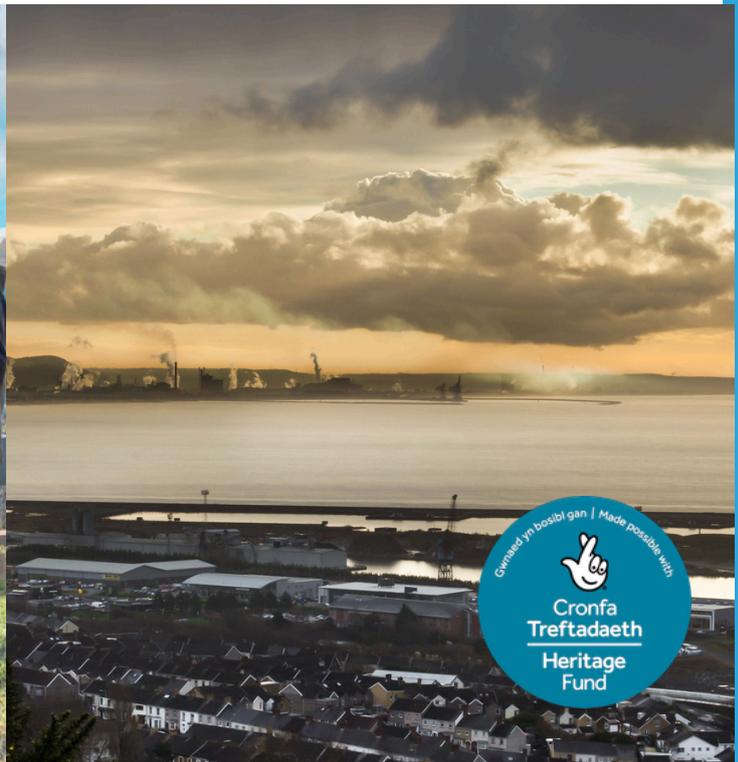




POWERED BY COMMUNITIES IN NEATH PORT TALBOT

Tempo Time Credits



Time Credits
Earned
5,376

Community
Groups
80

Volunteers
453

Business
Partners
23

76% **74%**

Feel their
mental health
has improved

Feel more able
to manage their
wellbeing

74%



Have learned new skills

87%

Feel more able to
contribute to the
community



68%

Feel healthier
overall

82%

Feel more
positive about
the future



74%

Feel Time Credits
improve their
quality of life

76%

Feel more valued
as a result of
Time Credits



POWERED BY

Tempo Time Credits

Neath
Port Talbot
Programme

2025

COMMUNITIES



79%

Feel more
confident

71%

Visit or see
other people
more often



The first year of Pathways to the Past

Involving Volunteers and Connecting Communities in Neath Port Talbot to their Heritage, funded by the **National Lottery Heritage Fund**, has demonstrated the power of a place-based, community-led approach to heritage engagement. The project was established to co-produce new pathways into volunteering, enabling more people from diverse backgrounds to connect with local heritage while strengthening the sustainability of heritage organisations across the borough.

This interim impact report showcases the progress, achievements, and emerging impact of the project throughout 2024–2025. During this first phase, the project has focused on building strong foundations: developing partnerships, understanding barriers to volunteering, and creating accessible opportunities for people to engage with heritage in meaningful ways. The vision set out in the original proposal was to create a sustainable volunteer model for heritage organisations, broaden participation, and foster pride in place through deeper community connection.

In a borough where many heritage organisations rely heavily on volunteers and where declining volunteer numbers threaten the sustainability of sites and activities, the need for innovative approaches has been clear from the outset. The first year has shown encouraging signs that this need is being met. Through collaboration, outreach, and the use of Time Credits to recognise contribution, the project has begun to shift perceptions of heritage from something people observe to something they actively shape.



72%

Of organisations saw a positive difference in their ability to recruit volunteers



453

Total volunteers in our Neath Port Talbot Programme

5,376



Hours given back to the community

60%

Of organisations saw a positive improvement in retaining volunteers



72%

Saw improvement in the health and wellbeing of volunteers



79%

Feel Tempo helps their organisation thank volunteers more effectively

Where are we now?



Across Neath Port Talbot, the Pathways to the Past team is bringing people together through heritage, culture, and shared local stories. Through these activities, they are creating meaningful pathways to participation and volunteering, using local history, shared experiences, and cultural exploration as powerful tools for connection and engagement.

At the heart of this network are **453** volunteers, **80** community groups, and 23 business venues generously offering activities and experiences in exchange for Time Credits. Together, this growing network is helping to preserve, celebrate, and make local heritage more accessible to people across the area.

Our local delivery team have played a central role in this progress. By building trusted relationships, undertaking proactive outreach, and offering practical support, they are engaging new volunteers, strengthening community networks, and creating opportunities for people to explore their connection to place and identity. Their work exemplifies the project's core principle: that heritage thrives when communities feel ownership of it.

As this report shows, year one has not only delivered measurable outputs but has also generated valuable insight into what enables participation, what barriers remain, and how community-centred approaches can unlock new and more inclusive volunteering pathways. This learning is directly informing the development of our digital toolkit and video case studies, ensuring they are grounded in real experience and practical evidence.

Creating Pathways to Family Volunteering

One of the central aims of the Pathways to the Past project is to create accessible routes into volunteering for people who have never volunteered before. A particularly successful example has been a series of stand-alone taster days, open to everyone, delivered in collaboration with staff and volunteers from **Coed Lleol** and **Craig Gwladus Country Park**.

Recognising that practical barriers often prevent people from taking part, we provided transport, a shared lunch, and five Time Credits for each participant. We scheduled the days during weekends and school half-term periods so children could be at the heart of the experience and families could volunteer together. Coed Lleol volunteers added to the sense of community by preparing large pots of vegetable soup, cooked over a campfire and shared with everyone.

From the very first session, it was clear something special was happening. The minibus filled quickly! Volunteers aged three to over eighty came together, creating a rare and joyful mix of generations. Parents told us that children who often struggle in classrooms came alive here. In the woods, every child found their spark, building, weaving, exploring, digging. Outdoors and free from rigid expectations, families felt welcomed rather than judged.

Each day blended practical conservation tasks like brush clearance and litter picking with enriching activities including survival skills and heritage crafts such as willow weaving, soap making and charcoal making. Children who had arrived shy soon formed friendships, moving confidently between groups as the woodland filled with energy and connection.

Today I learnt how to make soaps, charcoal and a willow bird feeder. Volunteering is really good because you get to experience things, it's been really fun." - Hattie



With momentum building, more sessions are on the way. Future days will again start with shared conservation work, simple tasks that quickly unite the group with a shared purpose. Alongside the popular charcoal workshop, a new facilitator will introduce herbalism and natural remedies. These intergenerational days have become one of the project's strongest elements. When people of all ages come together, feel welcome and contribute meaningfully, the impact is immediate and lasting.



From Community Volunteer to Heritage Champion

For over 60 years, **Christine Barton** has called Neath Port Talbot home. A retired head teacher and a long-standing volunteer with the Pontardawe litter pick group, **My Green Valley**, Christine has always been deeply rooted in her community. With five years of volunteering behind her and a lifelong interest in local heritage, she already had a strong foundation of knowledge particularly about Pontardawe and the Talbot family of Margam.

Her journey with our **Pathways to the Past** project began in March 2025 at a co-production workshop held at Pontardawe Heritage Centre. From that first introduction, she recognised its value. When asked how easy it had been to get involved, Christine's response reflected both her confidence and clarity of purpose:

"I followed instructions – I found it very easy. I saw it advertised, and I knew that I wanted to do it".

A highlight of her involvement so far has been the July 2025 trip to **Margam Park**, which combined in-depth historical insight with a strong social element, from engaging heritage talks to conversations in the craft shop over home-made jam.



“
"The trip increased my awareness, I am inspired to carry on researching the Abbey"
"I could be a leader or a good guide!"
”

Christine expressed a desire to continue meeting new people, sharing her skills, and helping others engage with heritage. She has even offered to provide transport to make trips more accessible to those around her.

For Pathways to the Past, Christine's story highlights important learning: structured, high-quality heritage talks significantly enrich the experience; varied approaches such as industrial tours could broaden appeal; and regular contact helps sustain engagement.



From Isolation to Exploration

For 55 years, Adelle Collins has lived in Neath Port Talbot, yet until recently, she had no real connection with its heritage. Local history simply wasn't part of her world. That changed when she joined the Pathways to the Past programme through the PT Stroke Group and attended her first trip to St Fagans National Museum of History. ***"The talk and especially the Cynefin workshop made this a good day, even though it was a rainy day"***.

What stood out immediately was not just the heritage itself, but the atmosphere of support and welcome. ***"Pathways to the Past staff really engaged with us as a group, which was lovely to see"***. For Adelle, this support was life-changing. After experiencing a stroke, her confidence had been deeply affected. ***"I have had a stroke and had lost my confidence to go out to places"***.

Yet through gentle encouragement, accessible planning, and simple human connection, she began to re-engage with the world around her.

The programme didn't just provide a day out it rebuilt confidence, reduced isolation, and opened doors Adelle thought had closed forever. Accessibility played a crucial role. Being able to bring her mobility scooter on the bus and knowing venues were suitable made all the difference.

"I found it easy to connect and engage with others by staff supporting me and just talking to people, I made new friends because of attending this trip, I now have a new best friend called Maureen".

"The fact that I am able to bring my scooter on the bus and the venue is suitable too made such a difference as I am totally reliable on my scooter – this is brilliant as I thought that my mobility had stopped me from doing things I enjoyed before I had the stroke."

Her growing confidence hasn't gone unnoticed by those around her. ***"My family call me Dora the Explorer!"***

Through additional visits to places such as Dyffryn Gardens and a nature activity at the former site of Penscynor Wildlife Park, Adelle has deepened both her knowledge and her sense of belonging.

"The impact has reminded me of memories of the past by attending places such as Penscynor Wildlife Park which no longer exists anymore, and I visited that place as a child."

She now sees her future differently. not defined by limitation, but by possibility. She wants to attend more events, continue exploring, and even share her own craft activities with others.

"Your project, Pathways to the Past has made all of this happen for me".

"I am 100% less isolated as I don't go out and about to shops or anything".

"I wake up and say to myself to never give up, I say thank-you and just get up and show them."

Finding Her Place: A Cynefin Story



We'd like to share the story of a young girl we met through our Pathways to the Past programme, a story that perfectly captures the quiet, powerful impact this work can have.

When she arrived at her first Community Nature Day, she didn't look like someone ready to volunteer. Her mother later told us the night before had been difficult, anxiety had kept her awake, her thoughts racing. Simply coming that morning had taken real courage.

The session invited participants to explore their cynefin, their sense of belonging, identity and connection to place. There were no right answers. Just conversations about where you come from, memories of landscapes, family stories, favourite places, and the plants and animals that shape where you live. It's about discovering that your story matters. At first, she stayed quiet. But once the group moved outdoors and tools were passed around, she picked up a pair of secateurs and began cutting back hedgerows. Slowly, something shifted. Her shoulders relaxed. She started chatting. She smiled. By the end of the session, she seemed lighter, more at ease.

Her mother watched in amazement. Being outside, doing something practical, and feeling part of a group had calmed her daughter in a way she hadn't seen in a long time. She wasn't alone in her transformation. Others shared that they had never volunteered before but loved the feeling of giving back. One participant said they had never felt connected to local heritage, now they felt proud of where they lived. Another group described their heritage trip simply as "a lovely time" a small phrase that held something much bigger: welcome, belonging, community.

This is the quiet power of the Cynefin approach. It helps people see themselves within the story of their community, not as outsiders, but as contributors. For this young participant, the change was immediate. For others, it unfolds gradually. But the pattern is clear: when people feel connected to place and purpose, confidence grows, relationships form, and new possibilities begin.

Belonging isn't taught. It's experienced.

Thank you

None of this would be possible without the people and partners who believe in the power of giving time. From volunteers, community organisations and charities, to businesses and funders who choose to back local action, thank you.

Your support helps us recognise volunteering, open up opportunities, and strengthen communities across the Tempo network. We're proud of what we've achieved together and excited to build on this momentum in the year ahead.

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