



Ymylon Y Rheidol Verges of the Rheidol

A brief summary of the Project

The project was developed as an artist led project by Alice Briggs working with Zoe Quick with partner organisations Aber Food Surplus and Summit to Sea. It received funding through the Arts Council Wales Connect and Flourish.

Its summary in the original application was;

“A cultural action along the Rheidol that activates the arts to connect-empower diverse communities along the river’s banks, and respond to the critical need for thriving and inclusive platforms for uplands discussion. The project partners, based in the watershed, hold a track record of creative bilingual facilitation, and share deep concern to co-create a project addressing cultural landscape starting from within stakeholder communities to build resilience.”

Key words lifted out of the original funding application.

Its aims and objectives were listed as;

- Creatively connect communities and explore links along the Rheidol river
- Help create a resilient rural Wales by pioneering and showcasing regenerative and reuse/recycle practices, and collectively explore solutions to biodiversity loss and the climate crisis
- Nurture intergenerational relationships and practices
- Teach a method of artistic dialogue as a way to build community trust and shared learning
- Promote a healthier Wales, deepening our community’s connections to land, food and each other
- Encourage an imaginative, positive, creative Mid Wales economy
- Celebrate women’s craft and marginalised labour by reanimating traditional practices
- Empower a collective voice to converse with national/global institutions and organisations





It was a strength and a challenge that the first phase of the project was effectively a research and development phase to explore the idea as a larger, longer term project which gave it some scope to explore how a community co-creation project could be delivered however also put pressure on the project to deliver outputs.

The project proposal was ambitious aiming to deliver explorations and test and pilot events across a six month time frame whilst also developing the partnerships to deliver a plan for a longer two year project.

External and internal impacts on the project;

The project was extremely unfortunate to be severely impacted by multiple external factors which were beyond the control of the project team; as a project with gathering at its core the impact of Covid restrictions impacted the project throughout, both lead artists were impacted by personal circumstances which led to their being unable to drive the project forward and take responsibility for the creative vision for the project which led to multiple extensions to the project and unfortunately delayed the project into winter when it was difficult to gather due to covid limitations. For a project which embedded landscape and gathering at its core this seasonal impact was fundamental.

The project was impacted by the pandemic in terms of; the ability of the team to work together and being reliant on online meeting platforms, covid restrictions limiting the ability to gather indoors, community spaces such as Statkraft not being open for use, Aber Food Surplus had not moved into a bigger Hub space which was a key part of the original application, In addition to these, and sometimes because of these there were also internal impacts on the project which though addressed by the end of the project would need to be revisited before a future phase of the project could continue.

- There was a lack of experience within some of the project team at working in online spaces and working on creative projects which could have been addressed more effectively had the project been able to deliver according to its original plan.
- There were misunderstandings and differing views about definitions of co-creation and community driven projects which were not addressed until later in the project.
- There were challenges caused by differing approaches of social activism and creative activism which impacted on the demands for short term impact and long term deeper, longer lasting impact and finding the balance between these which was not addressed until later in the project.
- There were challenges caused by misunderstandings of the Research and Development phase and how to use a test and explore approach, and what needed to be delivered by Phase 1 of the project and how the project was developing aspects which would feed into and stimulate the next phase of the project.

- There was a need for definition of management structures and working process which led to a lack of management and a disempowerment of individuals working on the project.
- Though the project can take forward the learning of mitigation being in place to deal with many of these, ultimately when so many external factors impact on a project then it will prove difficult if not impossible to deliver a project.
- However it should be noted that as the project began and the project team were notified of these personal circumstances alongside an acknowledgement of the impact of the previous two years, from that emerged an ethos on the project of creating a supportive, compassionate and joyous space in which communities could celebrate, create and connect.
- There was also a realisation that the project needed at least two years, but ideally more.



The Statement of Intent for the project outlined the shared objectives and roles of the 5 collaborators to develop their partnership approach to working and delivering the project outlined in Verges / Ymylon of the Rheidol:

The agreed shared objectives were:

- Connecting communities: bringing together diverse communities who would not otherwise encounter each other, and creatively exploring links between diverse communities along the Rheidol;
- Creating a resilient rural Wales by pioneering/showcasing regenerative and reuse/recycle practices, and collectively exploring solutions to biodiversity loss and the climate crisis;
- Nurture intergenerational relationships and practices;
- Teach a method of artistic dialogue as a way to build community trust and shared learning;
- Promote a healthier Wales, deepening our community's connections to land, food and each other;
- Encourage an imaginative, positive, creative Mid Wales economy;
- Celebrate women's craft and marginalised labour by reanimating traditional practices;
- Trial different methods of consultation as a tool to inform policy-making going forward, using art as a medium for listening and creating safe spaces for discussion.

Partner roles in the project:

Artists (Alice Briggs and Zoe Quick):

- Co-creation of events and opportunities for community engagement and artistic skill sharing....;
- Develop the briefs and support the tendering of the marketing, producer, evaluator and creative freelancers;
- Support the development of information flow systems and a partnership approach way of working;
- Mentorship to freelance creatives;
- Develop and promote youth opportunities and leadership opportunities;
- Engage partner organisations in project evaluation, development and design;
- Sharing our outputs: shared learning through events, website, podcasts and print;
- Collaborative management of the budget;
-

Aber Food Surplus (Heather McLure and Laura :

- Support the development of a information flow systems and a partnership way of working;
- Support the tendering of the marketing, producer, evaluator and creative freelancers;
- Procurement of printing resources;
- Leading collaborative management of the budget;
- Develop and promote youth opportunities and leadership opportunities;
- Working with the project partners the Aber Food Surplus ECO Food Sharing Hub will explore innovative methods of recreating the space with freelancers, partners, volunteers and the wider community, and provide a meeting place for action days where stories can be exchanged between hinterland and townspeople, and be celebrated;
- Sharing our outputs: shared learning through events, website, podcasts and print;
- Engage partner organisations in project evaluation, development and design

Summit to Sea (Sian Stacey):

- Co-creation of events and opportunities for community engagement;
- Collaborative management of the budget;
- Sharing our outputs: shared learning through events, website, podcasts and print;





- Support the development of a information flow systems and a partnership approach way of working;
- Support the tendering of the marketing, producer, evaluator and creative freelancers;
- Develop and promote youth opportunities and leadership opportunities;
- Engage partner organisations in project evaluation, development and design

The project recruited Sandra Bendelow to the role of Creative Producer and Hannah Engelkamp as Creative Marketing.

The project secured Chris as an Independent Evaluator who delivered a two day theory of change workshop with the project team;

The workshop took place in Cwm Rheidol Chapel and at Ceredigion Museum.

Evolved into -“food, farming, natural and cultural cycles”

The Theory of Change workshop identified the problem being addressed as

“The disconnection of people and communities from each other and our food, farming, and natural/cultural cycles.”

And achieving the aim,

To foster deeper understanding, compassion, and community through exploring shared cultural-ecological practices along the verges of the Rheidol.

Theory of Change

The project will;

- Create spaces to bring people together
- Share thoughtful walks





- Learn creative skills
- Share risography skills
- Experience serendipitous moments of connection and artistry and the landscape
- Increasing connection and dialogue with others through making art
- Giving voice to people to express concerns and issues
- Enjoying tactile experiences of the valley
- Sharing and developing creativity
- Developing embodied knowledge through processes of walking, making and creating
- Fostering mentoring, coaching, leadership and facilitation skills
- Creating art as a reflective practice
- Creating resources and practices that communicate with different stakeholders
- Increasing experiences of Rural landscapes and connection to nature
- Encouraging different neighbours
- Meeting and listening (across hyphens) to others in the community with sensitivity
- Becoming familiar with Local Ecology, Hydrology, and Geology
- Developing networks of Care, Compassion, Support and Resilience
- Sharing Local Cultural-Heritage Practices of Gleaning, Foraging,

- Disseminating Thoughtful, Bi-lingual Communications
- Increasing Awareness of Issues around Land Use, Nature Loss, Language Loss, Food, and Food Production
- Increasing Familiarity with the Welsh Language and its Cultural Relation to Land and Nature (for both Welsh and English First language Speakers)
- Establishing and Developing Tools and Tactics for Collaboration
- Improving Understanding and Increasing Curiosity about the Forces of Capitalism at work in this thematic area
- Finding ways to give voice and agency to enable intimate and vulnerable exchanges between stakeholders
- Gathering stories that inspire the creation of collaborative and individual practices
- Learning creative skills such as Dyeing, Weaving, Craft-Making, Foraging, Risography, and Storytelling
- Gathering and Developing New Ecological Practices
- Generating inspiration for future work and creative practice
- Increasing engagement in the community
- Collating Archive Resources that bring together Voices of the Rheidol



- Increasing perception of the river as a Single Living Entity from source to sea
- Reflective journaling
- Delivering Creative Workshops around Food Use, Food Waste, the Food System, land Use, and Food Skills
- Developing Creative Artistic Responses to the Project Theme

Alice Briggs

Creative Journals of the community gathering to press apples,

<https://www.alicebriggs.co.uk/post/verges-of-the-rheidol--ymylon-y-rheidol>

<https://www.alicebriggs.co.uk/post/verges-of-the-rheidol--ymylon-y-rheidol-1>

<https://www.alicebriggs.co.uk/post/apple-pressing-at-devil-s-bridge-ymylon-y-rheidol--verges-of-the-rheidol>



Developing a visual aesthetic, communication toolkit and creative marketing aspirations

Analogue, Invitation, Word of Mouth

The marketing of the project was creative exploration in itself, a few examples of this in the R&D phrase were annotated pebbles on the riverbank, an invitation to the Hedge school in Cwm Rheidol hand delivered to the residents, an invitation card wrapped in wool tied around town,

For the Coed Geufron day we delivered a series of invitations all designed, created and printed on the Risograph, AFS volunteers delivering by hand invitations to the houses that sit around the woodland in Penparcau and Llanbadarn, inviting Aberystwyth kayakers to the woodland gathering by kayak, inviting the allotment owners through conversations over gateways, chalk drawings on pathways, invitations handed to dogwalkers.

However for the longer term project a marketing strategy balancing this with traditional forms of marketing, alongside ensuring we use the numerous networks available to the partner organisations to reach beyond usual networks to engage beyond traditional audiences for this form of work.

Some work also needs to be undertaken to progress the thoughts on identities within the Verges and how a marketing strategy could reach all these identities.



From this emerged a developed summary of the project

Ymylon y Rheidol - Verges of the Rheidol : Casglu, Dysgu, Perthyn - Gathering, Learning, Belonging

The project will seek to foster deeper understanding, compassion and community through exploring shared cultural-ecological practices along the verges of the Rheidol.

The Ymylon y Rheidol - Verges of the Rheidol female-led collective formed through a mutual respect of one another's work, and shared compassion and passion for the need for a co-created project to address the disconnection of people and communities from each other and our food, farming, natural and cultural cycles. The collective comprises of Aber Food Surplus (Lead Partner – Heather McClure, Laura Cooper), Summit to the Sea (Sian Stacey), Alice Briggs, Zoe Quick, Hannah Engelkamp (Marketing Lead and Creative Practitioner) and Sandra Bendelow (Creative Producer). Independent evaluation will be provided by Chris Blois-Brooke from Performing Dialogue.

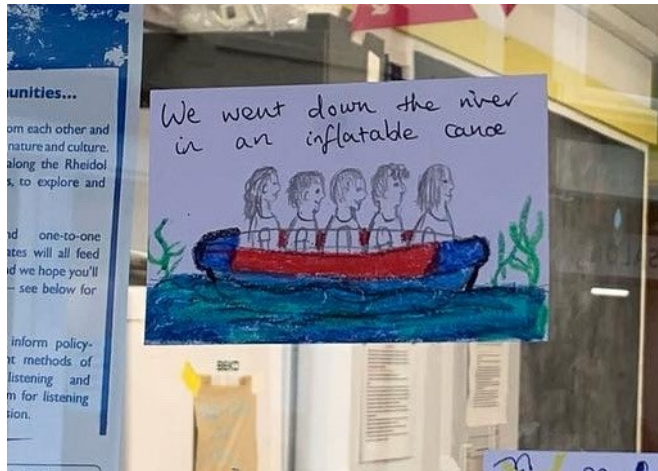
The collective will create gateways to support creative practice, the collective, the aims of the project, the people and community, the reconnections formed and its co-design.

The collective will use creative action for social impact to empower a collective voice to converse with national/global institutions and organisations, promoting change that is collaborative and emerges directly from community experience, needs and aspirations.

www.aberfoodsplus.co.uk/ymylon

Instagram: @ymylon_rheidol_verges

Gathering in Cwm Rheidol – the project team alongside creatives and community members gathered at Alice Briggs home in Cwm Rheidol to discuss the project and thoughts of how the project could work, it was a great exercise in engaging and responding to the general idea of the project and considering how a project could engage creatively with the wider subjects of the project and a community creative project. The gathering also showed how shared gathering of food, cooking of food and sharing of food could work as a key party of gatherings in the future.



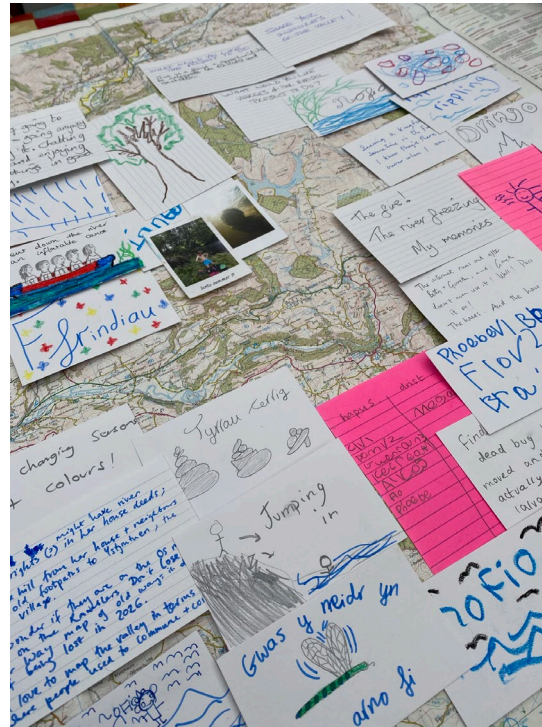
Gathering in Cwm Rheidol Chapel

A series of questions were left on a table in the centre of the chapel around which the community had conversations, often with people they had not since before the lockdown.

What are your memories of Cwm Rheidol?

What do you think the project should do?

The event was a vibrant evening with the Cwm Rheidol community enjoying the experience of gathering together, sharing their memories and their ideas for the project.



Aber Food Surplus Hub Day

The planned move to a larger hub was delayed as a result of the pandemic and with covid regulations in space our ability to use the Hub as originally planned was limited. However we tested takeovers in the space on busy Saturday shopping days and delivered small intimate workshops inside the Hub and interventions of spinning on the street outside, and a chalk drawing of the river in the road. Instead of the AFS youth workshops taking place inside the Hub they took place in community gardens, on the beach and in the woods.

The smaller capacity was found to very effectively deliver the project aims and generated deeper and more meaningful conversations, a woman explaining how the jumper she was knitted for her husband was from local wool he bought as a present, he had since died and she wore the jumper she knitted for him because it was “like a hug”. A farmers wife stopping to explain to her children that this was what happens to the wool after it was sheared. It was noticeable how many farming families stopped to talk, it was noticeable how many children wanted to try spinning. A father from Devils Bridge stopping to show his son how the river near them ran from the mountains to the sea.



Developing Creative Practice, Zoe Quick,



Zoe Quick delivered several workshops to the Aber Food Surplus Youth Group,

This is her summary of her creative practice in relation to the project and the impact of the workshops;

“My practice-led PhD research addresses the farming/rewilding binary in debate over the Welsh uplands through embodied re-enactment of the ‘lost’ custom of gwllana (wool-gathering). Until the middle of the last century, this wild-ish female practice connected diverse communities along and across the margins of farming as it transformed upland wastes into products.

Following gwllana, and a feminist approach to public engagement, which emphasises ‘reciprocal, collaborative relations that are deep and flat’ collaboration is central to my practice. For this workshop I collaborated with AberFoodSurplus (AFS), a not-for-profit social enterprise ‘focused on tackling food waste and delivering meaningful community change’. We were brought together by shared interests in the transformational potential of working with ‘waste’, and in empowering local young people to participate in dialogue and action related to the resilience of landscapes in which they live. This workshop acted in the context of the pioneering Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales 2015) and in recognition that rural youth in mid-Wales face a stark future.

Bringing my historical and practical understanding of upland 'waste' wool and dyestuffs together with AFS' direct action with urban food waste we developed a workshop for AFS youth volunteers with overarching aims to share skills and knowledge and collectively develop practical understandings of relations between food, fibre and farming through working with wastes gathered along the Rheidol river, and to co-develop new spaces and modes of engaging in dialogue over local resilience. The site for the workshop was itself a former wasteland transformed by the charity Mind Aberystwyth into a mindfulness garden.

In dialogue with AFS, I designed activities that drew on embodied modes of knowledge-communication to offer accessible, inclusive and creative means of exchanging skills and environmental-cultural knowledge. Prior to the workshop, AFS youth volunteers gathered items of food surplus and waste that I had listed as potential dyestuffs. Key activities on the day were: A foraging walk for other potential dyestuffs (weeds, rust, flotsam...), learning to spin wool yarn dyeing wool with wastes, testing out the potential of 'waste' dyestuffs by bundling them into rolled/folded strips of old cotton bedsheets. The wool was to be used in further workshops and the cotton to make a patchwork tablecloth for future AberFoodSurplus events, but it became clear that participants quickly conjured their own diverse uses and applications for the cotton, and so we agreed that everyone would donate a precious scrap of their work to a collaborative dye journal.

My research frames impact predominantly in relational terms – recognising, maintaining and generating relations between people and landscape – and emphasises 'smaller transformative actions that arise through learning among all of those involved'. Recognising indirect/intangible change calls for sustained engagement, and this workshop was the first in an ongoing series: one impact of the workshop has been a continued relation with AberFoodSurplus and further development of relations between my research and other local cultural and environmental organisations.

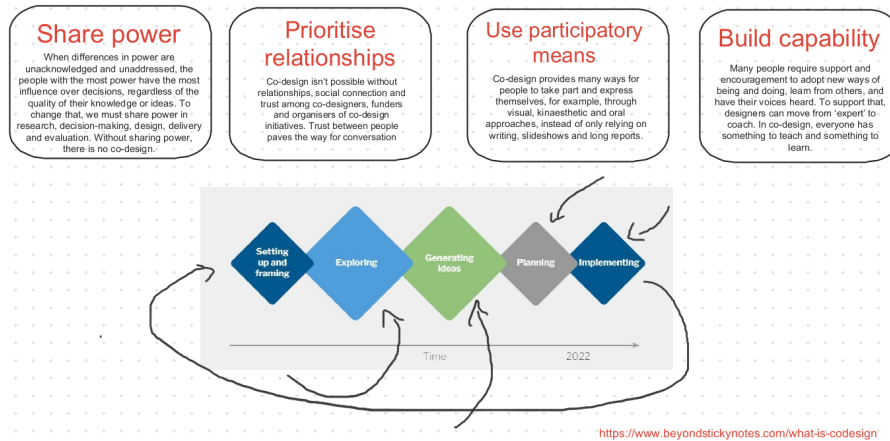
This workshop reinforced my understanding that collaboration involves recognising challenges to anticipating impact. I worked to co-produce 'desired impact', allowing for emergent impact at each stage. A key emergent-affective impact was that participants really enjoyed the process and it became clear that this related directly to their wellbeing and sense of connection to each other and the landscape. Evaluation was co-designed into the workshop. Mindful of challenges in measuring



affective-relational impact, we agreed upon film and audio recordings and a reflective discussion as one medium for co-evaluation. Video was recorded voluntarily by a participant, with full informed consent from participants. Another key medium for co-evaluation was the creative material outputs as evidence, arguably a textile document of our actions and learning, affirmatively including those who did not wish to be recorded. These key media will be fed into a cyclical process of continuous co-evaluation as AFS 'waste workshops' continue.

Co-Design of the Project

What is co-design? Why co-design?



There were multiple issues around the use of the terminology and establishing a process for the co-design of the project;

There was a need for definition of the terminology, was it a co-design, a co-production, a co-created project?

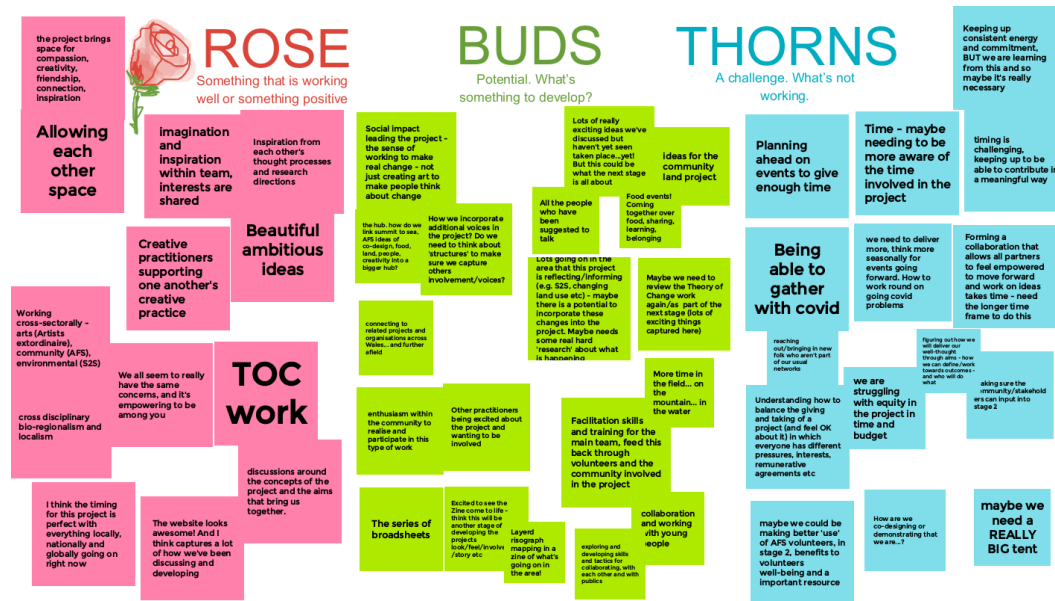
There was a need for deeper understanding of what co-designing a creative project means as opposed to a community led project, or a co-designed with a community project, or an artist led project working with community,

There was need for more time to explore these terms, and the processes that were needed. There were the skills within the group to deliver this with Sian Stacey's learning from the Summit to Sea (Tir Canol) project and Alice Brigg's experiences of working with community led arts projects however time was not given to explore this, and ultimately with the short time frame of the R&D there was simply not enough time for this.

There was also a need to consider and do more in establishing who was the community? Though there were interesting ideas about how to engage creatively around the ideas of how people identified themselves around the river and in terms of the river more needs to be done to think how to do this.

However in reaching the Coed Geufron event it did feel that the team had found a way to test and pilot, and learn through doing how to developing a flowing, continuous project which could deliver gatherings and events, could engage with community voices.

Roses, Buds and Thorns Reflection



Woodland Trust as a new Collaborator

Ahead of the Coed Geufron event Woodland Trust became a collaborator to deliver that event but also with the potential of becoming a collaborator on the longer term project and potentially leading to partner. It was invaluable in delivering the Coed Geufron event to have the support and experience of Woodland Trust in the event. Coed Geufron is a community created wood which many members of the community are not aware of so the event proved to be a strong collaboration in exploring the ideas of the project whilst gathering and drawing people to engage in an outdoor space that is a community space that is underused.

Creative Brief, Conversations with Creative Practitioners and Proposals

Creative conversation took place with a number of creatives including Peter Stevenson, Ailsa Mair Fox, Richard Gott and Naomi Heath. These conversations were developed into Creative Briefs which served usually in exploring how we could engage with and develop creative strands to the project.



Ymlyon y Rheiddol
gweithdau
gaeaf

Verges of the Rheiddol
winter workshops

Exploring the role of
Community Podcast:
Discussing the who, what
and how of getting started,
and sharing what you want
to hear from your
community?

On Zoom. Register in advance by
following the link on
www.vergesoftherheiddol.org

18:00 - 19:30
Tuesday, 15th Feb /
Mawrth, 15fed Chwe
Ar Zoom/ Join us on Zoom

Cofrestrwch o'n y cyfarfod
dwy ddiwrnod yn linc ar
www.ymlyonrheiddol.org

Archwilio rôl Podlediad
Cymunedol. Trafodaseth
am bwy, beth a sut i
gychwyn, a gwahoddiad i
chi rhannu be hoffech chi
eisiau clywed o'ch
cymuned?

With Lucy Dearlove, host of long-running and
award-winning food podcast Lecker, and
audio industry specialist

Gyda Lucy Dearlove, cyflwynydd podlediad
bwyd hirhoedlog ac arobryn Lecker, ac
arbenigwr yn y diwydiant sain

Development of the Project Proposal to submit a funding application for Phase 2

The project team met for a reflective session on-line led by Sian to review the project and consider the longer term project ahead of the funding application to ACW for Phase 2. This proved a useful reflective exercise to consider, reset and renew aims for the first phase.

Potential Themes – threads, flowing, dyeing, tributaries

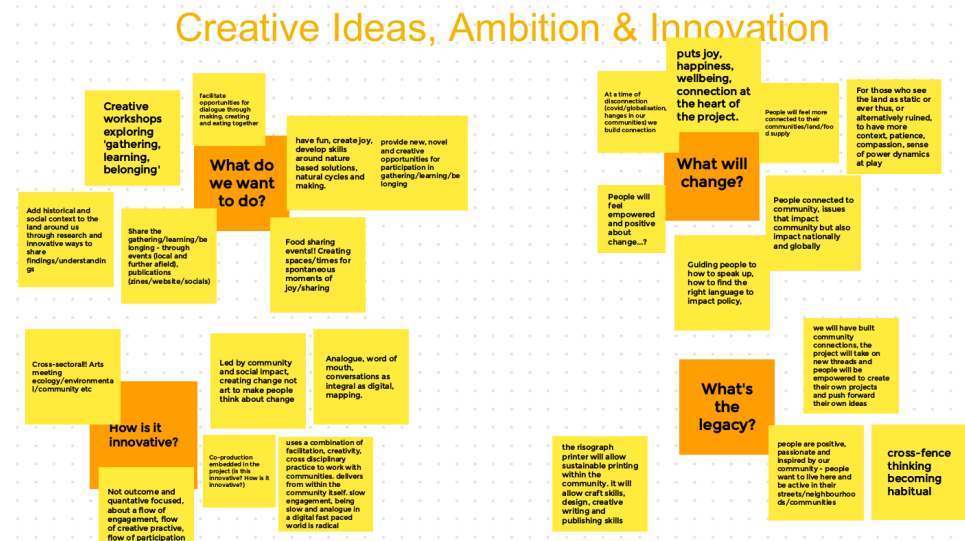
Scoping the next two years

What do we want to do?

- Creative workshops exploring gathering, learning, belonging,
- Facilitate opportunities for dialogue through making, creating and eating together,
- Add historical and social context to the land around us through research and innovative ways to share findings and understanding,
- Share the gathering, learning, belonging through events (local and further afield) publications, (zines, websites, socials),
- Food sharing events, Creating spaces/times for spontaneous moments of joy/sharing,
- Have fun, create joy, develop skills around nature based solutions, natural cycles and making,
- Create new, novel and creative opportunities for participation in gathering, learning, belonging,

How is it innovative?

- Cross sectoral – arts meeting ecology/environments/community,
- Led by community and social impact creating change not art to make people think about change,
- Analogue, word of mouth. Conversations as integral as digital, mapping,
- Co-production embedded in the project – is this innovative, how is it innovative,
- Using a combination of facilitation, creativity, cross disciplinary practice to work with communities it delivers from within the community itself, being slow and analogue in a digital fast paced world is radical,



- Not outcome and quantitative focused, about a flow of engagement, flow of creative practice, flow of participation,

What will change?

- Puts joy, wellbeing, connection at the heart of the project,
- At a time of disconnection (covid, Brexit, globalisation, changes in our communities) we build connection,
- People will feel empowered and positive about change,
- Guiding people on how to speak up, how to find the right language to impact policy,
- People connected to community, issues that impact community but also impact nationally and globally,
- For those who see the land as static or ever thus, or alternatively ruined, to have more context, patience, compassion, sense of power dynamics at play
- People will feel more connected to their communities, land, food supply



What's the legacy?

- Cross thinking becoming habitual,
- The risograph printer will allow sustainable printing within the community, it will allow craft skills, design, creative writing and publishing skills,
- People are positive, passionate and inspired by our community – people want to live here and be active in their streets/neighbourhoods, communities,
- We will have built community connections, the project will take on new threads and people will be empowered to create their own projects and push forward their own ideas,

Where and who?

- Aberystwyth Town Centre, - harbour, South Beach, marina,
- Aberfoods surplus Hub,
- Coed Geufron,
- Statkraft Visitor Centre, Allt Boeth, Butterfly House, Neil Gale, Hafod – Dewi, Riding Centre, Dafydd farm in uplands,

- In the river, In the sea, in the woods, in the fields,
- Websites, socials, forums, groups,

WHO

- Papurau Bro/Bro 360 could be a partner,
- Cwm Rheidol Community, residents, community Guild
- Aberystwyth people who rarely have cause to think of themselves as connected to a wider backcountry ecosystem. The land beneath and beyond the paving slabs

Why will people want to be involved? What benefit will they get?

- Feel heard, asked, valued

Target Audience and participants

- Aber community radio
- Cynefin – wider group of creatives, ecologists, environmentalists,
- Creative practitioners.
- Earth scientists, IBERS, seeds projects, landworkers alliance

AUDIENCES

- Eisteddfod/Tregaron 2022, Eisteddfod 2023,
- Beyond the Border 2023, Aberystwyth Storytelling Festival,
- Aberystwyth Show, Talybont Show,
- Farmers Market,

SPECIFIC GROUPS AND COMMUNITIES

- Students; Art students, theatre and performance students, film students; Coleg Ceredigion, Welsh bach,



- Taking on some community land for growing food/rearing animals
- Recruiting creative practitioners for longer term residencies

Coed Geufron

“The swans feathers being stolen in the story, and just how sad that was, and how funny that it being a ‘human’ swan was so upsetting, and other animals face that kind of thing so much.”

“A group of small children working together to make a collaborative drawing using soil, charcoal and pastels. They were really happy and focused in the moment on their work, with no sense of individual ownership of the work. It was just a chance to be outdoors in the sunshine working on a big piece of paper with creative freedom to express themselves.”

“This feels like a foundation for nature connection”

“Connection. Flow. Gather.”


'Oh I wish my mum had still being doing this walk because this would have been a perfect place for a rest - she couldn't quite get to the industrial estate and back in one.'

“The bench is a sensory experience of nature. You sit and listen and smell and touch.”

“We were so lucky to have such wonderful weather. I was so pleased how much everyone enjoyed the food, and how well that worked out in the end. The venue was so welcoming and so pleased to see us and host us. The woodland trust was so happy to have us there too. This positivity over using space as community space is so important and always exciting! Members of the community said thank you - this just made me feel so happy that they appreciated the event - one community member said please can we do more stuff like this! I loved sitting down at the end of the day and watching the story telling - especially outdoors - with the story being about birds it made me so conscious of all the birds - Nature connections - and how happy and engaged all the kids were was so sweet! The site looked very exciting with stuff everyone and the tents, this looked very interesting and I was disappointed to not get chance to explore this more!”

“Welcoming, vibrant, joyful, fun and much needed. Smiling faces everywhere. After passing through the trees and dodging a few branches, the site emerged inviting, between the fires and the gazebos. Laughing children, tickled by the green man's nose the colour of peas. Half of all the birds in the world came to Ceredigion - including penguins! The storytelling was brilliant”

“The woodland trust site and the cricket club were ideal”



Charcoal-making and drawing, dyeing with foraged materials, whittling, bench-making, spinning, creative trails, stories and music

Bring lunch for yourself or to share, plus snacks from Aber Food Surplus

If you can, come by human power! Walk, run, cycle, kayak!
Coed Geufron is ten mins walk along the river path from Morrisons

verges of the rheidol
explore coed geufron

ymylon y rheidol
archwilio
coed geufron

Safle o Ddiddordeb Gwyddonol Arbennig
Site of Special Scientific Interest


Creu siarcol, llifo gyda deunyddiau wedi'u porthi, naddu pren, adeiladu mainc, troelli, lwybrau creadigol, rhannu straeon a cherdoriaeth

Dewch â chinio i chi'ch hun neu i'w rannu, a fydd byrbrydau gan Fwyd Dros Ben Aber

Dewch drwy bŵer dynol? Cerdded, beicio, caiacio! Mae Coed Geufron yn ddeg munud ar hyd llwybr yr afon o Morrisons

10.30-3.30
Friday 25th Feb /
Gwener, 25ed Chwè
Am ddim, croeso i pawb!
Free, all welcome!

Singer Celfyddydau Cymru
Arts Council of Wales



“The walking bus took much longer than I anticipated yet it was well worthwhile and something I would happily do again, one community member enthusiastically said that they had been prompted to speed up by the things written on the pavement on the route”

“Freedom”.

“Carefree.”

“Sunshine”

“It felt like the perfect day to be out in the woods. The sun shone for us, groups of families came with their picnics. There was a sense of release and relief that the spring was coming and the storm had passed (literally and metaphorically!).”

“I was very busy with the drawings, and lots of people and children were focused hard on the activities. Turning the soil into paint was very popular, and everyone was creating different kinds of pigment, some very textured and thick, others much more like watercolour. I collected more samples from the site to add to the different soils of the Rheidol palette.”

“It was lovely having everybody involved. It felt great to have worked on it together”

“ I do think its fine to continue having our off shoot elements that one or two of us work on and that needs to be okay for threads and elements to be weaving in and out of the project. I think we need to be more okay with that happening.”

“can’t wait to do foraging feasts! More time thinking and talking about food”

“be nice to think about how we could do a more communal fire somewhere else that felt a bit more welcoming. Maybe when we go up the cwm and do it for ourselves.”

Throughout the whole day my estimate is about 80 people participating either for a short 1-2 hour visit or staying for more than 3 hours with a good percentage staying for a good part of the day - taking part in several activities.

- 20 people helped with the bench - either helping out a little and learning a few skills or giving a good amount of time - so approx 10 people built the bench together through the morning.
- Creating charcoal - approx 10 people did this in the one session.
- Approx 25 children took part in the identify trees and whittling activity
- Sound Mapping workshop - about 10 adults and 10 children took part in the sound mapping workshop
- Dyeing with foraged materials - about 30 through the day took part in this and created about 20 prints at the end of the day.
- Storytelling - about 30 gathered for this with a high percentage of children



The Risograph

Training was delivered to the core team on the technical aspects of the Risograph which focused on the software that could be used to create the material to print. It was recognised that more time was needed to play with the creative aspects of the Risograph. It was also recognised that more creatively focused training is needed to reach the project aim of several of the creative practitioners on the project being able to deliver community workshops to open up the use of the risograph to the community. This further training was delivered by Printhauss.

Why do we want to be trained by Printhauss?

Aber Food Surplus have been collaborating with artists to deliver a broadsheet on Verges of the Rheidol. This connect and flourish project has a vision to enable the risograph printer to become a community resource that can be used to share more stories, art and information through the medium of print. This is a creative way of communicating that aligns with the motivation to build connections locally and in a place where there is limited internet connectivity. Aber Food Surplus are passionate and committed to growing into larger premises where they will support the Risograph to be used by the community.

Learn new skills / gain knowledge of how to use the printer - the risograph printer is an unfamiliar piece of equipment to the Aber Food Surplus staff team, and to enable the printer to become a community resource it's important that we are competent with the basic operating and essential day-to-day maintenance of the machine

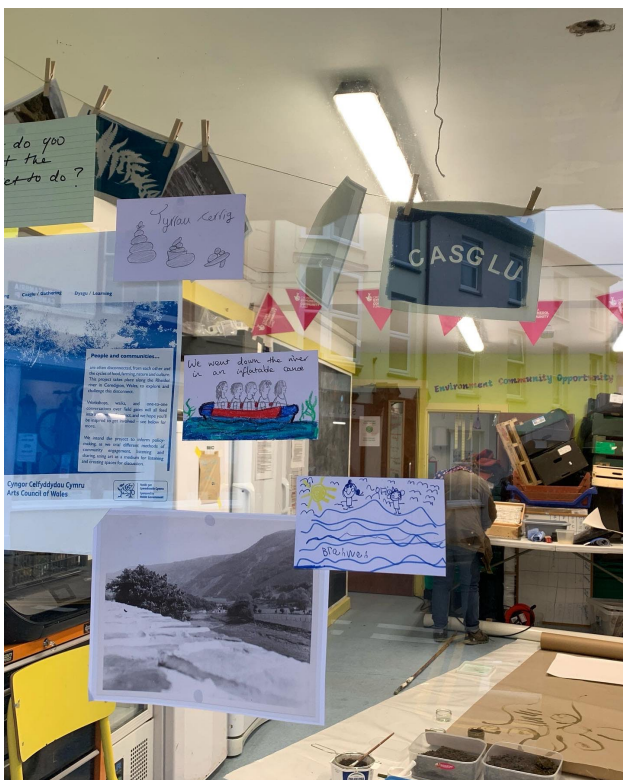
We already received training from another organisation earlier in the project which wasn't very helpful and unfortunately simply did not provide us with the competencies that we need.

Printhauss is a community print studio, they love print and want to make it accessible.

Visiting printhauss became an exciting part of the Verges of the Rheidol pilot project, it enabled the team to learn from a successful project, and learn more about creating an open and accessible printing facility.

Our learning objectives are still pretty broad, from becoming more confident in using the Riso, and to learn more about training, induction and the processes behind creating an accessible community print asset.





achieved

What did we learn at Printhouse?

The training day we received from Printhouse was invaluable to us as an organisation with little resources for creativity and a keen interest in supporting the work of creative practitioners and creative individuals in our society

This training day has given us the confidence in this model - making the risograph printer a community resource open access. We saw firsthand that this is doable and remarkably we were able to come away with a really robust template for how best to make this wonderful resource accessible and sustainable - Printhouse generously shared their learning and knowledge with us and we have the fortune now to take this forwards within our own community as a brilliant legacy of the Verges of the Rheidol project.

- We got some considerable practise and familiarity printmaking
- As well as key tips on using the Riso
- More knowledge on the things we need for cleaning and maintenance of the Riso
- How to train and induct our team (important and key notes to share)
- Exploring the resources that Printhouse have for inducting and training the community in to using the kit safely and sustainably
- Exploring the resources needed for ensuring the right materials are in stock and available
- Exploring how to make a studio accessible for booking, and for membership and payment of using the facilities
- Hearing experience and more about how it works having open facilities
- Being inspired by print and building ambition in what we could print and what could be

Next Steps:

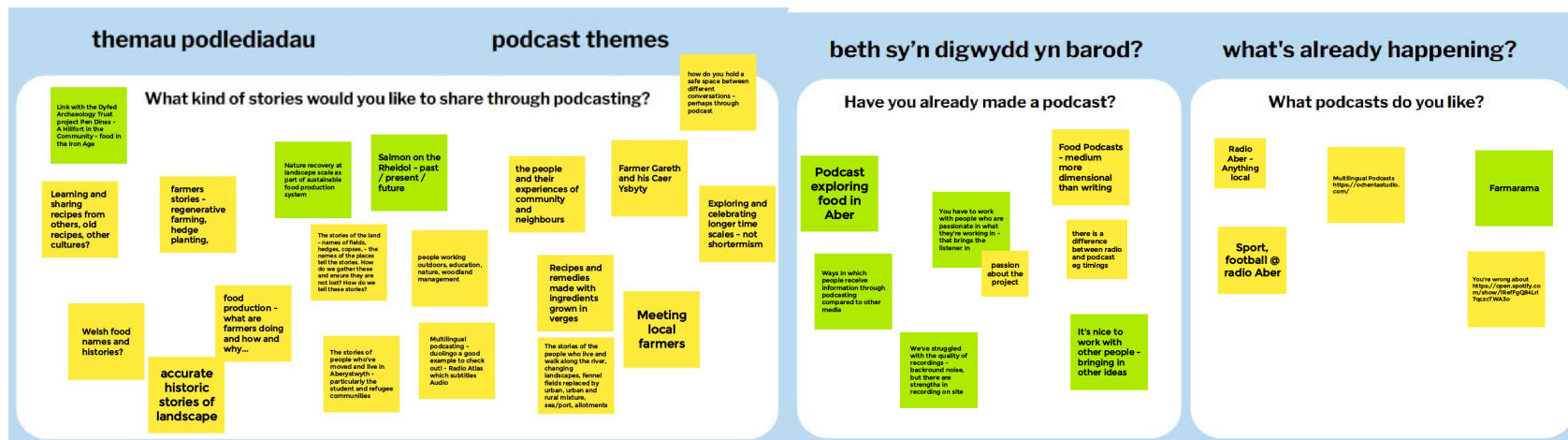
- Securing an accessible location for the Riso
- Buying more materials and other basic resources now we have a better understanding of the costings involved: ink, paper, storage (eg. shelving and boxes), binding kit (eg. staplers and fastenings), insurance, access, training, membership, other overheads (eg. electricity and rent), development (eg. new inks drums)
- Securing funding to develop the resources required to enable the Riso to be openly accessible to individuals and safely and sustainably managed

- Securing funding to do more activities with the riso, lead by example and create more opportunities for our community to get involved with risograph printmaking ; printing exciting stories and inspiring the power of print locally

Llais Rheidol – Podcast and Papur Bro

Two keys stepping stones for the R&D were to explore the ideas of a community podcast and a broadsheet, the podcast and papur bro needs to reflect the multiplicity of voices of the Rheidol and yet there is a need for them to be focused and specific to be successful. There is a demand for a podcast and for a broadsheet for the Rheidol communities which had already been established by AFS and S2S engagement, it is also a key interest of Woodland Trust.

The project held an online gathering to explore the idea of a community podcast which invited a guest Lucy Dearlove, host of long running award winning food podcast Lecker to share her experiences.



Roses, Buds and Thorns Exercise as final reflection on the project

Roses,

- Better understanding of what "arts practices" are, how they work
- Forged new relationships within team

- Starting to develop new modes of gathering
- Beautiful events – wool, wool, wool
- Great film
- Collective creativity
- Fun activities
- Coed Geufron – creative practitioner activities
- Identifying capitalism as a root of disconnect we want to address
- Collaboration potential, good collection of a range of partnerships and artists, good volunteer engagement,
- Connecting with Summit to Sea
- Momentum from S2S workshop on building with Verges
- Collaboration building partnerships,
- Creative ways of learning and sharing cultural/environmental skills and knowledge
- Connecting activism and grass roots work with creative practitioners
- So many exciting ideas,
- Getting to work with new people with new skills
- Interesting conversations and routes
- In awe of the all start group and really getting to know each other,
- Supportive, creative team,
- Inspiring to get to know each other as a collective and better as collaborators and friends
- Expertise, passion, enthusiasm of everyone in the Verges Team
- Learning new skills
- Loads of learning, great things to reflect on, change and have learnt about collaboration
- The lovely Risograph
- Realised dream of bringing Risograph to Aberystwyth
- Learning to use the Risograph
- Have done the groundwork for moving forward
- Lots of branding, templates, social media in place an ready to be used
- Lots of creative ideas for projects to move forward
- Understanding of a slower, flowing, smaller pace needed to achieve real and long term change rather than pushing to tick boxes in short term,





BUDS – Opportunities

- The river offers a great framework/structure to create a Gentle Radical style community arts project
 - Collaboration with education – national Library Wales, Ceredigion Museum, schools, University
 - Using the Riso – how to make more accessible, how to create zines etc, experience for planning and understanding
 - Potential to build on this start but need to learn and reflect on what went well/what the challenges were and will be – collaboration isn't easy
 - Potential for collaboration between the practical/science and art to inspire engagement
 - Know your audience
 - Divide sections of the river to focus on during season, spring – source, summer – families, autumn – between team and families, winter – team
 - Forage banquets, broadsheets, riso workshops, pigs, guided walks, so many budding ideas,
 - Critical exploration of mapping,
- Coed geufron, a beautiful beginning still lots to learn form that event
 - Capacity of all to learn a lot about different ways of activism/co-creation/community art from each other – it's a live experiment
 - Ways to explore past and present to impact on the future,
 - If structures well and a clear “path” established, creativity can be used to enhance/engage and inspire
 - If we keep it simple it can be clear where each org/individual can participate
 - Youth activities
 - Links/collaborations with young people through schools
 - The impact of doing/making focus on a physical activity like spinning, dyeing, foraging, painting whilst having conversations generating real converstions, deep engagement,
 - Wonderful stories of culture and resource
 - Great creative ideas to inspire and bring joy to people
 - End to covid restrictions means it's easier to share food and bring people together

- So many diverse possibilities for publication – Riso, zines, broadsheet, Llais Rheidol
- Bringing culture depth to Tir Canol projects
- Convergence of creative practice with social activism
- Connection to local “well being” projects and social prescribing
- Venues – allt Derw, Coed geufon, hedges and edges and fences, fairs
- Link with landowners and families and use creative means to “tell their stories”
- Space this over a few years
- Opportunity for large organisations to meet set targets in a fun and inspiring way
- Now we have the tools in place to move forwards
- Galvanise the moment to build on the project whilst we are here and have momentum
- Potential for linking/extending/sharing along other Pumlumon reivers eg Severn – Hafren
- Festival along river as a culmination of the project

THORNS – Challenges

- Challenge of commitment – need to be honest about commitment to project
- How to develop project without resource
- Recruitment and mentoring, ethical recruitment, opportunities for mentoring, volunteer engagement, how to value the contribution of volunteers in the project beyond participation
- Have tried to do everything together – lacked confidence to fly solo and just get things down
- Need for management, co-creation does not mean everything has to be done together, co-creation become a tool to disempower people, Need for leadership, mismatch of management styles and process which confused the project
- It was hard to deliver outcomes, communication problems, assumptions
- Not sure all on same page as partners,
- Roles, responsibilities and expectations of AFS to contribute to the project and maybe an evolution of this different to Phase 1
- Need to show up for the project – read notes, respond to queries, basic management process impacted by not being there,
- Need to rethink management process of project to allow the project to move forward
- Better integration of volunteers on the project
- Mentoring, volunteers,



- How to create a working group /partnership that is wider and how to bring on board new partners/collaborators
- Need to find funding
- Partnerships need to be developed
- Challenge of capacity to move forward and not let ideas gather dust
- Is the energy here for what is next?
- Overcommitted, exhausted partners
- More clarity about what co-design means
- Co-creation/co-design what does that mean? Community led what does that mean to different partners,
- Need to allow space for artists with experience of running co-created with community projects to do what they do well and learn from this process and style and not be outcome and tick box driven,
- Need for non-creative partners to have more understanding of creative arts practices
- Need for patience and time to be given to allow processes to happen – too much this didn't happen fast enough so going to go off and do it another way.
- Not enough notice/understanding of Hub and organisation and allowing it time to be involved in thing
- AFS did not participate in some key events which defined the project,
- Life got in the way, covid got in the way (but slowing down and compassion not necessarily a bad thing)
- Undefined “audience/participants” groups, difficulty in identifying and connecting with “hard to reach” communities
- No structure – can lose way in ideas easily
- Clashes in methodology
- Lack of understanding of others management structures – benefits to other management styles, need to allow space for people to work within structures of partners,
- Not meeting targets of large organisations who are contributing funding
- Personal circumstances – what's the mitigation for this in future
- Food – understanding AFS
- Co-design/facilitation/community involvement in design opportunities and bringing skills



- Organisation structure the inevitable challenges of the co.
- Need to learn by doing, test and pilot approach of co-design,
- How to create spaces to allow voices to be heard? Especially challenging if people don't show up to the space – what to do then?
- Need to define ways of working, terms of reference, management systems, process, clarity on everything and to revisit this frequently to ensure still working – revisited ways of working a few times, did change things but still didn't work? What else can we do? What else can be changed?
- Need for more positive energy and commitment to the project
- Need to allow the project to go at whatever pace it needs to go at – to flow as it needs to, it is a creative project, it is a collaborative project, it may change it may develop – that's a good thing. Forcing it back to original targets set before it began is detrimental to its longer term aim to have a social impact.
- Valuing time/skills/ideas/creation equally/listening space.

Key Learnings from the first phase of the project would be;

- The project needed more time to develop deeper, longer lasting connection with the community , to develop creative ideas into engagement activity.
- It needs a committed and energised project team to lead and guide a team of creative practitioners and volunteers.
- It needs project staff with focused time to spend on the project to keep driving the project forward
- To define the working processes of the project including defining terms, terminology, roles, management process,
- deeper, meaningful conversations happen with small interventions and outdoor spaces are very effective spaces for the project,
- a wider range of partnerships are needed to support the project through a longer term and through the geographical spread of the project,



