
WHAT WE DO NOW

EVALUATION

SNAPSHOT

SEPT 2022



W W D N

INTRODUCING 'WHAT WE DO NOW'

The What We Do Now (WWDN) project is a collaborative experiment to pilot a network of **creative placemaking** led by The Stove Network in partnership with artists, communities and organisations across Dumfries & Galloway.

As one of 26 regional projects within the nationwide **Culture Collective** funded by Scottish Government and coordinated by Creative Scotland, WWDN aims to improve the sharing of resources, knowledge, capacity, best practices, and collaborative values among creative practitioners and community organisations in South Scotland through a creative placemaking framework.



Creative Placemaking uses creative practice to engage communities at grassroots level, building on the existing culture, activity and relationships in each place. It brings people, communities, groups and organisations, public and third sector agencies together to co-develop better strategies for our places.

- 'Embers: Creative Placemaking in the South of Scotland'



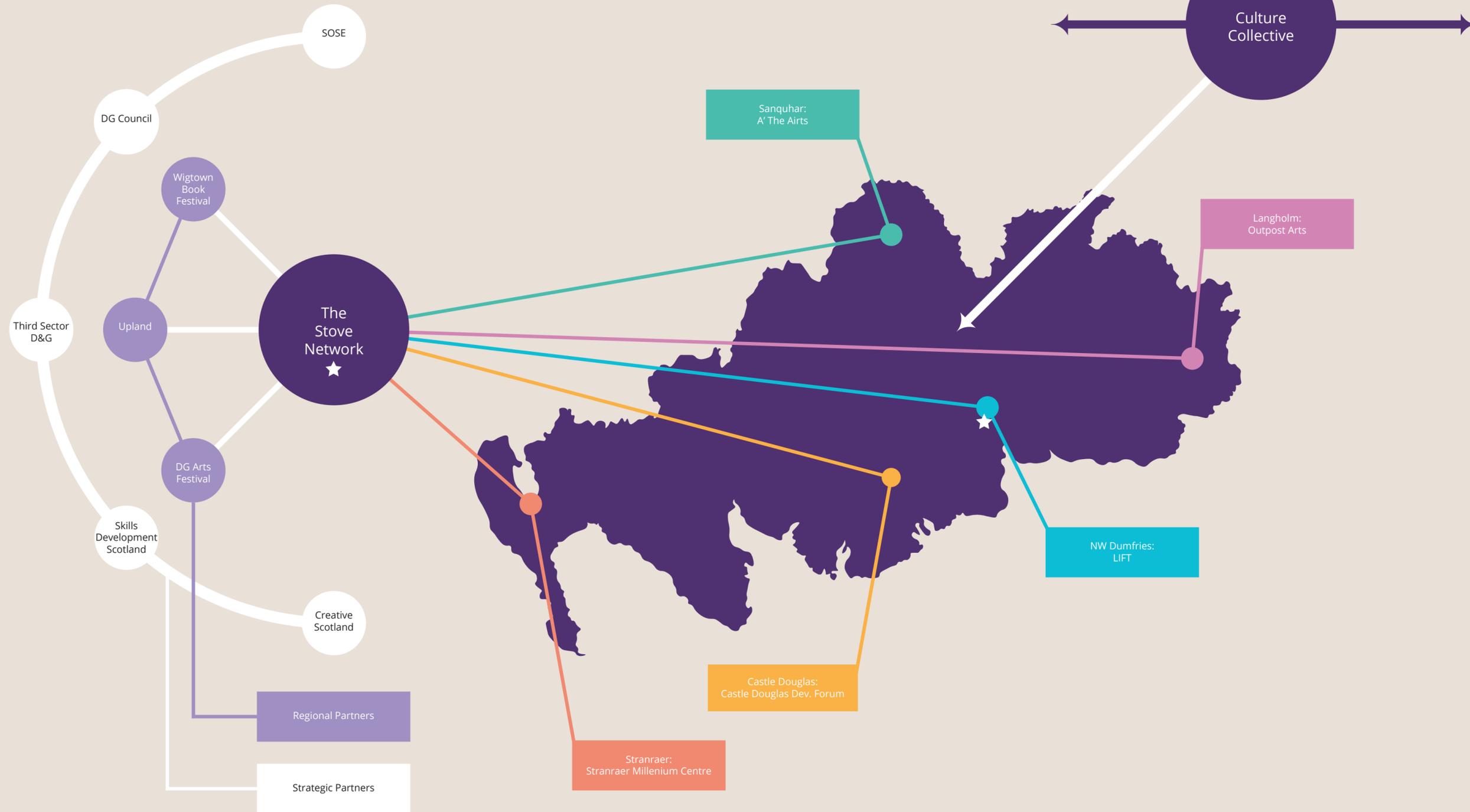
The first phase of WWDN lasted from **1st April 2021 until 31st August 2022**, during which time **5 community groups** have participated in the project as 'place hubs', hosting and partnering with a total of **12 creative practitioners** to develop long-term social art projects to support and empower members of local communities identified as disadvantaged in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Through media and methods as diverse as photography and willow-weaving, acting and stained glass, and drawing and juggling, the artists produced over **140 workshops, performances, recording sessions, classes, youth groups and participatory events** with members of the local community within a collaborative and process-led approach. As part of the creative placemaking framework, these activities provided space for community members and organisations to come together to develop new skills, reimagine their local areas, and lay foundations for further initiatives to improve local wellbeing and enterprise.

During this time, the artists and place hub leads also took part in a **6-week training programme**, regular collective discussions, and exchange opportunities facilitated by The Stove and Culture Collective, as well as **52 monthly project meetings, 142 artist check-ins** and **3 bespoke training sessions**, to foster a culture of shared practice and cooperation among participants and their communities.



WHAT WE DO NOW



Artists

EMERGING:
Sian Yeshe

ESTABLISHED:
Jim Buchanan

EMERGING:
Andy Brooke
ESTABLISHED:
Alice Francis
Rosie Giblin

EMERGING:
Jack Stancliffe
ESTABLISHED:
Colin Tennant
Saskia Coulson

EMERGING:
Keira Manson

ESTABLISHED:
Martin Danziger

EMERGING:
Rory Laycock

ESTABLISHED:
Hope London

WHAT WE DO NOW

- 1 six week training course
- 3 bespoke training sessions
- 8 regional partner meetings
- 52 place hub/artist project meetings
- 123 artist/place hub events
- 142 artist check-ins

SANQUHAR

LANGHOLM

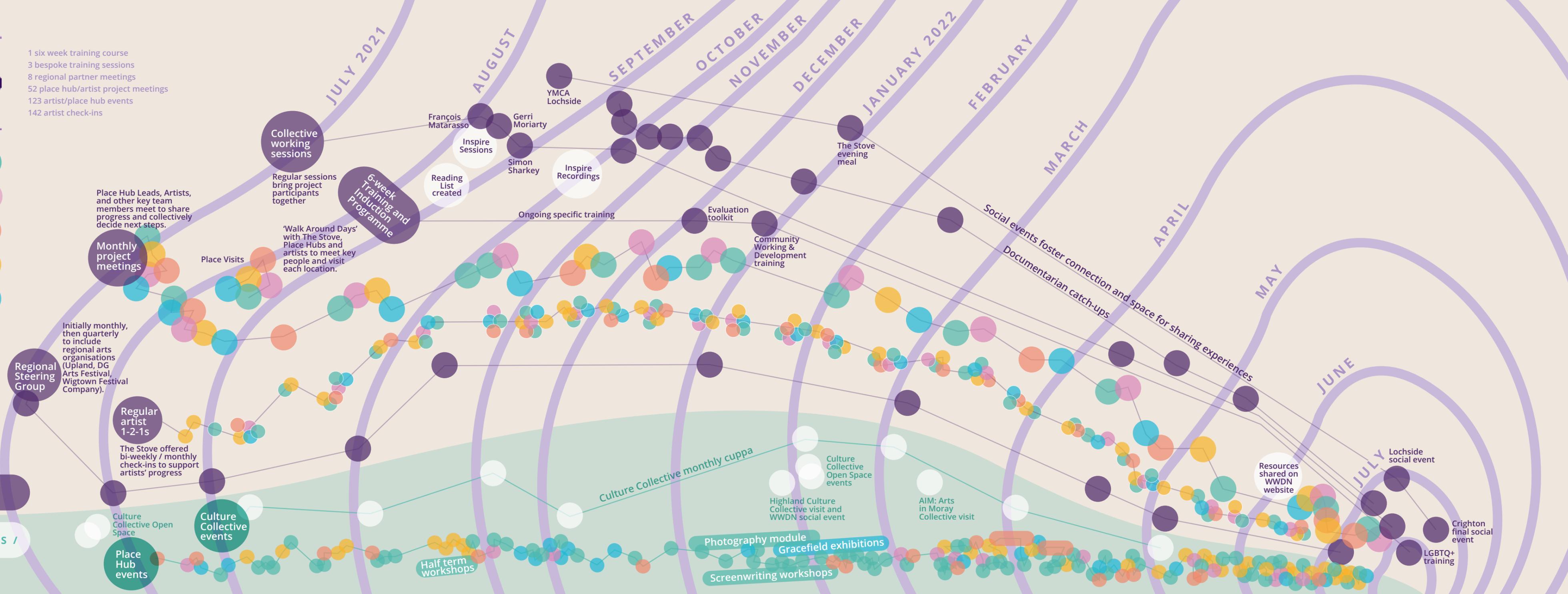
STRANRAER

CASTLE DOUGLAS

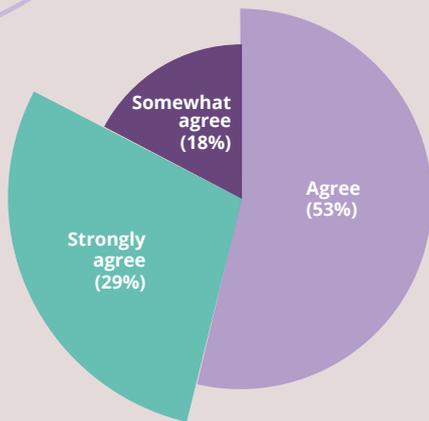
DUMFRIES

LED BY THE STOVE

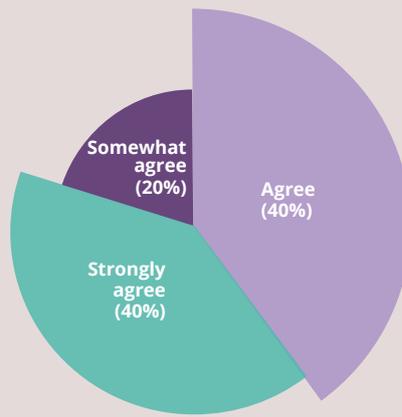
LED BY PLACE HUBS / PARTNERS



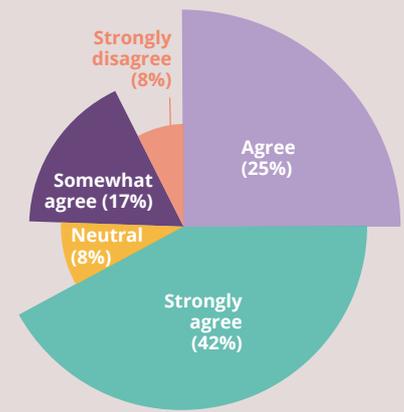
Would you agree that WWDN increased your confidence in undertaking Community Embedded Practice as an approach to working with communities?



Collective



Place Hub Leads



Artists

The project also improved practitioners self-reported confidence in delivering Community Embedded Practice (CEP) as an approach - as demonstrated by findings from interviews with artists, Place Hub leads and the collective toward the end of this phase of the WWDN project (above).

As many of the artists, organisations and communities involved in WWDN prepare to continue and further develop their work during the second phase of the project, this evaluation snapshot aims to serve as a **tool for reflection and discussion** about how to nurture their successes and grow from the challenges encountered so far.

The following pages highlight **key learnings** from the project's first phase as a resource for developing the potential and scope of creative placemaking to promote economic wellbeing, social enterprise and community development within and beyond the WWDN project.



BUILDING A SHARED NETWORK

For a majority of artists and place hubs, WWDN's **network model** was seen as a valuable source of support, a space for reflection, and an opportunity for training and networking.

The network has significant potential to be developed further by developing training opportunities that respond to participants' immediate needs; providing more varied activities; and balancing demands on participants' time.

Within the WWDN and broader Culture Collective network, artists and place hub participants took part in **training sessions, collective discussions and presentations** about their projects, and opportunities to host visiting groups from other parts of Scotland. These were praised highly in interviews, but participants also noted that high demands on their time meant that some opportunities were not fully taken advantage of. Others emphasised the importance of more casual gatherings and between smaller group meetings to discuss common challenges and interests, for example, between just the artists or just the place hub leads. For others, the development of more flexible and adaptable resources, like an archive of recorded training videos or bespoke mentorship to help resolve challenges faced during projects, was key.

These recommendations make clear that the WWDN network is viewed as a **highly constructive and fruitful** community of practice—one whose potential can be cultivated through ongoing dialogue with its members about their individual needs.



“ Support generally network wide has been amazing – especially as the emerging artist this has been confidence building. Working with other artists across the region has been inspiring, and great to become embedded in the wider community across the region. ”

“ In an ideal world there might have been more time for reflection and action between each session, there was a lot of theory input all at once without having any chance to try things out a bit or relate to what is being done on the ground. ”

LEARNING A COMMON LANGUAGE

Partnership between community embedded artists and place hubs expanded participants' understanding of the potentials of **creative practice** for improving community wellbeing and enterprise.

Every partnership is unique and requires early and frequent discussion about partner expectations, needs, and priorities; participants emphasised a need for **mutual accountability** and responsibility to one another's goals and methods.

The artists and place hub leads involved in the project had a wide variety of previous understandings and experiences with the concepts of creative placemaking and community-embedded art. The importance of **open and consistent communication**, as well as tools for formalising and adapting accountability to one another, cannot be stressed enough. For artists, having the **autonomy and trust** to develop their own practice as part of their wider contributions to the project was especially important, while place hubs felt misrepresented and under-utilised at times when artists did not build on their own ongoing projects and local relationships. Many participants expressed a desire for more 'practical training' from the WWDN network in how to establish and share working practices between artists and organisations, indicating a clear area in which the Stove can enhance its role as a bridge and facilitator.

“
When the project started, I was dubious, but now I am much more confident in the direction—very happy to maintain relationships with artists.
”

“
It's challenging us around the definition of partnership – what is a partner? This is good.
”



GROWING AS A COMMUNITY

Taking part in creative activities led community members to develop **skills and confidence**, pursue further learning, propose new activities for their community and build new local relationships. Often by working with smaller groups and taking part in other local events and projects, artists observed their activities reaching and connecting with the wider community.

Long-term, embedded work within communities places extra demands on artists' and place hubs' time and resources, requiring greater support to protect wellbeing and work-life balance. Project outputs are subject to other local interests and paces of working, making it important that both project legacy and adaptability are supported by the wider network and place hubs.

Each of the five WWDN projects connected with and contributed to local communities in diverse ways. An important lesson from all of the sites, however, is that this form of intense, embedded work with communities—although generative of rich opportunities for dynamic responsiveness by artists and place hubs to community interests and needs—requires considerable **emotional investment**. Many of the artists indicated that they had worked well beyond their paid

“ [I] think a big issue was understanding how much time it takes to do something, or this idea of having time to think. What does work look like?”



“ [Our local] project is helping in that there may only be five in the group [of young people taking part] but they are building their trust and can talk openly and confidentially with [the artists] – offers support as well as creativity. ”



hours due to strong senses of care and commitment to achieving outputs based on community participation and worries that unfinished ideas would be interpreted as empty promises. At the same time some Place Hubs communicated there had not been a clear idea over how time was spent. The immersive nature of this project, exacerbated by the precarious organisation of the creative sector, can make it difficult to separate work from life; resident artists from place hubs; and personal development from community contribution. There is need, however, to support all of these—and clear potential for the WWDN network to do so via mentorship in support of participant wellbeing and expectation-management. It is also important to bear in mind the pluralistic, multifaceted nature of communities: artists and place hubs may draw on different experiences, methods and skills to contribute to local communities in different ways; experiences across all five project sites make it clear that openness to these differences in perspective and knowledge is crucial for **building, learning and growing together**.

As the case studies presented in the following pages make clear, creative placemaking is not a linear process, but rather one of **experiment, patience and adaptation** that offers great benefits for—and these created in collaboration with—local communities. The process is ongoing in the WWDN network, and the question ahead is how the artists, organisations and community members involved make it their own.





WHAT
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SANQUHAR

CASE STUDY

SANQUHAR

CONNECTION AND POSSIBILITY

For A' the Airts Community Art Centre, the Sanquhar place hub, WWDN offered a way to **build new relationships** with members of the community who had not previously participated in the space—particularly young people, who felt both too old for the organisation's children's activities and too young among the older adults who attend the centre's regular events and classes.

Working with local schools, the resident artists helped them find a place: performance artist **Jack Stancliffe** and digital-storytellers and photographers **Saskia Coulson** and **Colin Tennant** led participatory workshops in theatre, photography, film-making and other digital skills in the art centre, local schools and public space. This involved a process of discussion, research and trial-and-error to work out what could catch the interests of local young people, which also challenged the artists and place hub to reflect on their own ways of working.



"It was good to have time at the start of the WWDN project to connect and research with the young people who took part. It enabled us to deliver a project that was inspiring to them and gained their interest. Projects often have short windows of delivery and WWDN gave us the research time at the start to deliver a project that was engaging and different. Meeting the needs of the young people.

- Yvonne



The project was an opportunity to **work collaboratively** for Yvonne Barber, WWDN Place Lead at A' the Airts; as the manager of a small art centre, she often works alone, but this project required her to work and think with the artists on a week-to-week basis and to share the work of her organisation with others through regular WWDN network meetings.

For the artists as well, the **long-term, embedded nature** of the project could be challenging, provoking reflections on and experimentations with their own practice, supported through mentorship and consultation with members of The Stove.



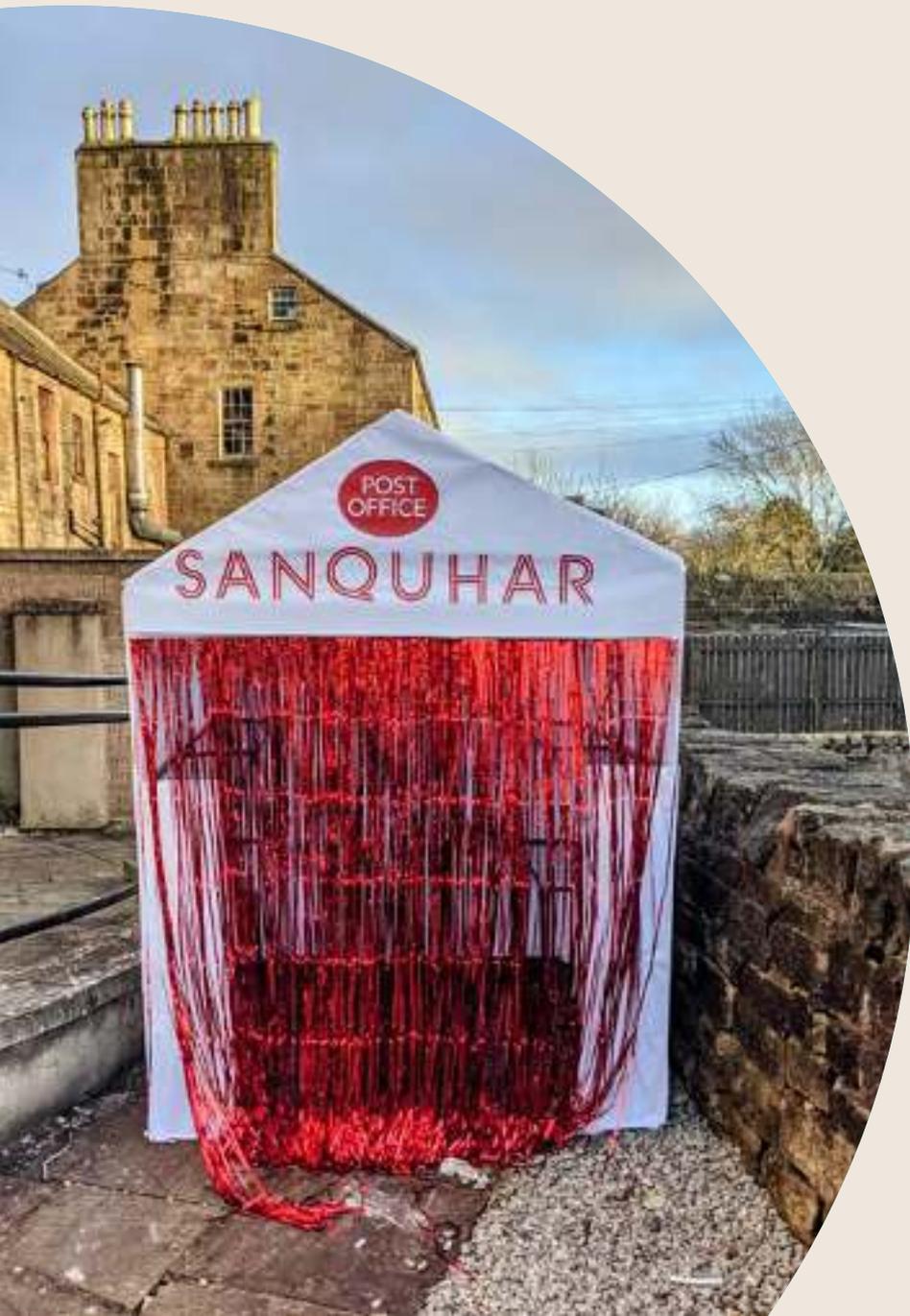
In Stancliffe's project investigating the possible futures of the Sanquhar post office, for instance, finding a way to balance the place hub's priorities with a provocative and experimental artistic approach could be a challenge. However, through a series of **experimental and performative interventions** and with regular mentorship meetings with The Stove, he found ways to create space for conversation and curiosity through chats as **'The Lost Postie'** and alternative post-box installations.

Negotiating the different and sometimes uncertain **expectations and interests** of project participants, partners, local organisations and community members could lead to frustrations—when met with low attendance or resistance to new ideas—but also inspiring growth.

ELLIOT BRYDON BROWN
BAILLIE READ
HOLLIE WALKER

“
When we had an exhibition of photographs [the young people] had taken they invited quite a lot of their families and it was a good opportunity to speak to some of their parents - parents feeling the benefit of their children having something they are passionate about ... it had an effect on the wider community ... it can feel small; but when about forty people from small town come in you can see part of a bigger effect.

- Saskia //





This perhaps shines clearest in the successes of the Sanquhar Camera Collective (SCC), a small group of young people who gathered weekly in A' the Airts to practice **photography and filmmaking** as part of the WWDN workshops. The group travelled to London together with some of the artists to visit the Sony World Photography Awards before hosting their own photography exhibition 'Sanquhar in Focus' back home.

4 of the group have even enrolled to study photography at college in the coming year, and at least 1 has been encouraged to begin in an advanced course based on the quality of their portfolio. Seeing the group take such **pride in their work and responsibility** for their space in the art centre has even inspired Yvonne and the Artists to begin work organising a youth steering committee for A' the Airts as WWDN enters its second phase. Coulson and Tennant will be staying on to help develop a new **'digital hub'** for young people in Sanquhar interested in learning new digital skills to connect with others across the region.



4
enrolled
to study
photography
at college
since

SANQUHAR



WHAT
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CASTLE
DOUGLAS

CASE STUDY

CASTLE DOUGLAS

MOVEMENT AND PLAY

Promoting **health and wellbeing** is at the heart of the Castle Douglas Development Forum's (CDDF) community work, and they saw in WWDN an opportunity to develop new, creative ways to get local families active. At the same time, they felt that the arts had not received as much support in Castle Douglas in years past, so collaborating with The Stove would give them a chance to support the arts locally and build relationships with creative practitioners throughout the region. Working together with their embedded artists **Martin Danziger** and **Kiera Manson**, along with storyteller Luke Winters, CDDF combined creative and wellbeing activities by bringing the circus to town.

Throughout phase 1, their artists teamed up to organise workshops and classes with local primary school students, members of the public, and service users of several local organisations, like the Better Lives Partnership.





At these events, skills like **juggling, plate-spinning and balloon-modelling** became more than niche hobbies: the artists used them to create light-hearted and adaptable activities that everyone could participate in regardless of ability. Workshops with staff helped to show how they could use these skills in their own work to connect with service users and create events that would be both active and inclusive. For the artists as well, working in intense, hands-on workshops with community members provided ample experiences and challenges for developing their skills in performance and entertainment as tools for community engagement.

For the CDDF too, this new form of collaboration involved a number of challenges: how to find a balance between their clear vision for the project and the artists' desire for free rein; how to empower staff with less experience working with creative practitioners; how to adjust their strategies to achieve their long-term goals through creative placemaking.



For CDDF, the ability to discuss opportunities and difficulties with The Stove and in WWDN collective working sessions not only provided the support needed to deliver their WWDN project, but also prompted **new discussions** with the CDDF board. They began to discuss cultural and art events for the first time, as well as the possibility of a **community asset transfer** to establish a more permanent and present space for their community work; and when WWDN in Castle Douglas culminated with a large, well-attended Party in the Park, CDDF realised they had developed a new model and space for future outdoor activities beyond their current premises.

Through their experiments, challenges and lessons learned CDDF found new paths forward to combining creative placemaking and wellbeing in their future work.



“
We as a charity are becoming more and more engaged with a just transition to net zero and I think CP [Creative Placemaking] is going to be critical to that. We have been able to grow this through this project by talking to people with a deep understanding of topics like creative work, climate issues, and freelance artistry.

- Carolyn **”**



WHAT
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STRANRAER

CASE STUDY

STRANRAER

IDENTITY AND VISION

The Stranraer Millennium Centre has hosted bingo nights, performances, classes and other social activities for the local community for over a decade, but it entered uncharted waters as WWDN place hub when its resident artists **Hope London** and **Rory Laycock** proposed to create an original colouring book and song for Stranraer called 'What Could Happen Here'.

The project was not only a first foray into collaborating with resident artists for the Millennium Centre, but also an experiment in serving as a platform for discussion about the **town's future**. Using the story of the dilapidated George Hotel and other neglected local buildings, the artists launched an open and collective project to re-imagine the futures of these spaces and the town with members of the local community, joining and hosting workshops, recording sessions, and other participatory activities as well as numerous casual interactions and interventions throughout the town.



By fostering conversation and inspiration, the project had a **practical impact** as well: the results of the colouring book and exhibition were incorporated into a call for the use of art projects for community engagement by the local council. Others were motivated to get involved in other local activities, such as one young boy who joined the local radio after attending one of the WWDN recording sessions. Further afield, members of neighbouring communities who saw the colouring books were inspired to create something similar for themselves.

The project did not just **foster new visions** for Stranraer's future; it prompted new ideas about how to **contribute** to local communities in the present too.



“I now have a completely different outlook on the value of arts and culture in communities... a new-found respect. It has made me think about working with artists completely differently and opened my eyes to what it can achieve ... If you can change the mind of someone like me in a project like this, then that is saying a lot.

- Stephen



For the place hub and artists as well, the project offered an opportunity to expand their capacity to contribute to local communities. The **Millennium Centre** was able to use its recording studio for the first time when local people came in to record singing, bodhran drumming and their thoughts about the town as part of the **new song for Stranraer**. Thanks to outreach led by the artists, the Millennium Centre also developed new working relationships with other local groups beyond the project participants.



“
Hard to put in context how different things are ... as a result of [the artists'] outreach we now have more working links with community groups, unsure if these groups would naturally have come to M Centre

- Stephen

For the artists themselves, the WWDN project and network provided the opportunity to develop **new professional contacts** and **multimedia skills** through their collaborative work, and to reflect more deeply on their existing practice and the approaches, resources and support they would seek in future work.

Now going into phase 2 of WWDN, the Millennium Centre and their embedded artists are contributing to a new Capital Initiative to **regenerate the George Hotel** as a cultural space and promoting other community initiatives around town like the 'Unexpected Garden' creative workshop series.



The most important thing has been hopefully helping the community, and on a personal level there's legacy to being part of that, and on a business level being part of that conversation. Being in dialogue with different types of organisations, individuals ... [the] project has developed my understanding of my relationships, my values and what it means to be an artist today.

- Rory

WHAT WE DO NOW

LANGHOLM

CASE STUDY

LANGHOLM

OWNERSHIP AND VOICE

Outpost Arts works to support community wellbeing and regeneration in Langholm through creative and artistic practices, and their collaboration with community embedded artists **Jim Buchanan** and **Sian Yeshe** within WWDN became an opportunity to develop new, playful and sometimes unexpected channels for young people in the area to have a say in their community and to make it their own.

Through Yeshe's work exploring **film and filmmaking** with high school students through the Arts Bronze Award, the young participants developed new relationships and practical skills, founding a new 'Creative Leaders Group', leading events through the Chrysalis Studio and even helping to organise the first ever **Eskdale Pride** to celebrate the local LGBTQ+ community and diversity. Their small group of students found ways to build a new platform for their voices and those of others in the local community who had felt unseen.



Buchanan's work centred on using the concept of play to **reclaim and reanimate disused areas**: willow-weaving workshops, for instance, offered an opportunity for families to have fun together and use public space, but also served as spaces for making connections and conversations about how to reclaim more public space for families and young people.

Such dialogue, connecting the artist's knowledge of inventive playmaking with the local knowledge of community members, also offered an important way to recognise the greater possible impact of playing together: in moments when teachers pointed out students who had been going through difficult times now laughing with friends in a workshop, for instance, or asking for artist input into proposals to develop **more inclusive** school grounds.

Photo:
Natalya



Photo: Jim Buchanan

“
A community is made up of parts ... to be fully embedded into that, it's almost impossible, so [the artists] found a niche within that community and worked with that

- Kate



In Langholm, WWDN was a platform for an array of community members to make their voices heard—even though the variety of different voices and views could sometimes pose a challenge. Both the place hub leads and the artists brought distinct visions about how to engage the community and what groups to work with; it required **negotiation and adaptation**, but also enabled them to **clarify and refine** their strategies for contributing to the larger community.

Involvement in the WWDN project, and working with The Stove and Culture Collective has allowed Outpost to **form connections** between their creative wellbeing and health programmes and regional placemaking initiatives/strategies. The artists themselves have developed a close working partnership with the local XCEL Youth Project, which will join WWDN during the next phase as a place hub and expand its services to embed a culture programme for the first time. Through conversation with other members of the WWDN network and local partners, they found ways to build on their strengths and develop more ambitious plans for their work in the future.



“
[Sian and I] have learned how to work with each other, what our strengths are, how to complement each other; very much looking forward to working with each other through into the autumn. Looking forward to working with the Xcel youth club, while the conversation started sporadically, [I] can look back on it and see the thread over six months.

- Jim //



WHAT WE DO NOW

DUMFRIES

CASE STUDY



DUMFRIES

BELONGING AND PRIDE

LIFT D+G ('Lochside Is Families Together') is a social enterprise based in Lochside that aims to change attitudes and conversations about poverty through community engagement; tired of hearing misrepresentations of their home as a 'bad' place to live, LIFT D+G organise activities that invite community members to take **pride** in their home.

WWDN was LIFT D+G's first experience working with **embedded artists** long-term, and their initial vision of a light-touch, 'beautification' project around Dunlop Road was quickly upturned, and then surpassed, when their embedded artists got to work.



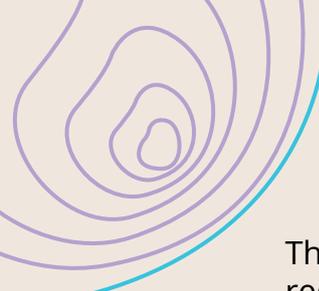
Working as a team, artists **Alice Francis, Rosie Giblin** and **Andy Brooke** brought together a sometimes unlikely combination of activities—portrait-drawing workshops and baked potatoes, a group excursion to the Taliesin community woodlands and stained glass—to build welcoming spaces for the residents of Dunlop Road to think creatively with them about what they wanted for their community.

In some cases, the artists supported local consultation processes, going door-to-door to encourage residents to come makes their voices heard—resulting in the area’s most well-attended consultation to date. In others, they listened to the concerns and interests of residents to launch new initiatives, to bring in new creative approaches to problems that felt entrenched.

“
At the beginning during consultation it was painted fences and tidying up the outside of flats, benches, spaces, flowerbeds etc. When we joined WWDN we thought artists would deliver on these things, instead the focus has been different. It’s nice to see how the ideas have been adapted to something different now that other people are asking the residents questions; instead of asking what OUR capacity is (benches, seating, flowerbeds), due to artists influence there is a more creative flair to the ‘ask’ and increased participation.

- Angie





These successes did not come about immediately: they required a long and uncertain process of question-asking and relationship-building, especially in the face of some initial reservations about their 'airy fairy' ideas for contributing to the local community.

Through **conversations, public space interventions** and **reflective experimentation**, the artists were able to use the project to link with local interest in a community art space with the idea of installing a 'portacabin' in a disused patch of lawn nearby. Their ambitious goal was to provide local residents a more enduring space to take ownership of. Negotiating the logistics and red tape required to secure planning permission was difficult and discouraging at times—and when the portacabin finally arrived, they realised it would require significant repairs before it could be used by the community. But this stands as their next big task going into phase 2, when they'd also like to expand the project to include residents from the wider area.

Collaborating with the DGHP local housing association, LIFT D+G will develop the portacabin into a **prototype creative placemaking hub** for Lochside to contribute to broader regeneration projects in the area, as a way to inspire residents to organise, work, play and think creatively themselves about what more they'd like for their community.



“
They talk about meeting people in the street now whom they didn't talk to before who they have met through our activities - increasing community spirit with the hope that at some point this will mean that the community is more galvanised for creative activism when it is needed (which I think it is).
”

- Alice