



Sky's the limit with Solent LEP support

Crowdfund Solent scheme raises over £5,000 to keep Solent Sky Services cameras rolling

When the country first went into lockdown in March 2020, our towns and cities fell quiet overnight.

From Gunwharf Quays to Southsea Castle, the usually bustling city of Portsmouth was quiet and empty, with only essential shops left open.

Yet behind closed doors, there was a hive of community activity - local people were rising to the challenge of helping the vulnerable and the elderly in a time of great uncertainty. Whether it was making up food parcels, delivering medical prescriptions or working on the frontline, the community spirit made a positive difference to others.

Portsmouth-based drone photography specialist, Solent Sky Services, had to adapt quickly to the restrictions of lockdown when their usual video production projects ground to a halt. It soon became clear that capturing the effects of a global pandemic through the lens of local people and how they responded to them felt like an important historical record that needed to be made.

Rather than furloughing his skilled team, Managing Director Mike Woods embarked on this ambitious project to make the documentary about the City's response to COVID-19.

With support from the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) 'Crowdfund Solent' scheme, Mike set a crowdfunding target to make the moving and inspirational full-length film, '[A Different Perspective of Portsmouth](#)'.



Mike Woods

Business background

Portsmouth-born Mike Woods set up Solent Sky Services in 2016 after following his passion for film and photography, expanding it into a company that now serves the marine, commercial, event and construction industries.

Initially, Solent Sky Services' drone photography covered everything from crop surveys to roof inspections, but Mike decided to specialise into specific creative projects. As well as surveys, they offered promotional video work, event photography and videography.

When the first lockdown began, Mike and his team filmed the empty streets in Portsmouth and the idea of producing a record of mid-pandemic local life started to take shape - initially as a short video about the city in lockdown, but with the extra funding, the company embarked on a two hour film version.

The documentary is a snapshot of the city as a whole during 2020, with [stunning drone footage of Portsmouth](#) interspersed with candid and honest interviews with local people from all walks of life - from key workers and business owners to residents.

Available to stream for free on [YouTube](#), the documentary is an historical time capsule of Portsmouth during an unprecedented period of time.

Support from the Solent LEP

Quite simply, Mike believes the funding that Solent Sky Services received from the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership 'Crowdfund Solent' scheme saved his company from closure.

There was an overwhelming show of support from the public, with over £2,000 raised from crowdfunding and a further £2,000 match-funded by the Solent LEP, and £500 from Crowdfunder themselves which was used to produce and promote 'A Different Perspective of Portsmouth' <https://solentskyservices.co.uk/a-different-perspective-of-portsmouth>

Mike said: "Unlocking the extra funding from the Solent LEP helped us survive 2020 and the coronavirus lockdowns. The crowdfunding campaign also raised awareness of Solent Sky Services - which will stand us in good stead for the future.

"If anybody is thinking of launching a similar crowdfunding campaign with the Solent LEP support, I would advise: Keep it visual, keep people updated and run a social media campaign. People are interested in you!"

"We found the whole experience, including the coaching from Crowdfunder UK, very helpful in achieving our aims."



Where the business is today

As lockdown restrictions are lifted in Britain and the city of Portsmouth starts to take to the streets again, Solent Sky Services is in a strong position to take on exciting new projects and welcome new clients.

Without the Crowdfund Solent support, which allowed it to keep staff working on the documentary, it might have been a very different ending of the film.

For more information visit

<https://solentskyservices.co.uk/>

or connect on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

Paying it forward:

The Solent Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) 'Crowdfund Solent' fund supports small and micro businesses, social enterprises, charities and the self-employed in the Solent area who have been adversely affected by COVID-19.

By October 2020, the fund had supported 84 projects in the region. These projects have collectively raised nearly £620,000 from the public, with £184,000 in pledges from the Solent LEP.

If your business needs a helping hand, find out more about the Solent LEP's crowdfunder by visiting

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/funds/crowdfund-solent>



Stephen Morgan MP (right)