

# MAKING THE MOST AND WASTING THE LEAST

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# A FORCE FOR GOOD

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Alexandra Krause,  
The People’s Pantry

A new pantry in Govanhill, Glasgow, has opened in a former Edwardian public bathhouse.

Called The People’s Pantry, the hub offers fresh, healthy, and good quality food at subsidised prices, providing a sustainable and dignified option for people facing food insecurity, with the aim of reducing reliance on food banks.

The spirit of social justice lies strong within Govanhill Bath Community Trust’s (GBCT) history and it permeates across everything they do. The People’s Pantry is both powered by the community for the community.

The organisation started with the purpose of saving the Govanhill Baths, cherished facilities for the nearby residents, from closure. Over the past 18 years or so, extensive campaigning has been done by local people to transform the public bathhouse into a wellbeing community hub. There are plans for a vibrant space for the community to come together with projects spanning art exhibitions, ceramics classes and the annual Govanhill International Festival.

Community engagement officer Alexandra Krause said: “Most people who work [at the GBCT] are local, so there is a living experience of the area,

and intention to benefit the area. And this is across all our projects, there are a number of different strands to what we deliver, and they are all interconnected.”

And the pantry is now part of the wellbeing centre’s rich tapestry. Hannah, their project coordinator, says: “We see food poverty and food waste are two really huge issues, and obviously food waste can’t solve food poverty. There are already 14 different food banks and emergency food providers in the area, and we want alternatives that are more sustainable and give people more choice over what they’re eating.”

“And the beauty of Govanhill is that it’s so extremely diverse,” Alexandra adds. “There are 82 languages that are spoken in Govanhill and that’s a rare thing in Scotland. Food is something that is very important in many of the cultures of the people that are sharing that space. It’s a social binder.”

The People’s Pantry fulfils an urgent social need too. In response to food poverty in Scotland, the Govanhill Baths want to develop new ways people can access vital resources.

Both Alexandra and Hannah refer to the proposed Right to Food bill, which would enshrine the right to food into Scots law. The pantry aims to change people’s perceptions of food. The fragile nature of food supply in Scotland, and the UK, was illustrated by the recent panic buying during the coronavirus crisis.

“The undignified access to food has been made culturally accepted in the UK for far too long,” says Alexandra. “The Pantry aims at facilitating people to regain control over what they choose to eat and how. We also wanted to bring an element of sharing and, most important, foster individuals’ stewardship towards the whole process.”

Next door to The People’s Pantry is Locavore, a zero waste shop where customers can fill up on loose groceries using their own containers from home. Locavore is one of the many local businesses that donates surplus food, for free, to The People’s Pantry.

Food acts the centre piece of connection between the customers as well. Alexandra recalls the time when a donation of artichokes from the allotment gardens nearby sparked inspiration and shopper traded their recipes.

“Food is something that connects everybody, it’s something everybody’s interested in. And even in these

initial weeks, talking to our members who are coming in about what they’re going to do with their food, everyone gets a little bit excited,” says Hannah.

The pantry has been set up with a membership model. Members pay around £2.50 per week, which entitles them to £15 worth of groceries. At first, there was concern that some might take advantage of the system, leaving not enough supplies for everyone.

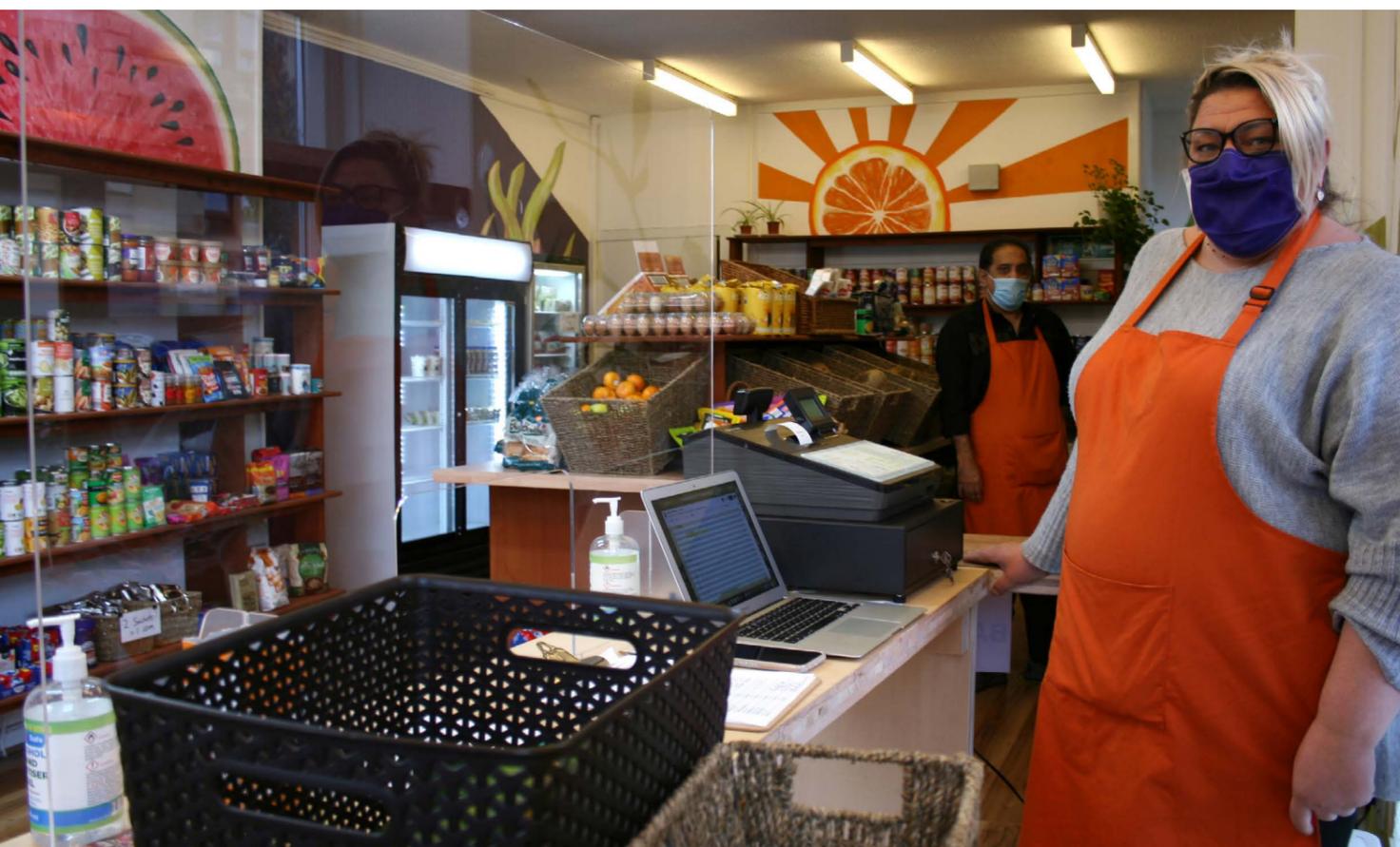
However, they’ve found the opposite. Members who come in take delight in shopping for only what the exact amount they need, which has the added benefit of reducing food waste.

“It’s interesting that, especially with supermarkets, a lot of the reason for a surplus is the way they package and sell things, especially in large packets for individual people. We’ve had so many people come in and say they like how they can take one banana, one apple, two pears. They can be specific about what they take. They might not take as much as they’re entitled to [with their membership]. And there’s something really nice about that,” says Hannah.

The residents of Govanhill also donate their own food that they don’t need, reinforcing the idea the pantry is built together with members of the community.

“I feel that the pantry has the ability of bringing these kinds of things together, in its delivery, its engagement with the community. We are not only talking about waste reduction.” says Alexandra.

**TO KEEP UP WITH THE PEOPLE’S PANTRY, HEAD OVER TO THE GOVANHILL BATHS WEBSITE**



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