

Powys Pioneers Digital Heritage Project

Case Study

Introduction

Over the past 250 years, Powys has been the home for a remarkable set of innovators, social activists and businesspeople who have changed the face of Wales and had influence around the world. These include:

- Laura Ashley and family - textile, home furnishing and fashion pioneer and significant rural employer.
- Robert Owen - philanthropic social entrepreneur and reformer, education reformer and creative genius of international significance.
- David Davies - coal & railway pioneer, and his philanthropic family - Lord Davies; Gwendoline & Margaret Davies.
- Pryce Jones - pioneer of international mail order and home shopping, purportedly the initiator of Royal Mail Parcel Post and inventor of the modern sleeping bag.

The Feasibility Study considered how the legacies of the Powys Pioneers could be used for the benefit of local people, with a central focus on digital delivery and activities.

Challenge

The Feasibility Study was designed to evaluate options for future actions against five objectives, with a central focus on digital delivery and activities. These objectives are to:

- Enhance local identity and pride in the Powys Pioneers, Newtown, and Mid Wales
- Increase recognition of the Powys Pioneers, Newtown and Mid Wales across Wales, the UK and internationally
- Achieve the monetisation of the Pioneers' heritage, for the future sustainability of the project
- Develop the heritage-led regeneration of Newtown
- Use the legacy of the Powys Pioneers to stimulate local entrepreneurship.

Solution

The Feasibility Study project has taken place over the period November 2018 to November 2019, with three key stages:

1. Exploring and developing a range of digital heritage options, alongside contacting the organisations responsible for the various pioneers' archives, to build connections and to explore current and future digital plans. The Royal Commission for the Ancient and Historical Monument of Wales (RCAHMW) and the People's Collection

Wales (PCW) were key partners, developing a report on digital heritage options (see Appendix 1) and presenting these to stakeholders at a meeting in March 2019.

2. Reaching out to communities in Newtown and Mid Wales, to assess interest in the heritage of the Pioneers and in developing digital heritage projects and resources. Two main events were held during this phase:
3. A Laura Ashley & family Heritage Day, held in a pop-up exhibition in a vacant shop in the Bear Lanes Shopping Centre in Newtown on the town's annual carnival day, in June 2019. Over 150 people visited the shop and completed surveys.
4. A Pryce Jones celebratory evening in October 2019, on the 160th anniversary of the opening of his mail order store. Invitations were sent to 150 people, of which it is thought that over 100 attended and over 70 completed surveys. The People's Collection Wales and Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales have both been key partners in the delivery of this phase.
5. Evaluating the data generated by the project and assessing the feasibility of various options, culminating in the creation of this report. Chris Blandford Associates has been a key partner, producing a report on potential physical heritage interventions in Newtown and the legacy of the project, and being a critical friend in the development of the Feasibility Study.

Throughout the project, the project team has communicated with key stakeholders, held private and public meetings, and attended meetings on related projects within the area. There has been a strong emphasis on developing awareness, interest and partnership in the ideas generated by the project and seeking buy-in for the most appropriate ways forward.

To achieve the project objectives, four strategic building blocks have been identified for the feasibility study, each of which contain a number of potential projects. The strategic elements are:

- Element 1: Digital
- Element 2: Permanent building & exhibitions
- Element 3: Temporary events & activities
- Element 4: Education

To evaluate the feasibility of these elements, they are each assessed both against their potential to deliver the project objectives and against a set of operational criteria, leading to an understanding of the most favourable options. These operational criteria are:

- Funding availability
- Human resources required & organisational capacity
- Urgency

There are already projects happening in Newtown and Mid Wales that contribute to the objectives of HH4MW, such as the Newtown & Llanllwchaiarn Town Council's new digital heritage trail. This Feasibility Study therefore focusses on the current gaps in delivery and aims to avoid duplication of existing projects and facilities.

Benefit

The Feasibility Study assessed 28 projects against the project objectives and operational criteria. This resulted in the identification of 4 strands of future activity, each of which incorporate a number of the evaluated projects. Clear next steps for the HH4MW organisation are also identified. The 4 strands of activity are:

- **Festival 2021** - an ambitious year-long arts, culture and heritage festival tied to the 250th anniversary of Robert Owen's birth and the 60th anniversary of the opening of Laura Ashley's first shop;
- **Conservation and Digitisation** – digital projects to ensure the conservation of dispersed, unique and fragile collections held in private ownership across Mid Wales, ensuring maximum access and engagement;
- **Awareness, Education and Entrepreneurship** – Promotional and educational awareness of the Pioneers locally and nationally to develop their profile and impact on the future of Mid Wales, and to drive entrepreneurship.
- **Developing the Legacy Projects** – permanent facilities that can celebrate the Pioneers, safeguard their legacy and support the cultural and economic regeneration of Mid Wales and Newtown, namely a permanent object and archive store in Newtown and a permanent exhibition.

Result

The creation of the Feasibility Study has involved extensive public consultation, with two very well attended heritage days (one focussing on Laura Ashley and family and another on Pryce Jones). Important networks for project development and delivery have been established with the project partners, who have kindly given their expertise and resources as in-kind funding: RCHMW, Peoples' Collection Wales and Chris Blandford Associates. Through the course of the project, Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales have emerged as a new partner, generously committing resources to the Feasibility Study delivery and with a commitment for future partnership working.

Project Outputs/Outcomes

Output (Case Level Indicator)	Achieved
No. of feasibility studies	1
No. of networks established	0
No. of jobs safeguarded	0
No. of pilot activities undertaken / supported	0
No. of community hubs created	0
No. of stakeholders engaged	30
No. of participants supported (awareness raising events only)	258

Outcomes	
No. of jobs created	0
No. of communities benefitting	0
No. of businesses benefitting	0

Project Contact Details

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Partners/Match Funders Logos



Project Details

Key Data	Project Specifics
Delivered by:	Heritage Hub 4 Mid Wales
Start Date:	November 2018
End Date:	December 2019
LEADER Theme:	Theme 5: Exploitation of Digital Technology

Financial Details

Description	Amount	%
Total Expenditure:	£11,843.29	100.00%
RDP Funding:	£6,317.93	53.35%
Match funding:	£5,525.36	46.65%