

onioncollective

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2017

(PUBLISHED JULY 2018)

ABOUT US

We are a type of social enterprise. We work 50 percent of the time in community development for our home town of Watchet in Somerset, helping to build a stronger economic future here, and 50 percent of the time helping other towns and community businesses around the country do the same. We use our practical knowledge of capital builds, business planning, funding bids, impact monitoring and evaluation and community engagement to provide 'on the ground' experienced business support. Our consultancy work elsewhere effectively subsidises the work we do in Watchet.

OUR MISSION

We believe that community business can change the world. Community businesses are like social enterprises, but wherever they trade (whether locally or globally) the profits are reinvested back into the local community. We are a place-based business with a social purpose. We believe that every community has the raw ingredients it needs to build a strong and successful future for itself. By providing business support for other community businesses we can help the sector grow into a strong movement for social change. This model can help to address many of the difficulties we now face in the 21st century. With the right support community businesses can grow to be a strong, resilient, powerful force for our civil society future.

OUR TEAM

We are a team of eight, each with a wide variety of skills, experience and knowledge. We are: Naomi Griffith, Jess Prendergrast, Georgie Grant, Rachel Kelly, Sally Lowndes, all Directors, plus Kiri Carter, Office Manager, Louise Body, Visitor Centre Manager and Jon Barrett, Contains Art Manager (not officially an Onion but we work closely together on East Quay). We also have three Non-Executive Directors on our Board appointed in 2017: Tessa Jackson OBE, Naomi Friend and David Fitch.

WATCHET COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Over the last few years we have worked on a number of projects, all designed to deliver the things that Watchet told us it wanted through our consultations in 2014 and repeated since.

Watchet Visitor Centre

Opened in summer 2016, Watchet Visitor Centre and Boat Museum is now the hub of tourism delivery for the town. Our Visitor Centre Manager, Louise, helps to deliver the Watchet Tourism Strategy in partnership with Watchet Town Council and Watchet Coastal Community Team. Last year, thousands of visitors were supported, and tourism projects that we raised the money for included a brand new tourism website www.lovetowatchet.com, eight new visitor maps, seven new directional finger posts and a new geocache game.

East Quay Community, Culture & Enterprise

We have just received planning permission for a new £7.5m development on Watchet's East Quay. It focuses on enterprise, creativity and culture, and will be home to entrepreneurs, businesses and organisations across social enterprise, culture, geology, and industry. It will include 15 workspaces/studio units, a double-storey gallery, a restaurant, a handmade paper mill, a print studio, self-catering accommodation 'pods' and high quality public realm. This project is very much community-led; having started with a blank piece of paper, it answers a number of expressed needs within the town. The scheme will support 50+ direct jobs and bring an increased tourism spend of £2.3m per year as well as bringing far better access to the arts. It will provide workspace for artists and attract nationally important touring exhibitions. Public consultations took place between the 4th and 12th February 2018—our 4th round of town-wide consultation. The architectural designs are by Invisible Studio and the Landscape Architecture is by LT Studio. We are now raising the funds.

Industry for Watchet

This year, we were awarded funding from The Fore Trust in order to carry out research and feasibility work into what a new future-proofed Industry for Watchet might look like. Following the closure of the Paper Mill in 2015 and the loss of 175 jobs, this project aims to bring back civic pride and a stronger economy. Desktop research analysing assets and barriers has been carried out, and we have investigated various options including: supply chain at EDF, bio-based materials, environmentally-aware construction, and future food industries.

Watchet Community Makers

Funded by Santander, Watchet Community Makers is a volunteer group of makers who meet weekly, led by builder Ian Wedlake. Community groups can 'bid' for any work that they need doing, and WCM will help make or fix it and in the course of doing so learn and share making and construction skills. This year Watchet Community Makers delivered projects for: Watchet Sea Scouts, Knights Templar School, Contains Art and the Boat Museum and Visitor Centre.

Watchet Coastal Community Team

Watchet CCT is a membership organisation with close to 30 local groups, charities, businesses and organisations. We sit on the board. WCCT exists to help further the economy for Watchet, and has created a strategic Economic Plan to deliver these aims. In 2017 WCCT oversaw a number of tourism projects. WCCT also lead and deliver Street Fairs in the town every first Sunday of the month from April to October, bringing music, activities, market traders and food to Watchet. The team is delighted to have been named as a Social Action area by the Government's Office for Civil Society. Over the next year, we will be working together to explore how the town can maximise the impact of all the amazing community work that already happens here.

Splash Point

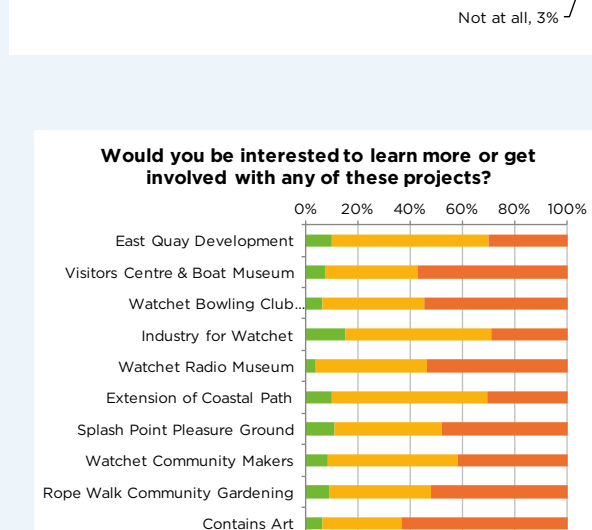
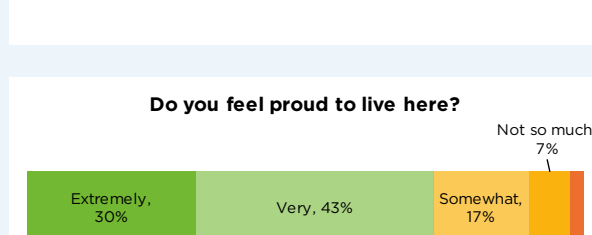
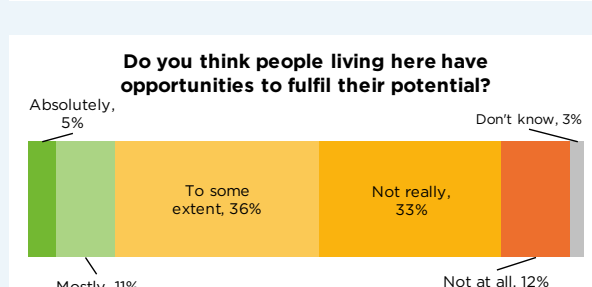
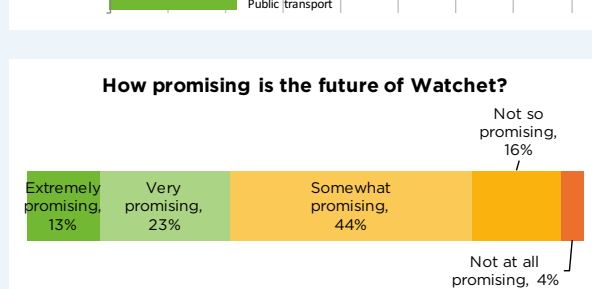
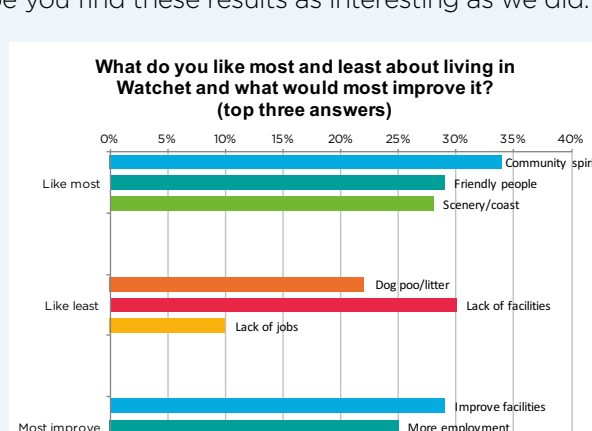
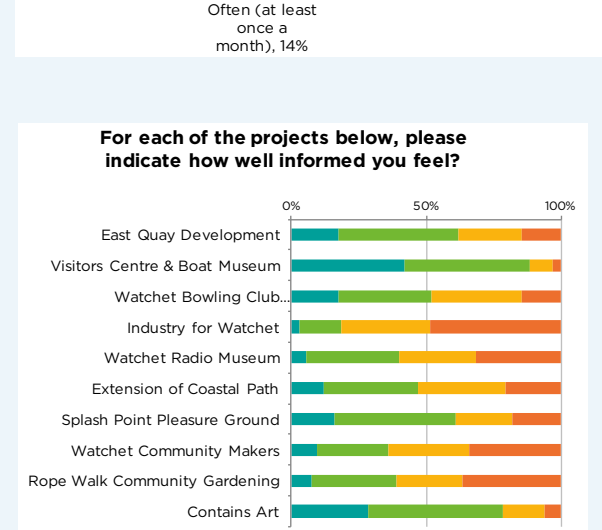
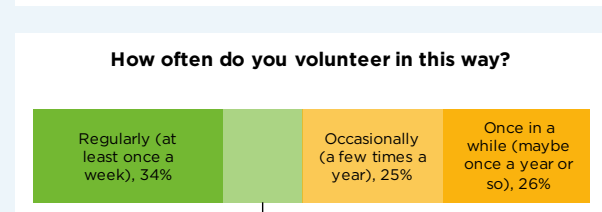
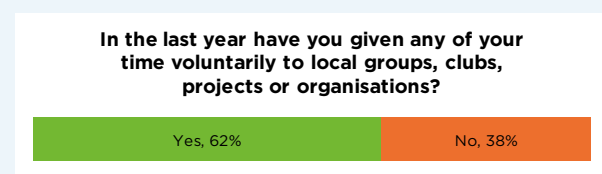
Splash Point is open public space owned by local businessman John Richards, and leased for a peppercorn rent by Onion Collective. Once Victorian Pleasure Grounds, we hope to return it to a 21st century version of its former glory. Watchet Conservation Society has planted a cider orchard, and local people have built benches and a BBQ. This year 30 local teenagers, with architect Kate Darby, have designed a 'field kitchen' to provide a communal sheltered space and storage up there. The community build will, we hope, take place in 2019.

Sculpture and gardening at Rope Walk

In 2017, local Blacksmith Dot Kuzniar created a sculpture which runs along the path by Harbour Road. Funded by Coastal Revival Fund, this sculpture uses a variety of different metals, many donated by the Paper Mill, and its layers mimic the geological strata found in our cliffs. The metal pieces also contain welded metal that look like ammonite fossils. A team of community gardeners help with the beds.

2017 RESIDENTS' SURVEY RESULTS

Towards the end of 2017, we distributed a survey to Watchet residents to get your feedback on issues that matter to you, and to ask you about the work being carried out by us and others to try to build a stronger future for Watchet. Here are some results: they clearly show the strengths of the town, its huge sense of community and how proud most people are to live in Watchet. Interestingly, although there's a strong feeling that overall the community can make a difference, there's much less a sense that individuals can personally influence decisions. There's loads of amazing volunteering going on, but a relatively low sense that people living here can fulfil their potential. There are also some areas for improvement. People would like to see more facilities, less dog poo, and for us at Onion to communicate more about the work we are doing and who we work with. We promise to do more of this. We hope you find these results as interesting as we did.



FINANCES

We work hard to raise grant funding to pay for all kinds of projects in Watchet. For example, last year we raised £40,000 from LEADER for tourism infrastructure, £20,000 from the Fore Trust for Industry for Watchet, £5,000 from Somerset Community Foundation for the teenage Splash project and £5,000 from the Social Action Fund for the Coastal Communities Team. In the main, these funds are spent directly on project costs, though they occasionally cover some of our time—for example, the Industry for Watchet funding includes time for us to research what a future business could look like. Most of the time, our client work elsewhere pays for our salaries and overheads (rent, insurance, accountancy, stationary etc.). In fact, often it pays for Watchet projects too. For example, we contributed £5,000 towards the LEADER project, and we have contributed over £20,000 to paying for all the East Quay requirements, such as planning fees, surveys, legals etc.

COMMUNITY BUSINESS SUPPORT

This year, Onion Collective became a Community Business Support Provider for Power to Change, a national funder for community businesses. We work with and help their grantees all over the country gain the skills needed for long-term resilience and stability as community organisations. In this role we also act as a 'broker' which means we help to identify where support is needed and find other businesses that are able to offer that support. We are also proud that Jess Prendergrast was appointed to the Board of Directors at Power to Change.

AREAS OF SUPPORT

The areas where we offer support include: visioning, outcomes and outputs, Theory of Change and Logic Frameworks, social impact, monitoring and evaluation, grant bid writing, business planning, community engagement, governance, financial, community asset transfers, project management and capital builds.

CLIENTS

In 2017, our clients have included: Mid Devon Council, Porlock CCT, Watchet Bowling Club, Christ Church Methodist & United Reformed Church, Shrouds of the Somme, Squash Nutrition, Alfrick Community Shop, The Burton at Bideford, Horfield Common and Cafe in Bristol, Charles Burrell Community Centre, WS Community Land Trust, and Stour Space in London.

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH WITH ONION COLLECTIVE:

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