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CASE STUDY, DOCUMENT

Celebrating Local on the School Plate Caerphilly Council and Welsh Food for Schools: PDF

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Overview

This Caerphilly case study highlights how procurement, creativity, and communication can come together to create measurable social and economic value. By working with Larder Cymru, the council not only celebrated its strong Welsh sourcing record but also boosted community engagement, supported a local design business, and laid the groundwork for future innovation in public food provision.

As part of its commitment to the Welsh Food for Schools project, Larder Cymru worked in partnership with Caerphilly Council to explore how local authorities can procure and celebrate more Welsh food and drink within school meals.

Backed by the Welsh Government's Foundational Economy Team, the project aimed to maximise the use of local produce on the public plate while also strengthening Welsh supply chains and supporting local businesses.

Caerphilly's story stands out, not just for the improvements made, but for the discovery that they were already ahead of the curve in local food sourcing, and simply needed support to recognise, visualise, and celebrate what they were already doing well.

Background: Welsh Government's Commitment to Local Food

Following the rollout of universal free school meals for all primary school children in Wales, the Welsh Government encouraged local authorities to increase their spend on locally sourced Welsh food and drink.
Larder Cymru issued an open call to councils across the country offering support to review procurement, redesign menus, and strengthen local supply chains.

Six local authorities responded, including Caerphilly County Borough Council.

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Initial Discovery and Opportunity

Larder Cymru's first step was to meet with Caerphilly Council to understand their current food procurement practices and priorities. The expectation was to identify gaps where more Welsh produce could be introduced into the supply chain.

"We came into it expecting to find opportunities to increase local sourcing," said a member of the Larder Cymru team. "But we were genuinely surprised, Caerphilly was already doing a brilliant job."

A detailed review of their procurement revealed that Caerphilly already had a strong baseline of Welsh products in use. Instead of needing radical change, the opportunity became one of recognition and promotion.

A Creative Approach to Celebrating Welsh Food

With Caerphilly Council's strong foundation in place, the project pivoted to a creative communications approach. The goal was to redesign school menus to:

- Celebrate existing use of Welsh products
- Increase pupil and parent awareness
- Drive greater uptake of school meals through transparency and pride in local food
- Support economies of scale for the council's catering service

Larder Cymru commissioned Rose-Innes Design, a Caerphilly-based creative SME, to bring the new menu to life.

The updated menu featured:

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- High-quality photographs of actual school meal dishes, taken by a professional photographer
- A Welsh dragon icon next to each dish containing Welsh-sourced ingredients
- A dedicated section along the bottom of the menu that named the Welsh suppliers and wholesalers contributing to the meals (e.g. Castell Howell)

“Caerphilly is now the only local authority in Wales, as far as we know, with a menu that shows real food photos alongside supplier information,” said a Larder Cymru spokesperson.

Results and Added Value

- **Increased Visibility of Local Food**
  By showcasing the Welsh content in meals, the council raised awareness among pupils, parents, and staff of the value and quality of what was already on offer.
- **Support for Local Business**
  The creative supplier, Rosina’s Designs, was later procured directly by Caerphilly Council to continue updating menus, creating an ongoing local economic impact that outlived the initial project.
- **Enhanced Uptake of School Meals**
  By celebrating the quality and sourcing of the food, the project aimed to increase uptake of universal free school meals, improving health and ensuring better value for the council’s investment.
- **Recognition of Good Practice**
  This case became a positive example of good practice already happening within local authorities, proving that sometimes, the solution is not more change, but better communication of what’s already working

Next Steps: Street Food Pilot in Secondary Schools

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The collaboration doesn’t stop there. Larder Cymru is now working with Caerphilly Council on a new street food-style concept for secondary schools, aiming to modernise school food offerings and gather evidence to inform future healthy eating regulations for older pupils.

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