

Research Wales Innovation Fund 2020/21

Civic Mission and Public Engagement: template for case studies

Institution:	Aberystwyth University
Civic Mission Theme (select from drop down list) :	Leading place
Vision for Research and Innovation Pillars (select those that apply):	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Place <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Innovation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaboration
Title of case study / project / initiative:	Creative Exchange Network
<p>Summary description: (max 150 words) [Briefly describe the project, including groups within the community who were engaged and how it was funded. Was the project evidence-based / informed by research?]</p> <p>Established in January 2021, and supported by RWIF, the Aberystwyth University (AU) Creative Exchange Network places creative endeavour at the heart of the institution's innovation and research programmes. It connects the University's artistic practitioners, in various academic Departments, with key stakeholders across Wales to develop new creative arts and humanities projects.</p> <p>Under the oversight of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences' (FASS) Associate Dean for Research Sarah Wydall, project lead Professor Matthew Jarvis has, with the support of a cross-disciplinary steering group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - participated in the development of around a dozen research or knowledge exchange (KE) projects; - and undertaken two major scoping surveys to identify the breadth of AU's creative expertise and how external partners can benefit from such expertise. <p>The steering group includes representation from the Centre for Alternative Technology, and research and/or knowledge exchange projects are being developed in collaboration with Literature Wales, the National Library of Wales, the Books Council of Wales, and Ceredigion County Council.</p>	
Project / initiative impact: (max 200 words)	

[Describe the actual impact of initiative, including insights gained, and positive outcomes (whether planned or unforeseen)]

The establishment of the Creative Exchange Network has had a significant impact on arts-based research at AU, leading to new projects/collaboration and increased public engagement:

- Working with Books Council of Wales to develop a major funding bid around questions of how to enable best-selling fiction in the Welsh language, crucially supporting the publishing industry within Wales.
- The 'Constitutional Futures' project deploys innovative open space research technology as well as poetic practice to help participants imagine potential futures for Wales.
- A project developing high-street regeneration work with Ceredigion County Council, in collaboration with the National Library of Wales, will see untenanted shop windows in Aberystwyth town centre display artwork, historic manuscript reproductions, and contemporary poetic responses, with the aim of addressing issues of post-pandemic high-street decline.

Other community-oriented projects with Creative Exchange Network involvement are also now in pilot phases funded by Aberystwyth's University Research Fund (URF):

- A project about poetry and anxiety brings together staff to work with participant groups from within the local community to examine how engaging with the uncertainty inherent in poetry as an artform may have a positive impact on issues around anxiety.
- A project exploring the use of creative practice within a local community is addressing how community cohesion and identity may be assisted by community members writing narratives about their community and its possible futures.

Future activity: (max 150 words)

[Is the project now sustainable, or are there plans for follow-on projects – if so how will these be funded?]

Central to the Network's current work are its aim to:

- turn projects currently at the planning stage into full funding applications, and
- enable projects currently running as pilots to use the pilots themselves as the basis for major funding applications.

As such the entire Network is future-oriented. This means that projects such as the five cited in the section above are oriented towards development into more substantial funding projects or community-engaged work. For example, the work around shop windows is part of a longer-term cross-community initiative to develop a bid for Aberystwyth to become a UNESCO City of Literature – an idea developed within the Creative Exchange Network and approved at a recent meeting of Ceredigion County Council.

Moreover, AU's commitment to ensuring the ongoing success of the work is demonstrated in its funding of three of the projects involved in the Creative Exchange work via the URF.

Quote(s) e.g. from external project partner: (around 60 words)

[There is potential for HEFCW to publish this case study – please provide a quote that helps demonstrate the impact of engagement]

In relation to the project working with Books Council of Wales on Welsh-language publishing:

“BCW services the publishing industry in Wales, in Welsh and in English, from commissioning and writing to distribution and sales. In a very small market sales are crucial. This project gives us an unique opportunity to look at the interaction of literary style and merit with purely commercial aspects to ascertain the factors that contribute to overall success.”

R. Arwel Jones
Head of Publishing Development, Books Council of Wales

**Contacts:
(website; contact name; email; phone)**

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How did the activity help support the Well-being of Future Generations Act goals (select those that apply):

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales

[Briefly outline how the project helped support the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015]

Because of the inherent diversity of work that the Creative Exchange Network enables, it supports the full range of the goals of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act. For example:

- Work with the Books Council of Wales to enhance success in Welsh-language publishing supports a prosperous and resilient Wales, as well as a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.
- The project exploring the potential benefits of poetry to individuals suffering from anxiety supports the development of a healthier Wales.
- The project addressing the value of creative writing to enhance community development supports a Wales of cohesive communities.
- Another project under development, 'Visualising Net Zero', addresses the importance of global responsibility around issues of climate crisis.
- The Constitutional Futures project is centrally aimed at drawing into conversations about Wales's future those communities that often do not get much of a say in developing constitutional change – thus enabling a more equal Wales.

It is one of the great strengths of the Creative Exchange Network that, precisely because of its commitment to fostering wide-ranging collaborations rooted in the work of artistic practitioners and researchers, it speaks so effectively to the full range of the goals to which the Well-Being of Future Generations Act is committed.