

# Norda Trust

## Update 2022-2023

DURING the years 2022 and 2023 Norda Trust helped more than 100 people in Cornwall who work for themselves or work remotely. The Trust is currently delivering £200,000 of economic benefits to Cornwall each year, based on jobs being created and micro businesses/remote workers assisted. Here in this review we highlight examples of what our funding and assistance have delivered in the post-Covid period of 2022 and 2023.

### Covid recovery

During this time Cornwall, the rest of the UK and the world continued to feel the aftershock effects of Covid, but the Community Interest Company which runs the two Workbox coworking spaces in Penzance and Truro spaces was able to benefit from business grants and furlough schemes and so was able to cope as the new way of working for most people became the norm. As people's confidence increased, the ability to use the Workbox was welcomed and the feeling of isolation and desperation gradually reduced. Many members were grateful for the advice and support during this uncertain time. The Workbox community spirit continues to be a major benefit of membership.

### New jobs and new members

As Covid changed the way many people in Cornwall work, so the demand for flexible workspace accelerated. Workbox membership increased and visitor use became very popular particularly during the post Covid UK holiday boom. There has been a notable increase in people from Cornwall with jobs returning to live here and work remotely.

### New opportunities

The members of the two spaces continue to employ staff and set up new businesses each year. A notable new member is the fast growing company One World Network, an internet TV production team that creates content on major science and technology issues worldwide. The company now occupies the former boardroom at Workbox Truro. The MD, who relocated to Cornwall, has employed five new staff who now work on international documentaries. They are mainly graduates from local colleges and universities (see photo below). [www.oneworldnetwork.io](http://www.oneworldnetwork.io)



### Zoom Booths

*The Trust funded two new video and phone booths for members to use for more private meetings. These have proved very popular and are now used daily. Meanwhile members are also, post-Covid, becoming more familiar with noise reducing headphones for routine Teams/Zoom meetings. The Workbox now offers headphones and extra screens to members who need them.*





### Workbox Helston project

*The Workbox has been commissioned to help advise Helston Town Council on a potential new third Workbox on the lower floor of its historic Guildhall building (above). Should the bid for Shared Prosperity Fund and Heritage Lottery succeed, the CIC will offer a management arrangement to help establish the new coworking space. The building has a slightly larger capacity than the other two Workboxes in Cornwall. Already a good number of remote workers, freelancers and small companies have expressed an interest in joining. @workboxhelston*



### Living wage headquarters

*Penzance Workbox is a "living wage building". This is a higher level of support for fair pay than just having the CIC register as a living wage employer. It means that all members of the Workbox there are expected to pay their staff at least the real living wage, in 2023 this was £10.90 an hour.*

### Workbox membership and facilities

Membership at both facilities is at a record high of 102 members. People are now used to remote/flexible working and approximately 50% of the membership are employed, with many having returned to Cornwall. Membership includes people that do not want to always work from home eg wanting a different lifestyle, parents with young children, seeking human interaction, person to person skills etc. The range of types of work carried out by these people working for themselves in Cornwall is impressive. Members now include photographers, low carbon consultants, educational tool providers, IT and cybersecurity specialists, a forensic scientist, defence sector consultant, magazine publishers, film makers, civil servants and many more. The range of skills is impressive. The ability of members to work not only for national but international clients and employers is notable. The Workboxes are becoming centres for the transmission of knowledge and economic activity in and out of Cornwall, using their One Gigabit fibre connections and facilities for online meetings.

### Assisting local people to gain jobs and start businesses

In total since 2013, the Trust has helped enable the creation of over 60 jobs as a result of supporting the Workbox and other projects. New jobs we have supported by funding the Workbox are typically new business start-ups. But Workbox users have also directly recruited staff, including Cornish graduates. The tracking of new jobs is ongoing, with six new jobs created by Workbox members in just 2022 (more have already been created in 2023).

### Putting a value on the Trust's impact

The Workbox, a registered not-for-profit social enterprise, provides excellent value for money and delivers tangible results for the charity's objectives. The economic benefit of supporting the Workbox was calculated at £200,000 for the year of 2022. How was this figure arrived at? The Trust decided to assign an average value of £26,000 to each job (based on how previous EU and current Government regeneration programmes value jobs). All Workbox members receive support/assistance with various aspects of their business. The Trust decided to value the average amount of help each member receives (at least one hour per month) at £1,000 per year for 12 hours support.

So, the £200,000 figure is based on six new jobs created at the Workboxes by members at £26k value (£156k) plus support/assistance of 40 plus members at 12 hours each per year (value £1,000 per member). It was agreed that the same comparison, rent foregone in return for charitable outputs delivered will be made on an annual basis. When comparing recently commissioned

valuations of the notional rental at Truro and Penzance Workbox buildings (which the Trust owns), the £200,000 value of the impact of the two facilities on the local economy hugely exceeds the amount of foregone rent.

The Workbox provides an environment for support from other members as well as improving well-being and mental health. All these benefits are very difficult to track and quantify, although some members have recorded their appreciation of this. Research will continue to find a formula for tracking wellbeing impacts. Ideally we will want to track:

- New jobs created and businesses started by members
- Businesses and remote workers assisted with at least one hour of help per month
- Wellbeing and mental health benefits of using the Workbox to avoid too much home-based isolation in a remote part of the UK.

### Low carbon at the Workbox

Norda Trust is helping to support a new network of low carbon businesses and experts using the Workbox as a base for events and coworking. Reduction in carbon is also an important benefit of membership eg sharing printers, cost of premises, heating/lighting, broadband etc. The CIC has sourced renewable electricity. It will actively support Cornwall's plan to become net zero carbon.

### Workbox snapshot 2023

As at Autumn 2023, the Workbox has 102 members. Of these over 36 are Box Clever (flexible) or Box Office (own desk). Seven offices are let (used by around 15 people) and there are 59 virtual mailbox members. Demand for temporary visitor use (day/week) is very high and will provide a useful income stream to help the Workbox support members.

### Workbook Cornwall: free listings site for Cornish self-employed

We continue to directly fund this dedicated online freelance directory for a diverse group of people working for themselves: [www.workbookcornwall.com](http://www.workbookcornwall.com). In 2023, there were 184 listed, promoting their services with our help (listing is free). Their professions and businesses ranged from roof thatchers and jewellery designers to musical instrument repairers and translators.

### Workhubs.com: free listings for independent workhubs across the UK

In 2021 the Norda Trust supported the creation of a new UK wide website promoting similar collaborative, independent workhubs nationwide. At present there are 55 workhubs listed on the map, all independents not corporates. This site also offers advice services to others thinking of setting up a new coworking space. The Trust



is committed to helping others do what it has done to help self-employed people in Cornwall.

### Looking to 2024 and beyond

The Trust will continue to support both the Workbox in Penzance and Truro. The Trust will also explore potential for a third Workbox in Cornwall at Helston. By providing the two buildings to the Workbox at Penzance and Truro, the Trust is helping the CIC to offer its services in Helston. Should the Helston Workbox be funded (by Shared Prosperity Fund and Heritage Lottery), the CIC will be able to increase the number of new jobs created in premises it manages. It will also be able to assist even more micro businesses and self-employed people.



### Renovation

*Norda Trust takes the quality of its buildings used by micro businesses and remote workers seriously. The front facade of Truro Workbox was renovated and repainted with respect to its conservation heritage in 2023.*

