

# COALTOWN COFFEE

## COALTOWN

Coaltown Coffee is based in Ammanford in south Wales, a post-industrial community where Anthracite coal (Black Gold) fuelled the local economy. Back in 2003, the last of the collieries closed and with it went the town's purpose. The founder of Coaltown Coffee, Scott James, had the ambition to bring a new industry to his hometown, a new Black Gold, a new purpose. In 2018, Coaltown Coffee launched and Ammanford became famous for its Black Gold again, albeit a different kind.

The ambition for the company has always been to break the mould of a traditional business and to adopt a forward thinking, modern approach instead. Whilst Coaltown Coffee is a 'small town' business, they approach what they do with a 'big city' mentality, always looking to the future, embracing e-commerce and omnichannel strategies.

In fact, they have been pioneers in Wales for promoting Fair Work practices, having adopted them early on within the company's journey. They have also been B-Corp certified since 2019, the first coffee roaster in the UK to achieve that status, which means that in everything they do they put planet before profit. This links through to how they employ people, how they take care of their team, the awareness of their carbon footprint, as well as how the trade of their coffee impacts producers at its source of origin.

## FAIR REWARD

Coaltown Coffee have been accredited by Living Wage for the past three years, however, it is not something they consider to be that exceptional.

As a company, rewarding hard work with fair pay whilst being conscious of in-work poverty is something they feel strongly about. Everything they do is about rejuvenating the local area and the local economy, and they understand that

paying a real Living Wage is crucial to that.

Scott explains that a fair wage is something all employers should be providing their employees with as standard: *"It wasn't even something we considered, paying below a real Living Wage. We know that when we pay our employees fairly, that money is then spent back within the local community, helping to nurture and grow other great businesses around us."*

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## CASE STUDY

### EMPLOYEE VOICE & COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATION

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Annual company-wide employee surveys are utilised by Coaltown Coffee where they ask their team to share their thoughts, feelings, and ideas about the company.

The information is reviewed, and the company then looks for the best way to embrace the feedback and take meaningful action from it. For example, last year the results of the survey found that their team felt communication had not been so clear since the team had grown bigger, as a result, daily morning meetings have now been implemented.

Scott explains that a structured start to the day is essential for the team to know what is going on in the business: *"We come together in the morning, grab some coffee, and sit down and just hash out the day and*

*the week ahead. Every meeting is hosted by someone different from the team and we don't have a top-down approach to our managing style, we want everyone to bring their full, true self to work and we want to hear what everyone has to say."*



### OPPORTUNITY FOR ACCESS, GROWTH AND PROGRESSION

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Another practice of Fair Work that has been a focus for Coaltown Coffee over the last year is the opportunity for access, growth and progression and the idea of delivering a lean culture. This is a similar efficiency process implemented by car manufacturer, Toyota, who have put into their manufacturing systems the idea that there is room for continual improvement. The team has set a goal of making a two second time-saving improvement every day, just tiny improvements that over the year saves hours of time which then ultimately frees up employees' days so that they can get on with the other things that will help them grow and develop in the workplace.

The Coaltown Coffee employees are also offered participation in fully funded training programmes. This includes becoming certified as intermediate baristas as part of the Specialty Coffee Association, rewarding participants with points that can be put towards a diploma in coffee, which is the equivalent level to a degree. Vocational and on-the-job learning is also part of Coaltown Coffee's commitment to offering opportunities for growth and progression to their employees.

### SAFE, HEALTHY AND INCLUSIVE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

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As they have a production line and heavy machinery, Coaltown Coffee take the physical health and safety of their employees very seriously and ensure that stringent measures are in place, communicated to the team and regularly reviewed in consultation within the company.

However, it is not just the physical health of employees that is prioritised, Coaltown Coffee also ensure the mental health of their employees is being taken care of. Scott explains: *"It's all about communication. Whether it's operating machinery or checking in on someone's state of mind, we want the conversations to flow back and forth so we can offer the best possible support system for our team."*

Coaltown Coffee are also leaders in providing an inclusive work environment. Priding themselves on being a primarily neurodiverse team, Scott says: *"I actually view it as one of the company's superpowers"*.

It is clear to see that Coaltown Coffee do not view any disabilities as a limitation within the workplace, quite the opposite in fact. In relation to the company's attitude within this Fair Work pillar, Scott adds: *"It's very much an attitude we have every day rather than a policy we abide by."*

Even the company's recruitment process seeks to be as inclusive as possible. Scott explains that it is not about your past experiences or qualifications, it is all about a candidate's passion, drive, and desire to be part of the team. Scott adds: *"We're a close-knit team here, striving to create local jobs for the local community and so not creating any barriers when it comes to the recruitment process is essential."*

### SECURITY AND FLEXIBILITY

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The employee time management system used by Coaltown Coffee is cutting-edge, allowing for non-traditional forms of in-work flexibility. No more card stamping to clock in, instead everything is on a newly implemented HR system, an app called Blip from BrightHR, which is downloaded onto employees' mobile devices. Team members can clock in and out digitally, book off annual leave with the touch of a button and everything within the company is QR coded so employees can just use their phones to access links to relevant information, including relevant policies, processes, and general operational information.

## CASE STUDY

### LEGAL RIGHTS RESPECTED

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Coaltown Coffee are acutely aware of how the coffee industry has not had the best reputation for trading fairly with global coffee bean farmers.

Leading by their own example, all Coaltown Coffee is sourced ethically and in line with the sustainable and fairly traded requirements of being a certified B-Corp. Coaltown Coffee are proud to be part of the solution by encouraging partner organisations to eradicate unlawful and unethical employment practices within their supply chains.

Coaltown Coffee also ensures that the legal rights of their employees are completely respected. Scott explains: *"From our direct employees to everyone working along the supply chain, treating everyone correctly and fairly was a huge criterion of us becoming B-Corp certified and we're so proud of the standards that we have set internally to ensure that everyone feels that their rights are completely respected."*

### THE BENEFITS OF BEING A FAIR WORK EMPLOYER

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One of the primary benefits Coaltown Coffee have found from adopting Fair Work principles has been their impressive employee retention. By being great employers and rewarding and respecting their staff within the Fair Work principles, they are able to retain and develop their employees. This is exemplified by the majority of the Coaltown Coffee team having been with the company for more than four years, and there are several team members who have been there since day one.

Scott adds proudly: *"The whole mission of Coaltown Coffee was to rejuvenate the local community, and in doing so we've built our very own community here. I'm so incredibly proud of all that we've invested in, in terms of our people, and by being a Fair Work employer it has really shown that treating your people right is good for business."*



### LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

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Over the next year, Coaltown Coffee are looking to double their workforce with new café locations, including one opening in Pontardulais in 2023.

In preparation for this growth, Coaltown Coffee's Director of Coffee, People and Culture, Josh, will be at the forefront ensuring that all new employees are onboarded utilising the Fair Work principles with all the necessary resources in place.

Looking to the future and new practices to optimise performance, Coaltown Coffee are always open to change. Everything they do fits into the B-Corp mentality of limiting waste and what is particularly clear is that Coaltown Coffee are continually looking to improve and become a more efficient business, as ultimately, those efficiencies can be passed on to benefit their employees and customers.

### CONTACT

Contact us to speak 1-2-1 with a specialist adviser about how your business can realise its Fair Work ambitions and take steps towards becoming a more equal, diverse, and inclusive employer.

Call Business Wales on **03000 6 03000** or visit  
**[Fair Work | Business Wales Skills Gateway \(gov.wales\)](https://www.gov.wales)**  
for further information, free advice and support.

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