

## CASE STUDY

# Local impact investing

Swansea Council

Across the UK, LGPS funds are seeking ways to deliver meaningful local impact alongside strong financial returns. This case study explores how Swansea Council is creating real-world social impact through a collaborative partnership and innovative investment strategy.

## Unlocking local potential: investing in social infrastructure

Over the past several years, both we and Swansea's officers have talked to real estate managers about the potential for local impact investment in South Wales/Swansea. The research team met various managers with development experience in Swansea or credentials in this sector. However, this process did not identify any opportunities that we concluded would be suitable for investment.

We subsequently discussed the Newcore Swansea Social Infrastructure Partnership (NSSIP), a real estate fund focused on social housing and infrastructure, enhancing the functioning of society and supporting quality of life and wellbeing in the local community. This resulted in a recommendation to invest around £50m of the fund's assets.

The NSSIP's targeted outcomes for the local area include the development of around 700 housing units, with 80–100 units refurbished; 50 new places for childcare; service provision of 300 nursery places; 250 special education needs places; and four health-care buildings servicing 40,000 patients. The mandate also broadly aligns with the fund's 2037 net-zero ambitions, with substantial emissions-reduction targets, a focus on refurbishment and waste and resource efficiency.

From an LGPS perspective, the Wales Pensions Partnership (WPP), which we also advise, will oversee the NSSIP. This presents an opportunity for Newcore – a B Corp firm, like Hymans Robertson – to use this work as a model for similar local impact projects with other Welsh funds.

## Biomass investment in Margam

Separately, Schroders approached Swansea to discuss a co-investment opportunity in a biomass plant in Margam, South Wales, managed by Greencoat Capital – a specialist renewable infrastructure manager that was acquired by Schroders. We were supportive of a commitment of up to around £25m, given that operational infrastructure such as the Margam asset can generate high levels of income over the long term, part of which is inflation linked, and diversify risks elsewhere in the fund's portfolio.

We supported Swansea with manager due diligence, assessing the strategic fit in the portfolio and a high-level analysis of the co-investment asset. The Committee and Pensions Board did a site visit and were delighted to see a local investment with potential tangible benefits for the area.

## Delivering results: positive outcomes for the fund and local area

Capital deployment is ongoing, but we hope that Swansea's example with NSSIP will be an exemplar of how councils can create real-world impact in their local communities. We think that this alignment of interests could deliver not only mutually beneficial outcomes for all stakeholders, but also the multiplier effect that the government seeks via unlocking the potential of local regions for economic growth.

In terms of the biomass project, investing locally was attractive to boost Swansea's economy and create jobs, which increased the relevance of the project's social impacts to members.

Although biomass creates greenhouse gas emissions, environmental benefits include the generation of power and efficient disposal of waste. This avoids a higher level of emissions from materials that would otherwise end up in landfill.

Ultimately, through our approach, we empowered the client to achieve their local-impact objectives in an innovative way. We fostered a collaborative approach with our belief-setting work, focusing on net zero and local impact as the key themes. And we made sure we brought along the client, including the Chair of the Committee, at each stage, galvanising all stakeholders around the strategy.

*“Our climate journey and investing in natural capital has been transformative for the fund. Hymans Robertson's collaborative approach enabled us to set clear beliefs and objectives, with a strong focus on sustainability and local impact. Their expertise helped us navigate complex decisions, but it was their commitment to empowering us - rather than directing us - that made the difference. By working together, we've developed a strategy that not only meets our fiduciary responsibilities but also delivers real-world benefits for our members and the wider Swansea community.”*

**Swansea Fund Officer**

### Get in touch

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