



Together  
For  
Change

# Ideas Unlimited

## Summary report

*Thematic summary of the Ideas Unlimited Series -  
Events to generate practical ideas on big societal challenges*

*November 2022*



UK Government  
Llywodraeth y DU

This project is funded by the UK Government through the UK Community Renewal Fund  
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## 1. Overview

### 1:1 Introduction

The purpose of the Ideas Unlimited series was to bring together community members, organisations, and community leaders to discuss some of the most significant issues facing communities. The objective of the series was to provide a shared basis of knowledge, to propose and consider possible solutions and ideas for improving the collective wellbeing of our communities.

### 1:2 Schedule

The Ideas Unlimited series hosted four virtual events throughout the month of November 2022. The events were as follows:

<b>01/11/22</b>	<i>Perspectives on Community Power</i>
<b>10/11/22</b>	<i>My Home, My Haven</i>
<b>16/11/22</b>	<i>Tackling the climate emergency – ideas for community action</i>
<b>22/11/22</b>	<i>From surviving to thriving – seeking radical solutions</i>

### 1:3 Attendees

The events were attended by an average of 30 individuals representing a range of organisations, local authorities, and social enterprises as well as independent attendees.

### 1:4 Speakers

A total of 15 speakers presented over the four events, providing a variety of perspectives including third sector organisations, social enterprises, community groups and public health services. The speakers provided a sectoral viewpoint on key challenges, offering examples of good practice and their experience of trying to create positive change.

## 2. Key messages

### 2:1 Perspectives on Community Power

The true power of communities was evidenced throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. However, in order to ensure a sustainable future for all, this strength must be harnessed into associative action, enabling communities to thrive not simply survive through crisis. Being able to engage in decision making processes in order to create change is important, with lived experience being vital to successful and lasting development in this area.

For development efforts to be fruitful, collaboration between third sector organisations, local authorities, the local health board and the Welsh Government is fundamental. Furthermore, opportunities where communities feel truly valued and heard within democratic systems are needed. The existing partnerships within the County provide an excellent springboard to further empower communities and could be used to help foster a wellbeing economy that puts place-based communities and lived experience at the heart of solutions.

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## 2:2 My Home, My Haven

Home means far more than the house itself, it is related to connection, pride of place, community, and wellbeing. Yet, throughout Pembrokeshire and across Wales there are many challenges impacting the ability of residents to remain within their homes and in turn, their community.

It is evident that community led initiatives play a vital role in not just understanding the issues locally but also supporting sustainable solutions based upon the local population's needs. The initiatives presented ranged from the Solva Care partnership with Neyland Community Interest Company offering employment opportunities locally to community land trusts and intentional communities who aim to provide affordable housing. Local innovation is key to creative thinking and radical actions which address the issues and create strong and resourceful communities. This will ensure that everyone feels connected, safe and supported to thrive.

## 2:3 Tackling the climate emergency – ideas for community action

Whilst Wales has declared climate emergency and implemented the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015) which placed a legal duty on policy makers to consider the long-term impacts of their decisions, there remains scope to improve the implementation. Communities on the other hand, are taking an active approach to tackle the climate emergency. Examples presented range from renewable energy projects and beach cleans to mini meadows and education. Additionally, in terms of collective action, Extinction Rebellion have been bringing together individuals, groups, and public figures to urge the UK government to take urgent action.

If a future for all is to be secure, it is vital that communities continue to work towards sustainable solutions at a local level. It is also imperative that decision makers actively recognise the underpinning impact of the climate emergency upon every area of policy, work towards a greener future and invest in actions that support environmental protection and in turn, community wellbeing.

## 2:4 From surviving to thriving – seeking radical solutions

The cost-of-living crisis is having a detrimental impact upon communities across Pembrokeshire. Many of those impacted were already living in poverty prior to the energy crisis and are now faced with immensely challenging choices in the face of financial insecurity. In turn, the crisis is having a knock-on effect on the overall health and wellbeing of society.

Whilst the future is somewhat uncertain in terms of the economic climate, there is hope. The Welsh Government is currently piloting universal basic income over a two-year period which has the potential to offer a radical solution to the economic challenges faced across society. In the short term, community groups, third sector organisations and charities provide crucial support on the front line, directly with those adversely impacted by the crises.

## 3. Thematic Summary

The main message woven through the event series was two-fold. Whilst it was evident that there is grave concern for the wellbeing of society given the permacrisis we find ourselves within, there is also immense strength and resilience within communities. This is not to dismiss the struggles faced by so many but to recognise a sense of hope, that communities, when adequately resourced, have the power to come together and make meaningful change to improve the wellbeing of society.

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## 3.1 Crisis

The series of four events shared one very poignant and stark reality, crisis. The UK has been experiencing significant turmoil recently and crisis has been felt by all. Yet, as seen during the Covid-19 pandemic, society is not all being impacted equally. Socio-economic inequality gaps are widening and the most vulnerable within communities are experiencing far more hardship than most.

The management of the cost of living crisis by government departments has been met with criticism, with evidence suggesting that the challenges faced by society are not adequately being addressed. There is a sense that central government could utilise the lived experiences of those in poverty and the organisations supporting them to enhance their approach, ensuring policy effectively considers and reflects the experiences of citizens.

## 3.2 Resourceful and resilient communities

The theme of resourceful and resilient communities was a primary element throughout the events. Whilst those from third sector organisations and social enterprises raised awareness of the challenges faced, they also provided an overview of the level of aid, support and initiatives communities have conducted to support one another and generations to come. Such initiatives range from immediate projects such as social care to longer term initiatives including investing in community owned renewable energy. The discussions evidenced that those best equipped to tackle the challenges facing communities, were the residents themselves and those with lived experience providing a valuable perspective for informing future decision making,

This sense of resourcefulness combined with an understanding of lived experience is an asset which could be better harnessed to create change on a larger scale. Individuals and organisations working on the ground have considerable knowledge and awareness which could be better utilised by local authorities, Welsh Government and the UK Government in order in order to support the true power of communities.

## 3.3 Relationships

Communities are immensely resourceful and have proven their ability to care for and support one another throughout a number of crises. However, to work towards long term change, efforts must be focused on strengthening relationships between authorities and those working on the ground. Whilst communities have been acknowledged by Welsh Government for example within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act )2015 and the proposed Communities Act, there remains an opportunity to reinforce this synergy.

In order to create policy and legislation that truly reflects and protects Welsh communities, it is crucial they have a voice to share their own priorities within the decision-making process. Due to ongoing crisis, a level of fire fighting at policy level has been necessary in order to tackle the crisis at hand rather than being able to focus on preventing and mitigating against future challenges. In the long term this approach is not sustainable and there is an urgent need for preventative planning at a policy level in which communities are consulted, engaged and their experiences valued by those in power.

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## 3.4 Collaboration

It was widely acknowledged throughout the sessions that collaboration and co-production are key elements to developing approaches for meaningful change. Whilst there are many positive examples of third sector organisations working together for the benefit of communities, the role of close working with the statutory sector is also important.

Despite the immense impact grass roots initiatives can have upon the wellbeing of local populations, in order to create long term, sustainable change at a national level, collaboration is key. Collaboration can offer significant opportunities to improve service provision and to the overall wellbeing of society. The evidence shows that effective collaboration can be based upon the sharing of knowledge and best practice, building capacity at a local level, replication of successful projects, access to resources and networking.

