



Case Study

Carmarthenshire County Council

Project (activity):

Working with Outdoor Recreation, Sports and Leisure, Cultural Services Departments, spanning the Communities and Place and Infrastructure directorates of Carmarthenshire County Council.

As one of the larger Councils we are working with, Carmarthenshire already has a lot of volunteering opportunities across various departments and directorates. In some ways similar to Ceredigion in that the initial work we identified within the Leisure directorate was a lack of information and a need for clarity on what each department was doing, so we first developed a series of structured questions to scope what is happening and ensure consistency of offer and support for volunteers.

Project summary

Our initial project plan with Carmarthenshire was to scope and collate information on existing opportunities, collect examples of good practice in managing existing volunteering activity and support the roll out of new volunteering software.

In brief - we agreed:

1. An initial scoping exercise across Leisure Services - Outdoor Recreation, Culture, Sport & Leisure - to discover what each is doing in regards to volunteering and how they manage it.
 - a. Aim of scoping exercise is to ascertain the range and status of Council-led volunteering opportunities across the Council and share best practice and knowledge to ensure consistency and quality of experience for volunteers and Council employees
 - b. LlyG to produce an initial draft/headings of information to be collected, circulated and finalised, with contacts for each department provided by CCC.
 - c. Exercise could also include opportunities on Council owned land/properties but led by third sector organisations
2. Catalogue and chart progress of new online volunteering platform and support potential roll out to rest of Leisure?

1. Scoping Exercise

Staff from across the Leisure Services directorate filled in a spreadsheet/survey of their volunteering offers from recruitment, through processes, systems and support.

After staff from across the leisure Services directorate filled in a spreadsheet/survey of their volunteering offers from recruitment, through processes, systems and support, we identified areas where departments can help each other to improve consistency, taken forward via the portal.

2. [Online Volunteering Platform](#)

Leisure were already planning to roll out a Council specific volunteering portal. This was initially just

going to be for a small cross section of the Leisure directorate, but as people from other departments have started talking around a table (facilitated by Martyn Davies, Llais y Goedwig), it has become clear that it would be of more benefit if it was broadened to encompass more opportunities. Theatres in particular were keen to be involved but weren't a department with a lot of volunteers. Recreation were initially keen, but had their own systems that worked well for them. We planned to follow the roll out of the platform and look for ways to integrate with other existing portals.

Acting as a 'one stop shop' for volunteers, it attempts to pull together opportunities within the council, as well as external opportunities. Not just for green spaces, but is also - for example - Theatres and Museums.

The volunteering portal that the directorate have implemented is now up and running and we will be supporting access to it by other areas of the service.

Leisure has lots of programmes for example, including work experience, regular working parties, one off opportunities.



What worked well, what didn't work so well:

Carmarthenshire has been / is very keen to work with us, but likely not the council that needs the most support.

Their capacity is such that they are relatively comfortable with existing systems and processes, and have been able to put time and resources into making improvements. It has also meant they have had the capacity to engage with us. It's this contradiction that has been a challenge for us. Those with the time to engage with us, often also already have the time to engage their volunteers. Those who do not have capacity, also don't have the capacity to enter into additional work with us.

Re. The survey and scoping, Outdoor recreation, Cultural Services and Leisure were particularly quick to respond, but despite this, Outdoor recreation soon after said that they were quite happy with their processes and didn't want to move toward a centralised system.

Re. the portal itself:

A strength of this work is in the facilitation of departments that occurred with Martyn's support,

allowing for a more holistic, volunteer focused outcome.

Acting as a 'one stop shop' for volunteers, it attempts to pull together opportunities within the council, as well as external opportunities. It is not just for green spaces, but is also used by - for example - Theatres and Museums.

What has been learnt:

The functionality of the portal sets it apart from comparable options like Volunteering Wales. Volunteers can register interest and apply for positions all in one place. If positions need applications and interviews, a lot of this is also done through the portal. The system can either be used to manage volunteers or just to advertise positions which will then be managed by the Volunteer manager should one exist. There are also areas of the website that can be accessed only by the council staff, where notes that can be added / accessed prior to an event and to help their volunteer offer.

For regular volunteers there is an option of signing up 'per session' or for blocks of sessions. It can be used to manage a large event with multiple volunteer roles. Or a long running programme such as their 'Ambassador Program'. In terms of data collected, the portal can record hours volunteered, and can also be used to gather feedback, both from and about the volunteer. It can be used to communicate with volunteers, sending texts through the system, although most choose to communicate via WhatsApp for ease. It can be set to send reminder texts the day before a session.

There is also the capacity for providing training if necessary. Question around how training can be delivered, which might be part of our work with Carmarthenshire in the future.

Conclusion:

The hope in entering into this centralised and streamlined process is that the capacity to manage more volunteers is increased.

If the process itself is made easier, then there is potential there to improve the volunteering offer, make it easier for teams to enlist volunteers in areas of work that you might not have been doing previously. We can continue to work on this expansion with the individual departments going forward.

The outcome is a process that is volunteer focused rather than county/council focused. This can be seen by how many external opportunities are linked to. The volunteer journey has been prioritised, and finding an opportunity that works for them.

From this point on, we might want to offer training to volunteers, practical skills for volunteer leaders. Perhaps also helping the leisure directorate to assess if they need to expand their volunteering offer, or review the areas in which they use volunteers to have the greatest benefit, now that the processes have been made more simple and streamlined.

It would be additionally helpful if the management of an online platform like this could also be centralised within the council, taking any onerous away from departments which are individually quite stretched.