

# GOOD FOOD STORY

**Name:** Becki Castle and John McGuire  
**Project:** The Pop-up Cafe  
**Location:** SMCC, Whithorn  
**Open:** Tuesdays 9.30am-1.30pm



## Describe your project

John:

It's a community cafe, so we're all volunteers apart from Becky cause she's the manager of the centre and we're here every Tuesday. I'm here all day on a Monday, it's a lot of work. We use food from the community fridge that people collect from the supermarkets, we got people who grow veg in their garden they'll say: "I've got as massive pumpkin, can you do anything with that?" I don't really know what the menu will be until the Monday morning and we'll see we've got this we've got that, we'll do something, a lot of the time we kind of wing it.

## What draws people in?

Becki:

We get up to 50 people a day on average. The appeal is the variety of the food, the quality of it but also the price of it. People also talk about how it's so sociable. A lot of people that we get are older people, they live alone and it's just that nice thing once a week you come sit at the big tables, have a chat, get a really nice meal, it's not costing a lot of money, they know where it's come from and it's that real sociable connection, you know. That's what a community centre should be.



## How did it all start?

Becki:

It started from our Trustee, Sheralyn, she's the plant-based professional chef, she's got her own restaurant in the area. She comes up with a lot of ideas [laughs]. She was basically just doing it on her own then I think she was off one week so I drafted in John to cover. He donated and cooked queen scallops so we could sell them at a reasonable price and it kind of evolved from there really where they started to do it together. It's kind of an unlikely pairing a fisherman and a vegan, but it just works so amazingly well together and it's just grown from there to what you've seen today.



## What does sustainability mean to you?

John:

A lot of people have preconceptions about fishermen, that they're wrecking the sea. Why would I do that? The majority of fishermen look after the sea cause that's how they make their living. Overfishing is the problem, we're really lucky in the Solway cause we fought hard with the government and had rules brought in to stop the big super crabbers from fishing our waters. We have this argument too about dredging. Yes, it is damaging to certain things, but a lot of places where they've banned it they don't have the same fish anymore. I'm fifth generation, my son's the sixth, we wouldnae still be fishing the same grounds if it wisnae being worked sustainably. We still catch the same amount of lobsters with the same amount of gear. We've had arguments too about discards. We

have to put back fish that are dead cause we've reached our quota. That doesn't make any sense cause they could have been used for food.



## How does the cafe change people?

John:

The majority of the [food is] all vegan, even the cheese pastries are! If people don't know, it doesnae bother them. It's the stigma attached with being vegan. One of the ladies that comes to the caf, she actually bought me an apron when she was on holiday with all sorts of fish and shellfish on it. She said: "I thought of you, all these different things on here I woulndae have tried if it hadnae been for you." You come in here and you can try the crab cakes and the lobster lasagna for 5 or 6 quid for a portion. Now when she goes out for a meal she'll order crab or anything cause she knows she likes it. It does help to broaden people's horizons a wee bittie, so it does.



## What are your future plans?

Becki:

We'd like to expand and there's certainly a need for it, there aren't a lot of places to eat locally. Lucy just set up the cosy hub for the winter which starts this week until February where people can come and have a hot drink and a bowl of soup and a chat every Thursday and Saturday 11-2.

And we've got this teaching kitchen with all the benches and equipment and it's being used but not anywhere near enough. We need funding to put on cooking workshops and things like that.

