



Mobile coffee company looking forward to a 'very important year'

BY QUAYS NEWS STAFF ON DECEMBER 16, 2015

BEST OF...

THE founder of a Manchester-based mobile coffee company is looking forward to what he describes as a 'very important year'.

Zygmunt 'Zym' Wysocki works for Coffee Cranks Cooperative, a company selling ethically-sourced and vegan products on a fully-mobile cargo bike.

But they have found it difficult to operate freely, facing opposition from Manchester City Council and the University of Manchester.

Coffee Cranks say that they aren't a profit-first company, and seek to re-invest money back into the community, as well as helping out with local initiatives and schemes similar to their own.

Wysocki originally came over to England in 2005 to study a Masters degree at the University of Manchester, and after leaving did a three month bike ride from Russia, through Poland, and back to the United Kingdom.

But after struggling to find a job in his field of expertise, he became a barista at a café, leading him to piece together two of his passions – cycling and coffee – to form an idea for a business.

"It wasn't just another coffee shop, or a mobile coffee shop," he explained. "But the most important thing about it was that it was meant to be a fundraising platform for similar projects because there is just not enough people organising themselves to provide themselves with meaningful employment.

"So the idea behind Coffee Cranks is that we would be able to support other, similar projects that are struggling to get off the ground.

"There's other community projects that we get involved in. Particularly the old boathouse in Platt Fields Park and the bicycle project that's happening there."

He built the first bike back in 2012, and the company – now headed by Luke Dickens and Agnieszka Jaroszewicz as well as Wysocki and a supporting cast of friends and family – now have three in total. Although they are seeking funding to equip the latter two with coffee equipment.

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Coffee Cranks Cooperative



"The first bike was quite a challenge because a lot of research had to go into it and we were restricted to parts that were available on the market. Parts that you don't usually build cargo bikes out of.

"Apart from dabbling in cycling mechanics before, I didn't know anything about building bikes. We had to buy all the equipment and welding machines, and vices, and drills and all the other stuff that would be required, and we just learnt on the job."

But a struggle obtaining a licence to trade daily has restricted the team to only being able to work private events and every Saturday at Levenshulme Market - which closes this week for the winter.

"Because of problems with the council and lack of support from the municipal authorities, we have a difficulty trading on a daily basis," he said.

They also faced opposition from the University of Manchester, who filed an objection against Coffee Cranks.

"That was a year and a half ago when we applied for a street trader licence on Dover Street, and around the Manchester University campus.

"They filed an opposition and they didn't like us to be there, claiming that we would be a detraction from the development happening around the place. That is ludicrous.

"The council in the hearing that we went to, two months after we filed our application, sided with the university.

"They did hire us for private events in the meantime and we provided coffee for student events and stuff that was also on campus.

"We are currently also the only coffee provider of the Manchester University farmers' market, which hopefully is going to come back to the campus next semester."



But despite their previous rejection, Wysocki is hoping for better things in 2016, and Coffee Cranks' products have been well received.

"Sometimes they [customers] say "it's the best coffee I've ever had!" I'm sure there's a lot of people trying to be nice, but I've certainly worked for long enough as a barista to know that we sell a quality product.

"The whole chain of supply for us is keeping it as local as possible and ethical as possible. But we don't skimp on quality ingredients.

"I certainly think that next year's going to be a very important year for Coffee Cranks.

"We're hoping to launch a proper campaign to work with the voluntary sector in Manchester and the council to try and make them recognise the community benefit of our project.

"At the moment because of the limited amount of time we are actually out and about, some people don't know we exist. But I would certainly want next year to bring in at least two fully equipped bicycles.

"My vision is in this next year we'll manage to raise around £30,000 for local community groups to redistribute in the community."

By: Tom Woods

@RealTomWoods

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