IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE LIFE-GIVING RIVER

confluence project report

"In the beginning was the life-giving river... from the very outset the nature and purpose of the place as a trading and commercial hub was set."

Simon Hancock, *A Photographic History of Victorian and Edwardian Haverfordwest 1860–1914*

INTRODUCTION>

Di Ford

Wednesday 27 November 2013. It is a bitterly cold evening and St Mary's Church at the top of the historic High Street is bursting at the seams for a *Question Time* type event hosted by the Haverfordwest Civic Society. Inside the church, despite the cold, the atmosphere is electric. The temperature rises as the people of the town share their passion and love for a place that holds so many memories. The dominant narrative is of a town, once rivalling Bristol in importance, suffering a long slow period of irreversible decline, blighted by poor planning decisions and a lack of hope for the future. The overriding feelings are anger, powerlessness, loss, frustration and sadness.

A month earlier, Arts Council of Wales (ACW) had launched Ideas: People: Places (IPP) – an experimental programme to: *embed the arts in a genuine and meaningful way, in a small number of imaginative, ambitious and innovative regeneration projects*.[1]

Since 2011, spacetocreate – a Haverfordwest-based community arts organisation – had been working with the support of partners in the youth, educational and business sectors to pilot and deliver takingpartwest.[2] Made up of twenty small-scale participatory art projects, this initiative had given a platform for children, young people and their families to creatively share their experiences of growing up, living and working in Haverfordwest.

1. www.arts.wales/arts-in-wales/ideas-people-places
2. www.takingpartwest.org.uk

Inspired by the passion of the St Mary's 'congregation' and the opportunity presented by IPP to build on and expand the scope of takingpartwest, five partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors came together to form the Confluence partnership.[3] Their aim was to explore the role that the arts might play in changing the fortunes of the town, or at least the creation of a new narrative and the beginning of a process, which, might over time lead to regeneration.

In January, a research and development proposal was submitted, and was one of thirteen across Wales supported by ACW. Four months of research and development took place between April and July 2014, laying the foundations for the development and submission of a full-scale project proposal.

Following a presentation to the ACW board, in October 2014 the Confluence partnership, along with six other partnerships across Wales, was informed that their project proposal had been supported.

The project plan submitted as part of the application included the following objectives:

- To design and facilitate a laboratory programme of experimental arts activities that will directly engage more than 1000 people in the process of re-imagining and regenerating the town
- To engage the community in the commissioning of seven artist-led projects, including at least one large-scale high profile capital project
- To develop a cohesive plan for the river and its immediate environs
- To document, evaluate and disseminate our findings to other market towns in Pembrokeshire and across Wales.

This final project report sets out to tell the story of the project, assessing how far it delivered on its stated objectives, as well as exploring the impact that it has had on the town and its people. It is informed by:

- Qualitative and quantitative data collected at more than 70 events
- A series of 'most significant change' interviews undertaken with stakeholders
- An anonymous online questionnaire, undertaken with support from Analytical volunteers at the Office for National Statistics.

The project website[4] hosts a comprehensive archive of the project and links are provided throughout this document and as a series of appendices to enable the reader to find out more.

The report is divided into four chapters, loosely correlating with four performance measures that were used to measure progress and also provided a framework for a series of Annual Report Cards. These were:

- **PLACE >** Changing people's perceptions of Haverfordwest
- **PEOPLE >** Numbers of people engaging with the programme and giving positive feedback
- **ART >** Increasing people's understanding of what art can be
- **REGENERATION >** Support and commitment of key decision makers for arts and regeneration.

Each chapter provides a narrative overview alongside comments from participants and stakeholders as well as a selection of case studies showing examples of work.

The report ends by reflecting on the journey and the learning arising from it as well as pointing to hopeful signs for the future.

3. The five members of the partnership were: PLANED, spacetocreate, iDeA architects, Transition Haverfordwest and Pembrokeshire County Council.
4. www.thelabhaverfordwest.org

PLACE

Haverfordwest has a resident population of only 12,042.[1] As the County Town, it provides a commercial and administrative centre for the whole of Pembrokeshire (population 122,4390[2]). The county is also a significant tourist destination, in 2015 hosting more than 4.2 million tourists[3].

The research and development phase located the geographical focus for the project as 'the river and its environs'. During this phase, and throughout the first year, people were invited to contribute their views and opinions to create a baseline study from which change could be measured over time.

The baseline indicated that, while there are many things people value about the town, in common with other towns across the UK, Haverfordwest is perceived as having suffered from a long-term decline because of:

- Changing shopping habits – move to online and out-of-town shopping
- High business rates leading to an over reliance on charity shops
- Lack of investment, understanding of and interest in the arts
- Poor planning decisions and a lack of a coherent vision for the future
- A lack of engagement opportunities leading to people feeling disempowered
- Changes in the rural economy having a negative effect on the town

Running alongside a dominant narrative of decline, signs of hope for the future were also present, most notably in: the development of an

1. 2011 census.
2. 2011 census.
3. Pembrokeshire County Council: STEAM Final Trend Report 2004–15.

outdoor skate park on Picton Playing Fields – 'one of the best skateparks in the UK'[4]; and a recognition by Pembrokeshire County Council through the development of town teams, that something needed to be done to address the challenges faced by the County's towns.

As the county town, Haverfordwest provides a geographical focus for a large proportion of Pembrokeshire-wide organisations as well as many more local ones that make up a healthy civil society. It plays host to Pembrokeshire College, Withybush General Hospital, the headquarters of the County Council and a high number of supermarkets and national chain stores, many sited on the periphery of the town.

One of the challenges facing the partnership was the natural tendency for people to operate in silos, within their organisations, networks or professional groups. Consequently, an early priority was the creation of a town centre riverside venue – as a neutral space for collaboration – between artists, regeneration professionals and the public.

This space was envisaged as the base for an experimental laboratory programme (the LAB), linked to a series of socially engaged artist commissions with the common aim of promoting a sense of belonging, civic ownership and empowerment.

How far the narrative has changed over the last four years is difficult to either measure or attribute. Stories about the town in the *Western Telegraph* – the county newspaper show a significant trend away from negative stories towards more generally positive ones.

Comments from the Confluence Questionnaire 2018 online survey[5] and a series of 'most significant change' interviews[6] also reinforce this positive trend.

"The cultural activities have changed my perception of the town and drawn attention to some of the cultural, historical and environmental assets already there e.g. Castle, jail, riverbank, local artists, musicians, galleries. I feel more inclined to shop there and visit cafés for a nice day out. I live one hour away. Change has been noticeably people-led. A change of attitude and air of anticipation that has been positive".

– Confluence 2018 online survey respondent

"Change has been noticeably people-led. A change of attitude and air of anticipation that has been positive."

– Confluence 2018 online survey respondent

"What shocked me when I got here was the negativity that I picked up from pretty much everybody. It was only when I got to the Ideas Lab and Confluence that I found an awareness that we have to change that negative rhetoric, not in an aggressive way, but to subtly start saying: yes it's a bit run-down but the potential is phenomenal."

– Daniel Settatree, artist who moved to Haverfordwest in 2016

"Although, I think Confluence has made a good solid start at changing people's perceptions, I think it's going to take a lot more money to get the town to where we want it to be. We're battling against these out of town shopping centres and other new developments and big businesses that are dragging the town down. Confluence is just a small fish fighting for a place in a big pond, which obviously makes it a very challenging thing. But they've definitely made a good start and helped to bring other projects together, and I have seen some really positive changes in the last few years in terms of creative activities and people's perceptions, but we've still got a lot of work to do."

– Arthur Brooker, founder of *Breaking Out Of The Gallery*, and Haverfordwest Town Councillor elected in 2017

4. www.haverfordwest-skatepark.co.uk
5. Appendix 1: Confluence 2018 Questionnaire results
6. Appendix 3: *Stories of Change*: a series of interviews undertaken by Karen Scott from PLANED in 2017 with artists, town councillors and county council officers.

JennyBlackmore

River of Lights

www.thelabhaverfordwest.org/river-of-lights

The aim of River of Lights was to test the contribution an annual community lantern parade might make to celebrating a sense of place and changing perceptions of the County town. The event set out to build a sense of community and belonging through a participatory arts event celebrating the river, the county town, its connections with the rural hinterland and providing a platform for the creativity of its people.

The event was developed in partnership with Span Arts and lead artist Toby Downing and built on earlier pilot projects undertaken by spacetocreate in 2011 and 2013.

Events in 2015 and 2016 engaged people from the town and its rural hinterlands in increasing numbers. The annual event, which takes place on Halloween caught the public imagination and has grown over the three years with more than three thousand people taking part in the 2017 procession.

A direct outcome is that Haverfordwest Town Council has included the event in its three-year plan as one of three events that will be developed and supported as part of an annual programme for the town.

"What a night!!! Thank you SO much for all of your input; from lit-up canoes to burning buildings, armies of volunteers to illuminated foliage, not to mention giant puppets, banging beats and some top-notch organisation." – Rowan Matthiesson, project partner, Span Arts

Feedback gathered from 100 people on the night and a further 170 online was extremely positive:

- 95% rated the event as "very good" or "excellent"
- 85% said it had changed their view of Haverfordwest for the better
- 100% want more events like it in Pembrokeshire
- 93% said they would participate again
- 35% saying they'd like to volunteer at next year's event.

Some of the 'three word' reviews from participants in 2017:

"Amazing coming togetherness"
"Breathtaking, spectacular, beautiful"
"Magical lantern puppets!"
"Art transformed Haverfordwest"

Confluence

Ideas Lab: Breaking Out Of The Gallery

www.thelabhaverfordwest.org/bootg2

Ideas Lab was launched in February 2016 to test ideas for arts and regeneration in Haverfordwest and open up opportunities for local people to become more engaged. The partnership provided support, including funding of up to £500 for 18 small-scale projects.

One of the first of these was Breaking Out Of The Gallery (BOOTG), which in the summer of 2016 brought art onto streets of Haverfordwest, creating a gallery without walls in the town centre. A launch event, and tour of the exhibition was scheduled as part of Haverfordwest Festival week and sponsored by Transition Haverfordwest.

In 2017, BOOTG spread right across the town and culminated in a silent auction to sustain the project beyond Confluence. In the mean time its founder, aged 26, was elected as a town councillor and a trustee on the board of governors for Haverhub – a project to re-purpose the old Post Office building as a community hub, learning and arts centre.

"I think that Confluence has opened up the doors to lots of other projects. I would have struggled to set up the Breaking Out Of The Gallery project without their help. And I know that through the Ideas Lab lots of other small projects have started off and they're planting the seeds for bigger things to come. It's like my project started off quite small and hopefully it's going to grow, year on year.

"Our main objective with the project is to spruce up the town, which is the same as the Confluence objective, trying to change people's perceptions of Haverfordwest and jazz the place up a little bit, get more people involved and create more vibrancy, which is what it really needs. I think Confluence is doing well at making that happen, getting the ball rolling, although we still have a long way to go." – Arthur Brooker, founder of *Breaking Out Of The Gallery*, and Haverfordwest Town Councillor

The Random Story Generator

www.thelabhaverfordwest.org/davis-jones

Over a couple of days in June 2015, as part of the launch of the Confluence project, artists Davis & Jones, equipped with a portable café and some marker pens, approached people out and about in Haverfordwest inviting them to chat about their thoughts and memories of the town.

Young and old, holidaymakers, people on their own, people in groups, shoppers, workers, skaters, families, friends, people with dogs, buskers, people with family ties, people living in town and people living nearby all took time to stop and talk.

The thoughts, memories, feelings, hopes and fears were written by Davis & Jones on their clothes.

Using an idea originally devised with young people in Wiltshire, the stories were grouped into categories and reassembled to create 11,007,360 possible new stories; a quirky and illuminating portrait of this town.

Vaughan's, a TV and radio retailer in Quay Street hosted the resulting digital artwork *The Random Story Generator Haverfordwest* where it played continuously for a month in the shop window.

"I'm what they call a Longneck; born in Haverfordwest and lived here all my life."

"Friendly, even by mad Welsh standards."

"It needs another direction to revitalise it. What that direction would be I don't know. Sad that a place that was once so bustling is so depressed."

"You can put loads of things down if you want to, but there's loads of good things."

"I've always thought it was the best town in Wales."

"It's got roots. It's a lineage if you pass it down. If people respected the past they'd be more grounded in the future."

"The river makes it. It keeps the place alive."

"Who's going to have the nerve to start something off?"

– Voices from the Random Story Generator

Karen Ingham

Pembrokeshire Drover

www.thelabhaverfordwest.org/the-pembrokeshire-drover

Through spring/summer of 2016, BAFTA award-winning artist film-maker Karen Ingham created Pembrokeshire Drovers: an artist film installation, which was shown as part of Haverfordwest Festival Week in July 2016, and in Oriel y Parc, St David's throughout August.

"Pembrokeshire Drovers is a socially engaged, site -responsive moving image artwork that draws on and reflects upon the interrelationships between Haverfordwest and the rural and coastal hinterland it serves." – Karen Ingham

The commission was planned in collaboration with Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, who provided officer time and a venue for the installation, which gave the opportunity for a longer and wider engagement with the surrounding county.

The film is structured around a series of journeys: road, track, waterway and foot, radiating out from Haverfordwest into the surrounding rural and coastal hinterland and defined the drover's roads as 'a kind of palimpsest, like an old wax tablet that is constantly re-written anew yet leaves prior traces of history and meaning'. The interrelationships between the Drover, the routes, the town, and the act of journeying, and the changing nature of journeys form the past into the present are central to the work.

"Absolutely brilliant to see this film/installation in Haverfordwest! " – Visitor to installation from Hackney, staying in St Justinian, St David's

"A fascinating and creative and educational journey. Am very glad to have to have seen this work." – Visitor to installation from Croesgoch

"Great to see such a nice tribute to the past drovers and today's 'tourist' drovers. Great work." – Visitor to installation from Mathry

PEOPLE

Confluence set out to devise and test new and imaginative ways of working in Haverfordwest, engaging people who live, work, learn and play in the town and inspiring them to shape the process of urban planning, design and regeneration.

The re-purposing of a former travel agent, part of an under-used and much loved town centre former department store as a 'meanwhile' base for the project posed its own challenges. How to strike the right balance between creating a tangible presence and venue without tying the project to this venue or appearing to be setting up an arts centre that was never open?

The space was most successful in providing a focus and meeting place for the arts community of the town and wider county. It provided a central location to host a seasonal programme of talks, walks, seminars, exhibitions and events. Each of the commissioned artists contributed to the programme, providing context for their practice and opening up opportunities for a wider arts development agenda. The primary beneficiaries were arts and creative professionals and those already with an interest in the arts.

Crossing any threshold requires a degree of curiosity and confidence, particularly one that tried to maintain a certain degree of ambivalence so as not to exclude a non-arts audience. The space was less successful at fostering the complex inter-relationships that connect individuals, families and communities to the places in which they live, work, learn and play.

The most effective solution to engaging the widest possible demographic was, wherever possible, to undertake projects in the public realm and as part of wider initiatives such as Haverfordwest Festival Week.

PEOPLE

Art projects in non-arts venues such as Festival Week's art sheds project and PLATFORM, which over three days presented Haverfordwest as a stage for a programme of new commissions and existing artworks by artists living in and around Pembrokeshire, opened up the possibility of 'just coming across something' and getting drawn in.

In terms of numbers, the River of Lights lantern parade provided the most successful means of engaging large numbers of people in the programme, followed by participatory events as part of wider events such as Haverfordwest Festival Week. Feedback gathered by Span Arts[1] provides a powerful testament to the value of these types of events in building a sense of community and civic pride.

"…it might be difficult for townspeople to see a legacy, except for one of the most visible and best things, namely the lantern parade – which was super popular, super enjoyable for everyone and ticked so many boxes for a community event. It was also a lesson for us as a town council that said: look THIS is how you do community stuff." – Town Councillor

Other initiatives, such as *The Big Map*, set out to target specific groups providing a clear route for local people to shape the future of the town by contributing their ideas and opinions to the development of the Haverfordwest framework and master plan.

At the end of the first year, *Making the Connections* – an open access participatory workshop used 'open space technology' to explore the question: How can art play a part in regenerating our county town? The event informed years two and three of the programme and gave rise to initiatives such as the Ideas Lab, which opened up the project to contributions from a more diverse range of activists and sowed the seeds of place-making programmes sited within wider initiatives such as Festival Week.

"There were several successful activities, including the art sheds, which people really, really enjoyed and I hope they'll do them again this year. There were garden sheds placed at different sites around town that put on interactive art activities for passers-by. They also brought the Big Model of Haverfordwest out onto the street and that was a huge draw because, like the sheds, it wasn't in a building. I think people can feel a bit suspicious or constrained about going into buildings to view art, if they're not used to it."
– Gillian Howell, Haverfordwest Town Councillor

The website, its associated social media presences, and targeted mailings provided the means of people keeping in touch with what was on and giving feedback after events.

Over the three years attendances at events went up year on year, beginning with 1400 attendances at thirty events in year one rising to 2500 attendances in year two and more than 3000 in year three. In total more than 7000 attendances were recorded at over 70 events. By the end of the project a network of just over 1000 contacts were receiving mailings and were also members of the lab Facebook group.

The Confluence 2018 survey showed high levels of satisfaction (90%) with the events, but comments also highlighted the challenges of letting everybody know what was happening:

"Fabulous events and projects that really made a difference to the feel of Haverfordwest in terms of increased sense of cohesion."

"Impressed to see the variety of the programme and the amount of local people participating."

"I think the Confluence project helped to achieve a lot for Haverfordwest. It helped in a big way to build a positive momentum for change, which now seems to be in full flow."

"My only complaint is that they were drastically under-advertised!"

1. From 270 respondents at the third River of Lights event, and following the event.

LAB EVENTS AS PART OF HAVERFORDWEST FESTIVAL WEEK 2017

LAB

PlaceMAKING

The Poetry of Haverfordwest

Sat 22 and Mon 24 July
10am–5.30pm in the town centre
Free • Suitable for all
Help create the poetry of Haverfordwest with local writer and poet Kerry Steed. Keep a lookout for the word gatherer at various locations in the town centre!

Little People

Sat 22, Mon 24, Tues 25, Wed 26, Thur 27 July
2pm–4pm at the Lab
Free • Suitable for ages 8+ • Please book via the Lab website
Work with puppet-maker Di Ford to create your very own little person using an artists' mannequin and a fab selection of fabrics. Photograph it on location and upload to #harfatlittlepeople before taking it home.

Seren Boat Launch

Sat 22 July
4pm–6pm at the slipway near The Bristol Trader
Free • Suitable for all
Celebrate the launch of the Seren Sailboat Mk 2, designed and built for the town by Clive Anderson and made with the help of local volunteers. Songs and shanties from the colourful Vagrants Crew.

Great Place

Mon 24, Tues 25, Wed 26 and Thur 27 July
10am–2pm at the Lab
Free, drop-in • Suitable for all
Tell us what makes Haverfordwest a #GreatPlace. Add to the story of the public artwork being designed for the river. Work with local craftspeople to explore the processes involved in making it.

Something Fishy

Fri 28 and Sat 29 July
10.30am–1pm and 1.30pm–4pm at the Lab
Free • Drop-in workshops suitable for ages 8+
Make a mosaic fish with mosaic artist Maddie Janes as part of a community mosaic project to brighten up the riverside planters opposite the new library.

Film$4change

Fri 28 July
7pm–10pm at The Picton Centre
Free • Suitable for all • Refreshments provided
Screening of the French film, *Demain* (Tomorrow) winner of Best Documentary at the Cesar Awards (the French Oscars), followed by an informal discussion about local community and environmental initiatives.

Booking or more information: www.thelabhaverfordwest.org/whats-on

cOnfluence

thelabhaverfordwest.org

Festival Week

www.thelabhaverfordwest.org/haverfordwest-festival-week

Reignited by a highly motivated group of town and county councillors, in 2016 Haverfordwest Festival Week set out to create 'a fun filled, action packed programme of events for all the family to enjoy'. The event brought together many different individuals and organisations in delivering a diverse programme of activity.

For Confluence, it provided a valuable platform to raise awareness of arts and regeneration and, with over 1000 people participating in Confluence-associated activities throughout the week, it made a significant contribution to the overall festival programme.

Feedback for the festival as a whole was very positive. Those involved in planning and co-ordinating were committed to developing it as part of the annual calendar of events in the town. A positive outcome was the breaking down of barriers between organisations as they worked together to achieve a shared goal.

Following the success of the inaugural Festival Week, Haverfordwest Town Council co-ordinated an even more diverse and ambitious programme for the 2017 festival, which again took place in the last week of July.

For this second year, Confluence worked with artists and organisations to produce a series of events themed around the idea of place making, which attracted over 500 attendances at 17 events and in the process:

- built a community of a hundred little people
- resulted in the publication of *Weave the Words*, a book of poems created by Kerry Steed
- created a community mosaic for the riverside
- introduced Studio Weave and the development of a new public artwork for the river
- launched a boat specifically designed and built for the Cleddau
- continued the experiment of Film$4change
- helped to inform a successful expression of interest to the Heritage Lottery Fund's Great Place programme.

Ideas Lab: Art Sheds

www.thelabhaverfordwest.org/artsheds

In early 2016, a newly established Haverfordwest Festival Committee approached the Confluence partnership looking for family-friendly art activities throughout a newly planned summer festival week.

The resulting Art Sheds project was supported through the Ideas Lab and created in partnership with Haverfordwest Town Council and Haverfordwest Pop-up Studios and Riverside Shopping Centre.

Three artists/artist collaborations associated with Haverfordwest Pop-up Studios submitted proposals for activities/interventions to engage the public, specifically children and their families, for a minimum of 25 hours during the course of the festival.

The use of three six-foot-square, pastel-coloured wooden sheds was negotiated with the local authority and these were erected on three locations along the Riverside Shopping Centre for the duration of the festival which ran from Saturday 23 to Saturday 30 July 2016.

Over the eight days that the festival ran, nearly 1000 people took part.

ART

'Haverfordwest is starting from a low ebb. It has been starved of investment in the arts over a long period... the fact that we are starting with a relatively blank canvas is an opportunity and it is part of what makes Confluence distinct and unique.'

Confluence project plan, July 2014

Two concepts were central to the commissioning programme. Firstly, the commissions should be 'site-specific' – making a contribution to debates about a number of key sites such as the Riverside Market, land around the new skatepark, the development of a riverside walk and green spaces linking the town centre to the more peripheral out-of-town shopping areas. Secondly, they should be 'socially engaged', ie. creating opportunities for the people of Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire and visitors to get involved.

Pembrokeshire has a high number of artists, whose practice tends towards the more traditional. As a small rural town in the far south west of Wales, Haverfordwest is also peripheral to the centres of population in South Wales centred on Cardiff and Swansea.

In the light of these factors, another key objective was to broaden understanding of what art can be by providing opportunities to engage with and experience the diversity of socially engaged contemporary art practice. This included opportunities to engage with the process of commissioning itself as well as participating in the creation of artworks with the commissioned artists.

"From a personal perspective, the most significant change was that it had inspired an awakening of a latent desire to make some sort of contribution in an art way to the town and in my own life." – Town Councillor

ART

The scale of the commissions ranged from small (bite-sized) and medium through to one large-scale capital commission. A micro-strand of the commissioning programme, the Ideas Lab was also developed to provide a supportive environment in which local people could develop and test out small-scale art and regeneration ideas.

The range of possible processes for commissioning artists was new to most of the creative lead team. The Arts Development Officer on the partnership, employed jointly with the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA) brought considerable experience in commissioning artists.

A two-tiered approach to commissioning evolved. Firstly, 'open calls', which were widely advertised aimed to attract the highest quality practitioners from across the UK. Secondly a curated approach to selection, for example in developing PLATFORM – three days of contemporary art in Haverfordwest and the production of a series of bite-sized commissions ensured that local artists were not excluded.

"For me, all of this was a 'shot in the arm' for my practice. It was nice to do something that was recognised and supported and also to make all these new contacts in the artistic community in Haverfordwest. It's also enabled me to develop a part of my practice that was on hold.

"So what's been nice about Confluence is that it's allowed me to broaden my interest and work with different materials and people in a way that isn't just a selfish venture, but is also appreciated by others."

– Ruth Sargeant, artist who worked on projects for PLATFORM and Festival week

"The little creations are so moving collectively and individually. They're like little filo parcels of hope."

"An inspired project beautifully executed, reaching deep into our community. Thank you."

– Visitor comments on *Hwyl*, Ruth Sargeant's installation for PLATFORM

For the largest of the commissions, the recruitment and selection process was supported by ADDO, an external creative arts consultancy. This 'capital commission', awarded to Studio Weave, an award winning art and architecture practice, looks to the future to explore new uses for the river and the development of a linear park connecting green spaces up and down-stream from the town centre.

In total, more than 50 artists, arts organisations and regeneration professionals from across Pembrokeshire, Wales and the whole of the UK contributed, with 90% of these living and working in Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire or West Wales.

"… The timing of the Confluence project was perfect, since the town was at such a low ebb and potentially a turning point ... It was difficult for the person on the street to understand where the money had been spent when the project hadn't resulted in a tangible cultural centre of some kind ... It hasn't been accessible and inclusive enough, although things like the festival week and lantern parade were so massively successful that they missed a trick. There is in fact a yearning in town for that to happen and people want to get involved with arty stuff generally, if it's not too high end." – Town Councillor

As part of creating a legacy, a study was commissioned to explore the feasibility of a biennial contemporary art event in Haverfordwest, sited within a wider arts programme in the town. The study concluded that this was dependent on:

- Strengthening the partnerships and funding relationships with other arts organisations
- Supporting and developing the concept of a Creative Hub for Haverfordwest
- Building on existing links with local events and festivals
- Encouraging and supporting a new Creative Network in Pembrokeshire
- Positioning arts development activity within wider economic regeneration agenda
- Consolidating the positive perceptions generated through Confluence.

The study was launched to an invited audience of artists and representatives of local arts organisations who came together in June 2017 at the seminar, *Stepping Up*, to:

- Review the Feasibility Study
- Draw inspiration from Peak/Copa – an innovative contemporary arts programme in rural Wales
- Build support for a future arts development programme in Haverfordwest.

"Judging from the buzz … this confirms the need for a strong artists' forum in Haverfordwest."
– Comment from *Stepping Up* seminar participant

"A well organised, focussed event and excellent opportunity for networking, as well as addressing local arts infrastructure. Fantastic CPD opportunity!"
– Comment from *Stepping Up* seminar participant

"Confluence is a high profile regeneration project and it hasn't only engaged local groups and artists, but also brought in national and international artists to challenge perspectives and views of Haverfordwest."
– Dr Steven Jones, Director of Development, Pembrokeshire County Council

Comments from the Confluence 2018 online survey tended to focus on the health and well-being potential of the arts:

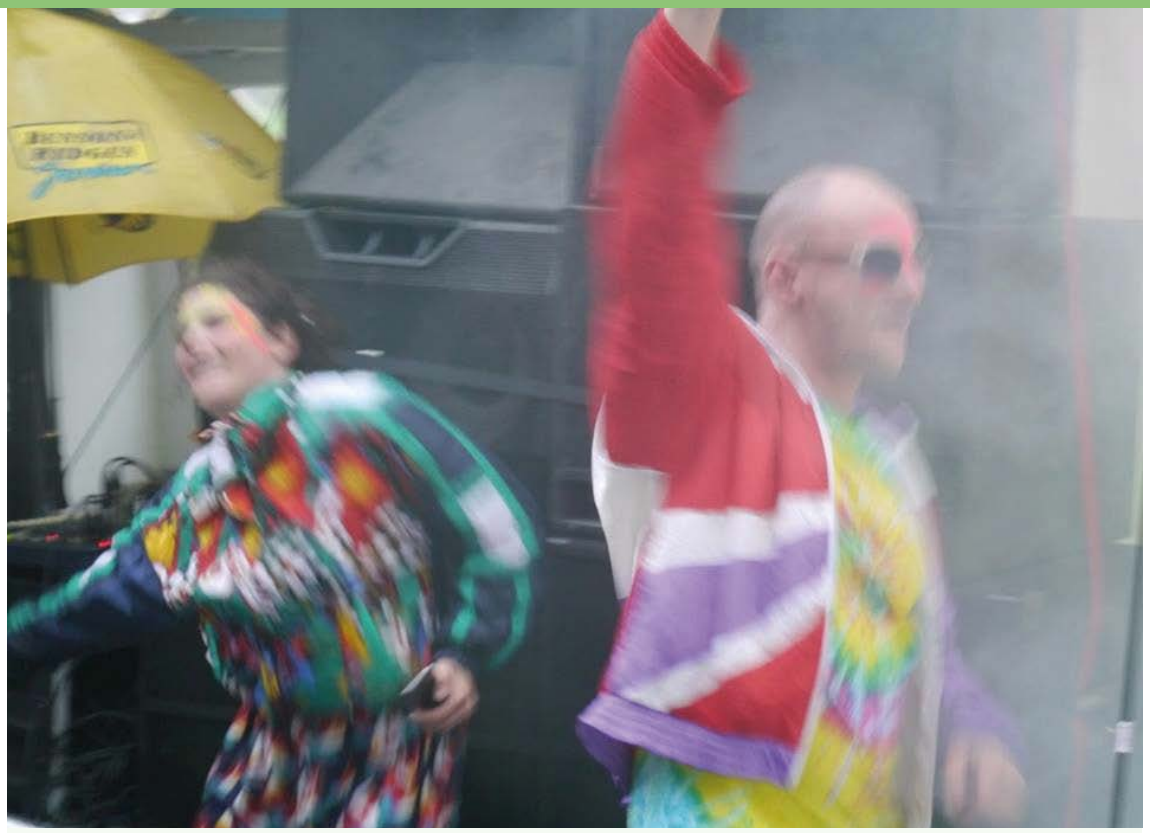
"Keep up the amazing work, the message sends positive ripples to the whole of the community."

"The benefits of creative opportunities are not understood by most people. This is a shame because it can be a great way to improve a person's well-being."

"Art, music and creativity bring communities together; people together share ideas and wonderful things always come out of that process."

"I think a lot of people have been inspired by all the projects going on. It's been great to see and participate in all the wide variety of events. I hope it continues and goes from strength to strength."

"Projects like this are so important in terms of combating isolation and loneliness."



Black Diamond

www.thelabhaverfordwest.org/serena-korda-black-diamond

Artist Serena Korda was commissioned by Confluence to create a new participatory artwork for Haverfordwest that connected with the River Cleddau that flows through the centre of town.

Paying homage to the anti-capitalist early 90s underground rave scene in Pembrokeshire, *Black Diamond* harnessed the sonic power of the river to create a rave track with local musicians interacting with the river and mixed by electronic composer Andy Wheddon.

The grand finale was a spectacular public event on Sunday 30 August 2015 when a rocking sound system on a boat journeyed up the river to the town centre.

"Mandolin players plucking at Port Lion, mysterious methane fizzing at Black Tar, a trombonist making elephant howls in the ruins of Boulston Manor. Histories of place and people converge with the early 90s rave culture of West Wales. Bringing the Western Cleddau to life on a high tide that breached the banks of Haverfordwest." – Serena Korda

Searching for the Centre

www.thelabhaverfordwest.org/searching-for-the-centre-2

The art performance, 'Where's the Centre Please?', was devised by artist Janetka Platun as part of her work on the commission *Searching for the Centre*.

Four women, wearing authentic 19th century Llangwm fisherwomen's clothes, walked into the town from four starting locations in the north, south, east and west, within a mile of the centre of Haverfordwest. Each route symbolising how the town centre and the routes to it have changed over time.

Over the course of her four-month commission, which ran through the winter of 2016/17, Janetka created a limited-edition artwork capturing and communicating her findings to a wide audience. In making people aware of their innermost feelings for the place in which they live, Janetka's artistic process and the resulting artwork aimed to change people's perceptions of the town.

"Searching for the Centre and the accompanying 'Doing Things Differently' workshops have demonstrated there are pieces of the centre missing and the public want them put back … it would be valuable to develop a series of commissions that are made up of collaborative, multi-disciplinary teams to imagine and design a new beating heart for the square, where intimacy, atmosphere, warmth and emotion can be experienced and shared." – Janetka Platun

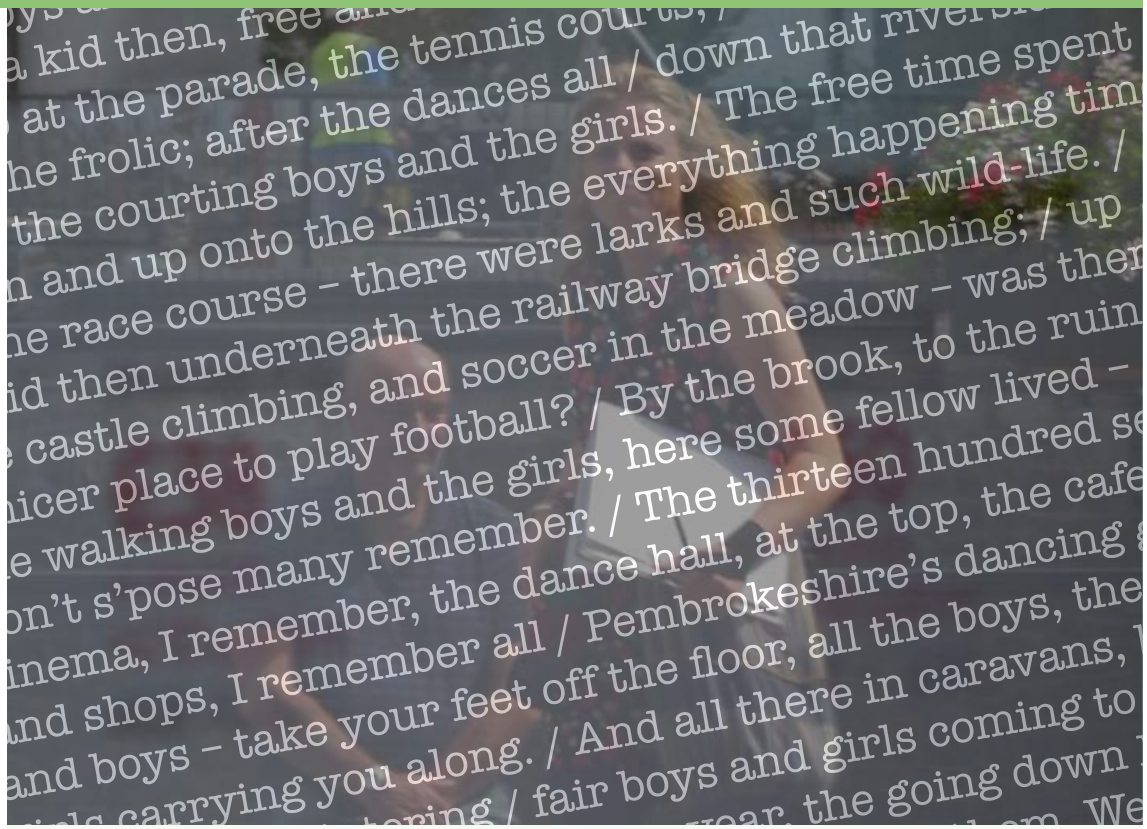
PLATFORM

www.thelabhaverfordwest.org/platform

Over three days, PLATFORM presented Haverfordwest as a stage for a programme of new commissions and existing artworks by artists living in and around Pembrokeshire. The programme reflected the diversity and depth of contemporary arts practice in the region, and included artists' film, installation and performance that together created a body of work that was in turn exciting, thought-provoking and inspiring.

Conceived within the context of The Lab, Haverfordwest's arts and regeneration programme, the works were presented at sites across the town, punctuating the urban landscape and opening up a dialogue between the artists, the viewer and the physical realities of place.

"You have found some fab venues."
"Excellent help at hand and information given at all sites."
"Loved this – so good to see something like this here."
"Felt transported to other worlds."
– Feedback from PLATFORM participants and visitors



Ideas Lab: The Poetry of Haverfordwest

www.thelabhaverfordwest.org/the-poetry-of-haverfordwest

As one of the 18 projects supported through the Ideas Lab local writer, Kerry Steed, took to the streets of Haverfordwest during festival week in July 2017, stopping to ask people their thoughts about the town – memories, descriptions, impressions – and writing these down.

These poems are composed entirely from the words and sentences collected. Some sentences are written as heard, others have been undone; words have been moved around and strung together like beads to create a different whole, but always the intention has been to stay true to the context and meaning in which they were originally spoken.

REGENERATION

Confluence has explored ways of working that would test innovative ideas that could inspire and shape the process of regeneration bringing new voices into the regeneration debate.

The overarching aim and purpose of Ideas: People: Places (IPP) was to embed the arts 'in a genuine and meaningful way' within a small number of imaginative, ambitious and innovative regeneration projects across Wales.

Confluence drew upon this to explore ways of working that would test innovative ideas that could inspire and shape the process of regeneration bringing new voices into the regeneration debate.

Bringing inspirational speakers working in the field of art and regeneration to Haverfordwest as well as inviting key people to visit 'successful' places was instrumental in changing hearts and minds. An influential trip to Bristol as part of the research phase was followed up with one to Frome – a market town that had seen its local politics subjected to something of a revolution.

In 2017 Haverfordwest town council elections were contested for the first time in many years, resulting in a number of people associated with Confluence being elected.

As a follow-on to the influential *Vital Places* seminar in the research project, *Vital Places II: A Place to Be*, brought together 50 delegates involved in art and regeneration, to learn from three arts and regeneration practitioners working across the UK. Their presentations provided context for an open and inclusive discussion asking the questions that people feel are most important in the process of regenerating Haverfordwest.

A diverse programme of talks by commissioned artists, arts professionals and regeneration specialists supported the development

of an informal network of artists and people with an interest in art and regeneration. This programme contributed to discussions around arts development, meanwhile uses for empty properties, the development of Artists studios, town planning and shared space as well as providing a platform for raising awareness of local creative practitioners.

"I think the biggest change has been the idea that art can be a vehicle for change and that art can bring a community together ... there are wider changes that Confluence has contributed to, where people are more willing to work together and there's less finger-pointing. For instance just this week, Honey Harfat were in a meeting in a pub with the county council and town council, talking together about regeneration and realising that it's not 'you' that has to change something, but 'we'." – Gillian Howell, Haverfordwest Town Councillor

"I'd like to say, but I can't evidence it, that the most significant change internally, is support for the regeneration of the market building as a 21st century library, gallery and information centre, as a consequence of the project." – Dr Steven Jones, Director of Development, Pembrokeshire County Council

"One project I really like that was seeded by Confluence is EPOC, Empty Properties Owners Club, which came out of the Ideas Lab. They're looking at different uses for empty buildings and I found their talk really exciting. They're looking at all sorts of different uses, community spaces and stuff. I hope it carries on because Haverfordwest is full of empty properties, which is probably one of our strongest commodities." – Arthur Brooker, Town Councillor

A key aim of the IPP programme from an ACW perspective was to explore how the experience of working together might affect the practice of each of the partners involved. At a workshop to review the use of Results Based Accountability (RBA) as a tool to measure impact and draw out the learning arising from the project, partners shared the following observations:

"The most significant change that has resulted from the project so far is the degree of acceptance shown by some of PLANED's board members to being part of a project with an explicit focus on art as a regeneration tool ... Some board members who were initially cynical about the project have come to an acceptance that maybe there is a role for art as part of the regeneration mix."

"This was very different to how we usually work. It changed our perceptions of what regeneration is. Learning has been around 'soft regeneration', ie. changing perceptions, how to go about getting life back into a place. The other physical things, are further down the food chain."

"People come before place. There is no point in making changes if people don't change. Working through art was a catalyst to have conversations at different levels. We were taking our professional hats off to have conversations with people. People in the Council also stepped out of their across-the-table, at times confrontational, role ... to take us out of those conversations and to have a 'on the level' conversation."

"Working alongside the ACW leads and mentors was very influential."

"Having time and space to experiment, try things, fail sometimes, learn from failures. The Arts Council of Wales held the risk and gave Confluence the support to experiment."

"The evaluation approach was able to capture subtle changes around emotional responses to place. Changes around self-esteem and belonging. While it hasn't been the primary focus, it has been an integral part of the project and it has allowed people to be empowered, to act in their hometown."

87% of respondents to the Confluence 2018 online survey either agreed or strongly agreed that art and artists have a part to play in regeneration.

"Art, music and creativity bring communities together; people share ideas and wonderful things always come out of that process." – Confluence 2018 online survey respondent

Confluence

The Big Map

www.thelabhaverfordwest.org/the-big-map

An opportunity came to engage with planning consultants Nathaniel Lichfield (NLP) in the development of a new masterplan for Haverfordwest. The timing enabled Confluence to devise and run a series of mapping workshops that would provide the consultative material needed to inform the regeneration proposals put forward in the masterplan *Haverfordwest a Vision of the Future* which was completed and adopted in Spring 2017.

Held in the autumn of 2015, *The Big Map* engaged targeted groups and the public inviting them to re-assess and reimagine the town. The workshops held for traders, artists, planners, young people and the public aimed to change people's perceptions and to encourage creativity and working cooperatively.

Each group mapped their ideas for the riverside and town centre. Five key themes were identified, which informed the masterplan and provided Confluence with a research platform and direction for its own commissioning programme. The Big Map exhibition showcased the results of the findings using digitised artwork versions of the maps displayed with a narrative explaining the workshop-led process to reimagine and regenerate the town centre.

To continue engagement, Confluence commissioned The Big Model, a 1:300 scale interactive model of the riverside and town centre for would-be planners of all ages to engage imaginatively in the process of re-shaping the town.

More than 100 people were actively engaged over three days during Haverfordwest Festival Week with many more curious bystanders and passers-by.

The model has been a useful tool in public engagement events since, such as a the Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC)/ Natural Resources Wales (NRW) public consultation on a proposed greening and riverside park infrastructure project held outdoors in the town's Farmers Market.

Doing Things Differently

www.thelabhaverfordwest.org/doing-things-differently

In May 2017, Confluence invited artist Janetka Platun to return to Haverfordwest to facilitate *Doing Things Differently*, a programme of workshops with four targeted groups: PLANED staff, board members and trustees; Pembrokeshire County Council regeneration staff; the 'Town Team'; and local artists and RIBA chartered architects.

The purpose of the workshops was to investigate how working with artists could help community development/regeneration agencies and practitioners to reach new audiences, with further aims to change the culture and practices of organisations who have a role in regeneration locally.

The content highlighted the importance 'of small creative risks to encourage feelings to emerge' that would foster a wider connection and emotional investment in place-making.

Janetka presented participants with a fundamentally different approach to regeneration that values the emotion invested in a place and how this could be used and interpreted in place making to build 'centres that are worth searching for.'

Capital Commission

www.thelabhaverfordwest.org/capital-commission

The Capital Commission, the largest of the commissions will leave a tangible legacy in the town. The public artwork is the first since the modernist sculpture commissioned for the façade of the former County Library over 60 years ago.

Following a shortlisting and interview process, Studio Weave, an award-winning practice of chartered architects, was awarded the commission. They drew upon the earlier experimental work in the Lab to develop a narrative about the town and its relationship to its river. This fed into a design concept for 'a habitable infrastructure' that would encourage nature in to the centre and draw people to venture out along the river.

The artwork *Cleddau Reaches* sets out to reconnect the town with its natural environment. A series of three 'boughs', signifying the return of native trees and wildlife, reach out over the river bearing 'gifts' and marking the route between Bridge Meadow to the north and Fortune's Frolic to the south – places to be explored.

The bronze 'boughs' referencing the woodland of the Bridge Meadow were cast locally by MB Fine Arts – a local foundry.

Michelle Cain, a local artist, made the willow 'gifts'. These are, like the willow and reed beds of Fortunes Frolic, temporary in nature and an invitation to future renewal.

CONCLUSION

"... the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time."

T S Elliot (1888-1965)

It is still too early to assess the legacy and change in Haverfordwest from the point of view of a ten-year vision and timescale. However, and remarkably, there are significant signs of change – especially if these are viewed in terms of the key performance indicators, which Confluence adopted as a yardstick to assess change:

- Changing perceptions
- Getting people involved
- Discovering what art can be
- Influencing decision makers.

Reviewing the objectives contained within the original Confluence project plan tells a story of surpassing expectations:

More than 7000 attendances in total were recorded with at least 3000 being unique individuals against a target of 1000.

More than 50 artists, arts organisations and regeneration professionals from Pembrokeshire, Wales and the UK contributed to the **commissioning programme**, including one **high profile capital commission**, with more than 90% living and working in Haverfordwest or surrounding locations in West Wales.

A cohesive plan for the river and its immediate environs has been achieved through the development of the Haverfordwest framework and masterplan of August 2016.

A number of key **regeneration** projects highlighted within the framework are at various stages of development championed by diverse organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors including:

- **Pembrokeshire County Council's new Riverside Library**: a £4.5m project opening Autumn 2018 that will not only provide a 21st century cultural amenity for local people but will also house a new gallery for the National Library of Wales to exhibit its collection.
- **Haverhub:** a new CIC organisation developing the Old Post Office as a community hub to include a range of mixed community/arts/learning and business use and a new performance venue in a key building on Haverfordwest's riverside. The project combines adult learning, community uses/ hire, leisure and work facilities in a central riverside location in Haverfordwest. Planning has been submitted and funding secured for repairs and phased alterations scheduled to complete by end March 2019.
- **Paddlewest:** a new private enterprise bringing boating activities back onto the river in the town centre and the lower tidal reaches was launched in the spring of 2018.
- **The river corridor:** Pembrokeshire County Council in partnership with the National Resources Wales (NRW) and Haverfordwest Town Council are developing a project for infrastructure improvements along the river corridor creating a circular route and town centre greening – similar to the linear park.
- **The Saltings:** A Town Council project to enhance a former rubbish tip on a 10-acre site on the west bank of the river is re-connecting the area with steps and a boardwalk linking the site with the ancient Priory ruins and the town. New tree planting and formation of paths has been carried out to begin the transformation of the former wasteland site.

Members of the partnership have been invited on to a range of platforms to **disseminate our findings** to other market towns in Pembrokeshire and across Wales.

"In five years' time and ten years' time will we be able to see how this 'artisan town' became an artisan town? When we look back and do the audit trails, I can see Confluence being an important piece in the jigsaw, and I guess history will judge just how impactful it's been". – Dr Steven Jones Director of Development Pembrokeshire County Council

Continuing to involve stakeholders and put in place a mechanism for engaging in implementing the vision set out in the Haverfordwest masterplan remains complex as it is often unclear where responsibility lies. An all-encompassing solution to involving the community and the various stakeholder groups and individuals in planning change remains elusive.

With individuals, groups and organisations, some partnering and working in ways that appear collaborative and others working more independently, a more decentralized and unstructured community-led process is emerging.

"I think what's most significant about Confluence for me is the possibility of things coming alive again and seeing that it's growing. Like the Yeoman starting to do arty events and the Creative Common, for instance. I guess everything has a cycle and maybe it is Haverfordwest's turn to come out of this period of depression and liberate what it is, which is a phenomenally beautiful place, full of creative people. – Daniel Settatree, artist

Working outside their everyday practice and roles and collaborating across disciplines, there have been huge opportunities for learning and reflective practice within the organisations that make up the partnership.

The website continues to provide an archive documenting the project, as well as a resource to disseminate our findings.

Using the experience and all the learning arising from it to shape what comes next will fall to each of the partners and all of the countless individuals, organisations and networks that have played a part over the last four years.

JennyBlacknore

LAB
DATHLU Y CERFLUNIAU AFON
CELEBRATE THE RIVER SCULPTURES
2–4pm
Dydd Sadwrn
30 Mehefin 2018
Riverside Shopping Centre,
Hwlffordd SA61 2LJ
Digwyddiad AM DDIM i'r
teulu, gyda cherddoriaeth,
2-4pm
Saturday
30 June 2018
Riverside Shopping Centre,
Haverfordwest SA61 2LJ
A FREE family-friendly
event with music, canoe
trips, making workshops
and a chance to find
out more about the new
riverside sculptures.
No booking required.
For more information:
thelabhaverfordwest.org/whats-on
The National Lottery
Y Loteri Genedlaethol

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 **Timeline**
www.thelabhaverfordwest.org/timeline

Appendix 2 **Confluence Questionnaire Results**
www.thelabhaverfordwest.org/thestorysofar

Appendix 3 **Stories of Change**
www.thelabhaverfordwest.org/stories-of-change

Appendix 4 **Report Card Year 1**
www.thelabhaverfordwest.org/thestorysofar

Appendix 5 **Report Card Year 2**
www.thelabhaverfordwest.org/thestorysofar

Appendix 6 **Report Card Year 3**
www.thelabhaverfordwest.org/thestorysofar

"Art, music and creativity bring communities together; people share ideas ... and wonderful things always come out of that process."

Confluence 2018 online survey respondent

confluence
Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru Arts Council of Wales
Llywodraeth Cymru Welsh Government
The National Lottery
Y Loteri Genedlaethol