

# Developing Elans digital platforms Elan Virtual Eco museum Final Project Report



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**Powys**



**Project Name:** Developing Elans digital platforms - Elan Virtual Eco museum

**Project Code:** RDP085

**Project Dates:** 25/01/2021 to: 31/12/2021 originally and then extended to July 2022

**LEADER Theme:** Adding value to local identity and natural and cultural resources

### **Project Funding Summary**

Total Eligible Revenue Expenditure (inc VAT as applicable): £ 98,281.76

Revenue Intervention Rate (%): 55.86%

Maximum Revenue funding payable (inc VAT as applicable): £ 54,900.00

Amount of Match Funding: £ 43,381.76

**Officer managing the project:** Eluned Lewis, Elan Links: People, Nature & Water Scheme Manager

**Contact:** 01597 811527 / [www.elanvalley.org.uk/elanlinks](http://www.elanvalley.org.uk/elanlinks)

## **Background**

The Elan Valley lies at the heart of the Cambrian Mountains in Mid Wales. Its unique landscape combines remote hill land, isolated farmsteads, steep-sided wooded valleys and an extraordinary feat of Victorian engineering, that brought clean water to the then rapidly expanding industrial city of Birmingham.

Today, Elan's 20,000 hectares is a haven for wildlife and people. It has a host of nature and landscape designations; and the 154,000 visitors a year enjoy the breath-taking scenery, nature, recreational facilities and extensive free educational and heritage-based resources for schools, families and communities.

Our vision is ambitious - to generate a step-change increase in beneficial outcomes from this special place for people, for communities and for heritage. To achieve this we have developed a strategic programme of investment to safeguard our heritage and to increase enjoyment, education, training, and recreation for the benefit of all.

The applicant, Elan Valley Trust, the Lead Partner in the Elan Links partnership, is a charity established in 1989 when Dwr Cymru Welsh Water was privatised, who's purpose of which is to promote nature conservation, quiet enjoyment and social welfare across the Elan Valley, one per cent Wales' land area, and in the heart of the Cambrian Mountains. With only 28 years past in a nearly 1000 years lease of the Elan Valley, the trust has a very long term perspective on its purposes.

## **Introduction**

This project was developed to ensure that much needed investment is made to ensure that the natural, built and ancient heritage and cultural heritage at Elan is safeguarded and celebrated in a way which supports and develops the people and communities in and around Elan, including the market town of Rhayader who's businesses depend so heavily on the visitors to the nearby valley.

The innovation within this project is bringing the idea of the 'eco-museum' to Powys. The concept has however been used worldwide as a community-and place-based approach to conserving cultural and natural heritage and promoting dialogue and enthusiasm for the future.

The deliverables focus on developing technology suited to the Elan Valley as the Elan Valley doesn't have a mobile signal and as such the mainstay way of information flow is severely handicapped. This project will redress this by utilizing the most appropriate technology to ensure information can be made available.

## **Piloting the eco museum concept in Powys**

Underpinning the whole project is the concept of the Eco Museum. An eco museum is community-driven and aims to support and empower communities to develop and manage their own heritage.

The concept helps communities to conserve their resources and traditions and encourages communities to become involved with their heritage. It also encourages both tourists and communities to visit and focuses on identity of a place and the relationships between places and the people who live there. The concept is well embedded through the landscape scale approach already being undertaken by the Elan Links: People, Nature & Water landscape scale National Lottery Heritage Fund Scheme.

Specifically in this project we have used technology in an innovative and positive way to protect and promote cultural, natural and built heritage

During the development of the project we have engaged with the community to gather content and stories piloting and testing technology, recording wildlife and updating information.

## **Main Project Aims**

Concept of Elan Valley Eco Museum discussed within locality and adopted by key stakeholders

Engagement and participation with key stakeholders

Development of the most suitable technology for the Elan Valley

Future proofing the technology for the future

Use of technology by participants (visitors and local people) to enhance their knowledge, confidence and experience of the Elan Valley

Continuous development of the Elan Valley Eco Museum

## **Project implementation & milestones**

January 2020 Set up of project management group following invitations to wider stakeholders

Group included representatives from:

Elan Valley Trust

Dwr Cymru Welsh Water

Rhayader Museum & Gallery

Natural Resources Wales

The concept of the eco museum was further explored and how there was a need for information to enhance visitors experiences. The constraints of the Elan Valley lacking mobile phone signal was a particular challenge as well as ensuring that the technology is future proofed.

February 2020 Selection of a creative content manager

Suzanna Jones appointed as the creative content manager for the project. Her previous experience as a interpretation consultant specialising in app development made her a great fit for the project. With Suzanna's help the group were able to discuss and agree on the key themes the app should feature:

Such as key heritage information

Locations of trails and family hubs

Additional information not available currently on key historic sites

Safety information

## **Project implementation & milestones continued**

March 2020 Develop tender specification for a bespoke Elan specific technology solution. With support from Suzanna a tender was written. It was agreed that an funding for an initial research phase was not required and that we would ask for a clear response within the tender about how the technology would work with the site limitations (no mobile signal).

14 tenders received which were shortlisted to 5 who were invited for interview. Fuzzy Duck a Salford based Creative Agency were awarded the contract to develop a bespoke app for Elan Valley.

Develop themes for the app following site visit by Fuzzy Duck and workshop, members of the interpretation and events group asked to contribute.

April – January 2022 App development. Project Management meetings during initial phase.

April – January 2022 Elan Links Archivist Matt Rose and Rhayader Museum & Gallery undertake research for app content. Oral history and archive items most suitable prepared

It was agreed that the additional expenditure for the research phase would be allocated towards further creative content for the app.


April 2022 Stakeholders invited to pilot the app

A number of problems with loading and locating hot spots using the gps technology were discovered.



## Project implementation & milestones continued

March & April 2022 – Stakeholders invited to pilot the new app and provide comments



**WE NEED YOU**  
TO HELP TEST THE NEW ELAN VALLEY APP

- Wednesday 23rd March  
11am - 1pm
- Friday 25th March  
2pm - 4pm
- Sunday 27th March  
2pm - 4pm
- Wednesday 30th March  
2pm - 4pm
- Wednesday 6th April  
2pm - 4pm
- Wednesday 13th April  
2pm - 4pm
- Wednesday 20th April  
2pm - 4pm
- Wednesday 27th April  
2pm - 4pm

@ ELANLINKS@ELANVALLEY.ORG.UK

01597 810880

ELAN VALLEY TRUST, ELAN ESTATE OFFICE, ELAN VILLAGE,  
RHAYADER, POWYS, LD6 5HP

Funding raised by  
The National Lottery  
and awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund

Cyllid a godwyd gan  
Y Loteri Genedlaethol  
ac aroffwyd gan Gronfa Dreftadaeth y Loteri

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Eight drop in sessions were organised and staffed by the project team enabling stakeholders to come and discuss the app and receive instructions on how to use it.

Attendance figures at the app trailing events were relatively low despite an concerted effort with publicity in the form of social media and posters.

In total 25 people engaged with this process.

Following on from this it was agreed to make further changes to the app capability and change how the car audio tour worked and loaded / played on the app. These changes required a bit of a redesign.

## Project implementation & milestones continued

July – October 2022 Although after the project completion date delays with the app stores loading the technology on to their sites and making it available for download (google and apple) which was beyond our control meant that public downloads of the app were not possible until Mid September 2022. Once the apps were available tests were undertaken in the visitor centre about downloading from the stores and the time this took.

### ELAN VALLEY ECO-MUSEUM LAUNCH EVENT

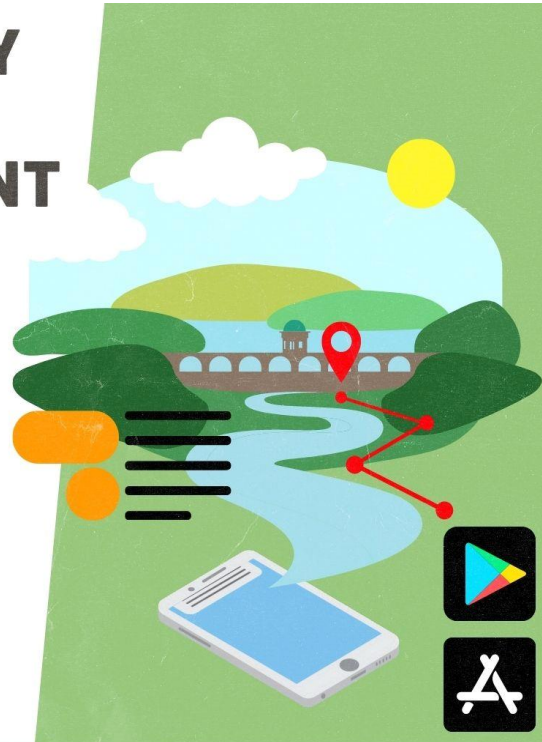
OCTOBER 15TH 12PM - 3PM

Join us to celebrate the launch of this special interactive tool which will help you navigate and discover more about Elan's unique heritage.

- Bookable coach tour following the new car audio route at 12:30pm.
- Interactive Information Quest for families from 12pm.

Members of the Elan Links Team will be available to talk through their projects and share their Knowledge on different aspects of the Elan Valley's heritage.

[www.elanvalley.org.uk](http://www.elanvalley.org.uk)



A social media campaign was organised to showcase the app and to launch it publicly on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October. 35 people attended the event.

The app will continue to evolve and integrate further as a tool for visitors.

## Project Highlights

### 1 network established

The partnership approach with stakeholders at Elan Valley is stronger and focussed on the continued development of the eco museum concept. The app will continue to be developed as it is a tool which can be constantly adapted. The redevelopment of Rhayader Museum & Gallery, due to open in the Spring of 2023 will further tie in the concept as will future developments at the Visitor Centre and on site at Elan Valley.

### 1 pilot activity undertaken and supported

The Elan Valley app has been developed, piloted and is now working well within the area.

Although the development of the app was slower than originally envisaged it is now working well and will continue to be developed and integrated further as a key tool for navigating the Elan Valley and its unique heritage.

## **Project Highlights**

150 stakeholders engaged

Although we haven't reached the required target of 150 people in terms of evidence there has been focussed engagement through the project management group and the organisations within it.

Engagement was continuous with a core of key stakeholders as the technology was developed and then during the piloting phase in July 2023 public consultation events were coordinated.

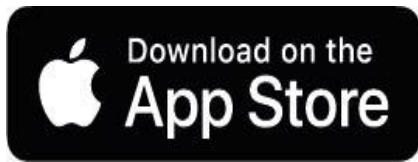
Number of participants supported (awareness raising events only) Target of 150

There have been a number of online campaigns via our social media platforms as well as Elan Links staff engaging with key stakeholders and businesses within Rhayader.

We have recorded 109 downloads on Android and 133 downloads to apple following a campaign to engage with the app and provide us with feedback.

Discover the Elan Valley with an interactive map, trails, stories and games

Darganfodwch Cwm Elan gyda map rhyngweithiol, llwybrau, straeon a gemau



[Elan Valley on the App Store \(apple.com\)](https://apple.com)



[Elan Valley explorer - Apps on Google Play](https://play.google.com)

[Elan Valley Explorer App - Out Now! | Elan Valley](https://play.google.com)