



Aspiration, Inspiration, Perspiration Programme summary

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Programme summary
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1. Background

1.1. **'Aspiration, Inspiration, Perspiration'** was a programme of online events planned and delivered by the Resourceful Communities Partnership during March to June 2024. In response to the many challenges and crises impacting on communities in Wales over the last few years, the programme aimed to bring practitioners and policymakers together to reflect, to share good ideas, to energise, and to 'further build collective efforts for a better life for all in our communities'. The programme title refers to the following themes:

- Aspiration – ambition in tackling challenges and pressing for change.
- Inspiration – acquiring great ideas and knowledge of what works and can make a difference.
- Perspiration – starting out, adapting, and keeping going in hard times.

The programme involved presentations, discussions and workshops led by citizens, community groups and people from across the sectors who work with them. They were open to all (citizens, voluntary groups, and public, private and third sector organisations) but assumed a common interest and commitment to building wellbeing, and a good life for all. Many issues were explored through the sessions, including: campaigning, Asset Based Community Development, leadership, organisational culture, circular economies, community assets, and social enterprise.

1.2. **The Resourceful Communities Partnership** is a national forum for public and third sector organisations that help develop and promote local activities and action that improves wellbeing in communities throughout Wales. The Partnership is jointly chaired by Building Communities Trust and Pembrokeshire County Council. <https://copronet.wales/what-we-do/rcp/?cn-reloaded=1>

The Aspiration, Inspiration, Perspiration programme was curated by Together for Change with Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services. It was organised by Together for Change too, with technical input by Social Care Wales.

https://www.tfcembrokeshire.org/en_gb/

2. Introduction

This report provides an overview of the 8 events curated under the Aspiration, Inspiration, Perspiration programme, starting with a summary of the themes that have emerged from across the sessions before suggesting some key imperatives that might form a basis for future work. It finishes with a programme evaluation, including a summary of participant evaluation feedback and reflections on the extent to which the programme met its aims. The annexe provides a brief summary of each of the 8 sessions, along with short speaker biographies.

3. Key themes from across the programme

A number of key themes emerged from across the events, with many resonating across multiple sessions.

3.1. Theoretical approaches to community led action

A number of theoretical frameworks, theories of change and approaches were explored using case studies in a diverse set of contexts (including in Wales, the UK and internationally). These included: Community Power, Co-production, Asset Based Community Development, Communitisation, Community Wealth Building, Circular Economy, Community Education, Arts Activism and campaigning. Each of these approaches provides unique insights but all share common values as follows:

- Seeking to work in and with communities.
- Building on the strengths and assets that exist in communities.
- Seeking to create more equal relationships between communities and public services/decision makers.
- Aiming to tackle disadvantage and improve wellbeing.
- Hoping to create alternative structures and strategies that are based in people and relationships.

Each of these approaches brings insights, strengths and weaknesses. It is hoped that the event participants will have increased their knowledge of these and can approach these issues as a 'toolbox' from which to draw creatively at different times and in different circumstances. Nevertheless, as will be explored in section 3.4, some of these are more prominent and have taken root more in Wales, and one or two in particular might be seen as unique to the Welsh context and thus capable of providing a shared understanding and set of approaches on which to build collaboration.

3.2. Approaches to community health and wellbeing

A number of the sessions focused on projects that are seeking to improve health and wellbeing (see particularly sessions 3 and 8). In keeping with the values identified above (section 3.1) these sought to work in and with communities to design and implement approaches that are locally relevant and that build on skills and assets.

Key to maximising and extending the impact of these initiatives has been the development of 'community champions' who are upskilled, 'upknowledge'd' and encouraged to share learning within friendship and neighbourhood networks. This informal community education approach could be applied in relation to many of the challenges facing communities.

In addition, session speakers emphasised the importance of effective partnerships with local authorities and public healthcare providers. These took various forms. In the case of the Fisherman's Rest projects (session 8), community led activities acted as gateways

for healthcare providers to engage on the community's terms and on their initiative. In the case of the Wigan Deal (session 3), the process was led by a local authority that had committed to the values outlined in section 3.1, was initiating institutional culture change in response, and was thus prepared to engage community actors sensitively and effectively. The challenges and opportunities in developing effective partnerships with public service providers will be explored further in section 3.7.

3.3. Approaches to community economic development

A number of sessions provided a critique of the extractive nature of our present capitalist economy (and identified its central role in the current 'permacrisis' of economic, environmental and social decline) and proposed alternative local economic models (see particularly sessions 2 and 4). These included Community Wealth Building, Circular Economy activity and Communitisation. These approaches overlap considerably, sharing a commitment to the following principles:

- Supporting local economic activity within communities.
- Focusing on the provision of key services that contribute to wellbeing and quality of life.
- Keeping money circulating within local economies (e.g. through progressive procurement by anchor organisations).
- Creating local employment.
- Building on the success of these approaches to advocate for an alternative economic system at regional and national levels (and seeking government support to upscale these approaches).

3.4. The need and potential for a uniquely Welsh approach

Presentations on initiatives from England and Malawi provided an opportunity for new learning but also to reflect on what is unique about the Welsh context and on what a specifically Welsh approach might look like. There are a number of areas to consider here:

History, language and culture – Session 7 provided a useful insight into recent Welsh political history, including the role of campaigning and protest (particularly in relation to the Welsh language). Session 2 provided rich insights into the nation's history as a 'community of communities' and the communal and cooperative culture that might still provide a solid and unique basis for our actions and initiatives.

Welsh policy – As noted in Session 7, these protests and campaigns were often successful as devolution paved the way for progressive policy developments in response. However, there was a sense of ambiguity expressed in relation to this during session 7. Has this adoption into policy caused a dissipation of energy in communities? Are these policies (for example the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015) effective in underpinning and inspiring change, or do they facilitate 'tick box' responses that are

ultimately ineffective? And are we struggling to operate in a political context that is paternalistic and 'top down' and that, as yet, doesn't know how to engage with community energy and initiative?

Welsh approaches – It was noted, during session 4, that the Community Wealth Building agenda has not taken root in Wales to the extent that it has in England or Scotland. This may be due to some of the policy and political challenges noted above. However, it may be that other terminology and approaches have emerged instead. For example, co-production has gained political support in Wales (and increasingly features in Welsh Government policy). Communities and practitioners in Wales need to develop a shared understanding of, and commitment to, our own terminology and theoretical framework. It may be that the term 'communitisation', introduced by Sel Williams during session 2 and based on Welsh history, culture and community practice, provides a focus for this shared understanding?

3.5. Research and evaluation

A common theme that emerged from the session was the need to generate evidence in support of community led approaches, to share this effectively and to make use of it to influence policy and decision makers. Session 6 turned its attention specifically to this area of concern, exploring a variety of approaches to the co-production of research and evidence in and with communities. These approaches shared the following principles and commitments:

- Long term sustainable engagement in communities by researchers.
- The valuing of community based knowledge (including lived experience) and skills.
- Communities identifying their own research priorities.
- Building research skills in communities.
- Co-creating knowledge in forms that can be used to make change 'on the ground'.

A number of challenges emerged from the session, including:

- The need to make relevant evidence that already exists available to communities in forms they can use.
- The need to increase capacity and resources in communities and third sector organisations to enable their active engagement in research.
- The need to make sure we evaluate and learn from the different approaches being taken to the co-production of research in communities.
- The need to provide some kind of repository that can gather and make available research and evidence.

It was noted that a number of the initiatives showcased during the session involved a brokering role between communities and researchers. This would appear to be central to the nurturing of successful research relationships and thought needs to be given as to how these roles are built and sustained.

3.6. Building collaboration and collective power

An absolutely central issue that emerged during almost all sessions is the need to develop effective networks and collaborations that build relationships between, and power amongst, community organisations. Success in this regard is fundamental to the following aims:

- The development of networks of solidarity and support that will sustain practitioners and community members for the long term and sometimes gruelling work of asset based community development and campaigning. This theme emerged particularly during sessions 5 and 7.
- The sharing of knowledge and good practice and the development of shared values and approaches (see sections 3.1 and 3.4).
- The influencing of decision makers and policy in relation to shared values and aspirations.

As was noted in a number of sessions, collaboration of this kind is developing through various initiatives both locally/regionally (e.g. Cwni Bro Ffestiniog and Cymunedoli Cyf (session 2)) and nationally (e.g. the RCP and Community Movement Cymru (CMC)). The issues and imperatives (section 4) that have emerged from this programme might form a set of priorities around which these networks could organise?

3.7. Campaigning and influencing

Session 7 provided an opportunity for interesting conversations about the role of campaigning in achieving aspirations for our communities. In particular there were questions raised about whether asset based community led action is campaigning at all, or whether we are rather seeking direct control of the assets and activities that can be used to build a good shared life. Nevertheless, there was broad interest in making use of campaigning and influencing approaches to change the systems and structures that impact on our communities. In this sense it is likely that both approaches are needed and could be mutually reinforcing. This brings us back to section 3.1. and the need to co-create a coherent and effective 'theory of change' or set of approaches. A number of issues emerged in relation to campaigning, including:

- The need to build networks and relationships to enable collaboration on campaigning and influencing for change (as noted in section 3.6).
- The need to develop approaches to sustaining ourselves and each other for 'the long haul' (also noted in section 3.6).
- The need to build democratic participation in our communities through education and by enabling people to connect their interest in local issues and activism to our system of representative democracy.

Finally, a key theme that emerged across many of the sessions (particularly sessions 1, 3, 4, 7 and 8) was the need to influence and promote culture change in local authorities,

health service providers and other traditional 'top down' public service providers. Some excellent examples were shared of where this has happened (see especially session 3). The following issues emerged in relation to this:

- Cultures changed significantly during COVID, with public sector organisations taking more flexible, collaborative and community focused action. Lessons were learned here but practice seems to be lapsing back to pre-covid conditions!
- Examples were provided of local authorities directly resourcing community led efforts as part of wider health and wellbeing strategy (e.g. the Wigan Deal's community investment fund).
- Local authority cultures differ greatly across Wales and it would be useful to identify where the best practice is and where change is most needed.
- There may be opportunities to develop community led training for public sector organisations modelled on the Wigan Deal's approach.

4. Future imperatives and recommendations

The following recommendations for future action are presented under the theme headings developed in section 3:

Theoretical approaches to community led action

- The range of approaches explored during the sessions, and the shared values that underpin and cut across them (identified in section 3.1) could be used to develop a values and vision statement for the 'community wellbeing sector' in Wales and could be championed by the RCP.
- There is a clear need for grounded and practice based training and development opportunities in support of the community wellbeing agenda. This could be shaped around a toolbox of theories and approaches with further facilitated opportunities to reflect on the implementation of these in specific places and scenarios. Training could be developed and led by a collaboration of specialist organisations who have experience in each of these (including some of the those that presented during the programme). This could be used to develop a community of practice providing other opportunities including mentoring, apprenticeships, project visits, exchanges etc.

Approaches to community health and wellbeing

- Work could be done to map community based health and wellbeing work across Wales, including identifying examples of good practice. What are the unique characteristics of this work in Wales?
- Additional work could explore the specific policy context in Wales. Where does policy support community based approaches? How might we maximise the opportunities afforded by this policy support? Where does work need to happen to influence the development and/or implementation of policy?

Approaches to community economic development

- The work taking place in Gwynedd aimed at networking community enterprises and influencing national and regional economic policy should act as an inspiration and 'call to arms' to the rest of us. Further work could be done in mapping community economic activity in other regions of Wales, along with the development of a 'power map' identifying the current patterns of economic power. Where is money being made? By whom? Where is it going?

The need and potential for a uniquely Welsh approach

- Welsh economic history and the history of Welsh political action, campaigning and community development should be incorporated into any community wellbeing/community development training programme.
- In addition, the sector should take an actively critical approach to the Welsh policy landscape, seeking to map all policy that is relevant to our aspirations, to identify opportunities and threats and to seek to understand the barriers to positive policy aspirations being translated into practice. This could provide a baseline from which to prioritise effective influencing and campaigning activities in favour of our values and vision.
- RCP and other related 'collectives' should seek to clarify a uniquely 'Welsh way of talking' about our aspirations. This might involve exploring which terminology and approaches resonate in communities themselves. For example, does communitisation effectively describe what we are seeking? Does it also embrace a specifically Welsh history of community and co-operation? If not, which concepts do resonate? This could be an exciting way of exploring shared history and aspirations in communities across Wales.

Research and evaluation

- The multiple and diverse initiatives across Wales that are working on this agenda should establish clear communication strategies and should also collaborate on project evaluation, seeking to identify what works across all approaches.
- Further work needs to be developed to ensure that communities and community organisations are enabled to engage in research that supports their practice. This could include the development of training in action research skills and the identification or formation of funding mechanisms that facilitate organisational capacity for research.
- Ultimately there is a need to gather research into a repository that enables access to communities across Wales, finally enabling practice to be rooted in a rich and diverse collection of evidence.

Building collaboration and collective power

- There is currently a sense of real momentum in this area, with networks and collaborations developing regionally and nationally. Thought should be given as to how these two levels can be effectively brought together. Real relationships are crucial to success in this area, and these relationships happen most naturally and powerfully at the small and local level. How can regional networks build on and

nurture local/community relationships, and how can national networks be a 'network of regional networks'?

- As noted, relationships should be central and the focus of network activity. How do we facilitate meaningful relationships of trust and solidarity between communities? How do we enable these networks to become communities in their own right, that are able to build practices that help sustain practitioners for long term presence and work?
- Beyond this, these networks are an opportunity to collaborate around shared activity that requires collective strength and power. These activities are likely to include: Shared learning and development, shared evaluation and research to build an evidence base, campaigning and influencing to change policy and tackle issues shared by our communities.

Campaigning and influencing

- Work should be done on developing a shared 'theory of change' for campaigning and influencing. Many organisations are committed to 'direct action' in terms of taking over local assets and activities and running them themselves – this is based on a theory of change itself! Nevertheless, most organisations will want to act to influence policy in ways that support this work and makes it easier, and some will want to seek political and policy change on social justice issues that impact on their communities. Once again, the shared values associated with community and asset based approaches potentially allow for a unique and powerful approach to this. There is plenty to learn from this programme but also opportunities to develop our own ways!
- A focus of collaborative influencing work is likely to be the desire to promote culture change in local authorities, health service providers and other public service providers, a key theme that emerged in many of the sessions. Work should be done to identify the current strengths and weaknesses of local authority engagement with communities across Wales, with attention drawn to good practice examples and influencing work targeted where change is most needed. Similar initial work could be done in the health sector.
- This could lead to the development of clear proposals or 'asks' for changes to policy and practice – for example, will local authorities explore or commit to creating community investment funds inspired by the Wigan Deal? Or, will health boards commit to commissioning community organisations to provide co-production and engagement training for staff?

5. Programme evaluation

The following provides an overview of the outputs and outcomes of the Aspiration, Inspiration, Perspiration programme:

Attendance numbers and type:

- Total attendance across all 8 events was 173
- 62 of these attendees were from third sector organisations
- 68 were from local authorities
- 14 were from public health or research organisations
- 29 were from other types of organisation

These figures suggest that the programme was relevant, attractive and catered effectively for, people from both the third sector and public sector, for both policymakers and practitioners. As such it was successful in creating and holding a space in which the nature of relationships between the two sectors, and their relationship to communities, could be explored effectively (this was a key theme in many of the sessions). One key outcome then is the harnessing of expertise and insights from both sectors (subsequently captured in this report) along with new relationships and understanding between professionals in both 'camps'. This could form the basis for a longer term more collaborative approach to working in communities.

Of the 173 attendees, 22 completed post-session evaluations. Of these, 16 responded to the question 'Overall how would you rate the event?' with 'Excellent', 5 responded with 'Good'. This demonstrates broad satisfaction with the sessions, although the limited response to feedback requests limits the conclusions that can be drawn from these figures.

In addition, it is suggested that the following outcomes resulted from the programme:

- The programme attracted a diversity of speakers, experiences and expertise, providing opportunities for participants to expand their knowledge in a wide range of relevant areas.
- Presentations included a number of interesting, challenging and inspiring examples of good practice from Wales, the UK and beyond.
- Workshop activities, breakout groups and participant conversations and feedback provided ample opportunity for people to step back from day-to-day commitments and reflect on their practice in a wider context.
- The enthusiasm with which participants engaged in conversation during the sessions, along with comments from the post-session evaluations, suggest that people left sessions encouraged and inspired to act.
- Discussions were also characterised by an honesty and, at times, vulnerability, with a focus on solidarity and mutual support that might sustain action. This could be the basis for a longer term supportive community of practice.
- The programme, and subsequently this report, provide an extremely useful and comprehensive summary of the challenges and opportunities facing those developing community based approaches to wellbeing.
- A clear set of issues and priorities have emerged from the programme (summarised in section 4) that could direct future action by the RCP and other networks and organisations and that could potentially form the basis of a manifesto for new kinds of relationships between public sector organisations and communities.

Overall, the Aspiration, Inspiration, Perspiration programme met the RCP's aim to 'bring practitioners and policymakers together to reflect, to share good ideas, to energise, and to 'further build collective efforts for a better life for all in our communities''.

6. Annexe - Session summaries and speaker biographies

This section contains a short summary of each session, along with brief speaker biographies. More detailed records of presentations and full biographies can be found in the individual event reports.

6.1. Session 1 – Building Community Power

Adam Lent from New Local presented an overview of the organisation's work with 70 local authorities and NHS bodies. He began with an overview of the challenges currently faced globally and locally, including: increased health inequalities, economic volatility, international tensions, political polarisation, extremism and environmental crises. He provided a definition of Community Power – 'communities deserve more power, resources and influence over the big decisions, services and infrastructure that effect their lives as communities' - before describing a number of examples of collaboration between public sector institutions and communities. These were characterised by a move away from a top-down institutional character and an attempt to build on community assets, energy and insights.

Adam described three 'routes' towards these ways of working:

Route 1: Voice – Opening up decision making using participatory approaches.

Route 2: Service delivery – Delivering services collaboratively with local communities.

Route 3: Organisational culture – Moving from 'we know best' to 'let's start with the community'.

Participant questions and conversations focused on the key role of organisational and community culture change. Adam noted that this can take years and that some communities are more ready for this approach than others. Effective leadership from the top is crucial, characterised by clear communication of the types of behaviour expected.

Speaker biography: Adam Lent has overall responsibility for the strategic direction, impact and efficient operation of New Local. His previous roles include Director of the RSA Action and Research Centre, Head of Economics and Social Affairs at the Trades Union Congress and Director of Research and Innovation at Ashoka – the premiere global network of social entrepreneurs.

6.2. Session 2 - 'Communitisation' – A Way Forward

Sel Williams, director of several community enterprises in the Ffestiniog area, described the impact that Marxism, religion, Welsh culture and his own experiences of living in community have made on his thinking. In particular he highlighted the work of Raymond Williams which resonates with a Welsh understanding of culture as 'belonging to the people'. He unpacked the nation's history as a 'community of communities' with a legacy of decentralisation and place based politics through which solutions are developed and led by people in communities.

Sel described the ways in which late stage capitalism has extracted wealth from Welsh communities. He advocated for the need to keep money in communities through the development of locally owned and led economic activity using an approach he has termed 'communitisation'. He gave a number of examples from Ffestiniog and the wider area including community owned hotels and restaurants and community tourism initiatives. Enterprises such as these across Gwyneth now collectively hold assets worth over £43 million. Their annual turnover is £13.5 million and together they employ 239 full time and 215 part time staff. These initiatives are increasingly working together through networks at both a Ffestiniog and Gwyneth level (known as Cwmni Bro Ffestiniog and Cymunedoli Cyf respectively). Collaboration at this level allows for strategic approaches to marketing and other tasks, and also provides opportunities to advocate for a different economic model based on communitisation at regional and national levels.

Sel finished by encouraging attendees and Welsh communities to focus on the following: Practice communitisation in our own communities, collaborate/work together, and influence policy.

Speaker biography: Sel Williams is a director of several community enterprises, nationally, and locally in the Ffestiniog area where he lives. He has a background in teaching, research and writing in the fields of Agriculture, Biology, Philosophy, Economics and Community Development.

6.3. Session 3 – Culture Eats Strategy for Breakfast

Professor Kate Arden introduced the Wigan Deal, a new way of working with communities introduced by Wigan Council that has sought to move from a deficit based towards an asset based model by creating a new organisational culture.

Kate emphasised the importance of political leadership in enabling this culture change and described the following approaches used to move away from 'doing to' people towards 'co-creating with' people:

- Training staff throughout the organisation for asset based conversations that create new relationships between public services and citizens.
- Working with anchor organisations in communities (e.g. schools, GP surgeries etc).

- Creating an open and continuous conversation with communities through community groups, the youth parliament, community leaders etc (instead of one-off consultations).
- Investing in communities' own ideas and efforts through an investment fund.
- Changing approaches to health by working with over 23,000 community health champions.

Key components to this new approach have been: a strong narrative of place; distributed leadership; recruiting and training for values, creating a supportive environment; and giving permission for staff to work differently.

Speaker biography: Professor Kate Arden is Honorary Professor of Public Health at Salford University, Visiting Professor of Public Health Chester University formerly Director of Public Health and Chief Emergency Planning Officer, Wigan Council and Greater Manchester Combined Authority Lead DPH for Health Protection and Emergency Planning.

A panel of 3 presenters responded to Professor Arden's presentation:

CLlr Neil Prior emphasised the need, as an elected member, to identify a 'coalition of the willing' and to set a clear direction of travel.

Sue Leonard (Chief Officer of PAVS) urged participants to move away from strategies and policies that sit on shelves towards place-based action and leadership.

Rob Blake described his work creating organisational values and embedding these in strategies at Hywel Dda University Health Board.

Speaker biographies:

CLlr Neil Prior is Pembrokeshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Corporate Improvement and Communities.

Sue Leonard is Chief Officer for Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS).

Rob Blake is Head of culture and workforce at Hywel Dda University Health Board.

6.4. Session 4 - An Economy for Communities and for Wales

Stuart MacDonald introduced the work of CLES (the Centre for Local Economic Strategies) and their approach of 'community wealth building'. He started by outlining our age of 'polycrisis' in which an extractive capitalist economy means that work is no longer a route out of poverty. In this context, community wealth building means ensuring that wealth circulates in local economies, creating jobs and supporting local economic growth. The approach builds on 5 pillars:

- Socially productive use of land and property
- Making financial power work for local places
- Progressive procurement
- Fair employment and just labour markets
- Inclusive ownership of the economy

The approach works with anchor organisations of place, bringing them together with local organisations to maximise the potential of their economic, intellectual and social power for local communities. For example, in Preston the university, council, housing association, college and police came together to rethink spending behaviour to support the local economy, including food and tech co-ops. Stuart also provided a number of other examples.

Speaker biography: Stuart MacDonald is Director of Research and Operations for the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES). He leads on all of CLES's research work and the strategic operations of the organisation.

Eifion Williams introduced the work of Circular Communities Cymru, an organisation dedicated to 'looping the value of material and monetary resources into re-growing our communities'. In particular the organisation seeks to support circular systems that reuse waste to create further social and economic value.

The organisation is involved in the Zero Waste movement, helped set up the first community fridges and established the curbside box scheme in Wales. Eifion focused on one project example 'Precious Plastics'. Plastic is collected from rivers, streets and beaches. Individuals ('from kids to pensioners') bring in their own plastic and make something to take home with them. This is a route to plastic sustainability where communities can create their own goods (e.g. grips for climbing walls and covers for iPhones).

Eifion encouraged participants to see themselves as 'community people, as the stitching, forever looping and bringing it back and weaving resources into our communities'. He recommended a DIY approach designed as a local level but networked to an all Wales level.

Speaker biography: Eifion Williams is CEO of Circular Communities Cymru, dedicated to looping the value of material and monetary resources into re-growing our communities. One of number of sister organisations globally, each utilising the other's blueprints to speed up the global arrival at Zero Waste.

Paul Hughes introduced the work of FRAME (Furniture Recycled and Managed Efficiently), an organisation that recycles and reuses furniture whilst supporting, training and employing people with learning disabilities or mental health issues. Everything the organisation does also contributes to the protection of the environment.

Projects and activities run by Frame include:

- The Green Shed – a community reuse centre with workshops and meeting rooms.
- Retail activities that sell upcycled furniture and fashion to generate income.

- Workshops in upcycling furniture and sustainable fashion that build local skills and generate items for sale.
- Bulky waste collection and recycling (contracted by the local authority).

FRAME is committed to providing proper paid employment for its beneficiaries through a range of projects, including the local authority bulky waste contract.

Paul finished by outlining the financial challenges faced in sustaining the organisation's work.

Participant questions and conversations focused on the progress being made in these areas in Wales. While Community Wealth Building has not really taken root, this may be related to different uses of terminology (for example, session 2 presented very successful Welsh examples under the term 'communitisation'). Wales has been very effective in recycling.

Speaker biography: Paul Hughes is Chief Officer of Pembrokeshire FRAME Ltd. He was an educator for over 30 years and held a variety of senior leaderships roles in schools and with a local authority.

6.5. Session 5 - The Vagaries and Virtues of Asset Based Community Development

Dave Horton introduced himself, explaining that he has lived, and worked as a community development worker, in Ely (West Cardiff) for 17 years. He is a cofounder of ACE – Action in Caerau and Ely.

Dave described ACE's journey from a deficit based to an asset based model, providing a definition of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) as 'building on the assets that are found in the community and mobilising individuals, associations and institutions to come together to realise and develop their strengths'. He showed a video created by ACE as an example of ABCD in practice.

Dave acknowledged that the reality is often more complex and challenging than the theory suggests, describing his own experiences of disappointment caused by recent troubles in Ely and arson attacks on a community owned play area. He raised the question of how we might sustain ourselves through these challenges and noted that the burnout time in this kind of work is 6 to 7 years.

The rest of the session used a workshop approach to explore related issues, and included some time reflecting in small breakout groups using the poem 'The Sycamore' by Wendell Berry. Some of the issues raised and discussed included:

- What does it mean to be, or stay, in a place?
- What do we bring to communities as practitioners? What kind of people do we need to be?

- What do we need in order to sustain ourselves, and how do we build communities of support?
- How do we manage professional boundaries in a community context?
- What role can creativity and the arts play in helping us negotiate these issues, getting beyond the rational and theoretical to the 'emotional'.
- What role can our own vulnerabilities play in breaking down barriers and helping us to connect with others? How do we share these appropriately and safely?

Some of the participant conversations revolved around a line from the Wendell Berry poem – 'gathering all accidents into a purpose'. This led to insights around coping with, and managing, unexpected incidents and circumstances. We cannot always be in control, but we can seek to be adaptable and flexible in our communities by embracing, learning from and seeking to 'redeem' experiences from the foundation of our values and vision.

Speaker biography: Dave Horton has 25 years of experience in Youth and Community Work in Cardiff and Cape Town. Currently based in Ely, West Cardiff, he has played a key role in developing and leading ACE (Action in Caerau and Ely) a nationally celebrated community development organisation.

6.6. Session 6 - Support for Communities in Research and Evaluation – the role of HEIs

This event used a series of case studies to explore approaches to co-producing research with communities.

Hannah Durrant introduced the work of the Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP) and described her research conducted with the RCP exploring actions that can be taken to support multisector collaboration to improve community wellbeing. She presented the co-production based approaches used during the research that emphasised active involvement of research users and the equal sharing and valuing of assets. The project included the following stages:

- Collaboration to address a collectively established question.
- Identifying sources beyond academic research evidence with research users.
- Exploring where the project sits in relation to wider trends.
- Focusing on relevant learning from practice.
- Ensuring outputs are action oriented.

Lessons learnt from the research project include:

- Taking time to ensure research remains needed, relevant and usable.
- Recognising the skills of others alongside researchers (and their skills).
- Focusing on the application to practice of research outputs.
- Going from 'research for' to 'research with'.

Speaker biography: Hannah Durrant is a Senior Research Fellow and Programme Director at the Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP). Hannah leads WCPP's work on community wellbeing.

Professor Michael Woods (Aberystwyth University) introduced the Local Policy and innovation Partnership (LPIP) Rural Wales, funded by the UKRI to support knowledge exchange with local and regional government, strengthen community engagement and work towards inclusive, sustainable growth.

The programme is organised around a number of themes: Building a regenerative economy; Supporting the net zero transition; Empowering communities for cultural recovery; and enhancing wellbeing in place. Each theme has a group that brings researchers together with third, public and community sector representatives to exchange knowledge and identify new areas for research. The aim is to empower local communities to undertake and use research to address challenges.

A community-led Action Research work stream, co-ordinated by Together for Change, will use the following model to co-produce research with communities:

- A Community Research Facilitator (CRF) engages local community members to identify a research issue and to specify a research question and methodology.
- An academic mentor (AM) is assigned from the relevant LPIP topic team. Together they design a research plan.
- A budget is drawn up and held by an established community organisation.
- Volunteer or paid community researchers are recruited and trained.
- Community researchers collect and analyse data, supported by the CRF and AM.
- Community members discuss and interpret research findings and plan follow up actions.

Speaker biography: Professor Michael Woods is Professor of Human Geography and Director of Cymru Wledig LPIP Rural Wales, the Rural Wales Local Policy and Innovation Partnership. He has over 25 years experience of working with and on communities in Rural Wales.

Dr Tom Avery (Swansea University) introduced the work of the Local Challenges Research Office (LCRO) which seeks to be involved and present with communities (between Pembrokeshire and Neath Port Talbot), and to leverage expertise across the university.

Tom provided a critique of the way universities have traditionally functioned:

- They are research led. (Academics pursue their own funding interests).
- They are funding reliant.
- As a result they tend to be limited to a short term period and are temporary.
- Relationships tend to be transactional.
- They are place ambivalent (it doesn't matter where the research happens).

The LCRO are encouraging a different way of working across the institution. The values they are advocating include:

- Making research across the university more community led.
- Ensuring engagement is long term (beyond funded research time).
- Making things more relational – being better neighbours.
- Making things place-based. (Tailoring to specific places).

A model based on these principles is being developed, built on three pillars:

- Educate – Getting to know the people involved and developing a shared understanding. Listening and learning. Bringing academic skills to the mix.
- Co-create – Valuing what's already being done in communities and finding ways to add value. Joining in with the community.
- Advocate – Vulnerable groups are not always in a position to co-create. Advocate means building bridges and evidence and enabling groups to be heard.

Speaker biography: Dr Tom Avery is a Research Officer at the Local Challenges Research Office at Swansea University. He supports and conducts research that addresses local, regional, and global challenges through collaboration with local communities.

Dave Horton and colleague **Anna Skeels** introduced SPARK, Cardiff University's Social Science Research Park, host of the Third Sector Research Partnership (TSRP). The TSRP aims to enable a vibrant third sector research culture based on the following principles:

- Co-production – equal relationships between academics and communities.
- Working with communities' own organisations.
- Making evidence that already exists available to these organisations.
- Valuing community knowledge as equal to academic knowledge.
- Developing research skills with Third Sector Organisations and co-creating knowledge that can be used by local organisations to make change.

There are six small and medium sized Third Sector Organisations currently engaged through the project. Together, they work in some of Cardiff's most disadvantaged communities. They are embedded in direct relationships 'on the ground', harness lived experience and are in a position to use knowledge to create change. They also share challenges and barriers related to capacity and the cultural differences and power imbalance that exists between Third Sector Organisations and academic institutions.

Dave described the engagement that has taken place through the TSRP so far. This has involved:

- Participatory creative workshops with Third Sector Organisations exploring aspirations and interests, strengths and assets, and support needs.

- Development of a bespoke research 'canvases' for each Third Sector Organisation. A single visual interpretation of their aspirations and plans.
- Surveying and outreach within the university identified 40 academics willing to provide pro bono support to Third Sector Organisations.
- Matching academics to Organisations to provide 10 hours of pro bono support, helping them identify their research question and methodologies.
- The university's Civic Insights programme has enabled students to carry out literature reviews related to the organisation's topic of interest, ensuring that evidence that already exists is made available for the organisation's use.

Speaker biography: Dave Horton has 25 years of experience in Youth and Community Work in Cardiff and Cape Town. Currently based in Ely, West Cardiff, he has played a key role in developing and leading ACE (Action in Caerau and Ely) a nationally celebrated community development organisation.

Participant conversations at the end of the session focused on the potential of integrating with pre-existing schemes in universities (for example that facilitate the involvement of students), the need to co-create research outputs that are usable by communities and the role of Action Research. There was also an acknowledgement that these examples demonstrate an exciting array of different approaches based on similar values. We should be sharing evidence and learning from these experiences.

6.7. Session 7 - Campaigning and a History of Protest

The session explored the history of campaigning and protest in Wales, before looking at current examples of education for democratic participation and challenges and opportunities for campaigners.

Richard King provided a 'greatest hits of Welsh resistance', starting with events in 1962 and finishing with some thoughts about devolution and post-devolution Wales. He described the formation of the Welsh Language Society and its revolutionary action in support of Cymraeg, alongside the fracture of the contract between state and worker that underpinned deindustrialization in South Wales.

Richard explained that the works of Ghandi and Martin Luther King were translated into Cymraeg in 1969, prompting the Welsh Language Society to use non-violent direct action in pursuit of their goals. In the meantime the energy of 'hippy environmentalism' arrived in Wales with the formation of the Centre for Alternative Technology in Machynlleth. This movement led to Wales being one of the first nations to include sustainability in its national charter when devolution was achieved in 1997 (a commitment that has continued with the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act).

1984 saw the miners' strike in South Wales and Richard described a moment in the mid 80s of a form of co-consciousness which saw the miners' strike, the anti-apartheid movement, the founding of the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp (which originated in a March from Cardiff) and the fight for Cymraeg 'gel together somewhat across communities'.

During the 80s Wales suffered severe economic hardship as a result of the policies of a UK government that a majority in Wales had not voted for, leading to significant tensions and setting the scene for devolution. During this period the Welsh Development Agency was a pioneer in post-industrial land reclamation, but the housing and economic situation remained bleak in South Wales.

Richard finished by reviewing the impact of these movements and campaigns in Wales, pointing out that the Welsh Language Society successfully campaigned for a television channel and a Welsh language act. He raised the crucial question of whether the adoption of campaigners' demands into devolved Welsh policy has led to a dissipation of energy behind social justice goals. Participants, in their comments and discussions, recognised this danger and identified the need to keep energy alive through community focused efforts for change.

Speaker biography: Richard King is the current Royal Literary Fund Fellow at Cardiff University School of Journalism, Media & Culture. He is the author of several books including *Brittle with Relics: A History of Wales, 1962–97*.

Yvonne Murphy (an Arts Activist) introduced her work researching democratic participation and co-creating prototype solutions to address the democratic deficit amongst 16 to 26 year olds in Wales. She identified the barriers to democratic participation as follows:

- A lack of knowledge of, and access to, our democratic systems and structures.
- A frenzied focus on elections and voting.

To dismantle these barriers we need large scale democratic education and information online, in schools and in community hubs. We need to help people connect their concern for local issues and activism to the democratic system and processes.

In seeking a solution, Yvonne identified the basic information that everyone needs and presented this in 'the Story of our UK Democracy that Every UK Citizen Should Know' in seven short chapters. The story forms the basis for the following 'Democracy Box' projects:

- The Democracy Box Public Information Campaign – This involves young people retelling the story in myriad ways across multiple media platforms. The campaign is co-led, co-managed, co-designed and co-created by young people.

- The Democracy Box Creative Cascade Schools Programme – Working with primary and secondary school teachers, students learn the story and retell it, cascading it to the year below.
- The Talking Shop – A cultural and democratic information centre, a place to find out what's on and what's what, hosted by professional creators.

Yvonne explained that for Democracy Box to be upscaled it must be co-owned by organisations that have public service at their core, including local authorities, the BBC and the Electoral Commission. The current unwillingness of some of these organisations to adopt the project has placed its future at risk.

Participants agreed on the importance of initiatives like Democracy Box in building democratic participation and noted the challenges of persuading big organisations with resources to pick up small successful approaches.

Speaker biography: Yvonne Murphy (Omidaze Productions Artistic Director and Executive Producer) has been a freelance Theatre Director, Creative Producer and Creative Practitioner and Consultant since 1992, working across the UK and Internationally.

Amanda Stone described her work with the Sheila McKechnie Foundation supporting campaigners, explaining that, for her, campaigning is about social change and social power. She based her presentation on the Power Report and the Change Maker Toolkit, both published by the Sheila McKechnie Foundation. She also described the support available from for campaigners from the foundation.

Amanda shared the following tips from these reports:

- Put mission first, don't just campaign as an adjunct to funding.
- Make sure you understand other people's position.
- Aim for collaboration not competition.
- Bring organisations together that are working on common community campaigns.
- Build greater public understanding and support for civil society's work.
- Be careful of language – don't call everything campaigning or activism or protest. Not everyone is comfortable with this terminology. We should change our language for different audiences and purposes.
- We need to think about why people might get involved and what might the barriers be?
- We need to ensure our campaigning is inclusive of the diversity of people in our communities.
- An effective campaign can take a long time to complete. It shouldn't fall on the shoulders of one person or one small group.
- Campaigners need to learn to pace themselves and to take breaks.

Issues discussed amongst participants included: the problem of charities having to remain politically neutral (and the barrier this creates to campaigning on political issues that affect them); the personal costs of campaigning, and how we might sustain ourselves and support each other; and the consequent need to come together and collaborate.

Speaker biography: Amanda Stone has been working for NGOs and leading campaigns for nearly thirty years. She's coached and trained U.K. and European charities on campaigns focused on human rights (anti-trafficking and slavery); homeless issues and access to education.

6.8. Session 8 - Sharing Learning on Community Development from Emerging Economies

Session 8 turned attention to community health projects in Malawi, seeking to draw out learning for a Welsh context.

Dr Susan Chichlowska described her work with Fisherman's Rest, a community led organisation based in Blantyre, Malawi, focusing particularly on the Madzi Alipo project which seeks to upskill and support communities to maintain and repair their own water supplies. The project takes an inclusive, local and asset based approach in response to the human right to drinking water and sanitation (recognised by a UN resolution in 2010).

Susan introduced the 'anti-development state' thesis, criticising development that imposes a western perspective. She explained that the current approach, which either sees bore holes maintained by communities without support, or by professionals, is failing. The Madzi Alipo project combines these two by training up and resourcing people to maintain their own water supplies, embedding the necessary skills and resources within communities.

Fisherman's Rest have used this community focused, asset based approach to develop other initiatives including:

- The Tree Project - Working with school pupils to plant trees in response to deforestation that is causing flooding.
- School construction – The building of quality primary and secondary schools to tackle overcrowded classrooms.
- Project Brave (Be Respectful And Value Everyone) – A girls' empowerment project seeking to tackle teenage pregnancy and school drop out.

Speaker biography: Dr Susan Chichlowska has lived and worked across Central Africa as an educator and academic for over 30 years. She became the programme lead for a

Masters in Public Health course at the College of Medicine in Malawi and is now Senior Lecturer in the Department of Public Health in Swansea University.

Dr Diana De introduced her research project aimed at understanding, and improving treatment for, anaemia in Blantyre, Malawi. She gave an overview of the condition, explaining that it affects 2 billion people (one third of the global population) and particularly impacts on women and girls in poverty.

Diana explained that, despite this, anaemia can be easy to treat through diet, iron supplementation, intravenous infusions or blood transfusion, or by treating underlying causes such as chronic kidney disease, malaria, tropical diseases and parasite infections. She described some of the approaches her work has taken:

- Providing simple medical advice that is culturally specific and sensitive.
- Encouraging people to share this information with the wider community.
- Supporting women to talk about taboo subjects including sexual health, menstrual cycles etc.

On returning to the UK, Diana sought to implement the learning from the project in Butetown, Cardiff, providing community events through which simple health information could be passed on and disseminated with the help of community champions.

In summary, Diana described the following aspects as crucial for this approach to thrive:

- A joined up approach with key stakeholders involved
- Local community engagement (including with charities)
- Government policies need to recognise the value of learning from other countries
- We need to address structural biases and stigma
- We need local authority buy in

Speaker biography: Dr Diana De is a Registered General Nurse and Reader at Cardiff University. During her 20 years in Higher Education, changes in population demographics and strategic developments within the University sector have given rise to Diana's ongoing campaign to diversify learning, promote cultural safety, public health, and foster global citizenship.