



Engagement, Action and Influence Workshop: 'Let's make positive change together'
A report on the workshop held on 25th October 2023
Together for Change

1. Background

- 1.1 This report summarises the presentations and discussions from the workshop, organised by Together for Change and partner organisations, that took place at Haverhub, Haverfordwest on Wednesday 25th October 2023. The aim was to explore 'how we can make a difference in Pembrokeshire's communities, from sustainability to measuring social change and more.' 47 people attended, from a range of public and third sector organisations.
- 1.2 The stories and insights shared on the day, and recorded in this report, are intended to inspire and support a coordinated approach to action for change across communities in Pembrokeshire.

2. The programme

- 2.1 The workshop began with introductory presentations from Sue Leonard (Chief Officer, Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS)), Sue Denman (Together for Change) and Neil Prior (County Cllr, Cabinet member for Communities and Improvement, Pembrokeshire County Council). They set the scene by describing the challenges facing communities, suggesting key approaches to change, and referencing work that is currently taking place in Pembrokeshire at both the community and local authority levels.
- 2.2 Two presentations then followed on the theme of 'Engagement - Equality, Inclusion and Diversity in Creating Change'.
- 'Meeting people where they are' by Gitti Coats (Haverhub).
 - 'Engagement and inclusion within sustainability and the outdoors sector' by Tom Luddington (Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum).
- 2.3 A further presentation followed on the theme of 'Action - A Chance to Act and Think Differently'.
- 'Social enterprise, a model for the future and innovative methods of measuring social impact' by Jo Hobson (Preseli Cares, PAVS) and Steffan Lemke-Elms (Catalyst for Care, PAVS).
 - The presentation was followed by a small group task exploring how social enterprise activities might be pursued in a fictional town.
- 2.4 Finally, the workshop finished with a presentation and small group workshop on the theme 'Influence – How Action and Research Can Create Change'.
- 'What matters to young people' by Tristy McDermott and Eil Lewis (Pembrokeshire Youth Service).
 - Workshop: 'How do we make change happen?' small group discussions.

The content of the presentations and the reflections shared during the workshop are summarised below.

3 The Presentations

3.1 Sue Leonard, (Chief Officer, Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS))

Sue described the great breadth of activity currently taking place in Pembrokeshire, involving over 1000 active voluntary and community groups. The Covid period saw positive developments, with increased community spirit and the emergence of self-organising groups characterised by quick response and innovation. Solutions were based on local skills and bureaucracy was lifted. In some ways things have gone backwards since, creating a set of challenges in Pembrokeshire including managing in a 'permacrisis'; coping with demographic changes; a housing crisis; and a shrinking workforce. In response communities should, in the words of St David, 'Do the small things', take risks, learn from failure and share learning with others. Sue shared ideas for future work, including: the creation of a 'Community Movement Pembrokeshire' to bring groups together to influence policy; A 'Give Pembrokeshire' campaign to encourage people to give time and share ideas on funding; and the building of communities of practice to share what works.

'It's always better to say 'well done' than 'well said'.'

Sue Leonard, Chief Officer, Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS)

3.2 Sue Denman (Together for Change)

Together for Change emerged from the work of Solva Care, motivated by a desire to influence policy using the voice of communities. The organisation seeks to build relationships that enable communities to share good practice, to build evidence of their impact through research and evaluation, and to take action. This agenda is increasingly supported by new champions in the Local Authority. Current key questions include: 'Where are we at now?' and 'What do we need to help us make progress?' Feedback from a recent Together for Change meeting of community, third and public sector leaders highlighted the need for innovation through community led pilot projects; pooling resources and exploring how statutory organisations provide funding and how it can be improved ; increasing communication between organisations and communities, sharing good practice; and moving away from a focus on services towards a focus on place based collaboration and community assets. There is a need to 'connect the dots', with strategy and implementation being underpinned by good work done locally.

3.3 Neil Prior (County Cllr, Cabinet member for communities and improvement, Pembrokeshire County Council)

Cllr Prior's primary concern is meeting the needs of communities through policy, with a primacy placed on work in his own ward where he spends time getting to know the area and seeking to build collaborative leadership. This has led to the establishment of a residents' group, a community renewable energy project, and a community land trust.

'When you feel you belong to a place, then you feel more invested, take more pride and care.'

Cllr Neil Prior

He also holds cabinet responsibilities including: the development of a communities policy (improving the confidence and capacity of communities); and Public Service Board collaboration (currently focused on the climate crisis, tackling poverty and strengthening communities). He emphasized that working across boundaries, 'working at the speed of trust' (referencing Cormac Russell), and sharing evidence are crucial.

3.4 Gitti Coats (Haverhub) – Meeting people where they are

Haverhub is a community centre developed with the aim of bringing people together on mutual territory to build relationships. In the early days there was considerable freedom, with 'no barriers, no policy, no filters' just a derelict building and a community 'willing to trespass.' Ownership of the building came a lot later, as a result of successful community engagement. Transparency and honesty have been key, creating lots of opportunities for people to contribute, and asking for help where needed (including from local people, businesses and the fire service). As a result there is a large diverse group of volunteers who are the 'engine'. Activities include: a vintage bike club, Eid celebrations with the Muslim community, and lots of groups making use of the space. Phase three of the site development is just starting.

3.5 Tom Luddington (Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum) - Engagement and inclusion within sustainability and the outdoors sector

Tom is responsible for stakeholder engagement for Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum across Wales. The organisation's mission is to inspire and collaborate with communities for a more sustainable approach to coastal management. They run a number of environmental projects including: development of marine renewable energy (including wind, tidal energy, aquaculture etc); climate adaptation (the co-creation of a strategy with communities); education and skills; and responsible recreation. Engagement and co-production with communities is central to this work. Tom has been particularly concerned with engaging currently marginalized groups through the organisation's developing equity, diversity and inclusion work, focused on the protected characteristic groups: Sex, age, religion/belief, gender reassignment, disability, pregnancy, race (including ethnicity), marriage, and sexual orientation. The organisation has a new Equity, Diversity and Inclusion action plan.

'Diversity is reality, inclusion is a choice.'

Tom Luddington, Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum

3.6 Jo Hobson (Preseli Cares) and Steffan Lemke-Elms (Catalyst for Care, PAVS) - Social enterprise, a model for the future and innovative methods of measuring social impact

The Preseli Cares project works with older people, who often feel dismissed and disconnected, co-producing care services that are preventative and built on local strengths and skills. They use a 'test and learn' approach to bring people together to increase access to services and to design new approaches. Current work includes: building on links with the Community Council to develop two community benefit societies; improving access to information; supporting community venues to generate income; exploring innovation in housing provision; working with community councils to develop wellbeing plans; and developing place-based action to influence policy. Building collaborative, long term, resilient solutions is a key challenge.

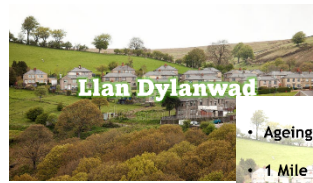
Steffan is Social Enterprise Officer for PAVS. He pioneered a successful enterprise recycling discarded wellies from Glastonbury Festival that supported projects in Kenya. This led to other opportunities including a restaurant, wellbeing centre and community farm. His role now sees him helping to develop social enterprise in the care sector, 'supporting the removal of profit from care'. A key challenge he faces is how to record the social value created by social enterprises. This can include approaches such as community consultations and techniques such as 'Most Significant Change' (MSC), a story based evaluation method. He and Jo are also developing a 'social value engine', an online database that enables organisations to create reports that assign a monetary value to social impact.

3.7 Small group task – Thinking about social enterprise in a fictional town

Participants were asked to consider an imaginary town and its potential social enterprise income streams related to a leisure centre and new footpath linking a nearby village. Groups discussed the following three questions: 'What are the possible income generating activities?', 'What are the potential outcomes in terms of social value?' and 'Who needs to be included?'



- Leisure centre closing
- A community run social enterprise will take on the centre working alongside the local authority
- Public transport being cut



- Ageing population
- 1 Mile from the local town Ymuno â'r Dotiau
- A proposed pavement to be installed to link to the town

Key findings/comments from group feedback:

- **Possible income generating activities:** Chargeable activities at leisure centre; hire of space; transport provision/cycle hire; community café; dog walking service; social food hub (cooking, bring and share etc); membership fees; PV panels/wind mills on roof; grant funding; local business sponsorship; community share offer; community events; one-stop-shop for health services; links to/fundraising with

schools; community lottery; Repair Café; community growing supplying café; add benches to path and skate-park.

- **Social value outcomes:** Improved mental and physical health and wellbeing; reduced need for GP services; improved environment from increased walking; new friendships/meeting new people; intergenerational access; connection between town and village.
- **Who needs to be included?** Community members; community groups; businesses; Community Council; transport people; people who are isolated; young people.

3.8 Tristy McDermott and Eli Lewis (Pembrokeshire Youth Service) - What matters to young people

The Children and Young People's Rights Office facilitates work across Pembrokeshire to promote the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Their aim is to give young people a voice and enable them to be active in their communities. They support a network of community youth councils, youth assemblies and special interest groups that work on projects and issues identified as important by young people. Priorities are agreed through a 'What matters to you?' consultation designed and led by young people themselves.

The key topics agreed currently are: The cost of living crisis, mental/emotional health, and housing. These will form the focus of project work for the next 2 years. Work so far includes: 2 question time events held by young people with County Councillors; input into the tackling poverty strategy; and the development of a youth housing forum. Future plans include: a young people led transport project; an anti-hate crime event; and resources developed by young people, for young people, on a range of issues.

3.9 Summary of presentations

The presenters represented diverse backgrounds, experiences and perspectives, with representatives from community organisations, a large third sector organisation, the local authority and the third sector council. Nevertheless, there was significant agreement on the key opportunities and challenges in relation to community led change in Pembrokeshire. At the centre of an effective approach lies a commitment to

'Everyone can be a community leader, an agent for change.'

Sue Leonard, Chief Officer, Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS)

relationships of trust as a basis for long term community engagement. These relationships, and the strength and effectiveness of efforts towards change, depend on a strength-based approach that recognises and nurtures local assets in the widest sense, including skills, knowledge, buildings and other resources. Long term presence and consistent activity in a community can be hampered by the challenges of sustainability, especially in relation to funding. In this context, social enterprise is celebrated as a key source of income generation but also for its potential in strengthening and rebuilding local economies. Bureaucracy is identified as a key restriction to the freedom of communities to respond quickly and creatively to local

challenges, and collaboration across the traditional boundaries of sector and community is seen as critical in overcoming these barriers to action. These growing relationships and networks also provide crucial infrastructure for the sharing of good practice and for efforts to influence local and national government policy. Key to this agenda are ongoing efforts to develop an evidence base in relation to community action through effective research and evaluation. Common to all presentations was a positivity, proactivity and a sense of hope. Communities can and do make change.

4 The workshop: 'How do we make change'

Participants discussed the following two questions in 6 small groups:

- What needs to change?
- How?

A Facilitator was available in each group to take notes. The session finished with a plenary in which facilitators fed back the key insights shared within their groups.

The key reflections from all groups are summarised below, grouped under headings.

4.1 Relationships

Our aspiration should be to involve everyone, and so issues of equity and inclusion are central. At the basic level, this means ensuring our activities are accessible.

Relationships need to see us 'working together, around the table.' This requires accountability and transparency between the different actors.

4.2 Communication

Effective community engagement is central to the aspirations expressed by participants. This requires a shared community communications plan that seeks to cater for diverse audiences and to clarify the many ways that communities and community members can get involved. This shouldn't just focus on digital communication. Pembrokeshire Hub could be used more effectively to streamline information.

4.3 Young people

There is a need to 'go to where young people are' and to utilise their preferred forms of communication. This means policy may need to be adjusted to allow professionals to use social media effectively. Activities need to be fun and engaging and could include, for example, treasure hunts that engage young people in physical spaces. In turn, these could be connected creatively to digital spaces, overcoming the gap between the online world and the 'real' world. There is a need to get beyond negative perspectives of young people, to create opportunities for youth volunteering and to develop youth ambassadors who can act as role models for other young people. Much of the current work is with children and more is needed with young people.

4.4 Assets

Efforts need to be built on local skills, shared with the community. In support of this, there is a need for multifunctional, accessible gathering spaces. One participant described these as 'third places'. These, and other assets, should be used to generate revenue for communities and, with this in mind, bigger organisations should use these

spaces and pay for their use. The utilisation of local assets should be supported through the development of a map containing information about spaces, services and relevant topics.

4.5 Approaches and priorities

An overarching priority was identified as the building of community, not projects. (Projects are valuable insofar as they support the development of community). Asset Based Community Development was seen as a key approach within this agenda. Social entrepreneurs and 'spearheaders' were believed to be crucial to the development of effective local action and volunteering needs to be supported and promoted by employers and education providers through the curriculum (e.g. the Welsh Bacc). Local economic development was identified as a priority (and particularly the growth of a 'circular economy') as was the local housing crisis. Community land trusts and various models of shared ownership were proposed in response. The environmental and climate crisis were seen as vital issues not just in their own right but also for the impact they have on the range of social issues impacting on communities (including mental and physical health and wellbeing). For this reason, a greater emphasis is needed on addressing these environmental issues as a way of also sustainably addressing social challenges.

4.6 Strategy

Overarching any strategic approach participants advocated a certain attitude which was summed up by one participant as 'ask for forgiveness, not permission'. This attitude is characterised by a 'let's make it happen' attitude and a refusal to be held back by bureaucracy.

Strategy should be based on a bottom-up approach, owned by local people and tailored to each place. There needs to be long term, sustainable commitment that allows the time and space for innovation and an openness to change 'upstream' not just 'downstream'. Collaboration is crucial – 'joining up the awesome things' and adapting good ideas for specific communities. In particular, town and community councils need to develop a shared vision. The desperate need to approach environmental and social challenges as interrelating issues can create significant complexity and a sense of feeling overwhelmed. An appropriate approach might be to pioneer fully integrated approaches in one or two local communities as demonstration and learning projects before attempting larger scale action.

'Aspiration, inspiration, perspiration.'

Participant

4.7 Funding

There is a need for easier, less bureaucratic access to funds for community organisations. Flexibility is needed to allow communities to develop their own solutions. In particular, there is a need to invest in community development. Income also needs to be raised through social enterprise and effective use of community assets.

4.8 Learning and evaluation

There is a general need for ongoing education and upskilling in many areas. These include specific skills for employment and economic development such as hospitality, farming, tourism and care, but also in skills for community building. It was suggested that schools should support this agenda through the creation of 'citizen slots' at lunchtimes. However, education needs to be two-way, e.g. 'we learn from children and young people.' There is an opportunity to learn from international and national models that work. Simple, short evaluation processes are needed to support the development of an evidence base in communities. Social value audits could be a crucial tool. Finally, information needs to be gathered in one place and easily accessible to support learning.

4.9 Challenges

Key challenges were identified as: a lack of leadership, limited volunteering, a lack of training and, fundamentally, a lack of power in communities.

Date: November 2023

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Thank you to all those that presented, attended and contributed to this event.

List of organisations in attendance

Adferiad Mental Health and Addiction Support Services	PACTO
Artisan Venue Tenby	Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services
Ateb Group	Pembrokeshire Care Society
Haverhub	Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum
Hywel Dda University Health Board	Pembrokeshire County Council
Llais Cymru	Pembrokeshire Youth Service
Macmillan Cancer Support	Preseli Cares
Marie-Curie	Solva Care
Natural Resources Wales	Span Arts
	West Kite