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**Crafts Network – An Overview and Observations from Dyffryn Gardens, Thursday 30th November 2017**

**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:**

**Sally Perini** manages [Vale Courses](http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/working/adult_and_community_learning/Vale-Courses/Adult-Learning-Vale-Courses.aspx) which operates from the adult education centre in Old Hall in Cowbridge. She informed us of the following:

* Sally already employs a number of crafts tutors to run a variety of courses but is 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 pound a 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.

**Hannah Dineen** from Creative Rural Communities mentioned a number of forthcoming events and initiatives that might be of interest:

* Inspiring New Workspaces is an initiative looking at news ways of developing and using workspaces, including co-working spaces. You are invited to attend an event taking place on 17th January at St Donats Arts Centre from 17.30 – 20.00. Please follow the link for more details and booking information: <https://tinyurl.com/InspiringWorkspaces>
* Redundant Rural Buildings is a initiative looking at underused spaces which could be utalised as work spaces, this could be a redundant rural barn, an underused space in a pub or an underutalised community venue. If you are looking for space, or have an underused space, we invite you to complete this survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/redundantbuildings>

**Paul Bartlett** is a woodworker and has access to plenty of wood. Paul kindly offered to make wooden plinths for anyone wishing to display their crafts on plinths, he is not looking profit from this. Please contact CRC if you would like to be out in touch with Paul.

**Ian Fell** is a great ambassador for Llancarfan Church and urged all to visit it to see the medieval wall paintings, but also spoke of a deconsecrated church in Eglwys Brewis which has many crafts connections; including a history with William Morris. Ian is working with a group to explore the possibility of this becoming a crafts hub in time which may include opportunities to sell, exhibit, teach and learn crafts.

**Rose Revera** has recently launched [House Martin Media](https://www.housemartinmedia.com/) which has developed a number of local craft professional websites. Please contact Rose if you would like to discuss your website with her.

**Karen Davies** from [St Donats Arts Centre](http://www.stdonats.com/) sent her apologies, but asked us to pass on that the gallery at the centre sometimes has availability and she would welcome conversations about possibly new exhibitions. Also, the Arts Centre would be interested in developing a programme of crafts workshops, we can explore this at subsequent meetings, but please contact Karen in the meantime if you wish.

**Others commented** on the need for some quality control and definition relating to ‘crafts’, feeling that craft fairs were all too often filled with items made from kits or pre-fabricated components;

That crafters at the Vale Show for example, weren’t representative of the local crafts, and this may be due to prohibitive costs or difficulty getting selected;

That craft in the Vale could have a greater presence and be on a par with West Wales for instance, celebrating a wealth of quality products through events, shows and workshops;

That artists could be considered as illustrators for a publisher that was present, if anyone interested in offering their services, please let us know and we can put you in touch;

That a closed Facebook group could be set up for crafters to share ideas and opportunities, whilst we appreciate that this wont suit everyone, we are happy to facilitate this to see if it gains any interest, we will keep you posted regarding this;

That public liability insurance is prohibitive for part time crafters who want to do an occasional event or stall, any thoughts on this would be gratefully received!

**Other noteworthy opportunities and forthcoming events**

[**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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