

## **Brecon Heritage and Cultural Network Legacy Group**

### **The Future of the Brecon Heritage & Cultural Network**

#### **Introduction & background**

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Brecon Heritage & Cultural Network (BHCN) and the Arwain project and to consult on the future role of BHCN when the Arwain funding ends on the 30<sup>th</sup> September.

The Arwain funding has been the catalyst to establishing the Brecon Heritage & Cultural Network, which has brought together members from Brecon's heritage & cultural organisations and businesses to work together. This has provided the opportunity to raise awareness of the town's rich heritage and the vibrancy of its cultural & artistic life through creating the Brecon Story digital marketing infrastructure and by sharing and exchanging knowledge and information.

#### **What has been achieved?**

The Arwain funding has enabled the employment of a project manager and administrative assistant to deliver the project, which includes: undertaking the development of the Brecon Story portal in a well researched and planned approach under the direction of the BHCN Steering Group. It has also included other activities the Steering Group prioritised

To date this has involved the following;

- Undertaking a product and digital audit
- Appointing specialist support following procurement guidelines: Digital marketing Hoffi and experience development, Yellobrick
- Branding workshops at which 35 people participated from a range of Brecon organisations
- Development of the Brecon Story portal <http://breconstory.wales>
- Identification and consultation on key stories and content
- Video production – 2 completed, 1 in development
- Audio interviews and production - 12 completed
- Help sessions & workshops on developing stories using photography and video
- In partnership with Visit Brecon production and distribution of the new Brecon Story 'What On' leaflet, supported by private sponsorship
- Participation in the working group preparing the Brecon Town Plan and Planning Guidance
- Planning for the launch of the social media campaign which will commence at the beginning of June

This work has already created a very solid framework for the future promotion of Brecon's heritage and culture. One on which the Brecon Heritage & Cultural Network can build.

### **Impact of coronavirus lockdown**

Following the coronavirus lockdown the project staff have continued to work on the project from home. One casualty of the lockdown timing was that the planned workshop on linking the partner's websites to the Brecon Story portal, had to be cancelled.

Thankfully most of the development work has been completed. The phase from now until the project finishes on the 30<sup>th</sup> September is focused on communication and engagement. A programme of presentations and workshops for volunteers and community organisations had been planned. However due to lockdown restrictions, the level of engagement will be restricted. This is regrettable as the lockdown has highlighted the need to train volunteers and give them confidence in using digital tools and platforms. However, the project team is confident that it can still deliver the project and fulfill all the KPI's it is contracted to achieve.

The above outlines the impact of coronavirus on the Arwain project but the impact on the Brecon Heritage & Cultural Network members has been **severe**. The restrictions have closed down BHCN attractions and businesses at the start of their main season. Easter to the end of September is when the heritage & cultural organisations generate their main income. As of now, there is no clear timetable for when they will be able to trade. When they are allowed to re-open, their income earning profitability will be impacted by 2m social distance requirements.

### **Issues**

Due to COVID-19, the support role of the Brecon and Heritage and Cultural Network will be even more important than was originally envisaged. The first step will be to review the role of the BHCN to best help its members over the next difficult year, whilst developing a robust business plan to support its sustainability longer term. In the short term, the challenge will be to secure the necessary funding to enable the BHCN to provide delivery services to manage and maintain the Brecon Story portal, provide promotional and administrative services to see it through this initial period whilst the strategic development work is undertaken. At the present time, most grant giving bodies have closed down with regard to accepting new grant applications.

Further development of video and audio content for the portal is required as key stories cannot be created and filmed during lockdown within the current project. These include: Y Gaer, the history of theatre in Brecon, the Brecknockshire Agricultural Society and Brecon Guildhall. The development of these stories will be included in future grant applications once grant-giving bodies accept new applications.

The starting point is to find support from within the Brecon Heritage & Cultural Partners by providing both help in kind and cash contributions. Members are being requested to make a commitment to give a day a month or offer help in kind to a similar value along with possible cash contributions. At this difficult time we will leave it to members to contribute what they can afford. In the development of the business plan, membership categories and subscription levels, together with generating other income streams will be identified. Both Brecon Town Council and the Brecon Beacons Sustainable Development Fund will be approached.

### **Delivery Structure**

Whilst a three-year Business Plan is being developed it is important to put in place appropriate transitional arrangements. It is therefore proposed that Brecon Cathedral continue to lead the BHCN and the Steering Group contract specialist support to continue delivering membership services within the budget available, supported by the membership.

### **Draft Budget 2020 /2021**

#### **Income**

|                                    |                |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| BHCN member fees / donations       | £2,500         |
| Grant funding                      | £5,000         |
| Underspend on What's On, 2019/2020 | £1,273         |
| Help in Kind member contributions  | <u>£10,000</u> |
| Sub Total                          | £18,773        |

#### **Expenditure**

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| Marketing and member services delivery          | £4,900         |
| Brecon Story portal & social media costs*       | £1,000         |
| Production and distribution What's On 2020/2021 | £2,273         |
| Office, IT support & administration             | £600           |
| Delivery of services** (Help in Kind)           | <u>£10,000</u> |
| Sub Total                                       | £18,773        |

**Budget Total** **£18,773**

\* Costs include: url, portal hosting and annual maintenance contract

\*\*Help in Kind services Includes: business planning, facilitating workshops, hosting meetings, research, story development, collection of event and activity information, preparation of reports, monitoring and evaluation

This budget can sustain the Brecon Heritage & Cultural Network whilst the necessary business planning takes place and further grant applications are submitted

### **Priorities for action**

The delivery partner in agreement with the steering group will:

- Agree a revised 'membership' structure for the network to include guidelines for contributions to the portal and any published content whether it is online or in print. The structure will specify expected support back into the network whether this be help in kind or financial
- Ensure that the story portal is maintained and added to working with BHCN members – seeking seasonal images and content to ensure the portal's ongoing relevancy
- Deliver a planned and focused social media plan in collaboration with all members of the BHCN, which will encourage and enable both our local audiences as well as people further afield to discover more about Brecon's heritage and cultural activity remotely
- As the lockdown restrictions ease and audience & visitor 'allowed' numbers are better understood, the social media plan will help members begin to encourage their audience to return with confidence.
- Workshops and collaboration will enable partners to share best practice in a new world of audience and visitor management as well as help them to contribute to the growing wealth of stories on the portal
- Further funding will be applied for to allow further video and audio content to be created and enable greater engagement and training for volunteers, community organisations and businesses in the use of digital tools and platforms to allow the BHCN to continue managing and developing the portal and social media delivery into the future
- The 'What's On' leaflet will be continued in partnership with Visit Brecon (Subject to agreement with Brecon Town Council) assuming funding is in place for its continued production and distribution with regular calls for events managed in a time effective manner

### **Next steps**

Following consultation, the BHCN will consider the report and any proposed amendments then vote on the approach outlined

Once agreed, amend the Terms of Reference to support the future direction of the BHCN

Recruit a freelance professional with the necessary skills and experience using public sector procurement guidelines

20<sup>th</sup> May 2020