

## Evaluation of the ARTSCAPE project: Report for circulation

*Gaby Porter, 31 January 2022*

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## Evaluation of the ARTSCAPE Project: Executive Summary

*I was inspired by the work that was created. There was incredible collaboration and connection between artists; the projects on the ground were beautiful. This has the potential to become something else.*

ARTSCAPE began in Powys in the spring of 2021 and ‘involved the creation of a programme of community focused, environmentally themed and locally based creative arts experiences, happenings and events in the physical and digital space’ (<https://artscape.wales/about/>). ARTSCAPE included clusters of activity in the autumn of 2021 in three locations and with local communities: Hafren Forest and neighbouring villages and towns in North Powys; Llandrindod Lake and woodlands at Llandrindod Wells in Mid Powys; and the Island Fields and the town of Brecon in South Powys (Appendix Three).

The overall project was conceived and managed by Powys County Council and guided by a wide-ranging partnership including Natural Resource Wales, Impelo, 4pi Productions and Articulture. ARTSCAPE was funded by the Arts Council of Wales, through their *Connect and Flourish* funding stream which supports artists and creative professionals to innovate and explore new collaborations and partnerships; Arwain, a programme of local investment in Powys; and Powys County Council.

This evaluation was undertaken by Gaby Porter, independent consultant, in December 2021/ January 2022. Her sources were: a survey of project documentation; interviews with the ARTSCAPE partners, project lead, project co-ordinator and administrator, and project managers; an artists gathering (13 January 2022); and a facilitated session to share findings and recommendations with partners, the central project team and project managers (17 January 2022).

Section One of the full report focuses on the background to and development of the ARTSCAPE project. Section Two explores the impacts of ARTSCAPE on artists (2.1); people and places (2.2); and themes (2.3).

Artists commissioned for ARTSCAPE, and those contributing to others’ commissions, found the experience rich and rewarding – especially after a period of isolation during the pandemic:

*It’s reinvigorated the artists’ community.*

They particularly enjoyed and benefited from introductory and exploratory events hosted by project managers at the outset of the commissioning process, where local naturalists and scientists shared their knowledge of the environments at the chosen sites and the potential local impacts of the climate emergency. At these events, artists were encouraged to explore and develop their creative ideas. These conversations and the commissions prompted new collaborations among artists, collaborations between artists and local scientists and specialists, and new departures in their work:

*I had never written from a plural perspective before.*

*Walking, working with sound – strong, relevant.*

*I was a painter, now I’m a multi-form, multi-disciplinary artist: land art, performance, hands on making, sustainable processes. It’s brilliant, exciting!*

Many artists - and their project managers – are engaging in new commissions arising from ARTSCAPE, and/ or are seeking funding and support to continue their work. Many have also adopted sustainable themes and practices in their work:

*The themes inspired... they already resonated with us, then unfurled from there.*

*It was difficult to constrain our own creative explorations within the capacity of the project.*

All the ARTSCAPE interventions had a presence outdoors; many also included activities, workshops and performances in community and cultural venues, schools and village halls. The programme was necessarily short-lived (due to constraints required by a major funder). The aim to foster wellbeing and connection is therefore not evidenced. However, anecdotal evidence and observation suggest that many people enjoyed and gained from their experience:

*Connecting with nature, being outdoors, ultimately contributes to health, wellbeing, climate focus.*

Participants were able to find new ways to express their feelings about the climate emergency, in their own words:

*Climate change is very abstract – how to plumb back into local imagining, express in our own terms?*

The interventions also elicited strong personal responses, particularly when people contributed to the works being created:

*The [pupils] wrote some poetic pieces which illustrated their feelings towards our local landscape...[and] pleaded to world leaders to do what they can to support the natural world... The project enabled the[m] to feel that they had sent a message to others about the importance of acting to inhibit climate change.*

*Climate and ecology were the emphasis but it always came back to life, loss and personal narratives.*

The short timeframe of the programme limited the potential for longer and deeper connections and relationships:

*I would have liked more time to build relationships with youth clubs and others, everything had to be set up from scratch... Ideally we would want a year, not twelve weeks...*

The aim of the project which was less successful was that of digital innovation and reach. The expectations of some partners and of the project managers were for a creative and collaborative digital contribution, integrated and embedded with the different artists and sites, and engaging audiences. The digital company fulfilled a brief to capture the outcomes of activities at sites using a relatively uniform approach and platform.

At the time of submitting this report, a further stage of ARTSCAPE is outstanding – to take the work produced outdoors to indoor environments, using the digital resources:

*The work produced outdoors would then be manifested indoors and online.*

*There's a further life for this project, in old people's homes, in schools – who is taking this forward?*

Section Three contains recommendations to guide future projects and partnerships.

Without exception, the respondents in this evaluation want to continue to collaborate and to build on the broad vision and aims of ARTSCAPE. They particularly want to endorse and continue these aspects:

- 3.1 Continue to work with the themes of the project;
- 3.2 Foster connections and collaborations with others – specialists and communities;
- 3.3 Focus on process, not outcomes, in project design and commissioning;
- 3.4 Evaluate.

In addition, I make the following recommendations, drawing on insights offered by respondents and from knowledge of the wider cultural sector and of partnership and project visioning, governing and management:

- 3.5 Start with audiences, build the work with them;
- 3.6 Create social and participative digital opportunities and experiences;
- 3.7 Engage local cultural venues and organisations to adapt and build resilience;
- 3.8 Engage wider stakeholders to build understanding and appreciation of the potential for culture to contribute to wider agendas;
- 3.9 Good governance to guide purpose and maintain focus.

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 This evaluation:

I was commissioned in December 2021 to undertake a qualitative evaluation of ARTSCAPE, focusing on:

- Partnership: purpose and objectives; governance, roles and responsibilities; commissioning and project management;
- Artists: selection, commissioning, management; community engagement; artistic quality and professional development.

The evaluation would explore the themes of digital development as a new way of connecting with audiences, and arts in outdoor spaces, health and wellbeing and climate change across both of these.

The primary outputs were:

- This brief qualitative evaluation report, drawing out recommendations for future programmes and partnerships;
- A facilitated session (17 January 2022) to share findings and recommendations with partners.<sup>1</sup>

I surveyed project documentation and interviewed the partners, project lead, project co-ordinator and administrator, and project managers<sup>2</sup>. In addition, I contributed to the development of the programme for, and facilitated, an artists' gathering (13 January 2022) to reflect on their experience, their response to the four themes of the programme, and what they would want going forward.

The evaluation contract was managed by Suzy West, Executive Director, Impelo.

Throughout my work on this evaluation, I have received varying, and occasionally opposing, accounts of key stages and decision points during the project. I have sought where possible to verify accounts and, where this has not been possible, to present the different accounts.

### 1.2 ARTSCAPE background and focus:

ARTSCAPE was a Powys County Council-led project delivered in creative collaborative partnership with: Natural Resource Wales (NRW); Articulture; 4pi; and Impelo.<sup>3</sup> The project leader was Lucinda Bevan, Arts & Culture Commissioning Officer, Powys County Council (PCC). PCC's Climate Change Officer was also a partner in the project.

Bevan was considering the concept of a project to explore how arts and culture might be created, shared and experienced during the pandemic, when many cultural venues were

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<sup>1</sup> Contract between Impelo and Gaby Porter, 6 December 2021.

<sup>2</sup> 4pi Productions were approached for an interview but did not respond. Throughout this report, 'project managers' refers to Articulture's team - Heskin, Lloyd and Morton.

<sup>3</sup> The partners are described at: <https://artscape.wales/about/>

closed or subject to very restricted opening. She was then encouraged to submit an expression of interest to the Arts Council of Wales (ACW) through its *Connect and Flourish* programme in autumn 2020:

*Connect and Flourish will fund innovative, ambitious projects that are artist led, audience or participant focused, and that engage and connect to the public... We want to support the development of collaborative proposals between organisations, individuals and creative professionals working together... Connect and Flourish seeks to create opportunities for individual artists and creative professionals from all backgrounds to work within partnerships, to discover new ways of working that help arts will [sic] emerge and move beyond the challenges of the Covid19 pandemic.<sup>4</sup>*

Bevan was invited to submit a full application to ACW in December 2020 and funding was confirmed in spring 2021. At a relatively late stage, substantial additional funding was offered and secured through Arwain: a programme of investment in Powys running from 2014 to 2020:

*...for projects which create vibrant, empowered and connected local communities, delivering sustainable and innovative solutions to current and future economic, social and environmental issues, to enhance the economic wealth of the County.<sup>5</sup>*

ARTSCAPE aligned with the themes of Arwain's LEADER programme, including: adding value to local identity and natural and cultural resources; exploring new ways of providing non-statutory local services; and exploiting digital technologies. Further funding was secured from PCC, and the ARTSCAPE project was confirmed in spring 2021, with a budget of £133,659.00.

The *Connect and Flourish* programme allowed a generous timing but, because the Arwain programme was drawing to a close, the shaping, scheduling and delivery of ARTSCAPE was compressed into a very short timescale. Also, because Arwain operated to tight criteria which were complex to manage, PCC undertook overall project management. Lucy A'Bear was appointed as part time Co-ordinator and Administrator for the equivalent of one day per week.

The partners were invited by Bevan to form the Creative Project Team – effectively a Project Board - and first met in March 2021<sup>6</sup>. An initial advertisement for the project management role to select, commission and manage the artists and interventions was unsuccessful. Bevan approached Articulture in April 2021: their proposal for undertaking the project management role was confirmed by the Creative Project Team on 10 May, and they joined the partnership at that point.

When Articulture was first involved, the UK was still in lockdown and they were unsure whether any outdoor work would be possible. Restrictions were relaxed shortly afterwards. The Creative Project Team agreed to focus ARTSCAPE events and activities in three 'pods'<sup>7</sup>, each of which was commissioned and managed by Articulture: Hafren Forest (North Powys),

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<sup>4</sup> <https://arts.wales/funding/get-started/organisations/connect-and-flourish>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.arwain.wales/>

<sup>6</sup> In its early meetings, the Creative Project Team was more focused on vision, strategic direction and overall planning; later meetings became project management meetings. I use the term 'Project Board' in this report to distinguish the role of governance and strategic direction from that of project management and delivery. See Section 3.9.

<sup>7</sup> Creative Project Team Meeting #02 Minutes 15 April 2021.

managed by Julie Ann Heskin; Llandrindod Wells (Mid), managed by Sarah Morton; and Island Fields, Brecon (South), managed by Ruth Lloyd. The open calls to artists were put out in August 2021; artists were selected by the partners in September; and events took place between September and November – the later events happening during COP26. (A full list of events and workshops is given in Appendix Two.)

4pi Productions submitted an outline proposal for creative participation in June 2021, and were contracted on the basis of their proposal.<sup>8</sup> They were subsequently also contracted to create a website to host information about the project: invitations to artists to participate in events and submit proposals; notice of public events and venues; and resources about the programme.<sup>9</sup> Thus two of the ARTSCAPE partners were also major contractors. A further contract was awarded to Aster Woods for digital and social media marketing.

Bevan described the central project intention as:

*[R]aising awareness, creatively interpreting, forming links and connecting across the four themes of – **ARTS (CREATIVE NOURISHMENT); ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE (COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY / ACTIONS); WELLBEING (ESP. MENTAL HEALTH AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS); DIGITAL (USES AND APPLICATIONS, INNOVATION, REACH).***<sup>10</sup>

The theme of mental health and wellbeing represented a shared priority strategically for both PCC and Powys Teaching Health Board, where Bevan is Arts and Health Coordinator.

The central project intention, and these themes, align with the wider cultural context in many ways: the spread and deepening of cultural experiences outdoors, in response partly to the pandemic and also to health, wellbeing and climate change<sup>11</sup>; a growing appetite for more participatory experiences, particularly for young people and families with young children<sup>12</sup>; embracing digital.<sup>13</sup>

ARTSCAPE's aims also align with the strategic context in Wales, including the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and the Welsh Assembly's ambition for a green and just recovery.

The partners and project managers wanted to connect with and amplify the messages of COP26, the global climate assembly hosted by the UK in Glasgow in October/ November 2021.

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<sup>8</sup> Outline proposal for collaborative digital artist services from 4pi Productions, for PCC's Arts and Cultural Commissioning Service, 29 June 2021; ARTSCAPE project Collaborative Digital Artist Services Contractual Agreement, 28 July 2021.

<sup>9</sup> ARTSCAPE project Collaborative Digital Artist Services website hosting domain Contractual Agreement, 22 September 2021. The website is at <https://artscape.wales/events-en/>

<sup>10</sup> Email from Lucinda Bevan to Gaby Porter, 15 December 2021.

<sup>11</sup> *A New Relationship with Nature: What it means and what we can do*, Briefing from the Nature Connectedness Research Group at the University of Derby, April 2020, pdf download at: <https://findingnature.org.uk/2020/04/08/a-new-relationship-with-nature/>; Miles Richardson, *Finding Nature: Nature Connectedness Research Blog*, <https://findingnature.org.uk>

<sup>12</sup> For example, *Cultural Democracy in Practice*, 64 Million Artists with Arts Council England, September 2018, pdf download at <https://64millionartists.com/our-work/arts-council-england/>

<sup>13</sup> Many of these trends are highlighted in The Audience Agency's forthcoming report, *Cultural Participation Monitor, Wave 6*, January 2022, <https://www.theaudienceagency.org/evidence/covid-19-cultural-participation-monitor>

Finally, ARTSCAPE sought to address and overcome some of the challenges of Powys as a very large county with a largely rural population, pockets of deprivation, many isolated communities and households, and an extensive, varied and rich outdoor environment.



## 2 ARTSCAPE Impacts

### 2.1 Impacts: Artists and project managers<sup>14</sup>:

*Let's celebrate that it actually happened! The weather was crap; there wasn't enough time.*<sup>15</sup>

*A testament to our fortitude.*

The artists used these words to describe their feelings of working together and with their project managers: proud; grateful; open; generous; kind; humble; curious; pliable; flexible; adaptable.

Articulture put out open calls to artists in July/ August 2021 to invite expressions of interest to work in the different areas of North, Mid and South:

*ARTSCAPE seeks to engage the local community in a hyperlocal creative conversation around climate change through the arts as well as the health and wellbeing of the people who live in the county. We aim to initiate a creative journey and present a positive vision for the future in Powys where we strive to live in harmony with our environment in a fairer world. Can you as an artist help facilitate and explore this intention? What can you offer as a creative to our local communities to stimulate attention, compassion and a long term relationship with the Hafren Forest?*<sup>16</sup>

Several artists responding to the open call were already known to the project managers.

Because of the pandemic, many artists hadn't worked with others for over a year; some younger artists had moved back to the area from elsewhere in the UK and didn't know other artists locally; many had had no work. Conscious of this, and of the need for people to become accustomed to working together again, Articulture invited interested artists to *Listen and Create*, an introductory day at Hafren Forest in early September 2021. The purpose of the day was: to foster networking and collaboration; to learn from and build connections with people living and/ or working locally (including a local geologist, a fungi specialist and NRW staff working locally); to explore sensory connection to the environment; and to encourage visioning, creative exploration and responses grounded in that place. 4pi also ran a workshop at the event.

Articulture witnessed a palpable sense of 'relief and excitement' among those participating:

*I faced my fears... being forced into situations where I had to work with others was really good for my confidence.*

<sup>14</sup> Artists' responses to the questions: 'What would you want to celebrate about your work for this project? What new ways of working, with new partners and in new places were you able to develop through this commission? Who did you engage with your work, and how?', Artists' Gathering, online, 13 January 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Unless otherwise attributed, all verbatim statements in this report are from partners, project lead, project co-ordinator/ administrator, project managers and artists. See Appendix One.

<sup>16</sup> <https://artscape.wales/2021/08/10/artscape-open-call-hafren-forest-powys/>

Eleven artists participated in the Hafren Day and were then invited to submit proposals: most did so, including the Glanio Collective, formed through the event. Two artists did not submit proposals but were invited to be involved in others' project proposals.

In South Powys, Lloyd put a call out for artists, which led a group of artists to form a new collective, the Brecon Art Collective, in order to submit an application. They and the other selected artists participated in a 'Summit'/ development day which Lloyd hosted in late September 2021. A local naturalist led a visit to the site; PCC's Climate Change Officer, Martin Kemp, led a session on climate change; and artists talked with Lloyd and Morton.

These events inspired artists to work outdoors and with the particular qualities of each place; to collaborate with others; and to embrace new approaches:

*The Hafren day was really important. [Another participant] suggested that I do something motion-sensored; she put me in touch with the technician... I recorded children's thoughts on climate change. I worked with a dancer who interacted with the motion-sensor speakers.*

*It brought me back to my own work and to public art after nearly 20 years... I now have a new avenue for my work.*

*I had never written from a plural perspective before.*

*Researching the land revealed lots of secrets!*

*Walking, working with sound – strong, relevant.*

*I was a painter, now I'm a multi-form, multi-disciplinary artist: land art, performance, hands on making, sustainable processes. It's brilliant, exciting!*

The commissioned artists collaborated with many others locally: a costume designer, graphic designer, digital artists, photographer, film maker, storyteller, clown, dancer, sound mapper, choreographer, geologist, wildlife trusts, birdsong and algae specialists, a biochar producer, green woodworkers.

*It was great to work with [the Powys Bird Recorder], because he was so excited about the project!*

The collaborations also included work with schools, cultural and community venues and outdoor spaces. In the South, Lloyd and artists created an outdoor installation and outdoor arts activities at y Gaer (the museum, gallery and library), which they had not done before. In Mid Powys, the Outdoor Recreation Officer 'turned on a sixpence' to support Glanio; in the North, NRW's local team at Hafren Forest participated in the *Listen and Create* workshop and supported the activities and events.

Heskin and Morton at Articulture also collaborated for the first time with Lloyd, who they employed to work with them and to project manage the commissioning process and commissions in South Powys. The relationship worked well: Lloyd felt she was well supported by Heskin and Morton, and they felt 'we have a new friend'.

There is a huge energy and impetus for artists and project managers to build on the experience, the connections and sense of community, and the learning they gained during ARTSCAPE:

*Not just six weeks...*

*It's reinvigorated the artists' community.*

Many are already exploring new openings, for example: Charlie Ward has received funding to go back into one of the schools she worked with. Puppet Soup is devising and 'scratching' a new show. The Glanio Collective is talking with Impelo about the possibility of a 'slow tour' of their work across Wales. Camilla Saunders has been encouraged to apply for a Without Walls commission<sup>17</sup>. Matt Cook is developing an accessible, interactive website to share the Powys Bird Recorder's data logs; he is adapting his birdbox layered sound installation for a more durable presence on the Island Fields. Others are seeking funding to continue their work and to involve the experts/ makers and others they worked with.

Partners are also keen to build on the experience and learning from ARTSCAPE. Seeing the benefits of the Hafren *Listen and Create* event, West has committed to host similar introduction/ interaction days for all Impelo's future commissioning. Also, inspired by the artists and their commitment to work sustainably, she is exploring how Impelo can become a 'carbon neutral' organisation while continuing to operate across a wide geographic area and with many freelancers.

Roberts is working to streamline NRW's twelve-week permissions process in order to help cultural organisations to use its land more easily; and as part of NRW's forthcoming Arts Strategy (due to be published in 2023) he is thinking how NRW might work with regional fora, connecting with NRW's area statements.<sup>18</sup>

At the online artists' gathering, artists and producers held a 'skills swap shop', requesting support in specific areas to develop their own work, and offering support to others. These ranged from requests for technical support and advice on writing funding applications, to the offer of a wild choir, dance workshops and a queer ecology walk shop.

At the gathering, there was also a strong appetite to form a network for ecological/ environmental artists: Morton and West will host an initial event in spring 2022.

## **2.2 Impacts: People and Places:**

The project design was guided by a broad desire to work outdoors and with local communities:

*To engage imaginatively with communities to stimulate re-connectivity, stir an enthusiasm for environmental caretaking in the face of climate change and promote people's wellbeing through interrelated environment / place based and virtual / digital arts experiences.*<sup>19</sup>

Articulture was keen to work at sites familiar to local people and with existing networks and communities of interest, to consider how the commissions would have meaning to them, rather than parachuting in with time limited projects.

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<sup>17</sup> [www.withoutwalls.uk.com](http://www.withoutwalls.uk.com)

<sup>18</sup> NRW is already working with ACW in the 'Creative Nature', partnership, to cultivate the relationship between the arts and the natural environment, and to improve environmental and cultural well-being.

<sup>19</sup> ARTSCAPE open call, op.cit., note 16.

Articulture proposed three sites for commissions and events, chosen by partners and project managers. In the north, NRW proposed Hafren Forest, a 40 sq km upland forest six miles from Llanidloes. It continues to serve as a commercial timber enterprise and is also managed as a habitat for wildlife and for visitors. It is visited by people in the nearby town, and Heskin, the project manager, was keen to explore how people might use the site:

*A site of interest to the community and where local people have access...*

Llanidloes has an active and activist zero carbon group and climate change community; the Wilderness Trust has held a Pumpkin Festival and lantern parade in the town; and its primary school has an Eco Committee of students. They took part in the project and contributed to one of the commissions. Another commission included puppetry workshops in the Function Room in Llanidloes, a local village hall, a school and the Old Chapel at the Wilderness Trust.

In mid-Powys, the PCC-owned and -managed Amphitheatre and woodland around Llandrindod Lake, close to the town, were used. Both PCC's Arts Service and Impelo were keen that this site be included, as a well-used community green space in a relatively deprived community and containing a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The local PCC Outdoor Recreation Officer was also keen that the site should be used for community activities. Glanio had submitted a proposal to work at Hafren Forest; Morton persuaded them to use this new location and worked with them to adapt their proposal; the Outdoor Recreation Officer worked with them to host the performances. These invited people to explore the area afresh, and at a different pace:

*There were spontaneous arrivals when we did the performance, people familiar with the space... we invited them to experience it in a different way, to reconnect with where they are, a place of collective care...*

In South Powys, Lloyd chose Island Fields, a site also owned and managed by PCC, on the edge of the town and easily accessible to people in Brecon. It is at risk through climate change because it is on the flood plain. PCC had recently put Island Fields up for sale but local people feel strongly that it should continue to be a public and recreational space:

*The local community was concerned about the potential sale of the site, I'd been involved in guerrilla tree planting and climate action...*

Most of the activities here had a presence both on the fields and in Brecon town centre where they were able to build on existing spaces, resources and audiences: the Climate Emergency Comedy was held in Theatr Brycheiniog; further events and activities were held mostly at y Gaer and at the Muse, an independent community arts venue. The Brecknock Play Network and other local organisations were involved; and the work had a further life as a digital installation and animation presented on the high street.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the more fully artists involved people in creating work, the deeper the impact, socially and emotionally. Many of the events were intergenerational:

*... led by children, they invited the adults to play.*

*A parent said that she is now going out with her daughter more, noticing nature, gathering pine cones and leaves...*

The most complex and longest piece in ARTSCAPE was Puppet Soup's 'Puppetry of the Woods' which ran over four weeks as a progressive programme, leading people from puppet making

workshops in local venues into Hafren Forest, to take the puppets they had made and to create and film their own shows:

*... to give everyone the chance to get involved with puppetry, the arts and the 'local-global' environment through a range of exciting activities taking place during November to coincide with COP26... FREE puppet making workshops, community events and ... our exciting Puppet Theatre Trail in Hafren forest.<sup>20</sup>*

Nineteen puppet making workshops were held; over 400 people participated in the project and one local group has continued with the work, making their own film.

For Lloyd, ARTSCAPE offered an opportunity to create good contemporary art in public places - 'not just stone carvings' – and to explore co-creation:

*How can we bring artists and audiences together to create work of a professional level?*

For all the project managers, the short timescales, timing and added uncertainties of changing Covid guidance limited their ability to connect more fully and deeply with people:

*I invited people locally, I had eleven lined up but only five came in the end... it's hard to recruit people, it takes time to build relationships locally.*

*I would have liked more time to build relationships with youth clubs and others, everything had to be set up from scratch... Ideally we would want a year, not twelve weeks... Just because you can, it doesn't mean you should!*

*It was really bad timing! Who would choose to do something outdoors, in Wales, in November, in a remote location?*

*These were transient interventions, events. How do you create a more ongoing, sustainable conversation on these sites? There's a benefit at the time, then they're gone.*

### 2.3 Impacts: Themes:

The project sought to raise awareness of, creatively interpret and connect the four themes of arts and creativity; environment and climate change; wellbeing; and digital.

The testimony of artists and of participating organisations/ artists confirmed that the first three of these aims connected well for them, and were broadly met.

*The themes inspired... they already resonated with us, then unfurled from there.*

*COP26 worked in our favour, it gave an extra depth and urgency.*

The artists' interactions and interventions invited people to find expression for their feelings about the climate emergency and the future in their own terms:

*Light touch conversations, connecting with nature as the way in.*

*Climate change is very abstract – how to plumb back into local imagining, express in our own terms?*

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.puppetsoup.com/puppetryofthewoods>

*Bringing climate change back to the local area, making it relatable, tangible.*<sup>21</sup>

The work elicited powerful feelings among participants:

*Climate and ecology were the emphasis but it always came back to life, loss and personal narratives.*

*The [pupils] wrote some poetic pieces which illustrated their feelings towards our local landscape. The poetry also pleaded to world leaders to do what they can to support the natural world... The project enabled the[m] to feel that they had sent a message to others about the importance of acting to inhibit climate change. (Eco-coordinator, Llanidloes Primary School)*

Because of the very short timescale and duration of the work, evidence of impacts on wellbeing is largely anecdotal and based on observation/ deduction:

*Such tiny interventions - how could we measure wellbeing impact?*

*Connecting with nature, being outdoors, ultimately contributes to health, wellbeing, climate focus.*

Similarly, the ambition of the project to encourage community responsibility for, and action on, the environment is not evidenced. However recent research suggests that a connection with nature contributes to positive behaviours.<sup>22</sup>

One respondent regretted that the project had been rebranded, feeling that the revised brand had less appeal to audiences or to the broader themes:

*It was rebranded from HeARTscape to ARTSCAPE but I think the heart is really important... It's a holistic project with the four disciplines – I would have stuck with HeARTscape.*

A very significant outcome of the project lay in the sustainable practices that the artists developed. They were deeply committed to working sustainably, and thoughtful and creative in their responses. These provoked consideration of the climate emergency both through their work - for example in the works by Ireland, Glanio, Saunders and Ward; and in their own practice - for example, using methods and materials that were local and biodegraded; sourcing materials and even sounds locally; drawing on local knowledge and wisdom:

*Using sustainable processes, the work goes back into the ground.*

*The sound score was extracted from within one mile of the site; ... the costume designer used sustainable materials and techniques.*

In this respect, their work offers a pathfinder and the promise of – and appetite for - much more:

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<sup>21</sup> At the June meeting of the Creative Project Team, Kemp made a presentation on the Committee on Climate Change's risk assessment, and on the potential local climate risks and impacts in Powys.

<sup>22</sup> 'Nature connectedness, nonattachment and engagement with nature's beauty predict pro-nature conservation behaviours' Announcement of forthcoming research paper by Professor Miles Richardson: <https://twitter.com/findingnature/status/1485925107214262272?cxt=HHwWgIC5peTAiJ8pAAAA> 25 January 2022.

*It was difficult to constrain our own creative explorations within the capacity of the project.*

The fourth theme in the project is that of digital: uses and applications, innovation and reach. Partners had several aspirations for this: to test and learn new ways of connecting with new audiences; to create transformative tools in transformative spaces, creating visual, sensory, immersive experiences and bringing climate-related stories to life; to experiment with how to bring the outdoors in:

*The work produced outdoors would then be manifested indoors and online.*

*There's a further life for this project, in old people's homes, in schools – who is taking this forward?*

Partners also hoped for a diversity of digital practices and price points/ values in order to provide digital learning for the arts sector in Powys.

For some in the project, this theme sat less comfortably and was less clearly integrated with the other themes. One participant at the artists' gathering felt that there was a tension with the desire for connection and wellbeing:

*There's a paradox: we're connecting into our bodies, using our bodies as a conduit, a channel to connect with ourselves, with others, with nature and art....*

Another participant at the same event voiced concerns about ethics, sustainability and reliance on proprietary platforms:

*Digital raises many questions about ethics, sustainability.*

The themes of connection and wellbeing would also suggest a need to address digital access. Many areas of the county have poor connectivity, as experienced by one of the commissions: Puppet Soup encouraged people to make and film their own 'productions' in the Hafren Forest, and them to upload these films to a website, but this was hampered by very poor connectivity. More generally, evidence throughout the pandemic shows that access to bandwidth, digital content and devices continues to be highly unequal: 'the digital divide' or 'digital poverty'.

The most immediate issue around the digital ambition was that partners and project managers were keen for their aspirations to be recognised and included in a brief and specification as the basis for contracting the creative digital elements. They report that they did not contribute to a brief, and were unsure whether such a brief existed. They do not believe they were invited to fully explore and respond to 4pi's proposal which formed the basis of PCC's contract with them<sup>23</sup>. This led to a divergence of expectation and of experience.

On the basis of early discussions in the Creative Project Team meetings, project managers anticipated that they and the artists would work closely *with* the digital contractor to develop bespoke approaches, sensitive to each project, site and audience, hyper local. They wanted the digital work to be an integral and creative element, embedded with the collaborative and participative processes and emergent practices which they were using.

4pi Productions proposed a different, and more distant, approach:

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<sup>23</sup> 4pi Outline Proposal; PCC contract, see note 8.

*We envisage that we will connect remotely with the selected artists/organisations from each pod for initial consultation. Once various activities are taking place within the selected environments, we will be capturing the outcomes and also behind the scenes footage that will form part of the digital legacy of the project.*

4pi provided what others perceived as a relatively uniform digital 'solution' and platform: they filmed interviews with the artists, and documented performances and events using 360 degree cameras. Some respondents are concerned that substantial additional funding would be needed in order to expand or refresh digital content.

Project managers described 4pi as unavailable and not closely involved with the artists or the sites:

*They haven't embraced the project as much as they could... they have been a provider or supplier rather than a creative partner.*

4pi was the only contractor not living and working in Powys, and some suggested that others in the area might have fulfilled the digital role more creatively, with more sensitivity to locality and with greater collaboration and shared learning.

In some cases, project managers reallocated budgets and sought in kind support for additional filming and photography. In South Powys, a member of the Brecon Arts Collective produced an 'amazing' film and installed it in an empty shop in the town centre, with the support of Lumen Art Projects, an international company with local connections:

*It elevated the children's work to a professional level, it was worth celebrating, it was presented professionally.*

This has led to:

*...a more ambitious project for bringing digital art into the centre of Brecon and... the formation of the Digital Art Collective Brecon which will open a new exhibition, funded locally, in early 2022. (Carla Rapoport, Lumen Art Projects. See Appendix Three)*

In other ways, ARTSCAPE artists developed a nuanced suite of digital approaches and resources, particularly with sound and movement. For example, in North Powys, Camilla Saunders gathered locally recorded sounds and worked with motion-sensored speakers. In Mid Powys, Jim Elliott worked with the Glanio Collective to create a hyper-local soundscape, amplified on two mini-speakers as part of their performance. The recording has been shared with, and enjoyed by, others who were unable to be part of the performance. In South Powys, Matt Cook worked on a 'fragile' birdsong sound installation, using portable chargers developed for mobile phones, housed in bird boxes made by green woodworkers. The work is now being adapted as a longer term installation on Island Fields, with QR codes for people to access the sounds.

Through digital, ARTSCAPE aims to have a further life, 'bringing the outdoors in' to schools, care settings and others. The digital offer created has not yet been tested in these settings for accessibility, connectivity and engagement. The project lead and project managers have not yet agreed how this further life will be achieved.

At the artists' gathering in January 2022, participants expressed their strong desire for the ARTSCAPE project to have an ongoing presence and further life, wider reach and legacy through the digital content and platform:



*... a springboard for opportunities to hold the work together, to involve others. We should be bringing in a huge audience.*

The participants who attended the gathering see the website and content as closure, celebration, recognition and legacy for what they've achieved. They were unsure whether the digital elements are complete, and how the website will be more widely used, shared and enjoyed.

### 3 Recommendations

Without exception, the respondents in this evaluation want to continue to collaborate and to build on the broad vision and aims of ARTSCAPE. The recommendations below are intended to guide any future project and partnership.

These aspects of the project were strongly endorsed by respondents:

#### 3.1 Continue to work with the themes of the project:

The themes of working outdoors in nature, with communities, seeking to enhance health and wellbeing, and to address the climate emergency were strongly endorsed by those consulted and drew in participants and audiences. Pursuit of these themes is confirmed by wider current audience research.<sup>24</sup>

The themes resonated strongly with the artists, and they found working in and with local communities a powerful stimulus:

*Working in the community creates a resonant space where artistic processes can be amplified.*

Kemp suggested that these creative interpretations and imaginings have great potential to contribute to the future of local place(s) and planet:

*There's an opportunity for creatives to be involved in imagining a positive future, empowering, collaborative: 'the future we can co-create' rather than 'there's nothing I can do'. Overcoming barriers, giving people agency.*

#### 3.2 Foster connections and collaborations with others – specialists and communities:

The project managers brought people together early, to encourage networking and creative collaborations – artists, scientists and naturalists, makers, other local people. They continued to broker connections, forge collaborations and leverage local support. This was extraordinarily productive, leading to new departures and multi-disciplinary working; and involving local people, stories, skills and materials.

Artists and project managers are continuing to build on their connections and learning and keen to take this further, for example:

*Could we invite artists or scientists to suggest sites we might use?*

#### 3.3 Focus on process, not outcomes, in project design and commissions:

One artist who had worked on 'public art' commissions which focused on creating and installing a piece of work as culmination and completion had become disillusioned by the superficial and ephemeral nature of such work. They welcomed the experimental and exploratory nature of ARTSCAPE, emphasising process rather than an 'end', and the potential to continue to grow their work with others.

They also welcomed the focus on process to enrich the experiences for audiences as participants, performers and part of 'the work'. (See also 3.5 below.)

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<sup>24</sup> The Audience Agency, *Cultural Participation Monitor, Wave 6*, op.cit.

### **3.4 Evaluate:**

Embed evaluation into future projects from the outset: evaluation generates insights and learning. It enables the project leaders and participants to develop practice at every level (governance, project management, commissions, engagement, creative development, personal and professional development through reflective practice), through working iteratively, reflecting and building on learning to refine or change practice. Evaluation should focus on process, rather than product.

Evaluation also gathers evidence of impact to win support from stakeholders. This is particularly important in demonstrating the wider benefits of arts and cultural activity and participation at a time of tighter budgets and pressure on non-statutory services. (See below, 3.8.)

Evaluation should follow the principles set out by the Centre for Cultural Value: beneficial; robust; people-centred; and connected.<sup>25</sup>

Further recommendations were made to the partners for areas to address in future projects:

- 3.5 Start with audiences, build the work *with* them;**
- 3.6 Create social and participative digital opportunities and experiences;**
- 3.7 Engage local cultural venues and organisations to adapt and build resilience;**
- 3.8 Engage wider stakeholders to build understanding and appreciation of the potential for culture to contribute to wider agendas;**
- 3.9 Good governance to guide purpose and maintain focus.**

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.culturalvalue.org.uk/our-work/evaluation/evaluation-principles/>

## 4 Conclusion

*I was inspired by the work that was created. There was incredible collaboration and connection between artists; the projects on the ground were beautiful. This has the potential to become something else.*

ARTSCAPE was a strong and vibrant project, rooted in local communities and the landscape and prompting people to creatively explore connections with others, with nature and with the environment. Happening at the time of COP26 and during the COVID-19 pandemic, it encompassed the connected themes of wellbeing, connection and a sense of collective concern for nature and responsibility for the environment.

Artists participating in ARTSCAPE were encouraged to embrace themes and ways of working which, for many, produced new collaborations, methods, sites and audiences/ participants. Several are exploring these further with new commissions and collaborations.

Communities were invited to explore familiar sites afresh, to contribute and share their own stories and creative expressions and responses, and to consider the local environment in the context of the wider climate emergency. The timescale for ARTSCAPE's programme of events and activities was short, and therefore longer term impacts are difficult to evidence.

ARTSCAPE also sought to innovate with new digital uses and applications and to extend reach digitally. Many of the artists worked with accessible and local digital devices and applications as an integral part of their work. The digital resources created to encompass the whole project have yet to be tested and used in the different environments and different ways anticipated.

The partnership guiding ARTSCAPE encompassed a wide range of people with deep experience of the county and in their fields of expertise.

There is a strong appetite and desire to continue to build on the overarching aims and achievements of ARTSCAPE, with a further project to foster collaborations, over a longer time period in order to develop stronger and more sustainable connections with communities and local organisations. The recommendations in Section Three above are offered to build on learning and to assist in shaping any future project.

## Appendices

### Appendix One: People interviewed/ consulted

#### Interviews, December 2021/ January 2022:

Lucy Bevan	Project Conceiver and Delivery Lead	Powys CC
Lucy A'Bear	Project Co-ordinator/ Administrator	Powys CC
Julie Ann Heskin	Partner/ Project Manager	Articulture
Martin Kemp	Expert Adviser	Powys CC
Ruth Lloyd	Project Manager	Ruth Lloyd
Sarah Morton	Partner/ Project Manager	Articulture
Joe Roberts	Partner	Natural Resource Wales
Michael Smith	Partner	Natural Resource Wales
Suzy West	Partner	Impelo

#### Artists' gathering, 13 January 2022:

Matt Cook, Bethan Cooper, Jim Elliott, Arianne Hopkins, Billie Ireland, Fin Jorado, Marla King, Clara Rust, Camilla Saunders, Charlie Ward (artists); Julie Ann Heskin, Ruth Lloyd, Sam Morton, Suzy West.

**Appendix Two: Programme of events and workshops****NORTH: Hafren Forest and Llanidloes Artscape Events Programme 2021**

Date	Event	Partner/Site	Target Audience
6 September All day	LISTEN AND CREATE SUMMIT	Natural Resources Wales, Hafren Forest	Artists Local users of Hafren Forest Local Businesses

Date	Event	Site / Partner	Artist	Target Audience
14 to 20 October (2-5 hours)	Puppet making workshops	The Hanging Gardens, Llanidloes	Puppet Soup	Adults/ Families
23 October All Day	Glove & Sock Puppet making workshop	The Hanging Gardens, Llanidloes Pumpkin Festival	Puppet Soup	Children
28 October half day	Puppet making workshops	The Wilderness Trust Llanidloes	Puppet Soup	Disabled Adults group
3, 4, 6, 7 November (3 hours)	Puppet making workshops	The Function Room Llanidloes	Puppet Soup	Families
6 - 7 November	Hidden Connections performances	Natural Resources Wales, Hafren Forest	Camilla Saunders  Billie Ireland	All audiences
All Day	The Source – Anti- Peat cut & Biochar demonstration			
7 November 15.00-16.00	COP26 Family Day Puppet making workshops	The Wilderness Trust Llanidloes	Puppet Soup	Families
9 November half day	Puppet making workshop	Trefonnen School Llandrindod Wells	Puppet Soup	Primary School Children
11 November 14.00 – 17.00	Puppet making workshop	Staylittle Village Hall	Puppet Soup	Disabled Adults group
18 November 14.00 – 17.00	Filming of Puppet Shows	Natural Resources Wales, Hafren Forest	Puppet Soup	Disabled Adults group
25 November 14.00 – 17.00	Puppet making workshop	The Wilderness Trust Llanidloes	Puppet Soup	Disabled Adults group

**MID: Llandrindod Wells Artscape Glanio Events programme 2021**

Date	Event	Partner/Site	Target Audience
13 November, 13.00 – 17.00	Glanio	Powys County Council Llandrindod Wells Amphitheatre/ Lake	Local users of Llandrindod Wells Lake, woods and meadow areas

## SOUTH: Brecon Artscape Events Programme 2021

Date	Event	Partner/Site	Artist	Target Audience
31 July 14.00 – 17.00	Story Telling workshops (2)	Brecknock Play Network, Uplands Park, Brecon	Kama Roberts	Children/Families
14 August 14.00 – 17.00	Multi disciplinary workshop	Brecknock Play Network, Uplands Park, Brecon	Fresh Creative	Children/Families
28 August 14.00 – 17.00	Digital animation Drop-in workshop/ Story Telling workshop	Brecknock Play Network, Uplands Park, Brecon	Matt Cook/ Kama Roberts	Children/Families

Date	Event	Partner/Site	Target Audience
30 September All day	ARTISTS DEVELOPMENT DAY/ SUMMIT	y Gaer, Brecon	Commissioned Artists

Date	Event	Site / Partner	Artist	Target Audience
25 - 27 October and 9 November 10.00 – 13.00	Charlie's Climate Emergency Comedy	Theatr Brycheiniog & The Muse	Charlie Ward	Young people (age 8 upwards)
27 October, 10.30 – 12.30	Family workshop: Printing with Nature	y Gaer, Brecon	Brecknock Arts Collective	Families
30 October, 10.30 – 13.30	Family workshop: Island Fields Mandala	y Gaer, Brecon	Brecknock Arts Collective	Families
Daily from 4 November	Stop, Look, See Display of work in progress	y Gaer, Brecon	Brecknock Arts Collective	Families
6 <sup>th</sup> November, 14.00 – 16.00	Family workshop: Twist, Pop, Scatter!	y Gaer, Brecon	Brecknock Arts Collective	Families
Daily from 11 November 2021	Brecon Sound Forage	y Gaer Garden	Matt Cook	Young People Adults Families
12 November, 17.00	Performance: Brecon Sound Forage	y Gaer, Brecon	Matt Cook	Young People Adults Families
13 November, 14.00 – 16.00	Charlie's Climate Emergency Comedy Party for Kids	<i>The Muse</i>	Charlie Ward	Young people Families
19 November – 17.00	Launch of Stop, Look, See installation	30 High Street, Brecon,	Brecknock Arts Collective	Families
20 November – 31 December	Stop, Look, See	30 High Street, Brecon, with Lumen Art Projects	Brecknock Arts Collective	All audiences

**Artist Summit – Celebration and Evaluation**

Date	Event	Partner	Target Audience
13 January 2022 all day	Artists Online Summit	Impelo	Commissioned Artists