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**Crafts Network – An Overview and Observations from Cowbridge Old Hall, Tuesday 27th February 2018**

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| **An Overview:**Creative Rural Communities (CRC) is the rural regeneration team for the Vale the Glamorgan Council. We are funded by the Council and the Rural Development Plan for Wales, and can support the development of projects, ideas and networks under our five themes. Over the past few years, we have supported a number of craft initiatives ranging from craft business start-ups, exhibitions, pop-up events and more, and it has become apparent that craft professionals and enthusiasts across the Vale, share a desire to develop their crafts, increase their opportunities to exhibit, sell, teach and work, and may benefit from having a Craft Network to explore these opportunities and connect with like-minded people. This idea is also supported by the Vale of Glamorgan Council’s Arts Development Officer.The CRC Board have agreed to fund a short term exploration of this, this means that we are happy to host some initial meetings and kick start some conversations and connections, but won’t be able to host this indefinitely. We would however be more than happy to support the group take the next steps to formalising the network, and would welcome a funding application to help cover the initial costs of hosting and marketing the network for a preliminary period, and subsequent funding applications to get some new initiatives off the ground. However, this is of course early days and you may collectively decide that a network that meets in person is not the right way forward, or indeed the only way forward, and we would be equally happy to help the group explore a number of network ‘models’ and equally, if there is no desire to continue after the initial meetings then there is no obligation to do so. |

**Offers and opportunities mentioned at the meeting:**

**Special thanks to** [Vale Courses](http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/working/adult_and_community_learning/Vale-Courses/Adult-Learning-Vale-Courses.aspx) for the free use of the venue for the meeting. Here’s a quick reminder of what Vale Courses can do to support crafts:

* Run a variety of courses but always on the lookout for new courses and tutors.
* There is a Pop-Up-Shop at the Old Hall with an entrance on Cowbridge High Street, this can be hired at £13 per day.
* The Old Hall affords a light and spacious gallery area in the foyer and ground floor communal spaces, this includes wall space and a number of glass display cabinets, and new exhibition proposals are always welcome.
* Vale Courses offers a number of [short and one day courses](http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/working/adult_and_community_learning/Vale-Courses/Course-Search.aspx?s=vcs&Category=Computers+and+Photography&Area=Rural+Vale+-+Cowbridge+%2f+Llantwit+Major&Day=Select+Day) aimed at small businesses, such as Excel, Social Media, Photography & Photoshop to name a few.

**Rolant Tomos – Agora**

Rolant gave a brief talk about Agora which is a collaborative project supporting growers and makers across the Vale of Glamorgan and a number of counties in South Wales. Agora can support those using land based products in their crafts such as wool, wood and willow. The type of support includes:

* Knowledge Transfer
* Mentors
* Facilitators
* Workshops
* Study Tours
* Business Development Officer time
* Meet the Buyer events
* Developing your supply chain

For more information, please contact Rolant or see the Agora website. rolant.tomos@menterabusnes.co.uk

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**Chris Short and Ewart Schofiled - Twt Beech Tree Project**

Chris and Ewart gave a talk about the Twt Beech Tree project; a project that celebrates the life of a significant beech tree in the Cowbridge community that has had to be felled due to disease. The project will seek to engage with the local community, artists and crafts practitioners to use the wood to learn new skills, create sculptures and artworks, furniture and multiple other items. The project is calling for anyone who wishes to be involved or use some of the wood to get in touch. The project also hopes to host an open day or weekend to host workshops and demonstrations and raise the profile of the project, commission sculptures, and host an exhibition of works.

For more information, please see the project website: <http://thetwtbeech.org.uk/>

**Other noteworthy comments, opportunities and forthcoming events**

**Glyn Evans – ffoto Image –** Was on hand to take photographs of the networking evening and people’s crafts. These photographs will be available to promote the crafts network in the future and the work of CRC. Photos can be requested free of charge depicting individuals and their work to be used at their discretion.

**Giles Gallery –** Beth Giles came along to advise us that Giles Gallery in Pontyclun now has a dedicated workshop space to hire to run classes. Please see the gallery website for more information: <http://www.gilesgallery.com/workshops/>

**Between the Trees Festival –** This festival takes place in Candlestone Bridgend during the August bank holiday, and they are looking for crafts people to host workshops and sell their wares. Please see their website for more information: <https://betweenthetreesfestival.co.uk/>

**Cowbridge Arts Group –** Are exploring funding opportunities to update the display cabinets in Old Hall, these need painting and new lighting, and also seeking funding for promotional literature. Please get in touch if you would like to help:

[**Artist Exchange**](http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/enjoying/Arts-and-Culture/Artist-Exchange.aspx) is part of Arts Connect, an Art Development partnership between the Vale of Glamorgan, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend local authority areas. It provides the opportunity to connect, promote, share and celebrate your art practices both locally and regionally and further afield.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council offers a variety of business support and can also sign post you to further relevant support. Please see the [**Business Support webpages**](http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/working/Business-Support/Business-Support.aspx) for further information, there will also be a Business Start Up event at the end of January and we will circulate details of this when they are confirmed.

**Contact Us:**

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