

Trader and community-run markets

A practical guide to setting up, running your market and accessing support

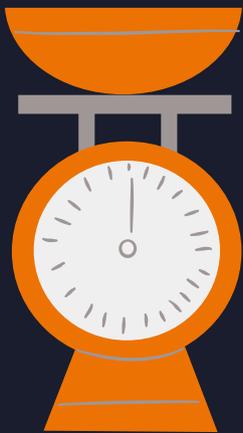
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**MARKETS 4
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Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the many research participants and collaborators who gave considerable time and knowledge to this handbook, an output from the wider Markets4People research project. Thank you to our handbook partners Suzanne Perry and Rachael Dufour from Power to Change, and to Graham Wilson and David Preston from NABMA, and Chris Savage, Rachel Laurence and Cath Muller for their productive feedback on previous iterations of this handbook. Thanks also go to the wider Markets4People team - Lisa Buckner, Andy Newing, Graham Clarke, León Téllez Contreras and Meegan Worcester from University of Leeds, Sophie Watson from Open University, Chris Savage, Shanaaz Carroll and Joe Harrison from the NMTF and team members at the University of Leeds - and Steering Group.



Suggested citation:

Taylor M, Northrop F, Kiberd E, Phagoora J, Scurrah E, Power H, González S, Waley P and Wilkinson R. 2022. Trader- and community-run markets: a practical to setting up, running your market and accessing support. <http://doi.org/10.5518/100/74>

Cover: Granby Market, Liverpool. (Image: Granby Four Streets CLT)

This handbook was supported financially by the Economic and Social Research Council [grant number ES/P010547/1], University of Leeds Impact Acceleration Account [award number 118631.053] and Power to Change. Myfanwy Taylor would also like to acknowledge financial support via a Leverhulme Trust Early Career Fellowship (2021-2025).

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Foreword

Ailbhe McNabola, Director of Policy and Communications, Power to Change

Power to Change is delighted to have supported Markets4People to conduct this research and we welcome this second handbook in the series. This handbook draws on the experiences of trader- and community-run markets to provide invaluable guidance and insight for traders and communities to operate their own traditional retail markets.

Power to Change has supported the growth and development of community businesses since 2015. We know community business works to create thriving places, when local people take ownership of spaces that matter and deliver services that our communities need. Community ownership and management of assets, like market halls, often kickstarts regeneration. We know from our research that community ownership on the high street drives up footfall and increases the diversity of town centre users, benefitting other businesses.

The community value of traditional retail markets makes them ideally placed to serve as community hubs for inclusive economies. Community businesses and other third sector organisations are particularly well placed to identify local needs which markets could meet, develop markets which serve specific marginalised or excluded groups, or develop partnerships with other local groups.

In our annual survey of community business, local authorities consistently come out top when we ask about the important stakeholders. Local authorities can provide crucial support to these organisations – ranging from supporting them to use the powers within the Localism Act or initiate a Community Asset Transfer for community businesses, to more early-stage support like skills transfer and capacity building to help community businesses to navigate these processes. Local authorities can also provide support and advice on accessing funding, and in some cases may be able to work with community businesses in bids for funding such as the Levelling Up, Shared Prosperity or Community Ownership Funds.

This also applies to trader- and community-groups wishing to start up a new market or take on an existing one. In addition, local authorities can use their market plans and licensing arrangements to encourage trader- and community-run markets, and ensure their procurement processes for new market operators recognise the additional social value generated by community businesses. We encourage all interested trader and community groups to take up the support and funding available via Power to Change and our partners, and look forward to future collaborations with Markets4People, NMTF and NABMA as this agenda develops.



Foreword

Helen Power, Head of Communications, Centre for Local Economic Strategies

CLES is delighted to have been able to work with Markets4People as they have conducted the research that underpins this handbook. Much of our work focusses on the need to develop local economies which are owned by- and retain wealth for- the people who create it. Traditional retail markets are as much a vital piece of this puzzle today as they have been for 1000s of years, not just across the UK but globally.

Markets act as incubators for small business innovation and provide a stepping stone into enterprise for those furthest from the labour market. Properly resourced, this process means that our high streets are better able to represent the people who populate them and their interests: on their shelves, in their supply chains and through their wage packets.

Community ownership of markets takes this effect and multiplies it – community businesses are uniquely placed to understand the needs of their community and to tailor both their offer and their impact to meet it. This handbook is a valuable resource for anyone willing to take up that challenge – and demonstrates that the rewards for doing so will spread far beyond the marketplace.

Here at CLES we are keen to hear from local authorities interested in supporting trader- and community-run markets, for instance, as part of community wealth building strategies, and look forward to further collaborations with the Markets4People team, NMTF and NABMA on this important agenda.





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1. Executive summary

This handbook is a practical guide for trader and community groups on how to set up and run your own market. It also includes a section aimed at local authorities, explaining how and why they can support the sector. The handbook is a product of the Markets4People project, a collaboration between university researchers and practitioners.

Retail markets are good for the economy; they can support local jobs and provide affordable produce for low-income, migrant and minoritised communities. The benefits and functions of markets are particularly significant in relation to the growing cost of living crisis as well as the economic and social recovery of our high streets and town centres. These factors make markets increasingly important to wide-ranging economic, social and environmental policy goals.

Trader- and community-run markets make up just 6% of UK markets (2022 figures); in the course of the Markets4People project, we identified a lively interest in growing this sector. However, we also found that it can be challenging for trader and community groups to understand and meet local authorities' requirements without specialist advice and support, more so when attempting to take on

a large indoor market than a small outdoor market. In the course of the research, we learnt that several trader-run markets closed. There is therefore a need for greater support for trader- and community-run markets if they are to grow in number and strength.

This handbook provides a free and accessible starting point for trader and community groups interested in running their own market. It builds on the experience, specialist advice and support available via the national market trader and operator associations, NMTF and NABMA, as well as other organisations providing relevant funding and support to social and community businesses and the wider third sector. The handbook is organised around several sections with practical advice, case studies and a bank of resources.

The handbook also describes for local authorities how they can support a new generation of trader- and community-run markets to flourish, both via their market plans, licensing arrangements and procurement processes and by connecting up with other local authority programmes and teams.

Local authorities' support for trader and community-run markets sits alongside and complements their important function as market operators, the focus of the first Markets4People handbook. There, we outlined how local authorities can operate and develop their markets as community hubs for inclusive economies, drawing together 30 best practice examples.

Local authority support for trader- and community-run markets will also contribute to wider policy goals to develop strong local voluntary, community and business sectors, and the shift to greater collaboration and partnership, including to drive the economic and social recovery of high streets and town centres.

By working together, local authorities and trader and community groups can help to ensure that every town and neighbourhood in the UK has an affordable and locally-managed market that meets the needs of that community. Such an expansion would contribute to wide-ranging local and national food, health and social and economic policy goals.

2. Introduction to markets

Markets form part of the essential goods, services and facilities which provide the foundations of economic and social life in localities. Markets also support livelihood opportunities and diverse local economies by providing low-cost accessible trading space for sole traders, small businesses and start-ups. Market trading is itself a highly social form of retailing, generating benefits for traders and users which go beyond exchange transactions, e.g. reducing loneliness, facilitating access to help and advice and promoting cooperation and collective action amongst traders.

Markets and market trading form part of the 'foundational economy' and 'social infrastructure' on which we all depend for the fundamentals of economic and social life. These concepts emphasise the importance of affordable access to these foundational elements within localities, whether provided by the public, private or third sector. Both ideas are gaining influence in UK policy debates relating to local and regional inequality, development and empowerment. For example, the Welsh Government has placed the foundational economy at the heart of its Economic Action Plan.

Read more about the foundational economy.



Read more about social infrastructure.



Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of national market operator and trader associations NABMA and NMTF to secure investment and policy support, UK markets have been neglected and poorly resourced by successive national and local governments over the last few decades. As a discretionary rather than statutory service within local government, markets have been vulnerable to the budgetary pressures and cuts which have increased under austerity.

Cuts can increase the pressure on local authorities to extract a surplus from markets for reinvestment in other services, reducing the scope for reinvestment in successful markets. Local authorities may face financial pressure to close markets that are financially struggling even where they play important social or cultural functions. Decline and disinvestment can also be exacerbated by a loss of skills and experience in running markets within local authorities. These challenges have been exacerbated more recently by the Covid-19 pandemic and the growing cost of living crisis.

Faced with these challenges, some local authorities have attempted to 'turn around' struggling markets by shifting them into more elite consumption and leisure spaces, catering to higher-income customers. Some have outsourced management to private operators.



Concerns about gentrification and interest in inclusive redevelopment are growing within the sector. Such concerns are likely to intensify as the existing model becomes increasingly at odds with the growing food and fuel poverty produced by the UK's worsening economic climate and growing cost of living crisis.

Responding to increasing requests from market operators for advice about how to avoid or mitigate gentrification, the first Markets4People handbook set out a new vision for operating and developing markets as community hubs for inclusive economies.

Drawing on 30 case studies, the handbook identified four key elements of this new vision:

1. Value the community benefits of markets.
2. Connect markets with other local authority goals and responsibilities.
3. Partner with other organisations on community value projects.
4. Deliver inclusive regeneration schemes.

Read the Markets4People operator handbook



All markets have the potential to operate as community hubs for inclusive economies, whether owned or operated within the public, private or third sector, as we explore on the next page.



Filwood Community Market, Bristol. (Image: Filwood Community Market CIC)

Local authority markets

Local authorities have a particularly important role to play in developing markets as community hubs for inclusive economies. Despite the pressures described above – and contrary to predictions 10-15 years ago – 85% of UK markets remain in local authority hands (2022 figures). Local authorities are also likely to be particularly interested in this new vision as it resonates with many of their goals and responsibilities, for example public health and food security, high streets, local economic development and community wealth building.

Local authorities' broad goals provide unique opportunities to operate and develop markets as community hubs for inclusive economies, as set out in the first Markets4People handbook. There is a strong case for setting up new local authority markets, as well as increasing investment in existing ones.

In [section 7](#) of this second handbook we explore how and why local authorities can support trader- and community-run markets, both through their market plans, licensing arrangements and procurement processes as well as by connecting up with other local authority programmes and teams. This information will be relevant for local authorities across all tiers of local government and in particular those with strong commitments to community wealth building, foundational economy, inclusive growth and other related policy goals.

Private markets

Privately-operated markets can also generate significant community value, making this new vision also relevant to private operators. Seven Sisters Indoor Market (also known as the Latin Village) in Tottenham, north London, for example, is a listed Asset of Community Value whose importance as a commercial and cultural hub for Latin Americans in London has been recognised by the United Nations.

In such contexts, private operators can use the first Markets4People handbook to help them understand and enhance markets' community functions and value in collaboration with market traders and users. As we discuss in [section 7](#) of this handbook, local authorities can also use their market plans, licensing arrangements and procurement processes to require private operators to deliver on their policy priorities.

Running your own market is hard work but can bring benefits for trader and community groups, as we discuss in the next section.

Third sector markets

The vision for markets as community hubs for inclusive economies is also likely to appeal strongly to third sector organisations with aligned goals and values, for example charities, social enterprises, trader co-operatives and community businesses. Locally-embedded third sector organisations may be particularly well placed to identify local needs which markets could meet, develop markets which serve specific marginalised or excluded groups, or develop partnerships with other local groups.

This part of the UK markets industry is relatively small at present, however; just 6% of markets are operated by third sector organisations. Growing and developing this part of the UK markets sector could help to ensure every UK town and neighbourhood has an affordable, locally-managed market that meets the needs of that community.

To support such an expansion, this handbook aims to improve and expand access to specialist advice and support to the third sector. As a freely accessible guide, it will be particularly valuable to groups that have not yet secured resources to pay for specialist support and advice. The handbook also signposts to sources of funding, support and advice that will be particularly important as the UK's worsening economic climate continues to impact funding and finances across the public and third sector.

3. Why run your own market?

BENEFITS FOR TRADER GROUPS

Autonomy and control

Operating a market through a constituted body such as a co-operative or Community Interest Company (CIC) provides traders with autonomy and control over key decisions relating to the market on which their livelihoods depend. Like local authorities and private companies, trader co-ops can use a portion of their income to hire a market manager to manage the market on their behalf. In the case of a trader co-op, however, the market manager is directly accountable to the traders themselves. While all market operators are recommended to collaborate closely with market traders, a trader co-operative or CIC offers traders additional autonomy and control.

Retention and reinvestment of surplus

Without any requirement to direct surplus towards company profits or wider local authority budgets, trader-run markets can retain and reinvest the full amount of any surplus they generate. Fully retaining individual traders' fees or rents within a market means more resources for reinvestment in the market. This can generate virtuous cycles of improvement to the benefit of traders, the market and the wider community.

Close links with the local community

Trader-run markets are able to draw on traders' knowledge of the local community, built through long-standing and regular interactions with their customers. This knowledge and relationships can help trader-run markets to identify and meet needs in the community, support new traders and form links with local groups and organisations to strengthen the market.

Case Study 1: Cottingham Market – being responsible for the market as a whole means traders are quick to adapt to changes in customer demand and work together to ensure an attractive and varied market.



BENEFITS FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS

Meeting local needs

Operating a market can help community groups achieve their goals by meeting identified local needs and providing opportunities. Setting up a new market might help food poverty action groups improve access to affordable fresh food, for example. Organisations working to help local people secure jobs or run their own businesses could operate a market with the aim of facilitating access to low-cost business space and providing training and support. Groups concerned about closure or disinvestment in social infrastructure might establish a new market – or take on the running of a struggling market – as a space of social interaction, civic engagement and connection with local support services.

Case Study 2: Filwood Community Market (Bristol) was set up by local people in order to improve access to affordable quality fresh produce and arts and crafts on a large estate with only four occupied shops and the nearest supermarket two miles away.

Case Study 3: Moulsecoomb Community Market was set up by a group of volunteers in the midst of the pandemic as a response to growing food poverty in a deprived area of Brighton. The market receives deliveries of surplus healthy food and essentials which members are able to access for a small monthly fee.

A location in the heart of the community

Markets are excellent locations from which to access and engage with the communities you serve. They are natural meeting points, where people come not only to shop but also for social interaction. Community groups can benefit from these functions by establishing their office or centre at a market. Being located at the market in this way will place your group at the heart of a key community asset.

A place for community activities and services

Markets are excellent locations for running activities, events and services. This can be financially beneficial, providing regular access without the need to pay one-off hire charges at multiple venues. Engagement may be greater, as people attracted to the market may also participate in activities/events. Running activities from a market that serves the community can reduce the cost and effort involved in advertising activities to targeted groups, as well as draw new customers to the market. You can also open up space to other local groups and organisations, further enlivening the market and its role in the community through a wider range of activities and services, and strengthening partnerships locally. These benefits will increase as the market becomes a stronger community hub.

Case Study 4: Granby Street Market provides a space for neighbours to mix and new residents to get to know the area, contributing to the Granby4Street CLT's wider efforts to build a thriving local community.

Case Study 5: Action West London has secured funding to set up a Climate Action Zone at Acton Street Market that will provide advice, support and training for businesses and residents to access and grow green jobs in partnership with Ealing Council and local green groups.



4. Choosing a legal structure

It may be possible for volunteers to directly operate markets without constituting as an organisation. However, the need to secure permission, contracts, licenses and insurance etc means that volunteers generally legally constitute as an organisation if they start to operate a market on a regular basis. Both unconstituted and constituted groups interested in running markets are encouraged to contact NMTF and NABMA for advice asap (see [Section 6](#)).

Constituting has distinct advantages and is highly recommended. Taking responsibility for the success of a market, and other people's livelihoods, needs to be well thought through and planned. Constituting the group from the outset allows for limited liability for its founders and future directors/trustees. This way no liabilities will fall to anyone's personal resources and directors/trustees will have the confidence to make informed decisions.

Constituting also communicates to traders, users and stakeholders (for example local authorities, building/land owners, funders and lenders) that the market is being run in a professional manner. It builds accountability, credibility and reputation in the local area. People can examine the organisation's accounts and see how any surplus is being reinvested into the market or the wider community.

If your organisation is already constituted, you may be able to start a market through the existing structure. A charity may be able to operate a market without the need to set up a trading arm as long as it does not breach trading limits.

Alternatively, you may decide to start a new organisation with a different legal structure. For example, if you want to raise capital via a community share issue, you will need to form a cooperative or community benefit society.

Specialist advice should be taken – for example, from an approved Co-operatives UK support provider – to inform discussions and decisions regarding legal structure and constitution, whether setting up a new organisation or changing an existing one. Section 5 provides more detailed information on sources of advice and support via NMTF, NABMA and the wider community and voluntary sector. Specialist support can be expensive but some free advice and support is available and groups can also apply for funding to resource more substantive work.

Case Study 6: Woodgrange is a weekly street market run by an unincorporated group of resident volunteers with the support of the local council and a paid administrator who handles trader bookings two hours per week.

There are several different legal structures to choose from. Each structure has its own advantages and disadvantages and it is important that you take time to consider which is right for your group and its goals. On the next two pages we summarise the key features of co-operatives, community interest companies, community benefit societies and charities.

Questions of how surplus (the equivalent of the 'profit' generated by private companies) is distributed, how decisions are made, the day-to-day running, how other stakeholders are involved and who ultimately owns the entity are all important to consider. Agreeing how the people within the organisation relate to each other and their members, customers and wider community is also critical.

For more information about legal structures, read the [NCVO](#) and [Co-operatives UK](#) guides.

Access Co-operatives UK's list of approved support providers



CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES

A co-operative is jointly owned and democratically run by its members, who can be workers, producers, traders, consumers, service users, supporters or – in the case of a multi-stakeholder co-operative – several of the above.

The formal definition of a co-op is: ‘an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.’

Co-ops perform many of the same functions as traditional forms of business, but the profits they generate do not accrue to outside shareholders and are instead used as determined by members. These uses may include reinvesting the surplus into the business or spending on wider social and environmental aims. They are also defined by the core principle of one member, one vote, ensuring power cannot be bought by holding multiple shares.

Read more about co-ops on the Cooperatives UK website



Access NMTF's specialist advice on trader-led market co-ops



Organisations ascribing to co-operative values and principles can take different legal forms, including a Community Interest Company (CIC), a Company limited by guarantee or shares, or a legally-constituted Co-operative Society. One important distinction is that only Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies can raise capital from the public via Community Shares or other forms of debt or equity finance. If you intend to rely on grant funding rather than investment, you may wish to register as a CIC or regular company, at least initially.

Case Study 1: Cottingham Market has been successfully operated by traders via a co-operative set up in 1996 with the support of NMTF.



COMMUNITY BENEFIT SOCIETIES

Community Benefit Societies (CBSs) exist for the benefit of a defined community, not for the benefit of its members as in a co-operative society. They are most commonly used when a community wants to buy or take over an asset, there is a need to raise capital and an interest in broad community ownership.

CBSs can raise capital by issuing Community Shares. Community Shares are different from company shares in several ways. They do not gain in face value and generally cannot be transferred. Members have one vote, no matter the total value of the shares they hold. Surplus is not distributed among members or external shareholders, but returned to the community through the operation of the society.

[Read more about CBSs](#)



Case Study 7: Radcliffe Market is a Community Benefit Society. Surplus generated by a bar operated by the CBS is reinvested in the running of the market for the benefit of the community.

COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANIES

Community Interest Companies (CICs) were first established in the UK in 2005. CICs are defined as companies 'designed for social enterprises that want to use their profits and assets for the public good.' They are not strictly 'not for profit', however; CICs can, and do, deliver returns to investors. However, the purpose of a CIC is primarily one of community benefit rather than private profit. Returns to investors must be balanced and reasonable, to encourage investment in the socially driven initiatives, ensuring true community benefit.

[Read more about CICs](#)



Case Study 8: Levenshulme Market is a CIC established by a group of residents who wanted to take on and run the street market as a social enterprise. The CIC commissioned a social value review to evidence its impact and inform decisions about how to reinvest profits in community projects.

Case Study 5: Acton Street Market has been run by local community development charity, Action West London, since 2005. Surplus generated by the market is reinvested in the charity to support its work with disadvantaged and unemployed young people and adults.

CHARITIES

Charities must be established exclusively for public benefit, and cannot make profits. Charities are regulated by the Charities Commission, which determines whether an organisation passes the public benefit test and can register and operate as a charity.

Charities benefit from various tax advantages, and are able to access charitable funding. Because of these benefits, the trading activities of charities are strictly restricted. Increases to charities' small trading exemption limits in 2018 mean that maximum non-primary purpose trading limits now vary on the size of the charity.

Charities can also establish a separate trading arm which can then pass its surplus back to the charity to fund charitable activities. This could be a CBS or CIC but often is a non-profit company limited by guarantee which is a relatively easy and low-cost legal structure to set up.

One popular option is to register first as a company in order to get started and get a bank account, and then apply for charitable status or convert to a different legal structure as your organisation grows.

[Read more about charities](#)



5. Accessing advice, support and funding

Whether your organisation is entirely new or just new to markets, it is important to access specialist advice and support to run a market successfully. One way to do this is to become a member of the national market operator or trader associations, NABMA and NMTF.

NABMA members can access legal advice, support sessions, mentoring, networking and online resources. Membership fees vary by sector and size; third sector organisations are able to join for the lowest rate (currently £384 per annum).

If your organisation is not able to afford membership, you can still contact NABMA to receive initial advice. You can also access NABMA's free resource on running markets; this is aimed at parish and town councils but will provide a useful introduction for all new market operators.

Read more about NABMA membership



Access NABMA's free guide on running markets



NMTF members can access a bespoke advice and registration service to form a trader co-operative, developed by NMTF in partnership with Co-operatives UK. Support includes attending and facilitating meetings between the traders and the relevant local authority, help with formulating a business plan, advice on legal registration, use of NMTF's 'Model Rules' and insurance. Once registered, trader co-ops can continue to access ongoing support from NMTF.

Single membership costs £140 per annum (2022 fee), which also includes a wide range of other services for traders. If your organisation is not able to afford membership, you can still contact NMTF to receive initial advice. NMTF's short guide to trader-operation is also freely available online.

Local authorities can also purchase a 'taster membership' package for £250 (2022 fee) to enable traders to access insurance and expert advice via NMTF for a 12 month period.

Read more about NMTF membership



Access NMTF's free resources



Newer organisations may also find it helpful to access broader support and advice. Over the last 15 years the social enterprise sector has been growing in the UK. There are now several specific organisations which can help with important considerations such as legal structure, governance, engagement and business planning, as well as start-up funding.

[Locality](#), [Social Enterprise UK](#) and [Co-operatives UK](#) are a good first port of call for further information, guidance and advice to support development of co-operatives and community businesses of various kinds.

Funders such as the [National Lottery Community Fund](#), [Power to Change](#) and the [Architectural Heritage Fund](#) are a good first port of call for start-up funding and signposting to other key funders.

6. Getting started: market basics

Operating markets can be hard work – requiring solid organisation, financial discipline, upholding standards, building trust with traders and working long hours. Outdoor market operators face the additional challenge of working outside in all weather conditions, while indoor market operators may hold responsibility for maintenance and refurbishment of buildings. Luckily, plenty of specialist advice, support and funding is available to support third sector market operators to make a success of their markets.

This part of the handbook provides a free, accessible and non-technical overview of the key steps involved in running markets. It provides a bridge for new organisations and those entirely new to markets to access the more specialist advice available via NABMA and NMTF membership described on the previous page. It also draws on and connects with the UK's growing social and community enterprise sector, which provides additional resources and support of value to new market operators.

The advice provided here is also oriented specifically towards the Markets4People vision of markets as community hubs for inclusive economies. It aims to help third sector operators ensure their markets benefit local low-income and marginalised communities by strengthening local foundational economic and social infrastructure and building community wealth. The handbook sits alongside other Markets4People resources which demonstrate the community value of markets, best practice on how it can be advanced and recommendations for policy-makers at national and local level.



1. BUILD YOUR TEAM

If you are establishing a trader co-operative, you should first establish and develop a strong trader group or association to assess and build interest and experience in working collectively. To benefit from the resources and supports NMTF provide to trader groups, you can register as an NMTF Group and join the NMTF Groups Network.

If your organisation is new, it is important that its first members/directors/trustees are able to commit their time and skills to the early development of the organisation. You will need to review the composition of your membership/board regularly as your organisation develops, for example bringing in specific expertise as needed.

All organisations – whether entirely new or just new to markets – should bring in people with experience or knowledge of markets at an early stage. This can include market traders or customers from your area, or people involved in running other local markets. You should also make sure the key groups and interests are involved as early as possible.

You may be reliant on volunteers, especially early on. This is a strength in many ways, as it draws on and builds skills, experience and capacity in the local community. Although many trader- and community-run markets may not initially generate a large enough income to employ any staff, larger markets, financially-profitable markets and those able to access grant funding will be able to use a portion of their income to hire core staff, like any other market operator. Hiring core staff will help to ensure legal and financial obligations are fulfilled.

New organisations can access grants (see [Section 5](#)) to pay staff costs until the market generates an income. Applying for funding can be time consuming but groups may be able to access support and advice from local authorities' voluntary and community sector support providers.

Paid staff can work closely with volunteers, making the most of different strengths and experiences as well as developing skills and providing training. This can also help to keep costs down so that a larger surplus can be reinvested in the market and community. Making time for fun, socialising, team building and creative activities can help to avoid burnout and build a strong volunteer and staff team that understands each other's strengths and weaknesses. This will also help your organisation to remain strongly rooted in the community even as it develops, ensuring it continues to be well-placed to ensure the market serves the community.

Paying staff also creates jobs for local people, contributing to the local economy. As the cost of living rises, being a good employer is a holistic way to support staff by paying a living wage and building a supportive, caring and healthy workplace culture, for example via effective line management and markets. Such measures, combined with markets' potential to nurture community and mutual aid, can make community- and trader-run markets desirable places to work.

Case Study 7: Radcliffe Market employs 18 staff who are all paid a Real Living Wage in keeping with the values and principles of the Community Benefit Society. It also provides work experience to local school and college students and support to young people starting up new businesses.



2. FIND OUT ABOUT LOCAL MARKET PLANS AND LICENSING ARRANGEMENTS

If you are interested in setting up a new market, you should contact your local authority to find out about market policies and approvals processes. If the local authority has a market plan, this may provide useful information on the markets currently operating in your area. You can use this information to ensure your market does not negatively impact on other markets. The market plan can also help you to understand the local authority's perspective on what kinds of markets might be needed in your area. Such information can help you shape a proposal that is likely to be accepted.

You should also find out whether the local authority operates market licensing arrangements, and other relevant sorts of permissions such as traffic regulation orders. Not all local authorities operate market licensing policies, but where they exist they will set out the local authority's position on markets, provide details of how you can apply for a markets licence and the criteria you need to address to be successful. Many local authorities take a 'light touch' approach to charity and community markets but they tend to be more demanding for commercial markets.

If a market licensing policy exists you should obtain a license before going ahead; otherwise you risk enforcement action by the local authority. If a market licensing policy does not exist, then you should be able to go ahead providing you meet any other legal requirements.

3. DEVELOP THE PURPOSE AND LOCATION OF THE MARKET THROUGH LOCAL ENGAGEMENT

It is important to agree at the outset the principles of your market, what its objectives are and who it is there to serve. In light of increasing food poverty and the cost of living crisis, ensuring your market provides affordable food and other staples should be a priority for any public, trader- or community-run market.

You can draw on your own knowledge and experience of the local community and any existing markets to develop your initial ideas. You will then need to test and develop these initial ideas further through extensive local engagement. Even if you are taking over an existing market, it is important this is done right at the beginning to establish and foster a sense of community ownership.

Early engagement will also help to ensure that issues of inclusivity, representation, and accessibility are addressed – for instance taking a steer from local residents on how to make the space disability-friendly, or on the kinds of produce, and prices, that would meet local need. Local engagement can also help to promote your market, group and activities to potential traders, customers and partners.

Think about whether your goals can be best served via an indoor or outdoor market, and via an existing or new market. These choices have wide-ranging implications, for example relating to financial viability and operations. You should make sure you understand and seek advice on building condition and financial implications before taking on responsibility for buildings or land.

If you are interested in taking on an existing market, you will need a good understanding of its current benefits, as well as potential gaps in provision. You should talk to the local authority at an early stage to understand their perspective on the market, whether they might be interested in partnering with a third sector market operator, and the procurement process and requirements. For a new market, you will need to find the right location, identify the land/building owner and explore their willingness to grant permission or a lease as soon as possible.

Read the Markets4People reports on how markets can particularly benefit low-income and minoritised communities



4. SECURE A FREEHOLD, LEASE OR OTHER CONTRACT

You will need to gain permission or secure a freehold, leasehold or other contract from the current owner of the land or building in which you wish to operate your market. It is important to understand and negotiate the requirements, restrictions and costs involved. You should obtain legal advice on sales, leases and contracts and engage professionals who can advise on health and safety, building operation and facilities management.

A freehold or a long leasehold is generally preferable as it provides greater clarity, security and investment potential. If this is not possible, a contract setting out the principles and conditions of the agreement can help to clarify roles and responsibilities. This is an area in which you are likely to need to pay for specialist advice and support; relevant sources of funding are signposted in [Section 5](#).

You should include the social value and impact of your market as part of negotiations on rent or sale price. Public bodies are able to set a sub-market or peppercorn price or rent where an organisation can demonstrate their social value or public benefit. Private bodies may also be willing to agree a sub-market or peppercorn rent as part of their CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) policies and ESG (Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance) reporting requirements.

While austerity may place pressure on these negotiations in some cases, the growing evidence for the community value of markets – including the Markets4People research - can be used to try to convince local authorities of the wider benefits of a sub-market or peppercorn rent. Various tools are available to identify and calculate social value/impact, some of which have been developed specifically for markets. You can use these tools yourselves, hire consultants or collaborate with students or academics.

Read the Markets4People report on measuring the social value of markets



If you are looking to take on an existing local authority market, it is likely you will need to go through a procurement process. You should talk to the local authority at an early stage to understand the process and their core requirements.

You will likely need to draw on technical and professional support and advice in order to prepare a successful bid, for example on financial viability and business plan; governance, management and operations; capacity and experience; and refurbishment and restoration plans where relevant. Procurement processes are often run online, requiring the preparation of bid documents and digital skills.

Funding is available to support existing and new organisations wanting to bid, as set out in [Section 6](#).

5. DEVELOP YOUR BUSINESS PLAN

Start preparing your business plan early on. At first, it will be quite high level but will become more detailed as you make progress. You should seek professional advice to ensure it is robust, and meets your goals and the requirements of the land/building owner. You should discuss the key issues with your group and the wider community.

A business plan should include a full understanding of the three year capital and revenue costs of the market. A projection of the expected income, based on existing local rents and adjusted for affordability, is a helpful exercise. Securing expressions of interest from traders can demonstrate demand and inform projections.

Developing a business plan will help identify and address any gaps or weaknesses. It should inform resource management and strategic decision-making. It can also identify the potential to generate a surplus for reinvestment in the market and community. You may need to provide your business plan as part of negotiations with the land or building owner, to demonstrate the financial viability of your proposal and your capacity to deliver. You can also use your business plan to secure grant funding and early investment.

6. STRONG BRANDING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Successful markets need consistent clear communication, and a recognisable brand. Bespoke local engagement and communication will help ensure your market is strongly rooted in the community. Communications and branding should communicate the culture and purpose of the market, and provide practical information about timing, location and activities.

You may inherit branding and communications infrastructure from an existing market that you can build on and further develop, or you may be starting from scratch with a new market proposal. Either way, you should draw on local knowledge and engagement to understand the channels through which your target communities get their information.

It will be important to use a range of channels and formats to ensure inclusive communication. This could include physical channels to address digital exclusion and additional languages where needed. Word of mouth recommendations will continue to be important.

7. BUILD RELATIONSHIPS, JOIN NETWORKS AND WORK IN PARTNERSHIP

Invest time and effort in building a good relationship with your local authority, especially if you hope to take on one of their markets. Building trust and dialogue with the local authority will also help to secure a license or permission to close roads if needed. It can also help with accessing relevant support and opportunities from local authority voluntary and community services and local economy, regeneration and public health teams.

You should also build relationships with local business associations, including any Business Improvement District, town centre partnership or local chamber of commerce. Likewise, it will be helpful to join local community and voluntary networks and forums. You may wish to explore partnering with local public bodies and other organisations on specific activities or projects in order to maximise their benefit for the local community

Read more about partnering in
Section 3 of the Markets4People
operator handbook



7. The role of local authorities

This section outlines for local authorities how they can support trader- and community-run markets. This includes connecting up with relevant local authority policy goals, programmes and teams, as well as making use of market plans, licensing policies and procurement processes.

While there are several existing and emerging examples of best practice in this area – see the [Markets4People operator handbook](#) – more opportunities for learning amongst local authorities and national level attention could help to drive change further in this direction.

1. CONNECT WITH VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR, AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES AND TEAMS

Most local authorities have policy goals and programmes to support a strong and active local voluntary and community sector and local business community. Local authorities increasingly work in collaboration and partnership with other local groups and organisations to achieve their policy goals. Partnership working with local community and business associations is now a major element of contemporary efforts to revitalise high streets and town centres, for example.

Supporting trader- and community-run markets contributes to these policy goals. This need not increase the workload of already-stretched markets teams; instead, local authority market teams can join up with voluntary and community services and business development teams to connect new third-sector market operators with the support and opportunities available. This might include connecting trader and community-run markets in to funding and support focused on addressing the cost of living crisis, including access to healthy affordable food and other basic goods and supporting livelihoods via low-cost trading space.

Likewise, local authority regeneration teams can work together with markets teams to collaborate effectively with trader and community groups interested in setting up markets as part of regeneration schemes. Markets teams can use the Markets4People resources to help convince colleagues in other teams of the relevance and potential of markets to contribute to their policy goals and responsibilities, and the benefits to be gained by joining up and working together.

Read the Platform Places report on community collaboration for high streets



Read the Markets4People resources on the community value of markets



2. CONNECT WITH COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING AND RELATED LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES AND TEAMS

An increasing number of local authorities have adopted community wealth building policies in order to retain greater benefits of economic development locally. This includes supporting the development of social and community enterprises of various kinds in order to increase local collective ownership of economic and social assets. It also includes ensuring local authority procurement processes are accessible to social, community and small businesses, making use of their spending power to increase the circulation and retention of wealth locally. There is increasing interest in the idea of 'public-commons' partnerships as an alternative to the 'public-private' partnership model.

Supporting trader- and community-run markets can contribute to community wealth building and related local economic development policies such as inclusive growth. Local authority markets teams can join up with community wealth building or inclusive growth teams to ensure trader and community groups interested in running markets are included and supported through the relevant programmes.

Read the CLES guide to community wealth building



Read Common Wealth's proposal for public-commons partnerships



Case Study 9: Oxford City Council is starting to explore how its market plan and powers might better encourage and support community-run markets, in response to growing interest from community groups participating in community wealth building projects in low-income areas.



3. INCLUDE TRADER- AND COMMUNITY-RUN MARKETS IN MARKET PLANS AND LICENSING ARRANGEMENTS

Local authorities' legal power to operate markets emanates from a number of different sources including royal charter, local legislation and public legislation. Local authorities use these market powers not only to operate their own markets but also to control the holding of other markets and market events in the local area via market licensing policies.

The national market operator association, NABMA, also encourages local authorities to develop a market plan; both the market plan and licensing policies are intended to provide a balanced market offer and to ensure that any market or market event meets required standards. Local authorities can use their market plans and licensing arrangements to shape the broader market offer locally beyond the markets they operate directly.

Local authorities can include the need and demand for trader- and community-run markets when developing or reviewing their market plans and licensing arrangements. While NABMA already encourages local authorities to include third-sector operators in market plans and licensing arrangements, a more proactive approach may help to ensure benefits for low-income, marginalised and vulnerable communities.

In these areas, social and community groups and enterprises may be particularly well-placed to run markets which genuinely benefit these communities, helping to address the inequalities that particularly impact them.

4. INCLUDE SOCIAL VALUE / COMMUNITY BENEFIT IN MARKET MANAGEMENT PROCUREMENT

Local authorities are legally required to take social value into account in procurement processes and decisions. Local authorities can also use their procurement power to retain and circulate wealth locally as described above.

By including social value in procurement processes for new market operators, local authorities can ensure public markets continue to deliver community benefit whether operated by local authorities, the private sector or the third sector. While NABMA already encourages local authorities to consider third-sector operations when exploring market management options, embedding social value in procurement processes will help local authorities to take into account the social value and community benefit that third-sector organisations can offer.

Read the Local Government Association's guide to how local authorities can build social value into procurement.



8. Case studies

CASE STUDY 1: COTTINGHAM MARKET, YORKSHIRE

Governance: Trader Co-op

Type of market: Street market

Regularity: Weekly on a Thursday

Staffing: The trader committee

Website: [facebook.com/cottinghammarket](https://www.facebook.com/cottinghammarket)

History

This is a historic market with a charter that goes back to 1200. Revived in the 1980's by the East Riding of Yorkshire Council it subsequently closed due to lack of funding and difficulties in running the market successfully. Existing traders felt they could run the market themselves and got together, with the support of the NMTF, to set up a trader co-op to take on the lease.

Trader-run since 1996, this outdoor market is set up at 5am every Thursday in the heart of Cottingham outside the Civic Hall, on a space used as a car park the rest of the week.

Challenges

Generating enough income between the traders to produce a surplus, once the rent charged by the Council is covered, is a challenge. Rent is charged for 39 weeks from April to December; it is a delicate balance between supporting traders and having a reserve pot of money for other activities relating to the market and unforeseen circumstances such as the pandemic. The traders also have to be adaptive to changing trends in customer demand whilst supporting each other to make a living and promoting the market through social media.

Benefits

The need to be adaptive also creates a sense of energy, and a changing customer base, alongside loyal weekly visitors, keeps the management interesting and fresh. The market traders are proud that there is always something for everyone. The trader co-op is also able to be flexible and have the skills in-house to support people into trading. Examples include a trader who grows their own plants for sale, a dressmaker who sells clothes she has made and a French patisserie trader who started making pastries during lockdown and expanded into the market.

Present Day

The Trader Committee runs well, and includes one member who has been there since the beginning. Social media content is produced and run in-house by one of the traders, and although the market primarily serves the needs of the people of Cottingham and the local area, it is also a strong part of the visitor economy.

There is a waiting list for the market, and a rota of food traders to keep variety and share opportunity. The market has a good mix of traditional and modern stalls including a tea bar, pet foods, fruit and veg stalls, a wet fish van and hosiery.

On average there are 20 stalls and the traders work together to ensure there is a useful selection of goods that people might need and enjoy. The committee also ensure there is only one stall per type, giving new traders the chance to try their business idea without excess competition.



CASE STUDY 2: FILWOOD MARKET, BRISTOL

Governance: Community Interest Company

Type of market: Street market

Regularity: Monthly on a Saturday

Staffing: Volunteer committee and market set up staff

Website: facebook.com/Filwoodcommunitymarket

History

This market started in September 2019, after local people identified a need for quality fresh produce and arts and crafts for the local community on a large housing estate with only four occupied local shops. It is a resident- and volunteer-led initiative which incorporated as a Community Interest Company in March 2022.

Facilitated and seed-funded by the Knowle West Alliance (a collaborative partnership of active and connected local residents, businesses and organisations), the market aims to be affordable and accessible – in walking distance – and to keep investment in the local area. The market sets up in gazebos on land near to the community centre, on Filton Broadway at the heart of the estate.

Challenges

Funded through a £1,000 start-up grant; risks have been managed well through partnerships. Market stalls were bought from another organisation, and some money was spent on marketing in an area where many people are digitally excluded. To overcome this challenge, the CIC has invested in radio and paper advertising as well as social media.

Space is now the next challenge with a need to invest in further stalls, perhaps on the surrounding streets.

Benefits

The market has stalls ranging from home-made cards and candles and a bakery to home-made knitted clothing and to plants. People with business ideas can access a £100 grant to get off the ground, as well as business advice and help with accounting..

The market is becoming a local community hub. For example, market users are signposted to a nearby community learning project for support and courses; a stall provides advice on affordable finance solutions for businesses and a group campaigning to save a local swimming pool reaches supporters from a market stall. The Filwood Broadway working group also has a stall at the market to encourage discussion of changes to the local area.

Traders and users are getting to know other communities via visitors from outside the immediate area. Importantly, the market is making food accessible as the nearest supermarket is two miles away, and local shops are benefitting from the footfall.



Filwood Market, Bristol.
(Image: Filwood Community Market CIC)

Four local people are employed to set up the market, and there are many volunteer opportunities.

Present Day

The market has gone from ten stalls in 2019, to 29 stalls and a waiting list. Alongside traders there are also stalls set up for people to give feedback and for a rota of community groups each month to showcase their work. This has included the Cinema Club, Historical Society and a boxing group. The market is thriving with local musicians playing along with a local dance group who do flash mob dancing.

Each month there is different entertainment and children's activities providing a combined market/community day atmosphere.

CASE STUDY 3: MOULSECOOMB COMMUNITY MARKET, BRIGHTON

Governance: Unincorporated

Type of market: Social supermarket **Regularity:** Weekly on a Wednesday

Staffing: Run by a volunteer core group

Website: <https://www.our-mcm.org.uk/>

History

The Moulsecoomb and Bevendean ward in Brighton is an area of relatively high deprivation and poverty, which faced challenges of poor employment prospects and health inequalities before the pandemic. Following the onset of the pandemic there was an urgent need for food support in the area, with many older people having to shield indoors. As a response, Moulsecoomb Community Market was set up in September 2020.

Challenges

The process of setting up and operating the community market has had its challenges, including time commitment for volunteers. A key lesson learned by the community market was not to spend resources on developing policies from scratch when it was easier to adapt these from other pre-existing organisations.

Opening a bank account was a difficult process; the group was unable to find a treasurer and was forced to rely on one of the volunteers to take this role on. The pandemic also posed various challenges, such as having to close and reopen in waves and the need to coordinate two separate volunteer teams to reduce the risk of a coronavirus outbreak forcing the market to temporarily close.

Benefits

The market is a community-run social supermarket, giving people a regular supply of healthy food and essentials in return for a small weekly fee (£3.50). In this way it forms an effective response to food poverty while providing a number of other benefits that the traditional food bank model fails to achieve. These benefits include a focus on healthy food and items that local people want to eat, improved wellbeing for volunteers and users of the market, and partnering with local community food growers in the supply chain. Drawing on the enthusiasm of community members to help out, the market has been a means for mutual aid in a time of crisis.

The community market works in partnership with various organisations. The council, in particular, has been key; it allowed the food support operation to be localised to Moulsecoomb, paid for the market's subscription to FareShare food donations, put the group in touch with existing third-sector funding structures and provided early vaccinations for volunteers as frontline workers. The community hall used by the market is also council-owned; the market is exempt from business rates but does pay rent to support the finances of the hall.



Moulsecoomb Community Market.
(Image: Kate Knight)

The market has also benefited from grants from central government and the National Lottery. There has been significant technical support from local not-for-profit organisations, particularly the Brighton Food Partnership (helping with funding applications, bulk-buying of food and training the market's volunteers) and the Trust for Developing Communities (helping to develop the market's constitution and policies in order to access food donations).

Present day

The market is responding to the current cost of living crisis through its regular affordable food and products. In November 2022 the market redistributed donations from a nearby school and has also had free advice on energy bills by a local energy coop.

CASE STUDY 4: GRANBY 4 STREETS MARKET, LIVERPOOL

Governance: Granby 4 Streets Community Land Trust

Type of market: Street market

Regularity: 1st Saturday of the month

Staffing: Volunteer manager and support roles

Website: www.granby4streetsclt.co.uk/street-market

History

This market started in 2007 and is a project of the Granby 4 Streets Community Land Trust in Liverpool which is entirely community-led and owned. The CLT was set up by various campaigns and projects whose members were actively opposing the demolition of a group of streets and working positively on 'greening' and improving the local environment. At the same time some local people started picking up and selling discarded objects. The market grew out of this and rapidly became an opportunity for social interaction and celebration.

The parent body is responsible for finance, accounting and governance.

Challenges

The market is almost entirely run by one woman and her partner, unpaid and in their spare time. It remains difficult to make it sustainable – but the intention is to fundraise to employ someone to take over the running of the market with voluntary support.

Maintaining community connections takes time – for example, getting people involved to help setting up and taking down the

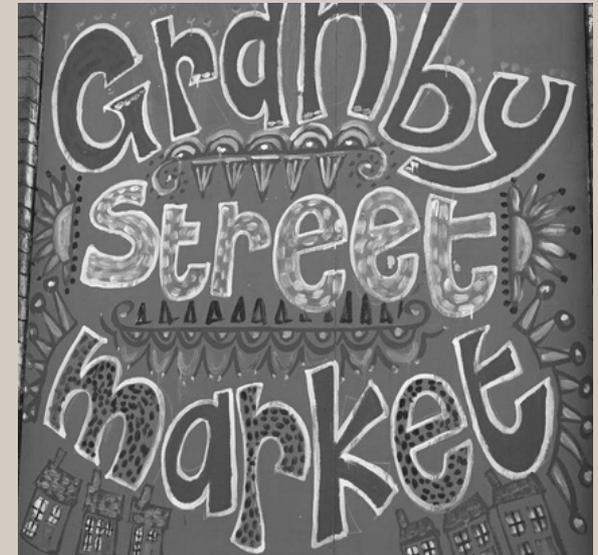
market infrastructure and reminding traders to come along. Lots of people still trade in cash and communicate only face to face or via text, which has its perks but can be time intensive.

Benefits

The market is halfway between a street party and a market, with regular live music. This is good for stall holders and those starting out and good for people getting out and about and making social connections.

The market provides traders with an extra source of income. Even those who don't turn a huge profit enjoy the social aspect. The council is about to allow traders to use some corner shops which are being shut down. This creates a good opportunity for small businesses who wouldn't otherwise be able to afford the space.

The market has a very strong social function. It reconnects residents who used to live in the area but have been displaced due to regeneration. It also brings visitors to an area that has suffered from stigmatisation. What is more, the market knits together a variety of community-focused and local organisations.



Granby Market's handpainted street sign.
(Image: Granby 4 Streets CLT)

Present day

The market is often fully booked, and depending on the weather there are between 60 and 85 traders.

In September 2020 a fire destroyed nearly all of the market equipment. In a testament to its significant role in the local community, the market managed to crowdfund over £20,000 in one month from around 600 donations. This has been crucial to the survival of the market, as the equipment is also rented at a low cost to other local and community groups across Liverpool.

CASE STUDY 5: ACTON STREET MARKET, WEST LONDON

Governance: Project of Action West London, a 22 year old community development charity

Type of market: Street market

Regularity: 4 days per week

Staffing: Market Supervisor with support from Action West London CEO and volunteers

Website: www.actonmarket.co.uk

History

The market was first piloted in 2005 and was then established in 2007 with a grant from the London Development Agency. The market has a central location, in the pedestrianised area outside a supermarket in Acton town centre in west London. At the time there was a high incidence of anti-social behaviour, which made local people feel unsafe, and a lack of access to a range of affordable goods and services. Action West London set up the market to create a safe, inclusive space, meet the needs of local low income families, create a customer base for existing traders and provide opportunities for new business ideas to be incubated and tested in line with their charitable objectives. Acton has a long history of markets, so when residents were consulted they suggested a market.



Challenges

Providing stalls for traders is important as this lowers the barrier for entry for new people looking to test business ideas; it also ensures the stalls are robust enough to withstand wind and rain. Finding people to erect the stalls and take them down each day can prove a challenge. Several years ago Ealing Council, which owns the land, talked about putting the market out to tender. The strength of the relationship between market traders and shoppers ensured this did not happen, but the lack of security of tenure remains a concern. This is coupled with pressure to have a more 'upmarket' market to serve affluent residents, something which is being considered as an additional specialist market.

Benefits

The market brings diverse communities together and has created a highly visible public space where everyone belongs. The market is a hub of community activity where stallholders and customers fully reflect the diversity and social and economic background of the community.



There is great camaraderie between traders, shoppers and residents, and people of different ages, nationalities, religions and ethnicities mingle together. Free stalls are given to local community groups, regular community events are organised and there are dedicated programmes of support for new traders.

Present Day

The market closed during the pandemic, but a few local hot food stalls but is now back to full strength. In January 2022, the market won a £157,000 National Lottery Grant to get local residents and communities involved in practical climate action by focusing on how to 'Reduce, Recycle, Reuse'. This grant is designed to fund new staff and extended activities around repair cafes, freecycle, bike repair skills and support, and clothing alteration and repairs. This is just one example of how the market constantly looks to adapt and change to suit local community needs.

CASE STUDY 6: WOODGRANGE MARKET, EAST LONDON

Governance: Unincorporated

Type of market: Street market

Regularity: Weekly on a Saturday

Staffing: Run by a volunteer core group

Website: [facebook.com/woodgrangemkte7](https://www.facebook.com/woodgrangemkte7)

History

Woodgrange Market in Forest Gate in Newham, London, launched as a Christmas Market in 2011 (the year before the Olympics) to bring people into the area, create employment and space where people could meet. The council provided support through a markets consultant and a local councillor, allocating a site, charging a nominal weekly rent and helping with planning to become a designated market.

Organisers visited other markets in the area to get ideas and form relationships with existing stallholders. Woodgrange is now a thriving weekly market with regular stalls – including three allocated for local charities and community groups – a regular clientele and live music. It mainly hosts arts and crafts by local traders and hot food but also fresh fruit and vegetables.



Challenges

Until recent improvements to the public realm linked to Crossrail, there was no electricity supply to the market. Also storage was an issue, and until the council provided two cyclehoop storage units as part of Crossrail-linked investments, the group had to buy storage and store things in their own living rooms. Initially many residents didn't know the market existed despite its location next to a local supermarket. Another challenge is to find regular volunteers to help setting up and taking down market infrastructure with shifts at 7am to 9am and 3pm to 5pm.

Benefits

The benefits of Woodgrange Market for the local community and in turn for the council are substantial. The market is well attended by residents and provides a safe space for people who would otherwise be isolated or lonely to come and socialise. It has hosted a number of local charities as well as start-up stalls that eventually set up as permanent businesses nearby, providing employment opportunities for young people. In this way, the initial assistance of the council and ongoing support through rent and licensing has allowed for much wider social value creation by local volunteers.



Fresh produce in Woodgrange Market.
(Image: Woodgrange Market).

Present Day

The market is thriving, employing an administrator for two hours each week to ensure traders are booked in smoothly. The administrator is someone who used to have a stall and now has a shop next to the market. Alongside the traders who pay for a stall there is a permanent stall that is free for charities, for example a young woman who has a charity that gives out hygiene products.

The market as a whole is the license holder, so individual stallholders need only complete a relatively quick registration process at the local library. This has removed what would otherwise be a significant barrier to local residents looking to set up a market stall.

CASE STUDY 7: RADCLIFFE MARKET, GREATER MANCHESTER

Governance: Community Benefit Society

Type of market: Covered market

Regularity: 7 days per week

Staffing: Manager and volunteers

Website: www.radcliffe.market

History

Radcliffe Market Hall was taken over by the community in June 2018 after it had been struggling under council management. The market lease was put out to tender, following dialogue with one of the traders who had a café. They won after forming a community benefit society.

The market hall has gone from five traders to full capacity at 30-plus stalls every week. It is a membership organisation with about 250 members who pay a monthly subscription with some of that money going into a pot to fund local projects. It is estimated that 1,200 people visit every week.

Challenges

When the market reopened there were only five traders left from the previous market, down from a previous 38 – these were a deli, shoe repairer, key cutter, butcher and hairdresser. The group started off with no income but then received support from the Greater Manchester Community and Voluntary Organisations (GMCVO) and applied for National Lottery funding.

Rent from traders at the start was very low and the building needed a lot of investment, including plumbing, upgrading stalls and putting in water heaters and extraction.

Benefits

Besides a varied and affordable market, which also opens in the evening serving affordable food, the market provides a space for skills and employment training for young people and others marginalised from the job market. This has been done by partnering with local schools and colleges.

The market supports 20 jobs and it engages with a further 25 volunteers. As part of the market's social value principles, the market also runs Community Tuesdays - a quiet day for the market - when the space is opened up to community groups. This enables community groups to share what they are doing, whilst contributing to some of the cost and creating more activity on Tuesdays.



Present Day

Supported by Bury Council and the national government through Covid grants, the market now provides a thriving space day and night. Alongside more traditional stalls such as a baker and greengrocer there are food stalls run by local traders serving Thai, Indian, Japanese and Italian food. Profits from an in-house bar contribute to the running costs of the market.

The large dining area is also used for local arts groups in the daytime. There is a plan to expand to the market cellar as part of a broader plan for community-led regeneration of the local area. In 2021 Bury Council won a £20m Levelling Up Fund bid to invest in Radcliffe's town centre; this will have an impact on the market.

CASE STUDY 8: LEVENSHULME MARKET, SOUTH MANCHESTER

Governance: Community Interest Company

Type of market: Street market

Regularity: Weekly

Staffing: Run by a volunteer core group

Website: www.levymarket.com

History

Inspired by the Portas Review's recommendation that markets could play a role in reviving high streets, Manchester City Council established the market in 2011. A number of local residents and local business owners who were extremely supportive of the market quickly became actively involved in resolving some early difficulties with marketing, booking stalls and operating days. After Manchester City Council decided it would not be viable to continue to run the market itself, this group of residents formed a Community Interest Company (CIC) in 2013, in order to run it as a social enterprise (a business which purposefully reinvests profit in projects for social change).

Challenges

The CIC received critical early funding and support from UnLtd and an expert in social entrepreneurship, helping it grow from 25 to 50 stalls and a weekly rather than monthly market. Faced with this rapid and unexpected growth, the CIC commissioned Nickala to carry out a review of the social value they had created so far. The aim was to make the case for further investment from funders and to guide decisions about where and how to invest future profits.

The review focused on aspects of social value which stakeholders reported they felt Levenshulme Market generated. These aspects included job generation and increased opportunities for economic participation; provision of a platform for enterprises to grow; investment in local businesses; promotion of environmentally friendly consumption and activities; a community building space and community regeneration and promotion. The evaluation followed a 'social accounting' approach, blending existing approaches in a bespoke way to broaden the scope of accounting beyond finance to account for social, environmental and cultural impacts.

Having first established what key stakeholders wanted from and valued about the market, the next task was to collect information and develop an evidence base about what had been achieved so far. Information was gathered from a range of sources, including pre-existing data collected from traders applying for a stall, as well as interviews, focus groups and surveys with direct and indirect stakeholders and beneficiaries. These methods produced quantitative figures such as the number of jobs generated, average turnover per trader and investment secured by the CIC for the market and the area.

Benefits

Attempts to produce proxy measures of the monetary value of 'softer' impacts, such as how greater enjoyment of community spaces impacts the lives of local people, were limited by the availability of suitable proxies. Nonetheless, the research revealed that these benefits were important for the local community and made recommendations as to how to continue enhancing them. Design and delivery of the review was facilitated in such a way that it made stakeholders feel listened to, enabled them to influence the future direction of the Market and brought groups of traders and residents together as peers to build new connections and share knowledge.

The research established a series of hard and soft impacts, including that traders generate £4250 average per week income; £3,000 of staff salaries per month are retained in the local area; 500 people have been engaged in community initiatives supported by the Market and are able to enjoy local community spaces more often.

Present day

The social value review continues to guide strategic decisions about where and how to reinvest profits in community projects. Key projects being developed include: projects to harness the passion and talents of black and minority ethnic communities; increasing links with the local business community; supporting traders to reflect the Market's values; creating new innovation schemes for venture start up, growth and joint community events.

CASE STUDY 9 – Oxford City Council

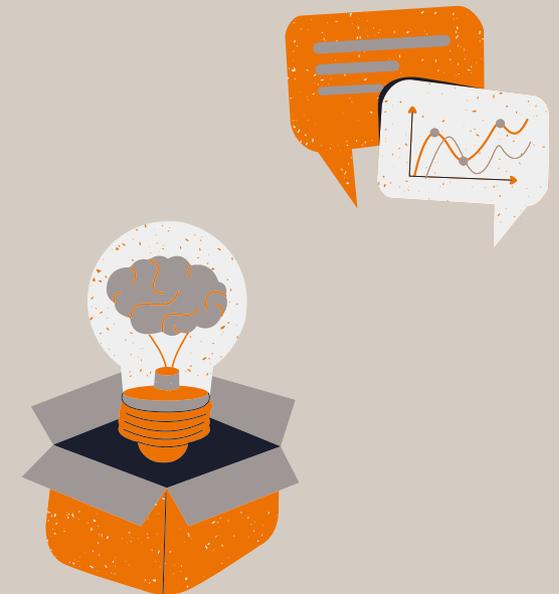
In 2022, Oxford City Council began exploring how it could support local community groups and social enterprises to set up and run markets. This initiative emerged from a bottom-up community wealth building project, co-owned by the city council and local community groups and social enterprises. The project aimed to explore how the city council and other large anchor institutions could support and facilitate smaller community groups and social enterprises in more deprived areas to generate and recirculate community wealth.

The project has focused on understanding the aims of local community groups and social enterprises, developing and supporting ideas for enterprising and tradeable socially-useful activities. One idea that has emerged in several places is community markets. An organisation providing support for victims of trauma was keen to operate an Afro-Caribbean market in order to generate income to support their services. Residents and businesses in newly-designated low-traffic neighbourhoods were also interested in starting up street markets, making use of space previously taken up by cars and bringing new activity to the area.

These emerging ideas have prompted discussions within the city council about how community-run markets could be licensed and supported. The community wealth building team are in discussions with the markets team to understand the current approach and explore what changes might be needed.

Currently, the council owns four markets, one of which it operates directly while three are operated by a private company, LSD Productions. Historically, the council has not had a wider plan or strategy for licensing markets, focusing wholly on its own markets. Like London local authorities, Oxford City Council has operated markets under street trading legislation, licensing individual market traders rather than entire markets.

In light of the interest in setting up new community markets unearthed by the community wealth building project, the city council is reconsidering this approach. Council officers have sought advice from NABMA on the legal basis for operating markets, and are interested in developing a wider plan or strategy for supporting markets that deliver community benefit.



9. Resource bank

NMTF

- Trader operation – your market, your way
- Spotlight on... co-operatives and trader operated markets
- Market trader start-up guide

NABMA

- Toolkit for setting up a local market
- Retail Markets: Management Models

Markets4People

- Developing markets as community hubs for inclusive economies
- The importance of Newcastle's Grainger Market as an affordable source of food
- Grainger Market: a community asset at the heart of Newcastle upon Tyne
- Bury Market: shopping destination and community hub
- Queen's Market: a successful and specialised market
- Measuring the value of traditional retail markets: towards a holistic approach

Locality

These and other resources available on the Locality [website](#).

- Good governance
- Top tips for community engagement
- 7 principles of local marketing
- How to get and keep local people involved
- Business plan template and guidance
- Understanding community asset transfer

Co-operatives UK

These and many others available on the Co-operatives UK [website](#), alongside a [practitioners directory](#).

- Guide to Co-ops
- Simply Legal
- Simply Start-up
- Simply Governance
- Simply Finance
- The Community Shares handbook
- Model governing documents

Other information about legal structure

- Community interest companies: a step-by-step guide
- Charities Commission

Support and funding

- Cooperatives UK
- Power to Change
- Social Enterprise UK
- NCVO
- National Lottery Community Fund
- National Lottery Heritage Fund
- Architectural Heritage Fund

Relevant policies

- What is the foundational economy?
- The value of social infrastructure
- Social value – achieving community benefits
- A platform for places: reviving town centres by changing how communities access property
- What is community wealth building?
- A new model: how public-commons partnerships can change the way we organise our cities

10. Funding sources

The National Lottery Community Fund has many programmes which may be useful for starting a market, developing partnerships or new projects. Awards for All is the best starting point - a simple application form for up to £10,000 for projects that strengthen communities.

Local Community Foundations are found in most counties and regions in the UK. They connect philanthropic people with local causes that matter to them. It does this by supporting a defined geographical area by building endowments and generating funds to support community needs and local organisations making a difference. Community foundations offer a variety of grant-making programmes and you can find your nearest one the website.

The Landfill Communities Fund (LCF) is an innovative tax credit scheme enabling operators of landfill sites in England and Northern Ireland to contribute money to organisations enrolled with ENTRUST as Environmental Bodies (EBs).

Power to Change is an organisation set up to support community businesses. They support people to start and grow community businesses that revive local assets, create the services people rely on and address local needs. They have a variety of funding programmes which can be found on their website.

The Co-op offer localised grants through their membership.

Co-operatives UK (the trade body for all co-ops in the UK) also have a tailored programme of support with some grants.

The School for Social Entrepreneurs run accredited programmes which may help you set up your market. They also have links to funders that may support social entrepreneurs/ social enterprises.

Social Investment Business support charities and social enterprises to build stronger and fairer communities. They offer funding and flexible, adaptive support to the organisations that make up the social economy. Their community enterprise fund is a good place to start.

UnLtd offer funding and support to both individual social entrepreneurs and social ventures.



