

BEACON ILLUMINE

Project Title:	Beacon Illumine	
Delivered by	Powys County Council Arts and Culture Services, co-ordinated by Peak – Art in the Black Mountains	
Start date:	Planning: December 2017- Delivery started Spring 2018	End Date: February 2020
LEADER Theme:	Theme 5: Exploitation of Digital Technology	

Total Expenditure:	£104,101.61
RDP Funding:	£70,289.86
Match funding:	£33,811.75



1. Introduction

“I’ve lived here almost all of my life and I had no idea I’d be able to see this place in a different light. It’s a re-enchantment.”

Illumine was an 18-month digital arts training project for young ‘Image Makers’ (16 -25 year olds) managed and coordinated by Peak on behalf of Powys County Council. Having commenced in Spring 2018, Image Makers worked closely with professional artists and industry professionals to ‘reimagine’ the Brecon Beacons and wider

area, creating new and original digital content for display at y Gaer in Brecon, a capital project undertaken by Powys County Council. This capital project is a remodelling of the former Brecknock Museum and its surrounding site as a new cultural hub encompassing library, museum, gallery, tourism information, and a suite of dedicated community facilities.

The Illumine project was made up of workshops, mini-residencies, trips, studio visits, and location shoots responding to the unique qualities of the town and surrounding area. Image Makers collaborated with ambitious artists, focusing on those with whose artistic practice encompassed creative use of digital technologies, to explore themes including sustainable tourism, folklore, geology, craftivism, public space, fashion, bilingualism, and identity.

This project had a focus on skills development, but also provided an opportunity for young people to meet like-minded peers in a rural area. One-to-one mentoring with Associate Producer Morag Colquhoun allowed young people to identify and develop skills and networks. Peak is committed to supporting these emerging practitioners to pursue creative careers through further project work in the future.

"Illumine has energised me to make artwork, and working with professional artists in Wales has made me feel like a career in the arts is a plan, not an idealistic path."

This case study should be viewed alongside the final film piece made by the Illumine Image Makers <https://vimeo.com/397978559> Further work is available to view on the project website www.illumine.website

2. Challenge

The market town of Brecon relies heavily on tourism and the associated impact on the local economy, jobs, and businesses. Without a dedicated visitor centre, a great deal of valuable custom is likely to be lost. Stakeholder engagement in the development of the Brecon Cultural Hub project – y Gaer – is longstanding, involved, and broad; deep concern prevails around the potential damage that the removal of the TIC will cause to the town, the region, and the economy.

A wide range of individuals, groups and organisations are enthusiastic supporters of the Brecon Cultural Hub scheme are keen to see it succeed in meeting the needs and achieving the ambitions of the community. An anticipated future reliance on volunteers to provide some face-to-face interaction with visitors and members of the community is understood but this will not be easy to manage or support.

It is for these reasons that the project was conceived unashamedly to provide 'visitor information' but in a new innovative, creative, and sustainable way using digital technology, wholly un-reliant on paid staff and in its image-based form. The 'product' made available to the public will be direct, inspiring, and intriguing – painting a picture of Brecknockshire and the Brecon Beacons as a place to enjoy, in which to stay and spend time. The visual content stimulates in viewers intuitive, instinctive, and emotional responses encouraging people to explore, discover, and experience what the area has to offer.



Further, there was a need identified for rurally-based young people with an interest in the creative industries to access an insight into professional practice, and the opportunity to develop practical skills in the creation, production, and presentation of digital content, with the support of professionals, at an industry-level standard.

The Illumine project was intended to meet these two challenges jointly: not only a need to include interesting and informative content that reflected the past, present, and future of the Brecon Beacons and surrounding area in the new cultural hub, but also to allow young people to access a better understanding and develop skills that allow them to build networks and confidence to create sustainable creative careers in rural Wales.

3. Solution

Illumine fed into the major capital Brecon Cultural Hub scheme, y Gaer, and formed content and resource which is now housed in the new building and managed as part of the new and ongoing operation of the public facility. Illumine content has been embedded into the facility forming the heart of the hub (through a large projector and screen as well as a smaller flat screen). The ability is there to update and refresh the edit, adding in new material into the digital infrastructure as and when it becomes available, thus maintaining evolving content.

The Brecon Tourist Information Centre (TIC), highly valued by visitors and local people alike, closed in 2018 as part of measures to achieve budgetary efficiencies required of the Council. Once y Gaer opened in Dec 2019, the building became an additional visitor information point to the Town Council's newly established 'Visit Brecon' shop location nearby.

As such, y Gaer offers a natural alternative as a draw to visitors and community members seeking information. There is no resource planned to provide this as part of the scheme, neither in the form of facility infrastructure, staff, nor budget. However, there was an intrinsic expectation that the hub would deliver a form of service in place of what has been lost.

4. Benefit

Participation: The project served as an engagement tool for y Gaer to include young people in this important local project, enabling their voice to be heard and embedded in the new building, and encouraging their future involvement and access to the new Hub. Young people who participated in the project have greater sense of ownership over the building, and are more likely to access it's services in the future.

Training: Whilst y Gaer meets the need of local communities, businesses, and visitors, Illumine met a need and demand to enable rurally-based young people with an



interest in the creative industries to access, gain insight into professional practice and to develop practical skills in the creation, production, and presentation of digital content, with the support of professionals, at an industry-level standard.

Content: The digital content created is innovative, inspiring, and authentic – made by young people who live, work, and who have been brought up in the area. A large portfolio of work was made (see Result below) which allows the content in y Gaer to be constantly refreshed for visitors, businesses, and the communities who use the cultural hub.

5. **Result**

Project outputs:

- A final film, created by the Image-makers, that curated a selection of the project portfolio output synthesised with a soundtrack
- A portfolio of still photographic images, digital film, animation, stop-motion and time-lapse footage, as well as prints and drone footage. This body of work is now shown via digital display within the large public atrium of y Gaer, with ample opportunities for refreshing and rotating content due to the large volume produced by young people during the project.
- Installation of digital infrastructure at y Gaer to display the content comprising a high-resolution laser projector positioned to display on a dedicated wall mounted screen (approx. 4m x 6m) and a multi-media screen, with integrated headphones to enable visitors to listen to the soundtrack, which was a particularly successful and innovative output created by the imagemakers.

In addition to y Gaer, the community hub, a 'community hub' exists in the form of the participants who were involved in the Beacon Illumine project. Although the Image Makers have not been able to meet together physically for most of 2020 due to Covid-19, they have plans to continue to meet as a group of young emerging artists, acting as a peer group for sharing work/developing new work and collaborating together. This is a great outcome to the project, particularly as many of the young people's plans have either changed or been put on hold due to Covid-19. Many of them are meeting virtually over Zoom/Teams in the meantime.





6. Project Outputs/Outcomes

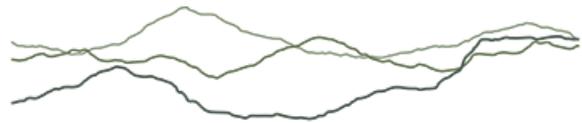
Output (Case Level Indicator)	Achieved
No. of feasibility studies	0
No. of networks established	0
No. of jobs safeguarded	0
No. Of pilot activities undertaken / supported	1
No. of community hubs created	0
No. of stakeholders engaged	77
No. of participants supported (awareness raising events only)	80
No. of jobs created	0
No. of communities benefitting	0
No. of businesses benefitting	7

7. Project Contact Details

Name:	Peak – Art in the Black Mountains
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8. Partners/Match Funders Logos



Peak Art in the Black Mountains
Celf yn y Mynyddoedd Duon



Date Case Study Completed:	March 2020
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