2023 ANNUAL REPORT



BLUE BEAR COFFEE CO.

THE JUSTICE BUSINESS CIC | 11592634

FOUNDER'S WORDS

“Who was it that said; ”Without risk there can be no reward”? I’m not sure either, but I have less trouble attributing the moniker “He who dares wins Rodney” to Del Boy’s character from the beloved TV classic Only Fools and Horses. Although I don’t tend to think of Del as much of an entrepreneurial role model, there is some truth to his thinking. Risk is a necessary part of growth, calculated and safeguarded where possible, but not completely free from exposure. It was time for us to accept some more risk as we looked to grow in 2023.

Of all our achievements over the year, opening Blue Bear’s first coffee shop was by far the most significant. With the world calming somewhat from the mele of Covid 19 and Putin’s invasion of Ukraine, the idea of having an in-person, business-to-customer (B2C) location soon returned and from the start of the year we began training our sites on the perfect location.

Just after marrying in May, my wife Lydia and I travelled to the Dominican Republic to visit Lily House and some of our good friends working in child protection. A few days after returning I happened to walk past a grade two listed former jewellers opposite Norwich Cathedral with a ‘For Let’ board in the window. A small but beautiful space with mahogany window boxes and ten-foot vintage safes. We, alongside 12 other businesses, submitted an offer for the lease, and after presenting our business plan to the landlord we were chosen as the fortunate new occupants of Tombland House, Norwich.

In opening the shop, I have been able to leave behind the world of executive protection, swapping curly earpieces for Cortados, Ferraris for Flat Whites, and work full time as Blue Bear’s Barista, Social Media Planner, CEO, PA to the CEO, U-bend scrubber and everything else in-between. (*Salary details available on our transparency page).

Despite the huge jump in operational costs, we have enjoyed significant growth in sales, turnover and profit, alongside fundraising opportunities and social impact.

Why didn’t we do this earlier!?

Bryn Frere-Smith

2023 ACHIEVEMENTS

352 COFFEE CLUB SUBSCRIPTION ORDERS

1025 ONLINE TRANSACTIONS
Coffee, Keep Cups, Teddy Bears and T-Shirts!

2898 COFFEE BAGS SOLD ONLINE

10,726 COFFEES SOLD IN STORE
Everything frok, Flat whites to Caramel Ice Lattes

£16,171
RAISED FOR CHARITY

Total amount raised for our registered charity Blue Bear Freedom UK, to be distributed in the form of grants and programmes pursuant to our cause over the following 12 months.

Blue Bear Coffee Co. 2023 Annual Report

IMPACT & INFLUENCE

In the Spring of 2023, Bryn returned to the Dominican Republic to visit Lily House and meet with leaders in the anti-trafficking field who worked across positions in government and the NGO sector in the Dominican Republic. The trip was intended to see if Blue Bear could launch a coffee shop in the Dominican Republic to provide sustainable source of fundraising, safe jobs for survivors and awareness raising to the issue of human trafficking on the island. After meeting with both experts and survivors it became clear that a more direct route to protecting and empowering children would be to fund their immediate and longer-term needs, reducing the risk of their re-exploitation. This meant partnering with established and effective aftercare shelters caring for children with this level of lived trauma and developing a fund for girls seeking further education.

In addition to the support we had committed to give our friends at Lily House aftercare shelter, we were also able to supply them with a gift of 50 bags of Blue Bear coffee beans to be sold as a way of raising money and awareness for our joint cause.

In May 2023 our foundation, Blue Bear Freedom UK (1200131) were represented by two young survivors who attended a large international anti-trafficking conference held in Punta Cana to share their stories. (Global Freedom from Slavery Forum).
Our trustees remained busy in the UK raising money and awareness. We attended a large cycle event and a Triathlon in Norfolk over the summer to sell coffee and share about the work of Blue Bear Freedom UK.

Students from Christchurch Winchester raised £1000 for BBF UK, swimming the 21-mile distance between Dover and Calais in their local swimming pool.
In August 2023 we opened our first coffee shop in the heart of Norwich in an 400 year old, grade two listed former jewellers directly opposite the Cathedral. Having a physical space to base the Social Enterprise and Charity from has allowed us to grow our presence in the local area and form new partnerships with local customers and businesses.

Our next door neighbours at the Mortgage Advisory Bureau raised £3500 with their foundation to help with the purchase of our Espresso Machine and Claire, an MAB employee, went on to run the Bristol half Marathon on behalf of BBF UK raising £670.
In October, Bryn was invited to give a Keynote address at the Inaugural Unseen Business Awards ceremony held at oval cricket ground in London, sharing a stage with a representative from Tony's Chocolonely and Tesco.

At Christmas time the staff from a local business (ASI recruitment) conducted a sponsored Hot Wing Eating competition which raised a further £1000.



2023 ACHIEVEMENTS

INTERVIEWS & SPEECHES

Newspaper articles, podcasts and public speaking events

11+

BLUE BEAR-IEFING

By the end of 2023 we had over 400 regular readers of our monthly blog and newsletter.

440+

SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS

In December 2023 we had gathered over 3500 .

4000+

OVER 35,000 PEOPLE REACHED

£47,146 RAISED FOR CHARITY SO FAR...

Since September 2018

UNSEEN BUSINESS AWARDS, 2023. THE OVAL



"There is a common misconception that slavery is something that happens over there, somewhere in the developing world, far away from here.

The truth is that it's happening all around us, in our take aways, on farms, building sites, massage parlours, nail bars, car washes and in the UK care sector."

Bryn Frere-Smith

CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Social Enterprise UK
Certified Member

Blue Bear Coffee Co. 2023 Annual Report

ENGAGE & EMPOWER

Towards the end of 2023 we had begun conversations with The Brave Bear Trust (1191986) regarding a move to absorb and continue their work within the auspices of Blue Bear Freedom UK. The Brave Bear Trust is a charity which aims to educate Key Stage 2 age children to the realities of modern slavery in an appropriate way and is based around a children's story book about a teddy bear called Brave. The story was inspired by the origin story of Blue Bear Coffee Co. Bryn Frere-Smith, Blue Bear's Founder is also a trustee of The Brave Bear Trust. The merger is planned to take place in 2024.

In 2023 online coffee sales grew by a healthy 23% and the launch of Blue Bear Coffee Tombland led to three new wholesale accounts in the form of two coffee shops and a church, all of whom came to learn of our mission as a coffee shop customer.

Coffee shop sales in their first five months were good. Summer months proved more profitable than the winter days but the shop grew its regulars and consistently hit its targets every month.

We were also able to recruit two baristas, Lucy from Australia and Yev from Ukraine, who have been an enormous blessing to the business.

In total, over the course of the year we were able to raise **£16,171** through a combination of BBCC profits and donations to our freedom foundation which will be administered in the form of grants and programmes pursuant to our cause over the following 12 months.

Almost all of the Foundation's operating expenses were funded by BBCC, allowing 100% of the money donated to BBF UK to be used in direct support of children affected or at risk of human trafficking, sexual exploitation and modern slavery.

Please see accompanied accounts at Companies House and UK Charity Commision.

We exist to protect, equip and empower children affected by human trafficking, and to raise awareness to the injustice of modern slavery and exploitation.