

NO WATER =

NO LIFE

NO BLUE

NO GREEN

A DOCUMENT OF CONVERSATIONS ABOUT WATER,
SUSTAINABILITY, COMMUNITY & CLIMATE ON ST HELENS ROAD,
CASTLE WARD SWANSEA

Led and developed by Owen Griffiths for Natural Resources Wales

CONTEXT

Clear Streams is a long running project started in 2013. It was created to address the need to humanise the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and therefore to connect communities to their use of water and to develop greater awareness of natural resources and shifting climate needs.

The overall objective of the project is that the streams, rivers, lakes, and sea in Swansea should be clean, healthy, and free from pollution; and that the provision of services from the water environment is optimised.

Clear Streams seeks to take an integrated approach to managing water quality, tackling pollution at source as well as driving forward a softer agenda aimed at raising people's awareness of and sensitivity to the environment. A mix of community and education-based activities with water related themes has taken place as part of Clear Streams, but this project wanted to engage with a more diverse range of people.

In 2019 artist Owen Griffiths was commissioned to work with communities in the Castle Ward of Swansea to explore how communities responded to the ideas of Clear Streams in relation to place, diversity, community, and sustainability.

Owen Griffiths is a socially engaged artist who works locally and internationally but lives in Swansea. He was commissioned by Clear Streams /Natural Resources Wales to initiate creative conversations and to consult with the community in and around St Helens Road. He brought in Creative Producer Isabel Griffin as a collaborator on the project. Griffiths and Griffin have a track record of delivering projects in community arts and community research /consultation working with HM Prisons, Social Services and Asylum and Refugee communities in Wales and beyond.

**'No water, no life,
no blue, no green'**

Sylvia Earl - we used this quote for the project as part of our project branding

The brief was to raise awareness of water quality issues, to stimulate public participation in the promotion of a healthier and cleaner environment for the benefit of people, communities, and wildlife, and to communicate the importance of sustainable urban drainage systems.

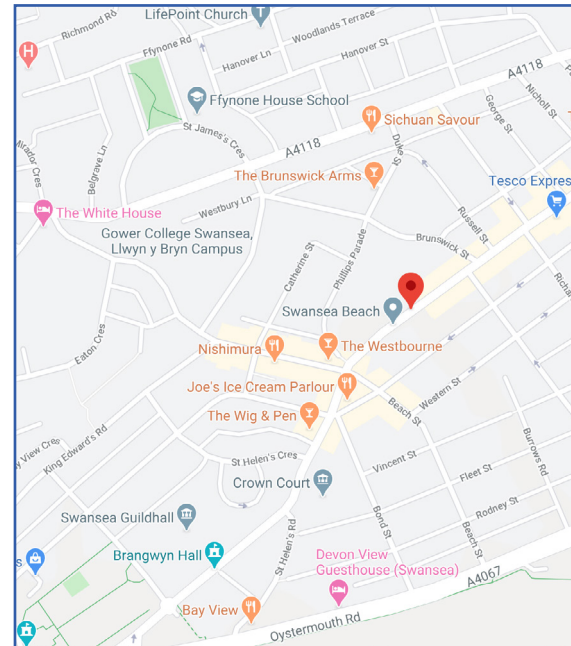
Underpinning the brief and subsequent conversations was the premise that everyone, wherever they live, has the right to a clean and healthy water environment.

LOCATION

St Helens Road is an arterial route adjacent to the city centre and is Swansea's most demographically diverse residential neighbourhood in terms of age, heritage, culture, and language. It sits within Castle Ward and is the 4th most deprived LSOA in Swansea (of 148) and 23rd (of 1,909) in Wales.

It has a rich mix of social service and healthcare provision, and of commercial and retail use spanning the day and night time economies. It is a place of work, worship, shopping, and leisure for people throughout the city and is widely acknowledged locally as a critical street in terms of the cultural identity of the town. It is a thriving centre and an alternative to the failing model of the city centre high street. Its mixed use with cultural, spiritual, and economic diversity, make it a significant community resource.

The street suffers from under investment. All city centre regeneration efforts and developments stop at the YMCA at the East end of the street and there has been little investment in environmental improvement or engagement with the adjacent local communities.



COMMUNITY CONSULTATION OR TALKING TOGETHER...

Serendipity enabled a highly visible, large-scale community conversation to take place in a street party being held on St Helen's Road to celebrate Swansea's 50th birthday as a city.

Whilst we were interested in gathering ideas around green spaces, sustainability, green infrastructure, SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems) and other green related ideas and terminology, we know that this is often an off-putting beginning to engaging people in the wider ideas of empowerment when thinking of climate change and 'place' and what we might do together in a local context like St Helens Road.

- gathering ideas through community dialogue on the future of St Helens Road as a green space,
- exploring water and other natural resources in connection to community and urban landscapes,
- as a city with a huge rainfall, looking at how we might use this natural and free resource, and
- on community voices and empowering people to think about natural resources and the connection between regeneration, community, and sustainability.

We used placards and different languages that are spoken locally including Mandarin, Bengali, Arabic and Welsh. There are up to 20 local languages spoken at the local primary school.

"It was great to volunteer to be part of the day, engaging people in conversations around climate, water usage and how they connect to these things. It was so important to have different languages present in the signage and visuals connecting to the local community and to explore the statistics and statements - they really started some in depth dialogues and what I hope will be a longer-term dialogue between Owen and the community. "

Local volunteer
Leonie Ramondt

Royal Society of Arts Fellowship Councillor & Chair of Swansea Co-Housing

“My dream is to capture the water we use at the mosque for watering the garden. I’m just learning through this project about grey water systems, SUDS, and the ideas of recycling water - where I come from we value and look after resources like water carefully and in Wales where it rains so much there must be a better way of achieving a more sustainable system.”

Elly Herminawati,
Swansea Mosque Community Garden



EVERYONE HAS
THE RIGHT TO
CLEAN WATER

#clearstreams

MAE GAN BAWB
YR HAWL I
DDŴR GLÂN

#clearstreams

75% OF THE
HUMAN BRAIN
IS WATER
75% OF A LIVING
TREE IS WATER

#clearstreams

人类大脑75%是水
活着的树75%是水

#clearstreams

MORE TREES
GREEN ROOFS
PARKS
& PONDS!

#clearstreams

MWY O GOED
TOEAU
GWYRDD
PARCIAU
& PYLLAU!

#clearstreams

THERE'S NO
SUCH THING AS
NEW WATER!

#clearstreams

从来没有新的水源

#clearstreams

80% OF WATER
COLLECTED FOR
HOUSEHOLDS IS
DONE BY
WOMEN AND
GIRLS

#clearstreams

٨٠.٥٪ من المياه
التي يتم جمعها للأسر
تقوم بها النساء
والفتيات

#clearstreams

TREES ARE
HEROES!
1 TONNE OF
CARBON
CAPTURED BY
THE AGE OF 40

#clearstreams

٦. الأشجار أبطال!
فهي تحتجز طناً من
الكربون عند عمر
الأربعين

#clearstreams

NO WATER
NO LIFE
NO BLUE
NO GREEN

#clearstreams

٧. لا ماء
لا حياة
لا أزرق
لا أخضر

#clearstreams

LET'S STOP
PUMPING
CLEAN USABLE
WATER AWAY

#clearstreams

PAID Â PWMPIO
DŴR GLÂN
Y GELLIR EI
DDEFNYDDIO
I FFWRDD

#clearstreams

1L OF WATER
CAN BE MORE
EXPENSIVE
THAN 1L OF
PETROL

#clearstreams

٩. قد يكون اللتر من
الماء أغلى من لتر
الوقود

#clearstreams

THE AVERAGE
ROOF COLLECTS
85,000 LITRES OF
RAIN IN A YEAR

#clearstreams

١٠. يجمع متوسط
السقف ٨٥,٠٠٠ لتراً
من مياه الأمطار في
السنة

#clearstreams

PROJECT AMBASSADORS FOR ST HELENS RD CLIMATE TALKS



We put together an all-female panel to discuss Clear Steams, water usage and what climate change means in local communities. Over 500 people stopped to engage with us and the project, and many people gathered to hear the talks and ask questions.

Gloria Gianbartolomei is a Phd Researcher in Participatory & Place-based Natural Resource Management at Centre for Agroecology and Water Resilience, at Coventry University. Gloria's research (a co-funded project between Welsh Government, Well-being of Future Generation Office and Coventry University) investigates the ways in which collaborative forms of natural resource planning, management and ownership are currently being pursued in Wales and with what effect. It reviews the contribution of place-based initiatives to building sustainable, resourceful and resilient relationships between people and their surrounding natural resource base.

Egija Cinovska is Swansea's Young Carers Project Coordinator and a Youth Ambassador to the UN. She is based at YMCA Swansea and works in community support and project development.

Sofia De la Rosa is Research Fellow at the Centre for Agroecology and Water Resilience with a particular interest in water justice. Her research interests include environmental history, political ecology and environmental justice. More specifically, she is interested on how inequalities are expressed in both society and space, particularly through water.

Elly Herminawati is a local resident and the Chair of the Ellipse foundation, a local charity. Elly has been leading the development of a new community green space at the front of the mosque, working to plant trees, install benches, raised beds and other resources for the local community.

Fran Rolfe (Swansea Environment Team, Natural Resources Wales) Urban regeneration and green infrastructure are Fran's passions. When combined with genuine community involvement, not traditional consultation, these are powerful tools for good, addressing health & wellbeing, adapting to and mitigating climate change and, more importantly, addressing the ecological emergency we face.





“I hadn’t thought about ethical water use before and how the local and global is all connected. The fact that there is no new water is obvious when you think about it but it really brings it home”

Local resident

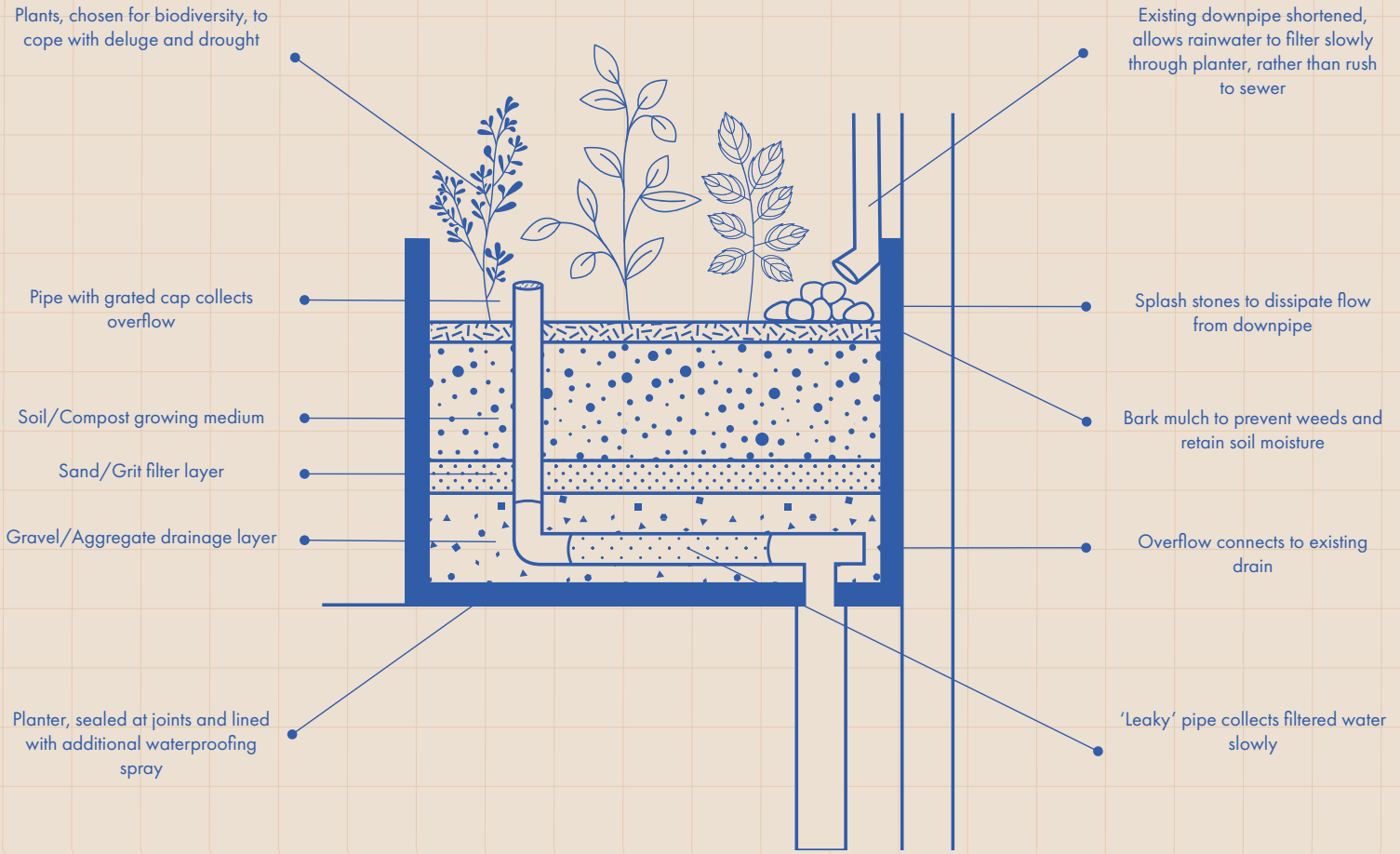
“Talking about natural resources and collective stewardship allows people to come up with their own ideas and builds relationships between institutions and communities”

Gloria Giambartolomei
Centre for Agroecology and Water Resilience



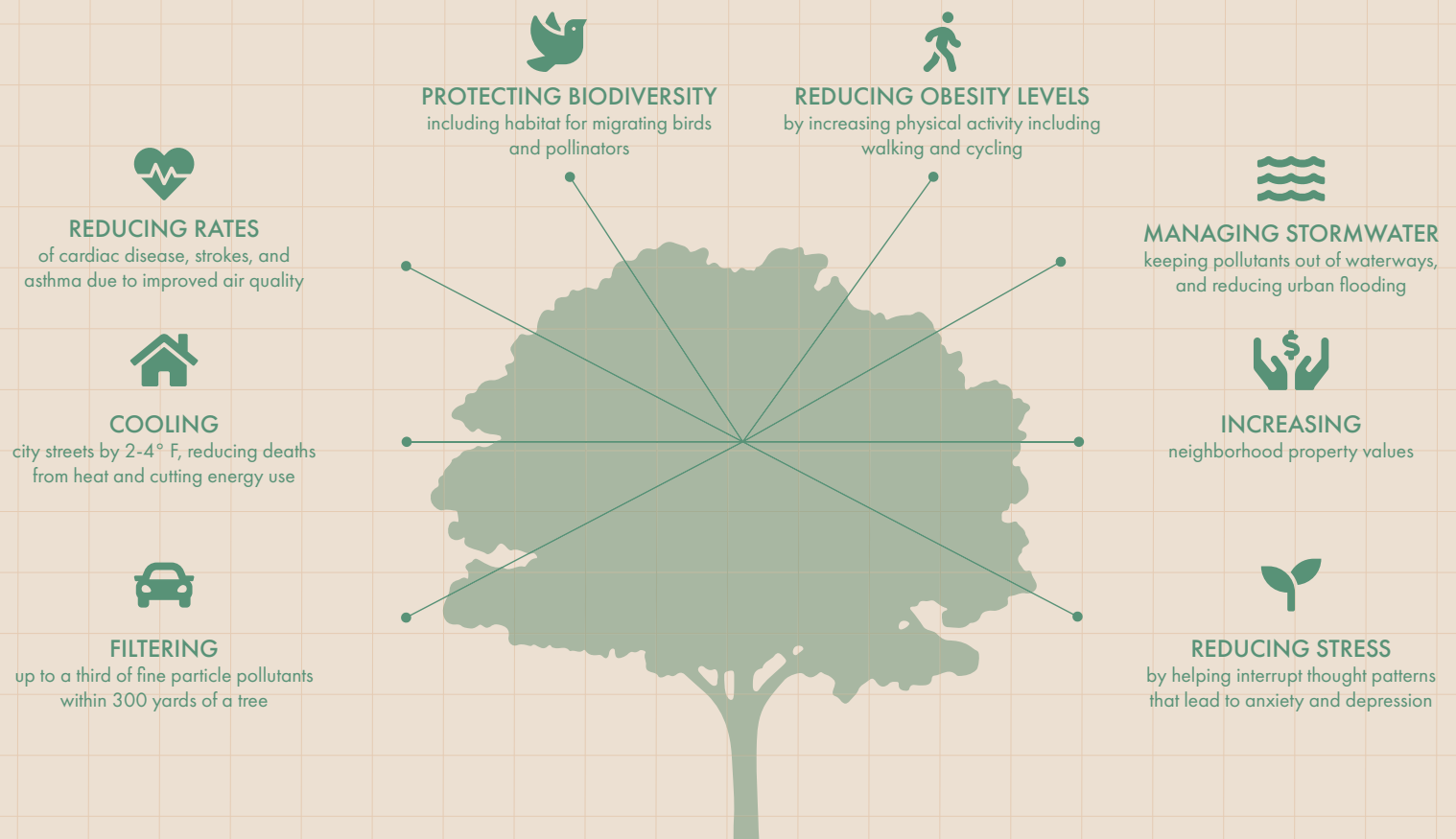
CROSS-SECTION OF A RAIN GARDEN PLANTER

Raised planters are useful SuDS solutions if space is tight, or ground conditions don't allow water to soak away. They can be built over existing surfaces as long as there is a plan for an overflow, if necessary - excess water can continue into the existing system, as before.



BENEFITS OF URBAN TREES

Research has linked the presence of urban trees to ...



FINDINGS

The interest in the conversation and the willingness to contribute was very strong. At times there were so many people wanting to participate that we were unable to fully capture their contributions. However, we did record many different responses and these frequently covered overlapping areas of concern, shared ideas and suggestions for improvements, use of the street and potential changes and similar understanding of environmental issues in an urban setting. Combined, the views and ideas represent an overwhelming desire for a biophilic street.

WHAT IS A BIOPHILIC STREET?

Biophilic urbanism has emerged as a way to bring nature more purposefully into cities, not just between buildings and infrastructure, but into and onto them in ways that increase the connectivity between people and nature and derive benefits from natural services and functions

<https://sustainableearth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s42055-020-00027-0>



“The generation that destroys the environment is not the generation that pays the price. That is the problem.”

Wangari Maathai

GOOD

This IS the high street / lots of independent businesses/ many different uses / good cheap food /best restaurants, barbers, fruit & veg /diversity - multicultural and multi -ethnic/ friendly / community / community organisations / City of Sanctuary - refugees and asylum seekers/ great history

BAD

Untidy and neglected / disrepair - buildings, roads, and pavements /dirty and littered / parking / more student housing/ Tesco - the arrival of a chain store / lack of green spaces and resources/ lack of benches & green spaces

BIOPHILIC
ST CREATED
WITH AND
FOR THE
LOCAL
COMMUNITY

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Tackle the dead spaces/ more green space and trees/ urban bees and bee line / green corridor/ planting for pollution / grow veg & herbs/ urban foraging / wildlife planting & boxes / vertical gardens/ flowers for colour / rooftop gardens/ window boxes & planters / rain gardens/ rainwater collection / water fountains / fruit trees and bushes/ community energy / wind turbine / solar panels/ ponds / water butts for local households/ improve frontages / front gardens in surrounding streets/ green islands for traffic calming/ connect to the beach

BUILT/SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT & ACCESS

More colourful buildings/ repairs/ shop signs / flags/ open churches / public & street art / make it beautiful/ more recycling bins & less packaging/ bin stores/ pedestrian access – wider pavements / wheelchair & mobility access/ social and communal space/ play space/ street furniture and social seating - benches, chairs & tables / urban drainage / creative community spaces/ food street market and festivals/ sensitive development / traffic restrictions / traffic calming - green islands, speed bumps/ road surfacing for shared access/ pedestrian priority/ improve for cyclists - cycle lane and bike racks/ more police presence

OTHER CONVERSATIONS

LOCAL: Before and after the street party Griffiths and Griffin spoke with a number of community organisations and businesses on St Helens Road. Again, the conversations were positive and chimed with the public/community desire to build upon the social and economic vibrancy and diversity of the neighbourhood and to translate that into action for environmental improvement in a rounded and sustainable way.

Those consulted included, YMCA, Young Carers Project, MIXTUP Family Housing Association (Swan Gardens), Swansea Mosque, Ellipse Foundation, Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team (EYST Wales) and several local businesses.

CITY: Ward Councillors, Swansea Council Cultural Services Team, Highways Department, Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, National Waterfront Museum, 4 the Region, Swansea Bay Food Partnership

FUTURE: Some of these conversations have continued and broadened into a plan for grassroots and regenerative change facilitated by Griffin and Griffiths. They have identified a multi stakeholder and community partnership project as a way of developing the next stages of this conversation. 'Re-rooting St Helens' is the working title for this project.

Together Owen and Isabel will work with Taliesin Arts Centre/ Swansea University, Natural Resources Wales and others as key strategic partners in the delivery of this project. It will be developed further in 2020/21 and be facilitated by Ways of Working, a new social enterprise set up by Griffiths in 2020.

OTHER KEY PROJECT CONNECTIONS & DIALOGUES...

John Little Grass Roof Co

We had skype conversations with John around the feasibility of utilising tree pits, existing structures such as bus stops, verges, planters and what would be considered low maintenance alterations to existing features as well as more long term and next phase solutions.

CAWR Centre for Agroecology Water Resilience, Coventry University

Owen participated at workshops and presented his practice at CAWR in 2019 and since then has been working with Gloria Giambartolomei on projects such as Skyline in the Rhondda Valley and Art Gene in Cumbria. Gloria and colleagues at CAWR have become collaborators and critical friends to Owen's practice and will help inform future works.

Site visits and meetings were also held with the Imam of Swansea Mosque and the community to discuss the potential Trial Project. We also met with Cultural Partnership Officer Kate Wood & Highways Officer Bob Fenwick of Swansea City Council as well as local councillors Sybil Crouch and David Phillips.

NEXT STEPS

TRIAL PROJECT : Swansea Mosque To begin work in 2020

Based on the consultation, we feel there is a firm basis to begin building an ambitious community developed project at street level which responds to the feedback gathered. Most of this focused on looking to green and sustainable solutions for the future regeneration of an urban environment, which holds community, social action and participatory methodologies at its core. Considering this, we want to deliver a sustainable green street which speaks to our collective sustainable futures as a whole, while focusing on community led design processes at a local level. Our starting point will be a number of capital works, which provide small scale examples of community led green infrastructure that aids in the slowing of water wastage, creating more porous and green surfaces, or finding new uses for that water.

Griffiths and Griffin are currently developing this next stage of works with Fran Rolfe.



Research group at Swan Gardens

PHASE 2: RE-ROOTING ST HELENS

POTENTIAL

We believe in the potential of the project to realise a unique, community vision working inclusively in partnership with organisations, businesses and community. Facilitated through culture and sustainability as lenses to connect people to their local environments and to ask what could be here and how could it look? The project has the potential to facilitate opportunities for younger people to take an active role in shaping their urban environment.

St Helens is a key economic and cultural street in Swansea (and Wales). It is an important hub within the communities of the Sandfields, Castle Ward and serves a huge cross section of people in Swansea. It is a critical space in terms of vibrancy, social life, cultural offer and diversity. It is home to a mixture of places for religious worship (including the main mosque), older people's housing, an iconic ice cream parlour, student housing, a nursery, social care providers, the Masonic Lodge, YMCA, various charities, barber shops, restaurants, world food markets, medical centres and so on.

There has historically been a lack of investment and infrastructure on this key street and we see Re-rooting as an opportunity to inform the next steps of community-led regeneration. As Swansea celebrates 50 years as a City we want to propose a rethinking of the street as a series of interconnected green community spaces for the next 150 years. Inspiring a new community vision which challenges the typical approaches to both consultation and regeneration.

COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

Essential to this work is a commitment to work with methodologies of collaboration, facilitation and co-authorship in a very real way that prioritises democratic structures and transparency. We want to grow collaborative partnerships through relationships with young people, residents, and businesses, and together make a structure in which validates everyone's ideas. Re-rooting seeks to be a jargon-free project where terminology such as green infrastructure, urban design, SUDs (sustainable urban drainage systems), can be normalised and made accessible and reflective of people's real-life concerns. Local distinctiveness and prioritising diverse voices are essential to the working methods of this proposal.

FUNDING AND FUTURE

We believe that we have a good case for a mandate to progress this project. Our research showed us that people want change of the kind we are proposing and are keen for it to happen. We have begun exploring potential funding possibilities, but this needs further work and would form a part of the next stage of the R&D. The impact of Covid-19 will need to be factored into the development and delivery of the project and will also alter funding priorities for awarding bodies.

The climate crisis is one of the most urgent and crucial issues in the UK public agenda but the representation of BAME climate experts invited to add their voices and perspectives in the media, at climate conferences, and working groups is desperately lacking.... The environmental movement in the UK needs to reflect the political and social realities facing BAME communities. We want to give a platform to BAME environmentalists who propose both strategies and solutions for dealing with the climate crisis. This platform will help create a pathway towards more BAME expertise and perspectives in the media.

<https://climaterereframe.co.uk>

AIMS

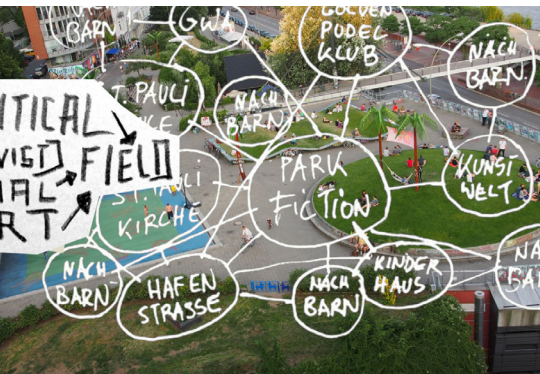
- To put focus on green infrastructure solutions, sustainable placemaking and alternative forms of urban regeneration
- To create an anti-gentrification-based project of working with collaboration and co-authorship at its core
- To reflect the needs of a shifting climate and a local community
- To explore inclusive participatory methodologies, partnerships and facilitation in relation to an urban community project
- To be radically inclusive and a case study for future community partnership work
- To explore a collective response to building sustainable futures and tackling climate change in everyday life
- To initiate opportunities for people living and working in St Helens Road and the surrounding area to co-design public spaces and infrastructure.

OBJECTIVES

- To build upon and develop local partnerships around this core vision
- To facilitate community social gatherings to implement the project's progression
- The development of capital works, including water recycling & rain harvesting systems at Swansea Mosque, roadside planting interventions, greening of bus roof shelters and community built bike and bin shelters with green roofs and habitat creation.



INSPIRATIONAL MODELS



PARK FICTION, HAMBURG

'Designed by the residents, it is located with a view over the harbour, in a significant and beautiful place, that the city's government wanted to sell to private investors. A costly building was planned here originally, but the neighbourhood stopped the development in 1997. After ten years of struggles the park was inaugurated in 2005.

Production of Desires in the Urban Field. The plans were stopped by a clever Network in the community. Instead of just protesting against the government's plans, this network organised a Parallel Planning Process in the community, creating Platforms of Exchange between people from different cultural fields: musicians, priests, a headmistress, a cook, café owners, bar-men, a psychologist, children, squatters, artists – Interventionist Residents.'

CIVIC SQUARE BIRMINGHAM

'A bold approach to visioning, building, and investing in civic infrastructure for neighbourhoods of the future:

1. Public Square: a vibrant home to collectively owned and built 21st Century civic and social infrastructure; a place to gather, make, create, grow, organise, play and connect.
2. Neighbourhood Economics Lab: an experimental social lab, focused on exploring, experimenting, testing, and building resilient, regenerative neighbourhoods; rooted locally and connected globally through partners and projects.
3. Creative + Participatory Ecosystem: a connected, collaborative, and open platform, shaping our everyday experiences by placing creativity and participation at their heart.'

civicsquare.cc/about



PROJECT SKYLINE

is a feasibility study that is looking at the possibility of communities managing the landscape that surrounds their town or village. What would happen if we handed to local people the means to shape their own environment? Not the current piecemeal approach, a small patch of woodland for a few years, but hundreds of hectares for hundreds of years - to the "skyline". What might a community choose to do with the land if it could plan not for the three years of a Lottery grant but for three generations? Create jobs from forestry? Support small-holdings or food projects? Improve public access? Support wildlife? Or a combination of ideas and more besides. Project Skyline is seeking to answer these questions. We will be working with three communities in the Valleys - Treherbert, Ynysowen, and Caerau - as well as all of the key stakeholders such as NRW, and the Local Authority, to understand whether and how land that is currently publicly managed could be managed by a local community.

skyline.wales/about

BIOGRAPHIES



OWEN GRIFFITHS

Owen is an artist and consultant. He is an experienced workshop leader and facilitator using participatory processes to empower communities and explore collaborative working methods. Working through socially engaged art practice, community development and consultancy, he looks at how art, creativity and collaboration can create new frameworks, resources and systems.

Owen is a former British Council Fellow working with artists and community growing networks in California specifically the LA Community Garden Council, Fritz Haeg, Edible Schoolyard Network & Binta Ayofemi. He was the 2016 Creative Wales Ambassador for the Arts Council of Wales for his work in placemaking, community development and regeneration. He has developed projects and been a consultant to National Museum Wales, Natural Resources Wales, Housing Associations, National Trust, HM Prison Services, Liverpool John Moores University, Manchester Whitworth Gallery. He is artist in residence with Art Gene in Cumbria, associate artist to TALIESIN Arts Centre at Swansea University and PEAK art in the Black Mountains where he is leading a community program with the Canal and River Trust. He is the founder director of Ways of Working.

ISABEL GRIFFIN

Isabel has 30 years' experience of working across the voluntary and statutory sectors in roles relating to: social and cultural justice, co-operative education and facilitation, creative and cultural participation, community engagement and inclusion, research, evaluation and policy development.

These varied but overlapping roles have enabled her to develop a rich and extensive skill set. Her freelance practice is holistic and she works across different disciplines combining Creative Production, Project Management, Community Engagement and Legacy, Evaluation and Social Policy. Isabel works as a creative producer with artist Marc Rees on multi platform large and small scale projects, with Owen on research projects and socially engaged works and is developing other work in community settings across the UK. and Europe.

WAYS OF WORKING is a new emerging social enterprise, not for profit company set up by Owen Griffiths in 2020 in response to climate, community and projects like Re-rooting St Helens. Its a company interested in collaboration, empowerment and social justice based in Swansea. WoW are currently working with the Community Rail Partnership, Transport for Wales to install systems of green infrastructure with community groups, setting up a local seed bank and are working with Ysgol y Bannau in Brecon to develop an educational landscape project.

PREPARED FOR NATURAL RESOURCES WALES BY
OWEN GRIFFITHS & ISABEL GRIFFIN
2020

www.aboutreconnection.com
www.waysofworking.org