Community Meals in St Nicholas Hall, Goodwick

St Nicholas Hall wants to bring people together through food, friendship and community, creating welcoming opportunities for local people to connect, share experiences and strengthen culture.

Context:
St Nicholas Hall is situated in Pencaer, a rural community in Pembrokeshire. Pencaer has 417 residents; 13.8% 0-17yrs, 53.3% 18-64yrs, 32.8% 65+ years old.

The community identified a range of local assets that could support community meals, including the village hall, local food producers, cafés, community groups, outdoor spaces and volunteers

"St Nicholas Village Hall has an excellent but underused kitchen!"

Challenges to consider:

- Limited local services and facilities
- Transport barriers and the need for improved transport options
- Loneliness and social isolation, particularly among older residents
- Ensuring affordable and accessible meals for all

"It is easy to be lonely in an ageing community that doesn't have a shop, a pub or a chapel and so on."

What did the community say about community meals? A community consultation event was held at St Nicholas Village Hall on 6th May 2026. Twelve adults and two children attended to explore what successful community meals could look like. Creative activities, prompt cards, a "Recipe for a Successful Community Meal" questionnaire and a large map of the area helped people to think about what already existed and what they want community meals to look like in their village. Community meals were discussed as a way to reduce loneliness, build local connections and make greater use of the village hall as a community hub.





What do people want most?

People want community meals to feel:

"Homely, casual, relaxed and friendly."

"Informal, welcoming, nourishing."

People emphasised the importance of helping people feel included and valued from the moment they arrive.

"A friendly face to welcome folk in."



What is the recipe for success?

Key ingredients are:

- A friendly face to welcome people.
- A warm, comfortable and homely atmosphere
- Attractive and appetising food presentation
- Pleasant aromas from home-cooked food
- Opportunities to socialise and make new connections
- Low background music that allows conversation
- A menu that caters for a range of tastes and dietary requirements
- Choice and flexibility around meals and portion sizes

"It is important they feel part of the evening."

"To meet new people and learn how to cook!"

"Sharing recipes as a way of being involved even if you can't come."

MENU

What do people want on the menu?

Simple, affordable, seasonal food, using local ingredients for different dietary needs

- Traditional home-cooked meals.
- Seasonal dishes
- Barbecues during the summer months
- Tray bakes
- Vegetarian and vegan options.
- Traditional Welsh recipes
- Recipe sharing and exchanges
- Celebrating food memories and local food heritage

More than a meal.... opportunities for creativity, learning and entertainment:

- Local choirs and musicians
- Community bands and musical performances
- Arts and crafts activities
- Food-themed creative workshops
- Growing herbs and food-related activities
- Learning new cooking skills
- Sharing food memories and stories
- Celebrating Welsh food traditions and heritage

“Use local fresh produce. Vegetables and meat grown without many chemicals are more tasty.”

"The connection with food and Welsh heritage will work very well around here."

Background: This project emerged from the Cymru Wledig LPIP Rural Wales project. Through Innovation Labs in 2025, participants explored how food can enhance wellbeing in rural communities. The vision was to support shared meal initiatives that use local produce, celebrate culture and bring people together, helping to strengthen wellbeing, community cohesion and rural prosperity. Acknowledgement: Special thanks to Ein Cegin and Sophie Bennett for providing mentoring and support to the communities. Contact: www.eincegin.org

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