

WOVEN PLACES

Yr Afon Llynfell

yn rhedeg i mewn i'r Afon Tawe.

Yn fy meddwl i ..y siap

fel ffon ddewino.

DIALOGUES IN PLACE

BASED IDENTITY



JUNE 2026

**EVERY RIVER IS MORE THAN
JUST A RIVER. EVERY ROCK
IS MORE THAN JUST ONE
ROCK.**

GREIDER & GARKOVICH, 1994

SUMMARY METHOD

This report details the methodology, execution, and emergent outcomes of Woven Places (Lleoedd Gwehyddu), a cross-disciplinary community engagement pilot delivered in Cwm Tawe Uchaf (the Upper Tawe Valley) by the eco-cultural consultancy Landed Futures CIC on behalf of the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority (BBNPA). Funded under the auspices of the UK National Commission for UNESCO's Local to Global (L2G) programme, this project sought to understand the extent to which landscape designations generate value within their host communities. Specifically, the pilot explores whether the formal Geopark designation and its definitions reflect something of deep, multi-layered value within the community's own sense of identity.

Part of the United Nations, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) is a specialised agency dedicated to promoting global peace and security through international cooperation in education, science, culture and communication. As part of this global remit, the UNESCO UK Local to Global (L2G) initiative is designed to test innovative, scalable approaches that connect local heritage to global goals with the aim of building resilient, adaptive networks capable of tackling intersecting crises. In Wales, this asks us to explore how global designations—such as Global Geoparks or Biosphere Reserves—can become active platforms for regional empowerment and community well-being.

Woven places was the Fforest Fawr Geoparks response to this initiative. A pilot approach to creative cartography using locally sourced materials to generate a form of map of the landscape through the landscapes eyes. On one level, the pilot sought to understand the extent to which the formal Geopark designation and its definitions reflect the community's own understanding of self. At its heart, the pilot was designed to hold space for conversations about local identity and connection to place. The project was delivered across two interconnected 're-membering' phases*:-

PHASE I

The Interdisciplinary Walkshops:

Over several weeks, community members took part in four immersive walks across

*Based on Alistair McIntosh's Rubric of Regeneration as defined through Community led land reform on the Isle of Eigg. McIntosh theorises to reclaim physical space, a community must first reclaim its inner capacity for self-definition. McIntosh structured this process around three deeply interconnected phases—the 3Rs: Re-membering (gathering the fragmented dismembered stories of place) Re-visioning (co-creating alternative futures outside top-down parameters) and Re-claiming (calling back the soul of place through active stewardship). Landed assert that the Woven Places activity began a remembering phase of work - that is Re-membering is the act of putting the members of community back together. It involves looking honestly at the layers of local history, gathering oral testimonies, and speaking truths that have been buried or silenced the goal of which is to heal "intergenerational trauma" and dismantle self-blame by restoring a community's pride in its shared, native heritage.

distinct geographies of Cwm Tawe Uchaf (Coelbren, Abercraf, Craig y Nos, and Ystradgynlais). Led by Geoparc Officer Alan Bowering alongside field ecologists, botanists, and local historians, tourism specialists etc etc, these walks blended scientific and social history asserting that every participant was their own expert on their relationship with place and its meaning to them. Creative prompts were provided to support participants explore this relationship. Generated outputs were then curated by Landed Futures into conversation openers for the workshop phase.

PHASE II

The Miners Welfare Workshop:

On the 16th April 2026, these field insights were synthesised during a public drop-in event at the Ystradgynlais Miners Welfare Hall. The space was pre-populated with five frame looms. Four looms carried key outcomes from the walkshop sessions. The looms themselves were strung with a structural warp of handspun Welsh wool sourced from sheep within the Geopark. The fifth, larger loom represented the wider valley scale. Visitors were invited to use this to capture their responses to the room. Throughout the session, the bare warp was transformed as poem cards, weavings, photographs, and words patterned the community identity through a dense layering of voices.

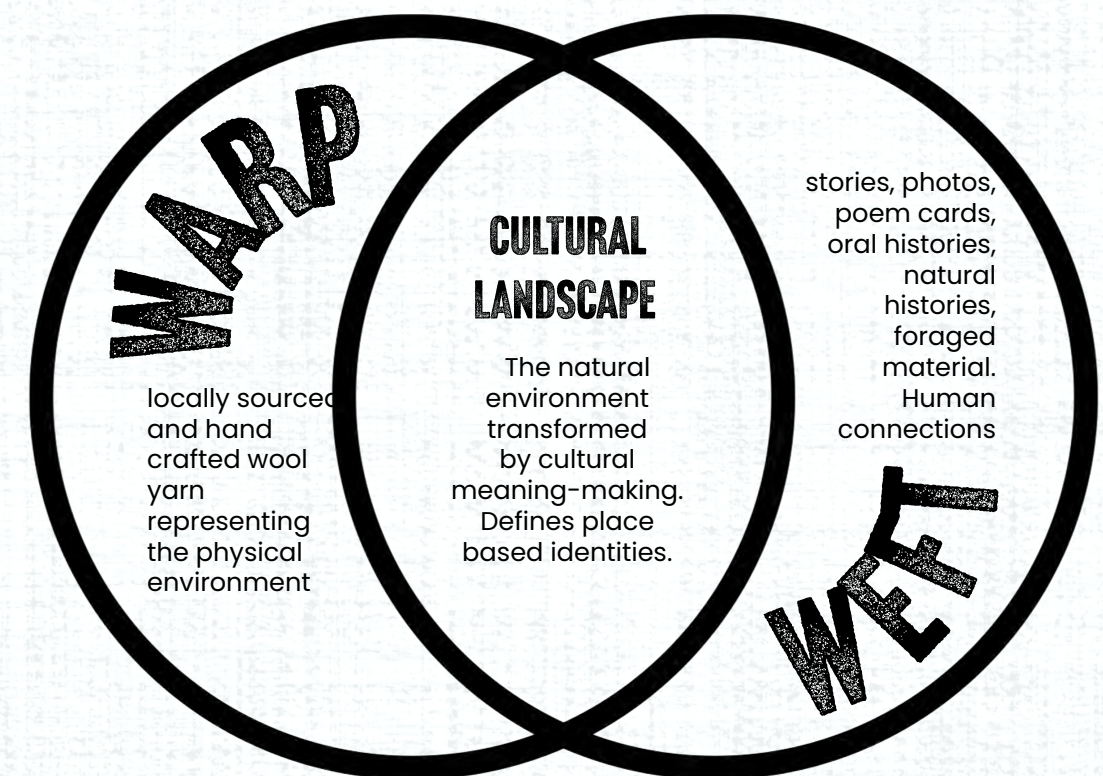


fig 1 - co-production model

SUMMARY FINDINGS

The landscape of cwm tawe uchaf is multiple, multilayered and culturally constructed

How people responded to place was dependent upon their existing connections. Those connections layered the landscape with meaning which in turn altered the perception of place.

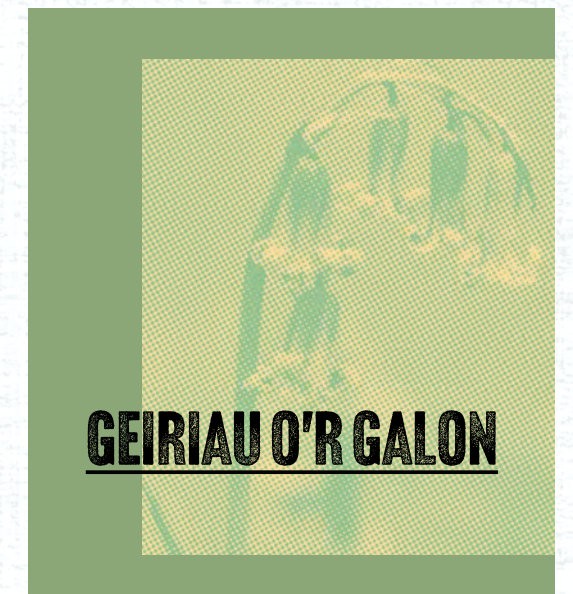
The Ystrad I know as someone who has lived here for less than 20 years is a totally different Ystrad to those known by people who have lived here all their lives. They see the layers of the past in the landscape, it is a much darker experience, I just see the surface which is greener in so many ways

walk participant



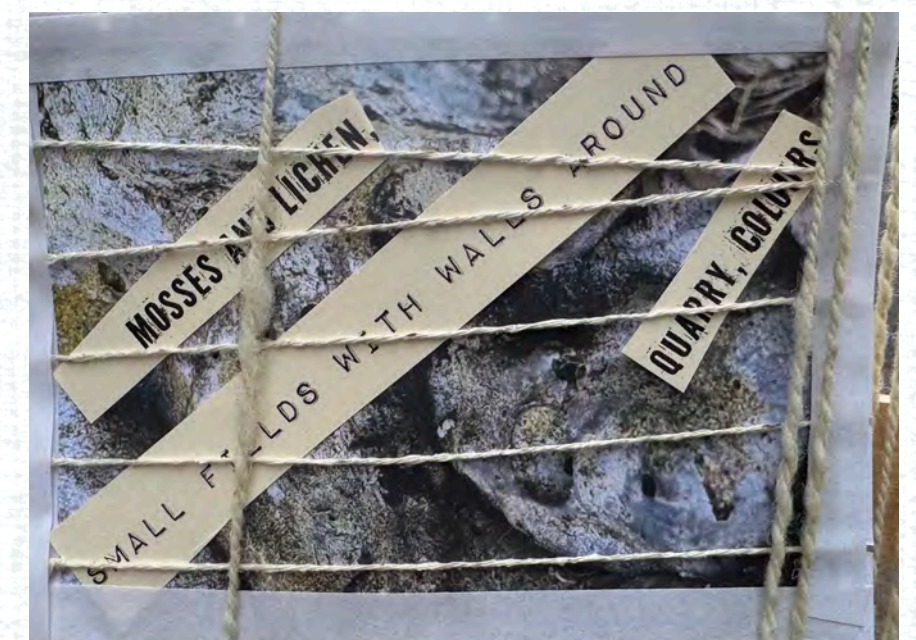
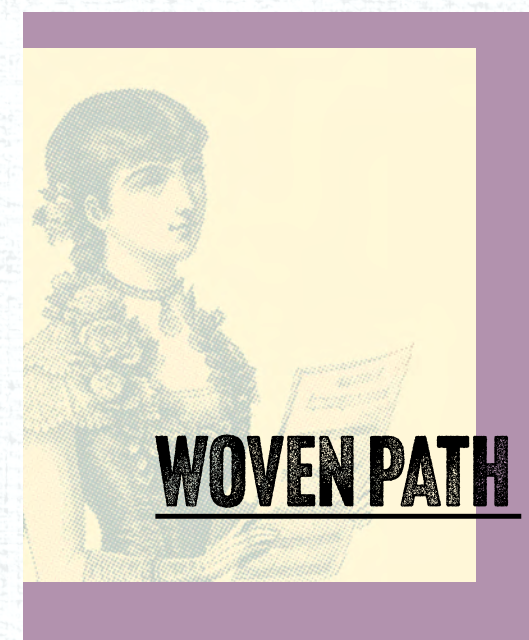
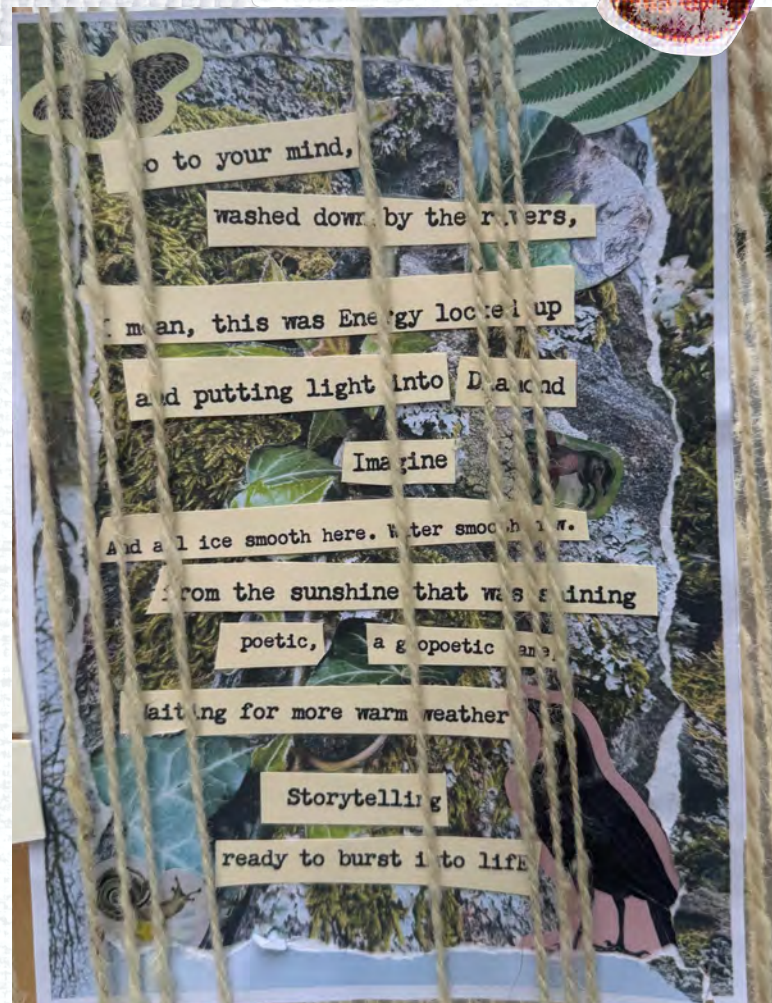
The Geopark designation seeks to conserve and enhance many of the same elements of cultural heritage which underly the communities sense of place.

Building on the intersection as well as exploring differences will allow the further development of trust and value between the designation and the designees.



Creative 'geopoetic' engagement methods made visible intangible connections.

Despite some reluctance from one or two participants the more creative elements of the programme generated a range of tangible responses to place which otherwise would not have been visible. This making visible allowed many participants to reflect on their time in the landscapes and generate novel outcomes in enjoyable, suprising and rewarding ways.



SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation I – Transform the existing woven images into a touring exhibition across public hubs along the Cwm Tawe floor to act as prompt for wider conversations about the Geopark designation's value to the community.

Recommendation II: Continue to gather geopoetic responses from the community using the woven places method, explore and expand their reach to develop a dialogic understanding of the area. Celebrate the artistry of the contributors and their unique perspectives contribution.

Recommendation III: Continue to evolve the governance model of the Geopark Management Board to explore how the re-membering activities can make way for more active phases of regeneration (re-visioning and re-claiming).



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