ADRODDIAD CYFLEOEDD

EICH SIR GÂR CHI

OPPORTUNITIES REPORT

PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

4theRegion PRESENTS...

IT'S YOUR CARMARTHENSHIRE

COLLABORATE
SHOWCASE
CONNECT

A positive conversation for people and businesses

On 11th July 2024, 200 people from the businesses, organisations and communities of Carmarthenshire came together at Parc Y Scarlets for a special event: **It's Your Carmarthenshire**. Convened by 4theRegion, this independent event was an opportunity for a positive and purposeful discussion about Carmarthenshire, and what people would like to see happen in the county. This report captures those discussions.

The event was supported by the following organisations:

4theRegion WORKING TOGETHER
Cyngor Sir Gâr Carmarthenshire County Council
Bwyd Food
colegsirgâr
SWANSEA BUILDING SOCIETY Established 1923
STORI CYMRU
PSU PEOPLE SPEAK UP
National Botanic Garden of Wales Gardd Fotaneg Genedlaethol Cymru
naturaluk
COALTOWN COFFEE ROASTERS

OCTOBER 2024

4theRegion PRESENTS...

IT'S YOUR CARMARTHENSHIRE

COLLABORATE
SHOWCASE
CONNECT

A positive conversation for people and businesses

CONTENTS

Introduction ..... page 5

Discussion Questions ..... page 10

1. Food & Farming ..... page 11

2. Jobs & Skills ..... page 13

3. Nature & Climate ..... page 15

4. Community Action ..... page 20

5. Arts, Health & Wellbeing ..... page 22

6. Business Support ..... page 24

7. Creative Economy ..... page 27

8. Visitor Economy ..... page 30

4theRegion PRESENTS...

IT'S YOUR CARMARTHENSHIRE

COLLABORATE
SHOWCASE
CONNECT

A positive conversation for people and businesses

Welcome to the full report of our recent cross-sector discussion forum, "It's Your Carmarthenshire," which took place at Parc y Scarlets on 11th July 2024.

This event was a fantastic gathering of local people, from businesses, organisations and communities, all sharing their passion, ideas, and aspirations for the county. We believe that the insights and reflections from this session highlight the immense potential for growth, collaboration, and positive change in Carmarthenshire.

This was an independently organised event, created by 4theRegion as part of our regional mission. Our goal is to get local people talking purposefully about the future of South West Wales, driven by our core values of Positivity, Collaboration and Empowerment. We are grateful to the support of local partners, including Carmarthenshire County Council, Coleg Sir Gar, People Speak Up, Swansea Building Society, and Bwyd Sir Gar Food. And a huge *diolch* to the inimitable James Owen of Stori Cymru for his bi-lingual support in hosting the day.

Our thanks also go to Council Leader, Darren Price, who gave the welcoming address to set the tone for the day. He was there throughout, to listen and talk to people about their ideas and the things that matter to them. Also participating in the day was Cllr. Aled Vaughan-Owen, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability.

One of the highlights of the day was the participation of local school children from Ysgol Gymraeg Dewi Sant, and young people from Ysgol Bryngwyn, who spoke to us about their community food growing project, and their recent visits to a local wind farm to learn about jobs and skills in the renewable energy sector. From these youngsters, we witnessed such confidence and commitment, and such bright hope!

Bringing young voices into the room reminds all of us what this is really all about: the wellbeing of our future generations, and their opportunities to thrive right here in Carmarthenshire.

In his short talk, Ammanford entrepreneur and business owner, Scott James, from Coaltown Coffee, also set an inspiring tone, urging us to tap into the entrepreneurial spirit that thrives here. His vision includes reaching out to students who may not be on an academic path but possess incredible entrepreneurial skills. The audience was keen to see Scott visiting schools, motivating young minds to explore their potential and seize opportunities.

COLLABORATE
SHOWCASE
CONNECT
IT'S YOUR
RMARTHENSHIRE

It's a reminder that Carmarthenshire is an environment brimming with inspiration and entrepreneurial energy.

As local people and organisations spoke up throughout the day, it was clear that opportunities abound in every corner of our community. Whether you're a student, an employee in a large organisation, or running your own small business, there's something for everyone. The key takeaway? If you've got the drive, the opportunities are there for the taking.

We were challenged to take action—no more waiting around. It's about standing up and doing something to create the changes we want to see.

A significant point raised was the benefit of cross-sector collaboration. Often, solutions to sector-specific issues can be found by looking beyond one's immediate industry. Events like this one play a crucial role in bringing together diverse sectors, fostering a collaborative spirit where everyone speaks as equals.

The atmosphere in the room was electric; there was a palpable sense of possibility. The energy and passion people have for their areas were infectious, making it clear that there's a strong desire to continue these conversations and turn ideas into actions. It's clear that we have the collective wisdom and skills within our region to tackle our own challenges. Crowd-sourcing this local expertise is key, and we need to bring everyone with us.

That is our hope for this report, which captures the key points from the thematic discussions. Let's take these discussions forward, act on the opportunities identified, and continue to make Carmarthenshire a vibrant place to live, work and grow. Thank you for being part of this journey with us!

4theRegion
WORKING TOGETHER

4theRegion
IT'S

4theRegion
IT'S
YOUR
CARMARTHEN

COLLABORATE
SHOWCASE

8 DISCUSSION ZONES:

1

FOOD & FARMING

How can we work together to enable all communities in Carmarthenshire to eat sustainable, local and healthy food?

2

JOBS & SKILLS

How can we ensure local businesses and key growth sectors have access to the skills and talent they need, from within Carmarthenshire?

3

NATURE & CLIMATE

How can we build a sustainable future and a thriving green economy for our young people and future generations?

4

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

How can we empower ourselves to create happier, healthier local places, together?

5

ARTS, HEALTH & WELLBEING

How can we improve the health and wellbeing of people across the county, and what role can the Arts play?

6

BUSINESS SUPPORT

What kind of support are local businesses looking for, and how can we collaborate to help Carmarthenshire businesses thrive?

7

CREATIVE ECONOMY

How can we develop our creative and cultural sectors, to create employment and business opportunities across the county?

8

VISITOR ECONOMY

How can we better promote and support Carmarthenshire's leisure and tourism offer, and ensure the whole sector is working together?

1

FOOD & FARMING

How can we work together to enable all communities in Carmarthenshire to eat sustainable, local and healthy food?

Sustainability and Local Food Systems: Participants discussed the importance of promoting sustainable, local food systems that benefit both the community and the environment. There was a significant emphasis on supporting local farmers, reducing food miles, and ensuring that communities have access to fresh, locally produced food. This theme also touched on how local restaurants can integrate local produce into their menus.

"We use as many Welsh suppliers as we can to accommodate our menu... Welsh beef, Welsh lamb... it's important for us to continue and keep doing so."

Food Security and Affordability: Several participants raised concerns about food security, particularly regarding access to affordable, healthy food. This issue is compounded by socioeconomic inequality, with low-income families often forced to choose cheaper, less nutritious options due to cost constraints. The conversation also touched on external factors, such as the Ukraine conflict and Brexit, which have further increased food prices.

"Healthy food tends to be the more expensive food, unfortunately, and people who are struggling sort of fall outside that area and then go for the cheap food, which is not good for you."

"Food security is quite a big topic... Ukraine used to supply a huge amount of our grains... we've seen price hikes happening as well."

Education on Nutrition and Cooking: There was a strong call for more education on healthy eating, especially for younger generations. Participants discussed how many families rely on processed foods because they lack the knowledge or time to prepare nutritious meals. By educating children and families on how to cook using fresh, local ingredients, the community could foster healthier eating habits.

"I think it's really important that we educate kids so they know that eating food that is processed isn't good for them."

"If we could teach families how to cook and prepare food at home, we could change their eating habits for the better."

Economic and Employment Opportunities in the Food System: Linking the local food system to employment opportunities was also a key topic of discussion. Participants noted that by expanding local food production, the region could create jobs and increase disposable income for residents, which would, in turn, help support local businesses and improve food security.

"By increasing jobs in the food system in food production and rural employment and fairly paid jobs as well, it will increase their disposable income."

Intergenerational and Cultural Shifts in Food Consumption: Another key theme was the need to shift the culture around food consumption. Participants discussed how processed foods have become dominant, and how reconnecting people, particularly young generations, with traditional, healthy food practices is critical for reversing this trend. This included promoting seasonal eating and fostering a greater appreciation for the quality of local food.

"We've lost one, if not two, generations that understand [where our food comes from] and we've got that disconnect with food. It's really encouraging to know that schools now are starting to look at that."

The Food zone was hosted by Bwyd Sir Gâr Food, which is the sustainable food partnership for Carmarthenshire.

2

JOBS & SKILLS

How can we ensure local businesses and key growth sectors have access to the skills and talent they need, from within Carmarthenshire?

Disconnected Job Market: There was a feeling of a clear disconnect between the available job opportunities and the skills of job seekers. There is a need to share knowledge on the kinds of jobs and careers avilable across the county so that young people can make informed choices about their futures. There is a perceived disconnect between the job market demands and the qualifications of job seekers.

"There seems to be a disconnect between vacancies and talents within the region."

Collaboration Among Organisations: People spoke about the need for greater collaboration between various stakeholders (employers, educational institutions, and support programs). Is there too much duplication, do people know where to go for support, could there be an employment forum to share knowledge about different sector needs and career pathways in Carmarthenshire?

"I think collaboration is the real key to everything, particularly the way the economy is and the way funding is."

Improved Job Portals together with promotion and awareness: A recurring theme throughout the conversation was the need for a more comprehensive and user-friendly job portal to better connect job seekers and employers. There's a call for better promotion and awareness of job opportunities and career paths to both potential employees and employers.

"A bolder, brighter portal where everybody can post for free their opportunities, their needs, and whether it's an employer or whether it's somebody looking for something, and it shouldn't just be for the unemployed."

"I would love to see some sort of video or whatever made available where you interview all the different job roles that are building Pentra Awel."

"So, I think we really need to have a platform that advertises local jobs for local firms, that all students coming from Swansea Uni, any different universities and coming fresh out of school have at least the knowledge to understand that there are other local firms."

Educational Alignment: The group felt that educational courses are not always aligned with what businesses need, leading to skill mismatches. However, there was evidence to show that there is collaboration between education and industry, enabling businesses to tap into a local talent pool when recruiting.

"For me, I think it's all about connecting young people with local businesses to keep that sort of channel, that sort of route coming through."

"We recently integrated with the University of Wales Trinity St David, who run an architecture course based in Swansea, so we can actually dip into that real talent pool from a local context. So that's been transformative for us."

Upskilling and Transition Support: Participants emphasised the importance of upskilling and supporting career transitions, especially for those affected by industry changes.

"We've just made a pledge that we're going to try and help 500 of the people that are coming out of Tata [closure of furnaces] to try and relocate them, retrain them into new employment."

colegsirgâr

The Jobs & Skills conversation was hosted by Coleg Sir Gâr.

3

NATURE & CLIMATE

How can we build a sustainable future and a thriving green economy for our young people and future generations?

Community Engagement: Community involvement was a recurring theme, with participants talking about the importance of local efforts, sharing knowledge, and building connections. There was also a call to raise awareness about local businesses and projects leading the way in sustainability.

"I also think a good way to get people engaged with the environment on a more personal, emotional level is through the arts. Nature journaling, storytelling, and place based education-related projects."

Making Sustainable Choices Accessible: Several speakers highlighted the importance of making sustainable options economically viable and accessible. They argued that people will choose greener alternatives if they are convenient, cost-effective, and relevant to their daily lives. For example, improving public transport.

"If we look at the, for example, the biggest things that cause pollution, for example, transport and energy, if we make it become easier for people to choose a more green option financially and in terms of access to it, that would be great."

Local Government Can Help Drive the Change: A local council member spoke about how local government can drive sustainability by embedding ethics and net zero goals into procurement policies, whilst also noting the tension between financial constraints and the need to prioritise other values.

"What concerns me is the future generations asking us, when we knew so much, why did we do so little? And when we did act, why didn't it make enough of a difference? What we've seen today is we need more young people with that unshakable confidence to help shape, I mean, to amplify their voices, to shape the future, the sustainable future that we need here in the county and across the world."

Sustainable Business Practices, and their associated costs: Business representatives shared how they are incorporating sustainability into their operations. With examples such as reducing paper use in legal firms, recycling nappies into new products, and supporting local supply chains in restaurants. However, they also acknowledged challenges, such as getting the wider community to support local, sustainable initiatives and making these projects financially self-sustaining.

The cost to local authorities and businesses was a discussion point too and is estimated to be high in order to achieve the goals that have been set to reach Net Zero by 2035.

"We've just developed a procurement policy that now puts equal weight to ethics and net zero as much as it does to the cost. But we need to make sure we see it through and we don't go to the default of looking for the cheaper option."

The Climate Change Committee (CCC) estimates that the UK's transition to net zero emissions by 2050 will cost £16 billion across all economic sectors.

"It's going to cost us roughly £180 million to decarbonise to 80%. Well, we haven't got that in the budget, so how do we do it? Where does the money come from?"

Circular Economy and creating local business opportunities: The circular economy is seen as a valuable model, with participants also noting that recycling should be a last resort. People highlighted the need for reducing consumption, reusing and repairing things in communities and through collaborative projects - there are good things happening across the county. More investment is needed to treat waste as a commodity, turning it into a valuable resource rather than merely focusing on disposal. There could be entrepreneurial opportunities in this area. There's a call for regulations that support this shift while recognising the need for change at both the policy and practical levels.

"We're always looking at ways to reduce our waste within the restaurants and we've connected in with some of the local food partnerships."

"We challenged ourselves to not buy new clothes for an entire year... most of us are still buying 90% of our clothes second-hand."

Sustainability Education and Behaviour Change: A key discussion point was the need for education and awareness to drive behaviour change across communities and businesses. Whether it's educating customers about greener products or training staff on carbon literacy, changing attitudes and values is key. Storytelling and effective marketing were seen as crucial tools for highlighting good examples and engaging people for long-term culture change.

Challenges with Grant Dependency: During the discussions participants commented that many sustainable projects rely on short-term grants, which makes long-term success difficult. There was a call for collaboration between organisations and a shift towards making sustainability projects commercially viable without relying on continuous funding.

"There should be a commercial case for these things to happen as business, as normal, not relying on funding from wherever it's coming from."

Youth Involvement and Leadership: There was a recognition that younger generations are more aware and concerned about sustainability. Participants encouraged amplifying youth voices and involving them in decision-making processes to drive innovation and progress toward a greener future.

Register your free ticket for the 4theRegion Green Economy Conference & Exhibition, taking place at Swansea Arena on Tues 19th November 2024.

"Our young people know what the circular economy is... how can we put it into action in our local economy?"

Collaboration with Educational Institutions: There was a focus on the role of education in promoting sustainability and collaboration between businesses and educational institutions.

Sustainability and Conservation: The importance of sustainable construction, conservation of green spaces, and using natural resources was emphasised. Several speakers stressed the need to protect existing habitats and ecosystems.

"We actually don't need any more houses to be built. If we actually look at the existing stock, there isn't always a need to build new."

Practical Actions for Change:
It was exciting to hear speakers suggesting tangible ways to promote sustainability, across all our organisations and businesses, including using sustainable building materials, growing flowers, reducing energy and food waste, and creating wildlife-friendly environments. There was a sense that if more people took small actions, it would highlight possibilities and gain momentum.

"If there's a disused space, you could make a flower garden for the bees, because it's not that hard. You just need seeds and people."

Bringing people together from Carmarthenshire, Pembrokshire, Swansea and Neath Port Talbot, the 4theRegion **Green Economy Conference & Exhibition** will be another unmissable day! Discover opportunities for jobs, careers and business development in the green sector.

Meet likeminded people and organisations in your areas of interest. Showcase your work through the exhibition. And increase your awareness of what's happening across South West Wales. **Be part of it!**
Tuesday 19th November 2024
Swansea Arena

Register your free place, or book your exhibition space, at 4theRegion.org.uk

4

COMMUNITY ACTION

How can we empower ourselves to create happier, healthier local places, together?

Communication and Engagement:
A recurring theme was the need for better communication and engagement within communities. Participants frequently highlighted the challenge of getting people involved and making sure they are aware of available resources and activities. This is compounded by the problem of relying too much on social media, which doesn't always reach everyone, particularly older people or those without access to digital platforms.

"There's so much available, and I don't think anybody talks to each other enough to know what's going on."

"I think communication is the key to everything. And also listen to the community, what the community actually wants, and then they will work with us. What they want, they will work with you, which is far better than telling them what to do"

One potential solution could be a collaborative platform where local groups, businesses, and services share updates and resources. This is an idea that repeatedly arises at 4theRegion events, and something we are keen to co-create for South West Wales.

Empowerment and Ownership:
The theme of giving communities ownership and permission to act on their ideas was central. Several participants noted the need for grassroots action, where community members are empowered to take charge of projects, rather than being told what to do by outside bodies.

"Give people ownership and then the action will follow."

"People don't believe they have the permission to do it themselves, so we need to highlight those examples."

Sustainability and Long-term Thinking: Many participants expressed concerns about short-term, grant-based projects that end prematurely, leaving communities without the ongoing support they need. The importance of creating self-sustaining initiatives that have long-term impact was highlighted repeatedly.

"What about the projects that are working? They are successful, and then they still have to finish because nobody wants to fund them."

"I think we should look at how we raise money through community equity and community shares so we can come up with our vision and actually ask our communities to invest in our vision and give interest and pay money back to our communities as opposed to look for external grants."

Inclusivity and Representation: Another key discussion point was the inclusivity of efforts. Some felt that certain groups, such as people with disabilities, older generations, or the LGBTQ+ community, were not well-represented in decision-making processes. The need for more inclusive approaches and co-production models, where all voices are heard and valued, was emphasised.

"The LGBTQ+ community don't feel they have a voice in Llanelli at all."

"Homelessness is a problem, and nobody seems to be cracking it. They (homeless) could be here today, sitting around these tables saying what they want to see. They don't have somewhere to live, they don't have jobs, they should be here engaging. They're not being included, so their voices are not being heard."

5

ARTS, HEALTH & WELLBEING

How can we improve the health and wellbeing of people across the county, and what role can the Arts play?

This discussion, led by Eleanor Shaw, of People Speak Up, spoke about the arts playing a crucial role in improving mental health, building communities, and fostering personal connections.

"The arts bring people together. If people are together, then they're making networks, they're making friendships, they're happier because they've got people to talk to."

Connecting Arts with Nature and Physical Activities: There was a consensus within the group that integrating the arts with physical activities like walking can enhance both physical and mental wellbeing.

Accessibility and Communication Challenges: The importance of accessibility in all forms was noted, and that with a lack of proper infrastructure, communication, and coordination the public are hindered from accessing arts and wellbeing services.

It was also noted that there is an assumption that everyone has a creative streak within them, but this is not always the case.

"There are assumptions that are made, for instance, rather broad assumptions, that everyone's creative impulse is the same and everyone loves to be creative, whereas psychological data and psychiatric data over the last 40 years shows, and it's a specific analysis within that field that most people don't engage in anything creative in their lives."

"The one area that I think is very important to be ring fenced specifically for public funding is the Arts. It generates beauty, it reflects beauty, it generates culture, and that's a very difficult thing to monetise in traditional commercial terms. So as a result, it needs to be held, and I'll echo exactly what you said at the beginning: Without a strong culture underlying society, you don't have a functional economy."

Support for Small and Independent Businesses: Another topic of conversation was how businesses fit in amongst the voluntary and third sector, and that small businesses related to wellbeing, such as walking guides, need more support and recognition alongside voluntary and charitable organisations. There is a need to strengthen the creative and wellbeing sectors as a whole.

"Just because I'm not a charity or a social enterprise or voluntary sector, there's still a place for businesses within that broad spectrum of stuff that's going on around wellbeing."

"How do we collaborate and make better use of our resources so that we don't end up in a situation... where half of Welsh creative businesses... are not going to last the next year?"

Collaboration and Tailored Approaches: The clear need for collaboration between various sectors and tailored, person-centric approaches to arts and wellbeing were deemed vital for success.

6

BUSINESS SUPPORT

What kind of support are local businesses looking for, and how can we collaborate to help Carmarthenshire businesses thrive?

Access to Funding: A significant portion of the conversation centred around the difficulty of accessing funding, particularly for small businesses. Many participants mentioned that while funding exists, it is often hard to navigate or comes with barriers, such as requiring co-funding, making it inaccessible for some businesses.

'We need real clear routes to support and to finance. It needs to be accessible... the people that are providing the support need to be more positive about the opportunities and enable businesses to get that funding'.

Mentorship and Specialist Guidance: There was a repeated call for more personalised and specialised business support. Participants expressed a desire for industry-specific mentorship and felt that existing business advice was too generalised to be truly helpful. Access to mentors in their specific sectors was seen as essential for growth.

'What would be useful for me is to have signposting to a specific mentor that's in my field because the business advice that's around is very generalised'."

Networking, Local Connections and Collaboration: The theme of collaboration and networking was also prevalent, with participants discussing the benefits of creating more opportunities for businesses to connect. They emphasised that networking was crucial not just for meeting potential partners or clients but also for sharing knowledge and resources.

"If we could create a platform for Carmarthenshire... where we all come together because we want to help each other and we want to help each other thrive, I think it would be a really energetic and exciting place to be."

"The more we know about each other's offer, the more we are confident to sell what each other has."

"...also not fighting for the same funding and working together as a team and perhaps sharing that pot and just trying to do it more efficiently and just bringing knowledge together from different businesses."

Clear and Centralised Information:
There was a general agreement that businesses struggle to find the information they need regarding funding, support, and other opportunities. Participants highlighted the lack of a centralised resource that brings together all the available support in one place.

"I'd really like a platform with a directory of local businesses so we can all connect, and so that people in towns and villages know what's there, because it can be quite hard to communicate that."

"A lot of people discuss all the different funding opportunities, but there's no central point for everyone to refer back to."

"If we had one business platform that connected networking groups, allowed sort of cross-collaborative mentorship, and signed posted grants all in one place, it would be really helpful."

Infrastructure for Small Businesses: Finally, infrastructure challenges were mentioned, particularly for businesses looking to grow or expand. A lack of suitable premises and the high cost of maintaining business locations were seen as major obstacles.

"One of the biggest issues for us at the moment is... the lack of suitable light industrial business premises in our part of the county."

Cyngor Sir Gâr
Carmarthenshire
County Council

This Business Support discussion was co-hosted by the Economic Development Team at Carmarthenshire Council.

7

CREATIVE ECONOMY

How can we develop our creative and cultural sectors, to create employment and business opportunities across the county?

Lack of Awareness and Exposure to Creative Opportunities: Several participants highlighted the lack of awareness regarding the availability of creative sector opportunities in the region.

There was a consensus that creative sectors could drive growth, but many people are unaware of the diverse roles they offer. This lack of exposure starts in schools and affects young people's career aspirations.

'People don't know what jobs there are in sectors like creative and culture because maybe they're not being exposed to it when they were growing up'.

'We need to put a bigger value on the creative sector because often with funding and the way things are working, it's the first thing to be pulled'.

Need for Better Networking and Collaboration: The need for a stronger creative network and improved collaboration across different sectors was widely recognised.

Participants suggested that bringing creative professionals together would help to maximise local resources, encourage collaboration, and facilitate innovation across industries.

'There's a lot of appetite for people to support and collaborate locally, but it's about creating that network so everybody knows where to find them'.

'We are all stronger as a larger group. The joined-up factor is really important, not just for networking but also for the infrastructure that connects people'.

Barriers to Entry for Creative Businesses: Another theme was the financial and institutional barriers that prevent creative businesses from flourishing.

Whether it is undervaluing services or the high cost of entry into creative spaces, participants noted that there is a need for accessible and affordable platforms for creative entrepreneurs to grow.

'In West Wales, we undervalue our services massively. You need to charge at least double to be taken seriously by other businesses'.

'It's a mindset thing. People need to realise they are paying for a skill, and creatives need to charge appropriately for their expertise'.

Lack of Creative Spaces and Facilities: Many participants mentioned the lack of physical spaces where creatives can work, collaborate, and engage with the community. Accessible co-working spaces and creative hubs were highlighted as essential for growing the creative economy, as well as for reducing isolation among freelancers and small business owners.

'I feel like we lack creative spaces. I work from home, it's really lonely, and there are few places where creatives can get together'.

'Empty buildings in towns could be utilised better to offer spaces for creatives who need somewhere affordable'.

Promoting Creative Industries as a Driver for Local Economy: Several participants stressed the role of creative industries in driving the local economy and creating opportunities for other sectors. However, there was a recurring issue of how to communicate this message more effectively to the public and policymakers.

"The creative economy is actually a real springboard for regeneration, so it should be the thing you look at and say, 'let's support this."

"Every business, big or small, needs the creative sector. It's not a separate industry; it touches all industries."

Need for Skill Development and Career Pathways in the Creative Sector: Participants discussed the gaps in skills and how young people are often not introduced to creative career paths early enough. Schools are focused on traditional career tracks, leaving creative industries less visible and undervalued.

"We created a four-week program introducing different ways of learning, helping young people who were not attending school, look at routes to employment in the creative sector."

"We need to inspire people to potentially go into a business in the creative and culture sector and show them that these skills

CARTREF CREATIVE

Cartref Creative is a new grassroots network for creative people in South West Wales, hosted by 4theRegion members.

VISITOR ECONOMY

How can we better promote and support Carmarthenshire's leisure and tourism offer, and ensure the whole sector is working together?

Participants brought forth ideas around marketing, collaboration, accessibility, and infrastructure that need to be addressed for Carmarthenshire to become a more cohesive and attractive tourism destination.

Unified and Effective Marketing: One of the most prevalent themes was the need for better marketing strategies to promote Carmarthenshire as a distinct and attractive tourist destination.

Participants emphasised that the county has a wealth of natural beauty and cultural offerings, yet it remains "one of the best-kept secrets in Wales."

A strong need for branding also emerged with many participants feeling that Carmarthenshire lacks a clear and unified brand identity, making it difficult to promote effectively. Others felt it would be difficult to communicate everything in one brand.

"If you were given the task to market Carmarthenshire, what do you pick? And if you pick everything, you're everything and nothing."

'We're really good at telling everybody how great it is to come and walk our beaches, climb our mountains, and do everything for free. But we won't survive as a visitor economy if we don't bring in people who actually want to spend on what we do'.

SWANSEA BUILDING SOCIETY
Established 1923

This conversation was hosted by Swansea Building Society.

Collaboration Among Stakeholders: Another strong theme was the importance of collaboration across sectors. It was felt that tourism operators, businesses, and local authorities need to work more closely together to ensure that Carmarthenshire's attractions, events, and services are mutually supportive. The lack of awareness among local businesses about what others offer was a frequent point of view.

"I've spoken to people this morning, and there are so many people who still don't know we exist. And I'm the same—do I know every holiday accommodation? Every hotel? I probably should."

"The more we know about each other's offer, the more we are confident to sell what each other has."

"The Discover Carmarthenshire site is fantastic, but not enough people use it."

Improving Accessibility and Infrastructure: Participants raised concerns about infrastructure, particularly the lack of accessibility via public transport. While Carmarthenshire has extensive walking routes and beautiful natural spaces, access to these locations remains a challenge.

"We have amazing areas for walking, but some of the footpaths are a disaster. The infrastructure isn't there."

"We have a train that can bring people to Carmarthenshire, but the service is poor and doesn't connect well with other transport options."

Promoting Unique Offerings: There was a consensus that unique experiences like heritage tourism, walking tours, and food culture are underutilised. For instance, Carmarthenshire's food culture, particularly its local cheeses and craft beers, could be promoted more strongly.

"It'd be really interesting to see how we could emphasise our food culture—cheeses, ice creams... It goes on and on."

Local Support for Tourism: Participants stressed the importance of local engagement in supporting tourism businesses. A lack of footfall in towns and villages is impacting the hospitality industry.

"Since the council staff started working from home due to COVID, local cafes and restaurants have lost significant income."

"We've got to buy sandwiches in the local cafes, not chain stores. It's about us supporting our community."

THANK YOU!

This Opportunities Report has been produced by 4theRegion using the voice recordings and post-it notes collected during the It's Your Carmarthenshire conference on 11th July 2024. We hope to have captured common themes and individual perspectives to provide a useful resource for anyone in who may wish to take ideas and new initiatives forward, or connect with what is already happening. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this event and to this Report, for sharing your time, insights and perspectives with us.

During these discussions there was significant enthusiasm for future events, with a resounding yes from the audience when asked if they would attend similar gatherings in the future. 4theRegion hopes to reconvene "Its Your Carmarthenshire" in July 2025 so please reach out to us if you would like to become an event partner. We also run lots of other inclusive regional events in South West Wales!

We welcome you to connect with 4theRegion on any of the issues or ideas contained in this report. We can connect you with likeminded people or organisations, offer support to facilitate further conversations and working groups, or just have an informal chat, whether you are part of a business, an organisation, or an individual with a desire to do something **for the region**.

Email Dawn, Zoe or Amanda, at mail@4theRegion.org.uk

4theRegion

WORKING TOGETHER

The collaborative regional alliance for South West Wales.

www.4theregion.org.uk