachs National Park. As you might imagine, Jane’s passion for nature is fuelled by the rich and striking landscapes with which the Scottish countryside is so amply furnished. On arrival, I was quick to make sure I had gathered my jaw from its seat on the ground. It was quite happily nestled there, awestruck after the hours of mesmerising mountains which towered above us like giants considering our passage between them.

Once Jane began her mission, ripples of her efforts reached the ears of both the John Muir Trust and the Scottish Book Trust who swooped down open this opportunity to offer their support. Over 500 people supported Jane’s crowdfunding campaign and it was this public wave of interest that convinced Penguin its publishers to reduce the cost of the book, thereby making the money raised go even further.

Upon completion, it was quite a shock when “7.5 tonnes of books were delivered to my home and the 7 pallets were unloaded by forklift from a huge lorry”.

Quite fortunately, Jane was prepared for such an event and there was a lovely new home waiting for them in the form of a shipping container in her garden. It is from this stash that Jane has been delivering these books around Scotland.

www.thelostwords.org



Images

(Above) One of many beautiful illustrations by artist Jackie Morris (photo credit, Sophie Bolesworth)

(Top) Jane with her shipping container and the 2,500 books inside, ready for shipping



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In October 2017 Sami Mauger our Head of Coaching at Crowdfunder UK, successfully raised £3,414 from 72 supporters to start her own independent jewellery business

www.crowdfunder.co.uk/catchthesunrise

Catch The Sunrise

I would love to do that, if only I had the time!

The average working person in the UK grafts for 46.8 weeks of the 52-week year. Of course, there are weekends and there are holidays but finding the time, headspace and energy to explore and develop your interests is difficult.

In the UK we are fortunate to have a high employment rate (75.6%), but with one of the lowest rates of productivity in Europe, is our traditional 5 day working week making the most of our potential? Keeping our noses so close to the grindstone may give the impression of hard work. However, in order to truly unlock the ambition and ingenuity of the UK, develop our economy and increase GDP, accommodating the personal aspirations of our workforce may be what we need.

Work takes up most of our time but does this mean that it should define us so completely? An approach which apportions time to the individual and encourages the cultivation of our interests outside of work could be an interesting stance for a modern economy to take.

I met with Sami, my manager at Crowdfunder, who recently crowdfunded her jewellery business, Catch The Sunrise.

She has since cut down to a 4-day week, giving her a day a to focus on her business.

Catch The Sunrise was born out of frustration. Sami was struggling to find any bracelets she liked to buy for her sisters and so decided to make some herself. "Ok, how hard can this really be," I thought? "Actually, as it turned out, quite hard. And looking back, those first bracelets that I did make were not good, but they got me interested in the idea of making things".

During her evenings after work, Sami embarked on a 6-week jewellery making class with local silversmith, Stuart Griffiths. Soon she was making her own pieces and after repeated requests from friends and family, it became apparent that she needed a name for her work. A love of adventure and the outdoors has shaped her style and the name 'Catch The Sunrise' in her words, "means getting up early, getting out there and doing something with your day, whatever that thing might be". The jewellery itself is mostly sterling silver and the designs are inspired by the mountain tops, wildernesses and oceans which live so close to her heart.

"Our products are quite simple, not particularly what I'd call girly or feminine. You won't find a flower on any of our



designs. It really irritates me that they put butterflies on girls' ski helmets, flowers on girls' skis and all our surfboard leashes are pink. It winds me up, it's just perpetuating that stereotype of femininity which I think is so narrow. A lot of the women that I'm surrounded by are still very feminine, but it just doesn't involve pink butterflies".

"It's all pretty simple, something that you can wear on a hike or when you're having a quick dip in the sea, it's not something that's going to jingle or jangle, get stuck in your hair and annoy you. It's practical without being that stereotypically earthy product which tends to be the other option that you have, where it's made of cow leather, a bit of old tree and stuff like that".

My interest in Sami's story is from a shared discovery, that making time to do what we love is incredibly good for us. From my own experience, I felt that I had so many ambitions beyond who I was paid to be Monday to Friday 9-5. Taking that leap and deciding to focus on yourself is liberating and it really helps to build your confidence, as you realise that you can be more if you put your mind to it. It's easy to watch from the side-lines and despair in your own unfulfillment. But if you're unhappy, take a look at the life you're leading and start to make some changes.

Sami doesn't pretend that striking a healthy balance between work and your own business is easy, "I was doing a lot of evenings and weekends, which was a bit of a stretch to be honest. Trying to fit in designing, making, marketing and everything that comes in between is very tough when you've already got a job which is demanding in terms of both time and energy".

"I decided to move to a four-day week over the summer, because summer is a very busy time for Catch The Sunrise where we do a lot of festivals with a great local business called Sailaway Dress Company. This is how it started, but has since evolved into something longer term. What that gives me is a day which is not supposed to be another day off, where I can get my head into the business and do some proper thinking and planning which no one really wants to do at 7am on a Sunday morning, least of all me".

"Because my other half is at work and my friends are at work you don't have that pull of doing other stuff. I do my own thing without being disturbed, I'm still working the 5-day week that I'm used to, it's just one of those days is spent in the studio".

"At Crowdfunder I'm moving a lot of data around, I'm not really doing anything creative and I'm definitely not doing anything with my hands other than typing on my keyboard". I can certainly agree with this statement. As human beings, we have been blessed with a good brain, two arms and

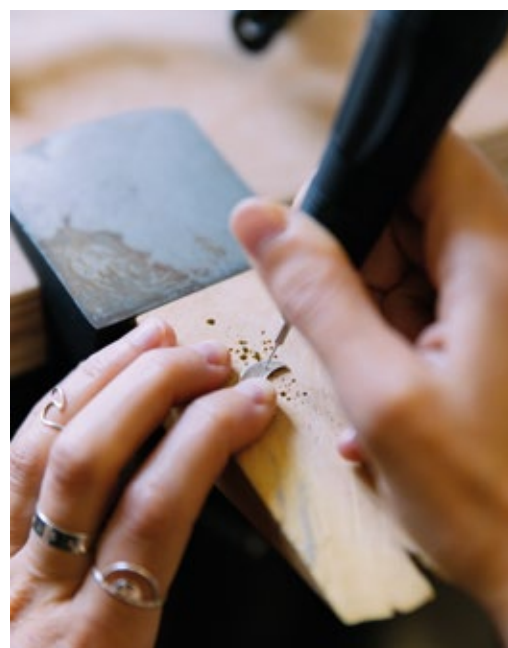
two legs. Sitting in front of a computer all day isn't really what we're made for. This may be a modern necessity, but drawing ourselves so far away from our nature, like the killer whale in an aquarium, makes our fins limp and our mind depressed.

"The physicality of getting to know the tools, to learn new skills and hone them, while having a lot of short terms wins after completing each product, gives you that constant stream of good feedback for yourself".

I was very interested in what Sami had taken from this experience and if she would recommend it. "I think it is something people should explore because it's hard to find a balance between those two great rhetorics we're told: 'get out there, be ambitious, work hard, do everything, be at the top of your game'. Compared to, 'take time for yourself and breathe, relax, karma, yoga and all that'. They are definitely polarised and we put a lot of demand on ourselves and perhaps from others to do both. And actually for me, I'm almost a classic example of those two things, when I'm at work I'm hard at it 110% and when I'm relaxing I'm relaxing hard. Trying to do both and fitting them into one personality and lifestyle is tough. It certainly takes a long-term view, to realise that you won't see the benefits straight away but that one day it will pay off and it will be worth it".

The Catch The Sunrise tagline is 'jewellery for wild women and adventure seekers'; so if that's you and you would like explore their products visit their website below.

www.catchthesunrise.co.uk





LET'S TACKLE SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS TOGETHER WITH FREE TRISHAW RIDES, BRINGING PEOPLE BACK INTO THE HEART OF THEIR COMMUNITIES

Cycling Without Age Scotland are the International license holders from the Danish Founded CWA Organisation. We are responsible for working with Care Establishments and Care Providers across the country to support and enable them to provide this service in the heart of their communities. Funded by the Scottish Government, our priority is to enable this wonderful service to be delivered in a regulated manner compliant with the safety regulations of all Scottish Care Providers.

Let's tackle social isolation and loneliness together! If you know someone who would benefit from this experience or would like to enquire about setting up a chapter in your area of Scotland, we would love to hear from you.

HOW CAN YOU HELP OR TAKE PART?

Contact us by emailing: info@cyclingswithoutage.scot
Find out about; volunteering, donating, fundraising, starting a chapter in your area or simply expanding and promoting the global network.
Follow us and spread the word on FB and Twitter @CWAScotland

www.cyclingswithoutage.scot

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CYCLING
WITHOUT AGE
SCOTLAND 

In November 2017 a community kitchen and cookery school in London, successfully raised £76,693 from 553 supporters, to help 10,000 people gain new skills to lead healthier and happier lives

www.crowdfunder.co.uk/made-in-hackney-1

Made In Hackney

People are different, that's true. People, however, are also the same, which is also true. In a city like London the melting pot has boiled over. A truly multicultural city, London is flooded with people of different cultures, countries, opinions, races, ages, you name it.

Whatever it is that has been bubbling away in that great pot, tastes interesting and full of flavour. We are incredibly lucky to have such a breadth of cultures across our planet and long may that last. London, whilst retaining the best of English sensibilities, has embraced the outside world and this is reflected in the great wealth of cuisine on offer.

London is a rich mixture of humanity but it's not yet the perfect blend, possibly even a little on the bitter side. Can anyone lend us some sugar? 'No!' Cries Jamie Oliver. Variety, may be the spice of life but it doesn't mean that things always go smoothly. Tension and misunderstanding can erupt from our differences and it's certainly easier to stick to any harboured misgivings or prejudices than it is to challenge them. A more open society would help with this situation, yet there are few spaces where you can learn alongside your fellow citizens on a truly level playing field.

One such space is Made In Hackney, a community kitchen based in East London and founded by Sarah Bentley. Made In Hackney was established below a Stoke Newington health food store called, 'Food For All'. It is comprised of a few small rooms and cooking spaces which can accommodate up to 15 people at a time. Their cookery programme is exclusively plant-based, not because they want to convert everyone to veganism but because consuming less meat and eating more plants is an action we should all take towards reducing our impact on the planet. Teaching people a range of exciting and delicious recipes that inspire them to decrease their dependency on meat and dairy can only be a good thing.

Made in Hackney is founded on the principal that 'everyone should have access to healthy, affordable food that's good for people and planet'. Theirs is a social mission and one which makes them an ideal partner for the council and charities who wish to use these principals to support disadvantaged groups across London. As it stands, MIH is funded by 50% grants and 50% of their own income generating activities, including master classes, corporate days and a range of others events.



CROWDFUNDER STORIES

As is true for most things, the idea for Made in Hackney didn't appear out of nowhere. Sarah began her career in journalism, not food. While working for a variety of fashion and music magazines she began to explore the social roots of music in genres like reggae, hip hop and drum and base. Digging deeper into these roots, Sarah unearthed social injustices that hinged on the disproportionately degraded health of people in low income groups, as a consequence of poor education and the affordability of fresh produce. Seeking to redress the balance, Sarah began to take a fresh look at these problems in context with some of the environmental concerns that we're collectively facing.

"A bit fed up after 10 years of being a voyeur, writing about all these cool projects and interesting solutions, I wanted to be on the front line instead of just writing about it all the time".

Sarah started to dabble in some of these areas that had grasped her attention. She trained to be an organic food grower and joined a 'Growing Community' as a patchwork farmer, where she grew salad for an organic veg box scheme. "This I loved and I realised here that food was where I wanted to be".

"I did a permaculture design certificate and while on that course, I met someone who introduced me to the shop owners of this building. They had the basement available and I wrote them a funding bid. I didn't have any experience in running a cookery school, a charity, or even a business. I'd been freelance. It has been quite a vertical learning curve".

We visited MIH on a Sunday for their weekly 'free or by donation' community cooking class. This is a wonderful experience, an opportunity to get everyone from all different walks of life around one table. Despite our differences, we all need to eat and cooking therefore, is a wonderful binding agent. As the saying goes, to 'break bread' is to put your differences aside. At MIH's community cooking classes, 10-12 strangers arrive and initially there will be a few awkward moments while everyone acclimatises. However, as soon as the aprons are on, the recipes out and the ingredients flowing, all self-consciousness goes out the window and you're left with a group of people chopping, peeling, generally mucking in and having fun.

I like the idea that two grandmothers from different sides of the planet, or even just different parts of London, might find themselves next to each other, chopping and sharing their tips and tricks. This is a fantastic leveller because inevitably you'll start to share and listen to stories of family, where you're from and what's happening in the world. In my case, my Grandmother Zena would tell you about what she likes to feed her grandchildren, how they love tarragon chicken and pancakes with lemon and sugar. In the predictably babyish voice she insists on saving for me, she'd say how at 4 years old I stole all her best spoons and she had to dangle me from my ankles to unleash the river of clattering silver hidden in my trousers.



Images

(Top right) Made In Hackney's Founder, Sarah Bentley, hunting for herbs outside Made In Hackney HQ



Sarah's passion behind what they do at Made In Hackney is evident and the real jewels that shine through and make this organisation so valuable to our society are the stories collected from those who have taken part in the programme. These precious stories are on the tip of Sarah's tongue and it is very clear that these are the spoils of her hard work.

I particularly liked hearing about an elderly gentleman, who at 82 recently became a widower and discovered that he hadn't much of a repertoire in the kitchen. He had pondered the possibility and ease of ready meals but had also considered how livid his wife would have been had she known that was what he was doing. Despite wanting to broaden his own horizons, he also wanted a place he could meet people and socialise. It is very easy to lock yourself away in life but ultimately we are social beings and interactions with others is essential to our wellbeing.

One regular attendee used these classes to overcome her depression. When you lose the motivation to live your life, allowing opportunities to pass you by and despairing in your inability to meet them, a routine can be one of the best combatants and easily applied coping mechanisms available. The key is to start somewhere, over time that regular

slot in your day enables you to improve at something and furthermore provides you with purpose and identity. This particular attendee, was a polite person. She was someone who, regardless of how bad she was feeling, knew that she had to honour her commitments. This meant that after signing herself up for the classes, she went. Regularly sitting down for a meal with groups of other people has done wonders for her depression. It has given her motivation that continues even outside of the class, finding new recipes in the week and dishes to suggest on her return.

In class you are forced, in a very supportive social environment, to interact with other people who may well be strangers. It's likely that the type of person who attends a community cooking class is also looking for a shared and friendly experience. You'll meet 10-12 others like this and there will always be a talking point and activities to tackle any awkwardness. Finding something that draws your attention away from yourself and into other things will remain to be one of the best ways to alleviate a depression.

www.madeinhackney.org

In April 2018 Cornwall's only bean-to-bar chocolate producer successfully raised £19,062 from 270 supporters to build a 'real life' chocolate factory in Porthleven

www.crowdfunder.co.uk/chocolarders-new-roaster-and-factory

Chocolarder

Twice a day, on his way to and from school, little Charlie Bucket had to walk right past the gates of the factory. And every time he went by, he would begin to walk very, very slowly, and he would hold his nose high in the air and take long deep sniffs of the gorgeous chocolatey smell all around him.

Roald Dahl – Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

Mike and James were the first project on our list to visit in Cornwall. They are soon to move into their recently crowdfunded site in Porthleven but for now are based on a small industrial park in Ponsanooth, near Falmouth.

Having worked with Mike I'm excited to properly meet him. He is a very laid-back character, with a good heart and a manner that's easy to get on board with. Their slick branding and impressive market positioning in the likes of Fortnum & Masons and Selfridges means that as a small independent Cornish business they are punching well above their weight.

I've never been in somewhere with quite as potent a chocolate smell as this place. The scent of chocolate and cocoa hangs heavy in the air and I'm sure it clings to Mike and James in equal measure. At first glance it seemed like they themselves may have been dipped in chocolate. It's everywhere.

The first port of call is a coffee in their office space. I suspect that this isn't Mike's first or even second, the day seems to start early for the chocolate maker. Mike invites us to try samples of different chocolates; some of their own, some bought from commercial retailers and some from their rivals. The difference is remarkable and upon comparing their product with store bought chocolate, you get a sense of just how much sugar is in the latter and how a heavy mix of what we're told is cocoa butter granulates the texture, losing the smoothness and what they call 'the melt'.

Mike is part of a revolution, the same revolution we have seen before in how we enjoy our coffee. The quality and provenance of a product is now high on the consumer's agenda and businesses like Mike's are responding to this by telling the story of a simplified 'bean-to-bar' manufacturing process which delivers both interesting chocolate and high ethical standards.





When it is your job to make world class chocolate, you can't help but become a bit of a chocolate snob. Just like someone who quaffs a lot of wine and spits it into a bucket after testing, Mike is almost swilling his chocolate, pulling out all the flavors, his face a mask of almost annoyance until at last, he swallows it. 'Business as usual'.

I doubt when surrounded by chocolate all day you gorge on it, you must restrict yourself to a nibble here and a nibble there. Otherwise you might end up like the Mayor in the film *Chocolate*, face down on the floor covered in chocolate. Chocolate is something that we collectively consume across the Western world in vast quantities and we know only a little about its provenance and the repercussions of how it is farmed. For those who have set out to make incredible chocolate, lifting the lid on the industry as an outsider and glimpsing at what lies there exposed and squirming may be enough to put you off.

In every industry, it seems there is always an unpalatable truth lurking beneath the surface and chocolate is no exception to this rule.

It is strange to think that this giant empire of chocolate came

from such humble origins and that our stoked desire for sweet treats has created this relentless juggernaut of a business which chugs through our forests churning out cheap chocolate, at a cost in pennies and earth.

In an age where every radio station not talking about Brexit is talking about the environment, it's high time to consider the impact of our own purchases and our share of the responsibility. It's easy to leave the blame and responsibility at the door of big business or governments but our own behavior as consumers is embroiled in their direction of travel. To instigate the changes that we want to see, the journey starts with us.

Most of the chocolate we buy comes from the Ivory Coast and it is here at the very start of the supply chain that farms are squeezed into an area, producing cocoa as intensively as possible for as cheaply as possible.

The big companies guarantee the purchase of everything produced, meaning the farms focus only on quantity, exhausting the land and passing on a product a shade of its full potential. There is a lack of emphasis on quality here because the flavors will be chemically tweaked, fortified and mixed later in the process to meet the standards we've become accustomed to.

Mike believes that Chocolate can be so much more than this, not only a credit to the area in which it grows but also as a taste experience. The rich variety of notes that can be discovered in good quality chocolate, should reflect the care taken to produce it.

Integrity is vital to the success of the Chocolarder business and its first principal of 'no compromise' means that it can attract a higher price because a quality product in an industry of cut corners comes at a cost. With their chocolate, you are not only buying into an exquisite taste but the journey the product has been on to ensure that it has met ethical standards at every turn along the way.

The Chocolarder work with Cool Earth, an intermediary who are helping indigenous and smaller communities across Central America to generate a sustainable income from their crop. These farmers can turn a small profit by selling the wet unrefined bulk of their cocoa crop to river traders who take it to a fermentation cooperative. Cool Earth help them in the early stages of the production process, encouraging them to hold onto their product for longer and add further value to it, until they can export it themselves and receive the lion's share of the profit.

"Everyone at the top of any type of food class, whether they are a chef, cake maker or fishmonger, want to get the best possible produce and showcase the best possible flavour".

"That's all we are trying to do, something that has often been forgotten in chocolate making. It is just making sure that everyone understands that".

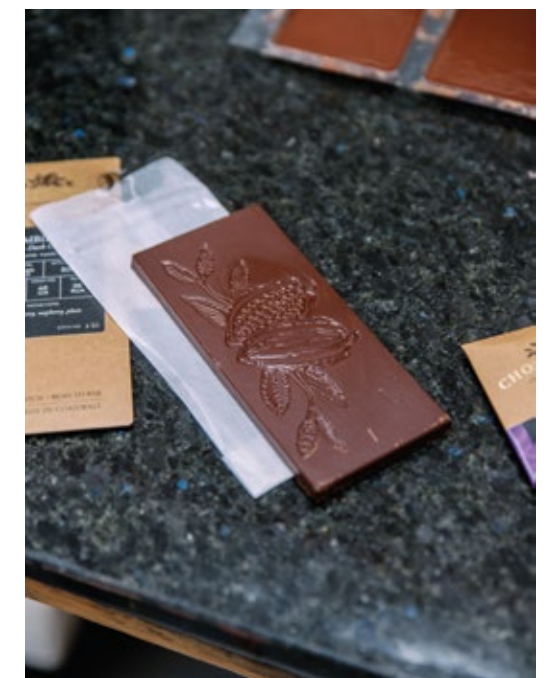
There would be no point in having this strong chain of amazing producers if the consumer at the end doesn't understand the need for it.

However, it is easy to see that there is a growing demand from the consumer to have a more ethical and better-quality product. This has led to a greater awareness and understanding around the production of food, and a continued call for transparency.

Mike has high hopes for the future, "we are fortunately getting to the point now where we are picking up on it, if the information of where it's from and how it is made is not available. That's where we want to be".

While we are under no illusions that this type of chocolate comes at a premium, before more sustainable customs are adopted by the rest of the industry, it will remain to be a luxury instead of the staple.

www.chocolarder.com



Images
(Front page) giants in chocolate, Mike and James with a rare shot of an Oompa Loompa caught in the middle

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In October 2017 a charity using equine-based therapy for young people, successfully raised £10,505 from 135 supporters to help finance a move to a new site on the Dartington Hall Estate

www.crowdfunder.co.uk/sirona

Sirona

There is a very special connection between humans and animals. Admittedly, this is not always so apparent, least of all when your dog is chasing the farmer's sheep and you're falling over yourself in the mud and hurling curses behind them. However, those moments of understanding, love, affection, comfort, companionship, fun and empathy are very special.

One of my favourite things about animals is their lack of concern or awareness of whatever modern stresses may be plaguing us. Their attention, limited to the basic needs in life, isn't overstretched. They are great fun to watch, getting on with their own day jobs of snuffling about the place, hunting for juicy morsels or seeking fresh pastures for adventure.

There was no funnier sight than witnessing the change in expression of my old dog Ruben, from lethargy to quick delight as he realised his good fortune of something spilled into his domain of the floor. Like a Venus fly trap, the 2 second rule needn't be applied, as he was always there first.

It was with great interest that I reached out to Josie at Sirona when I saw that they were crowdfunding. Sirona is

a South West charity that uses equine-assisted therapy to help young people with learning difficulties, trauma and behavioural problems.

Since their original plot near Newton Abbot in Devon was marked for redevelopment, they have raised the necessary funds to secure a new site for their stables at the neighbouring Dartington Hall Estate. Due to the sensitivity of their work, we couldn't meet any of the children or young adults who are the beneficiaries of the programme. We did however, see both sites, old and new, and meet some of the horses.

Sirona are gifted their horses from a variety of sources and often take on rescue horses when possible. Each new horse is assessed for its suitability to work with children before it moves into its new home. Rescue horses carry their own baggage and just like the children, each will have a dossier. Theirs is tacked to the stable door explaining the horse's history and required handling.

These foibles can make rescue horses appropriate companions. The children who hear their stories may relate, understand that they need to treat them carefully and upon reflection, hopefully see how to better look after themselves.



Therapy with horses makes a great deal of sense to me, for horses don't care what you look like or what your history might be, they care about how you behave towards them. From how they respond to us we can learn a lot about our own behaviour. Being loud or boisterous won't do you any favours. Instead, it is patience, calm and kindness that encourages them to trot over. Similarly, working with horses requires conviction and for those that are a little shy and retiring, taking charge and being assertive helps to build confidence. Even if the larger horses remain a bit too scary, you can always start with something smaller.

Dartington Hall has a very interesting history and I was hugely inspired by what I saw there. The Hall itself is medieval, built between 1338 and 1400 for the Earl of Huntington, half-brother to King Richard II. In 1925 it was bought by Leonard and Dorethy Elmhirst, who initiated the 'Dartington experiment'. They intended to redefine the purpose of the estate to champion progressive development of social and environmental practices. In 10 years time they founded the Dartington Hall Trust, a charity which lives on today and embodies these same values.

This legacy has continued and what exists now is a fully diversified and functioning estate with a college, cinema, pub and centre for social enterprise. These fantastic and beautiful buildings, so integral to our culture and history, are difficult and expensive to maintain. Beyond those which are privately owned, this combined use is a wonderful example of the progressive roles they can play in rural areas. Beyond pure aesthetic enjoyment, such estates or historic buildings, possibly considered obsolete for their intended uses, may offer functional opportunities that can be applied elsewhere to both celebrate our history and bind our communities.

Hannah, Sirona's CEO, discovered therapeutic horsemanship early on in life. A child of divorce, born in Soho to a jazz trumpeter and an artist, she moved with her mother to North Wales at a young age.

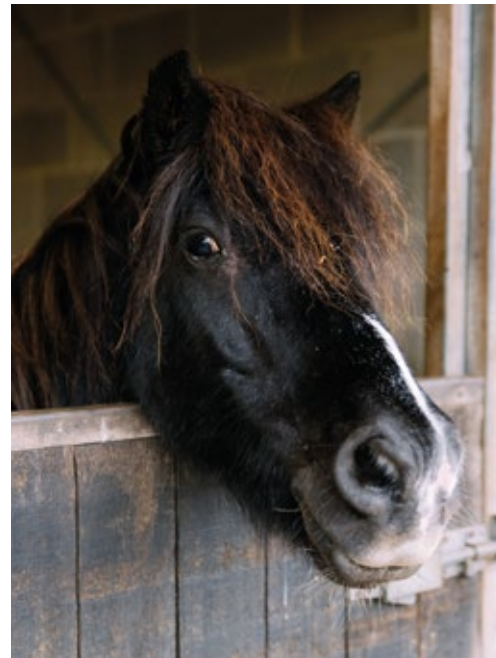
"Mum was a hippy and living in a small farming village, we were the outsiders and there was a lot of discrimination against us".

Hannah soon found lifelong inspiration in the ethologist and horse whisperer, Lucy Rees, who moved into the valley to start a horse training and riding centre. Her values were centred on using non-violent cooperative methods to train horses and a young Hannah took to this gentle approach, finding comfort for her own troubles.

Hannah, taking her horse with her, moved away from Wales a few years later to a commune in Buckinghamshire. Here she led an admittedly confused existence vacillating

between punk, a pony club and hunting. Upon moving to London, she was able to find somewhere to keep her horse in Epping Forest near Leytonstone, where she lived. Hannah found work in the then new night club, The Ministry of Sound and it was here that she stayed for the next 10 years, working at night and looking after her horse in the day. "A big defining moment for me came when I picked up a copy of Horse and Hound magazine and on the back page was an advertisement for The Fortune Centre of Riding Therapy in the New Forest". Excited by the prospect of doing what she loved and knew, Hannah called the centre and arranged a visit. "A visit turned into an interview and I got a job, so I moved down there with my horse". In order to work directly with the people who benefited from the therapy, it was necessary to get a professional qualification and this led Hannah to a Master's Degree in Social Work at Exeter University. It wasn't long after that Hannah struck out into the Devon countryside to start her own charity, 'Sirona Therapeutic Horsemanship'.

Josie, a Practitioner and the Communications Officer at Sirona, was born in Buckinghamshire at the same commune Hannah had moved to from Wales. Until five years ago she was doing something very different entirely, working in London as a literary agent. Her husband was from Devon and they had always planned to return there together.



Images

(Top right) The beautiful new stables on the Dartington Hall Estate
(Right) Josie, Hannah and husband Shaun with a light smattering of dogs

"After leaving my career in London, I had no idea what I wanted to do and I became very stressed. I have known Hannah since I was born and I asked if I could come and volunteer for her and work with the horses for a bit. I never left".

Children are often referred to Sirona through social services or through their schools, they get to spend an afternoon outside and time with the horses enables them to build new and positive relationships. Each week they return, the horses that they've come to know will be there, heads poking out of the stable door, waiting for their new friends to arrive.

The new site at Dartington Hall is beautiful and the extra space afforded to them will allow many more young people to benefit from this fantastic and unique approach to mental health.

www.sironaequine.org.uk



In October 2017 a social enterprise combatting waste, successfully raised £11,109 from 153 supporters to set up Plymouth's first 'Library Of Things'

www.crowdfunder.co.uk/borrowdontbuy

Borrow Don't Buy

Did you know that the average lifetime usage of a drill is only 13 minutes? I'm sure that when we delve into our cupboards, sheds or drawers there are innumerable items that have seen very little sunlight. I agree that it's nice to feel prepared but do we really need to own all this stuff?

We went to visit Borrow Don't Buy in Plymouth, a 'library of things', that provides the city's residents with an online catalogue of high-cost, low-use items that can be rented instead of bought. This is an interesting new step into the developing sharing economy which we've seen in the likes of Task Rabbit, Airbnb and Borrow My Doggy. Their intention is to save us money, space and commercial waste. Their library is what you might call an orderly version of Aladdin's Cave, tools of varying descriptions line the walls but the cave goes deeper than that. Keep searching and you'll find chocolate fountains, speaker systems and inflatable pools; the list is endless.

The concept of a 'library of things' was started in the USA, initially in the form of tool libraries which soon developed to offer a wider range of goods. Rob, one of the founders of Borrow Don't Buy, founded the library three years ago in an informal fashion by clearing out his garage and donating

many of the idle tools and objects he wasn't using. The source of his inspiration was a Torque Wrench. This had been given to him by his father and had accompanied him from house to house on many moves. When it came to the daunting task of packing everything up yet again, he realised that this wrench he had barely touched, really wasn't that essential to him. This thought allowed him to take a frank look at his possessions and start to declutter his home.

Borrow Don't Buy may be one of the antidotes we need to combat the consumer culture synonymous with the 21st Century. For this to work on a wide scale we need a behavioural shift in our relationship with consumer goods. Just like a good local library, if you know that you can borrow a book or that it can be sourced for you there should be little incentive to go out and buy a new copy. If we become more familiar with borrowing items rather than buying them, soon there could be an advocacy for this process and we might begin to limit our purchasing to what we really need. If a decrease in demand starts to stem the colossal and consistent flood of goods into homes across the UK, a rosy view might suggest that manufacturers would be obliged to scale back production, thereby using less resources and reducing their carbon footprint.



“These events are an opportunity for people to meet and share their knowledge and experiences,” says Rob. “We sit someone who’s afraid to give it a go next to someone with the confidence to try.”

The founders, Rob, Gary and Sol, are taking this concept of recycling goods a step further by hosting weekly Repair Cafés, encouraging people to bring in their broken goods and learn how to fix them. “These events are an opportunity for people to meet and share their knowledge and experiences,” says Rob. “We sit someone who’s afraid to give it a go next to someone with the confidence to try.”

More often than not, today’s manufacturing processes are not conducive to repair work. Glued and sealed joints with no replacement parts on offer can make fixing something very difficult indeed. The great mountains of waste generated from the short life span of our products and the rate at which we are burning through our resources will continue to contribute to climate change. Fortunately, the previously distant rumble of disgruntled consumers has arrived at the gates of European Parliament. A European Directive for Eco-design demanding more efficient products in order to reduce energy and resource consumption may be taking a leap ahead by enforcing a ‘right to repair’. This could ensure that manufacturers make goods that last longer and are easier to mend. Again, this will require a shift in our mentality. We need to move away from a throwaway culture towards repair and multiple use. Once the shift is made it can be difficult to regress. Once you have established the habit of carrying a refillable bottle with you it’s then very hard to bring yourself to buy a single-use plastic bottle of water. When you start to view your possessions as repairable, there’s a lot of satisfaction in maintaining them. These are then great practical skills learnt, which will help build our confidence and abilities.

Gary’s hope for the future is a physical shop on the high street. It will be an Apple Store and Argos hybrid, where you can learn about fixing a broken product at the front and rent from a lengthy catalogue in the back. The trouble that these ‘libraries of things’ face is accessibility.

Convenience is always key and if the library is out of the way, it is unlikely to become an attractive enough alternative. Therefore, the work happening behind the scenes at Borrow Don’t Buy is to explore how this concept might reach more people. Some of the best answers, however, don’t require any great reinvention of the wheel but just a smart adaption of what we’ve already got. For instance, there are many existing libraries, upon which this concept is based and through no great leap of the imagination they could incorporate a ‘things’ section. Similarly for communities that don’t have a library, a village hall could be a ready and practical alternative.

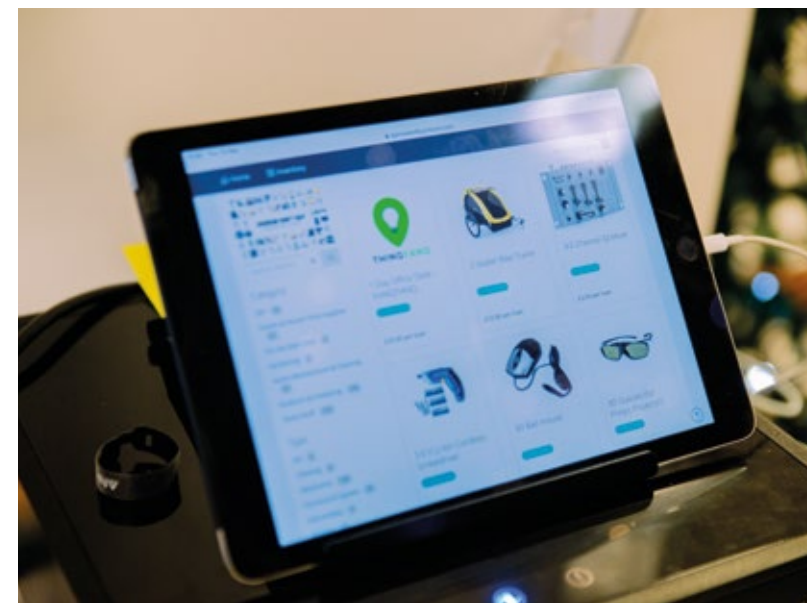
Surprisingly there are only 6 library of things here in the UK but their numbers are growing and in the spirit of sharing, each library has the experience to help other aspiring libraries set themselves up.

www.borrowdontbuy.co.uk



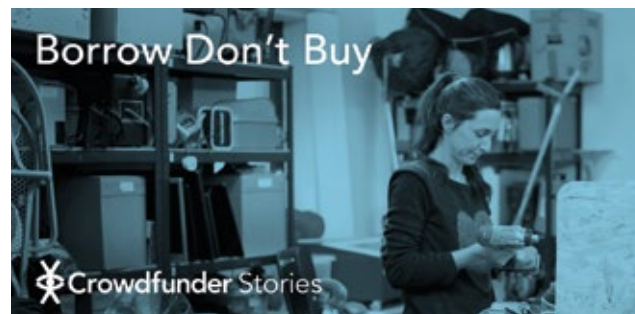
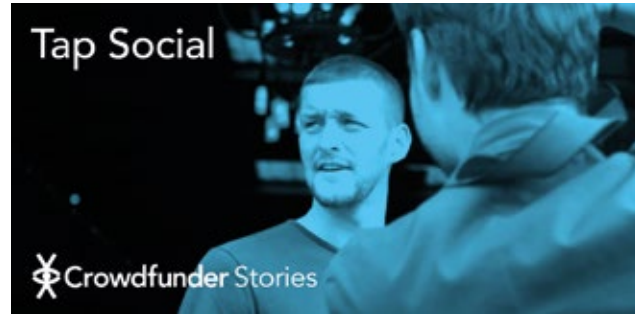
Images

(Front page) Sol and Rob (above), two of the three founding directors
(Right) The Borrow Don’t Buy online catalogue



Campaign Films

If you've enjoyed reading these stories and are intrigued to find out more, follow the link below to watch the entire series online. Films by Frederick Shelbourne.
www.crowdfunder.co.uk/stories/watch



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So, what's your idea?