

# Rural Wisdom Milford

Winter/Spring 2018



# About Rural Wisdom

Rural Wisdom is working with communities in Wales and Scotland to create opportunities for older people to shape their community. Our aim is to make communities work better for older people and the other people who live there.

These are the outcomes we want to achieve:

- More older people, and a more diverse range of older people, have a stronger voice.
- Older people have the opportunity for more social connections in their communities.
- There are more activities that are led by older people and are co-produced in the community, and older people get support from them.
- People of all ages are part of creating communities that work well for older people.
- Older people in rural areas are contributing to local and national policies and initiatives.



If you have lived in a city, you feel that Milford is a safe place to bring up your children.

The Torch Theatre is a great asset.

Taxi fares can be expensive and fares need to be more regulated for disabled people requiring an accessible vehicle.



# What we did

## The first few months

Rural Wisdom is working alongside people living in Milford Haven and the neighbouring villages of Hakin, Hubberston and Steynton – these constitute what could be thought of as the greater Milford Haven area, although each settlement has its own identity.

In May 2017, we held a community meeting in Milford Town Hall with around 30 residents and representatives of groups from across the area. Using contacts and networks gathered over 14 years of Volunteering Matters involvement in Milford itself and Pembrokeshire more widely, personal email invitations were sent out, to which an encouraging number of responses were received. A small street survey was also carried out prior to this meeting, which gave a flavour of what local people were thinking about.

At our gathering, our evaluation partners from the NDTI (National Development Team for Inclusion) facilitated some great discussions during a day of honest assessment, new ideas, shared concerns and hopes for the future. People talked about what it was like to live, work or be in retirement in Milford. We wanted to hear about things that were working well, things that could be better and what people wanted to contribute to their own communities.



People's perception of the town needs to change – we've got it all.

You get good medical attention from the surgery.



Charles Street is not what it was.

These are points from our first action plan:

- Making progress after the meeting and keeping in touch with everyone.
- Finding better ways of communicating with local people about what is happening locally.
- Finding out whether Tesco can re-instate its café.
- Finding out whether it would be possible to have seating down at the local retail estate.
- A mid-week activity for older people in the Pill areas of the town.
- Re-establishing the much-missed Hubberston & Hakin Luncheon Club.

## Taking on the ideas

Prompt action was taken on some points:

- The Small Steps email group was established in May following the meeting – this has now grown to over 60 members.
- Milford What's On was launched in September 2017, an events listing detailing community or low-cost activity sustaining the local population all year round. As a result of its value to the community, local funding from two different sources has been secured to maintain What's On until June 2018.
- Tesco was approached and the café will not be reinstated, for business reasons. A local resident and disabilities activist was assisted in writing to the Chief Executive of Milford Haven Port Authority, which owns the land on which Tesco and the retail estate are sited, to explore other options. A thoughtful response was received – we continue to correspond.

- A weekly social chat and boardgames group called PALs (Pill Activities & Laughs) was launched in August.
- The luncheon club was re-launched in November 2017 and we are confident that it will be at full capacity soon.

Other needs emerged over the following months:

- Volunteering Matters' existing library knitting group, and the Library itself, said that another weekly gathering for handicrafters was needed. The capacity in the first group was now limited but a number of ladies had expressed an interest in joining. As a result, the weekly Monday afternoon group was formed.
- Some work bringing people to organisations and organisations to each other was suggested. Working with statutory and voluntary sector colleagues, Rural Wisdom is helping to raise awareness amongst older people about where they can eat an economical hot meal in the week and identify any barriers to getting there. Rural Wisdom is also providing support for events where Milford groups can meet each other for mutual benefit, be it to find volunteers, exchange services, make new referral arrangements and even tap into small local funding pots.
- The Library, encouraged by those trying to help older people in the county, wanted to try some initiatives for older isolated people. A Telephone Reading Group is all ready to go and a Carers' Support Group is being planned.

## Continuing to meet and hear from people

Health & Social Care Liaison Officer, PAVS (Pembs Association of Voluntary Services)		Alzheimer's Society (office based in Milford)	
		Community Connector	
Older People's Strategy Officer	Pembrokeshire County Council Leisure Services	Volunteering Matters befriending volunteer and Milford resident	
PACTO (Pembs Association of Community Transport Organisations)	Volunteering Matters		
	Milford Library	FRAME	
Hubberston Parish	Nantucket Church	Youth Matters	
Volunteering Matters Knitting Group Organisers (Milford Library group)	PATCH (Pembs Action to Combat Hardship) (based in Milford)	Pill Community Centre	
		Dewis (advocacy)	
Milford Haven Port Authority		Hubberston & Hakin Community Centre	
Milford residents	The Society for Electoral Reform	Pembrokeshire County Council Milford Link Officer	The Royal Voluntary Service
Pembs Housing Tenancy Engagement Officer			
Milford Town Council	Contact the Elderly	Torch Theatre	
Women's Institute	The Job Centre	Workways	
Pembrokeshire College	St Katharine's Church	Christmas Together	
	The Town Regeneration Group	The Campaign to End Loneliness	The Vc Gallery
Community Police Officers	Tesco Community Champion		
		...and a number of local businesses.	

The community centre on a local estate had been closed for a few years but 12 months' access was negotiated by the local church in order to develop activities and support for residents. This gave Rural Wisdom the opportunity to work with local activists, get to know some of those living nearby and consult older people about what they wanted to see at the centre - it is at the heart of the estate, which is a vibrant little community in its own right. Ideas have been circulated, with one or two tried out, but plans are now in place to offer regular lunches.

People living around the community centre will be asked to be part of all the wider conversations and events to help plan the next stage of Rural Wisdom in Milford.



Some more activities bringing the generations together would be good.

Hardship is a part of life for many in the town.

Older people can feel isolated.

When the refinery shut, footfall and therefore spending declined significantly.

When you join a group,  
people are really friendly.



# The main points we are hearing

## Positive aspects of living in Milford

Although there are areas of concern amongst the townspeople, Milford folk are extremely proud of their home and say that the friendliness of the people is its strength.

Generally, people do not worry about growing old in Milford.

There are a lot of community activities and services for older people and for the community.

The facilities are good. The town has everything it needs for primary care: a large modern GP surgery and two dental surgeries. The Library is very good.

The physical environment is great:

- The Marina is a very attractive area and a nice place to spend leisure time.
- The Rath and Hamilton Terrace are lovely places to walk; there is seasonal planting, and the public green swards and the many memorials are all well-maintained.



This town has a fascinating history.

Did you know that it has the 2nd deepest natural harbour in the entire world?





There is a good community transport network and a reasonable bus service. This means people can continue to be active, gain access to shops and services and keep in touch with friends and family.

The sheltered accommodation complexes provide much of what their residents need.

The Town Council are doing their best to attract business by keeping the rents low.

The local Roundtable do a wonderful job of organising the Carnival and boosting the Christmas spirit during the festive season. Local families really look forward to Father Christmas visiting their street and appreciate the effort of local business people.

### People's concerns

Local people are very fond of the old town centre but this is not quite as vibrant as it once was.

There are lots of good things happening in Milford and its environs but if you are not online, do not take a local paper and do not attend the leisure centre or the library it can be hard to feel well-connected with events, clubs and societies.



The fishing industry was great but that's more or less gone now.



There is a mainline train station from which you can travel directly to London, but it is still some distance away from the bigger shopping centres. Haverfordwest is 6 miles away and Carmarthen is 36 miles away. Cardiff is over 100 miles away.

Transport can be a problem – many people are still unaware of how much community transport can offer them.

It seems that public places to sit and chat are being lost.



## Next Steps

People in the Milford area will continue to come up with ideas as to how their community could work better for older people and others who live here.

Some of the developments people suggested have been taken on by local people and groups and will continue to benefit people living in Milford.

Rural Wisdom will continue to provide ways for community groups to get extra practical support for what they do. Rural Wisdom will also support people and groups to connect with each other where they might have common interests or goals, whether that means finding mentors to work with a youth group, or helping to replicate something good in another town or village.

We are already sharing the experience of people between groups in the county and with the other areas that are part of Rural Wisdom. This element of passing on learning in the pilot areas is a big part of the project and we are pleased that PALS social group now has a counterpart in neighbouring Neyland and the Small Steps email group could inspire something similar in Haverfordwest. Our other Welsh Rural Wisdom area, Leeswood and Pontblyddyn, is also trialling an email news group.

Ideas continue to spring up in Milford, not only from existing friends of Rural Wisdom, but also new contacts. These will be explored with the community during the remaining months of the project's work in the town.



## Contact for more information

**Rachel Evans**  
**Rural Wisdom Project Co-ordinator**  
07733 265769  
[rachel.evans@volunteeringmatters.org.uk](mailto:rachel.evans@volunteeringmatters.org.uk)

**Rural Wisdom is based at**  
**Volunteering Matters Cymru**  
Suite 9  
Frazer Buildings  
126 Bute Street  
Cardiff Bay, CF10 5LE  
[www.volunteeringmatters.org.uk](http://www.volunteeringmatters.org.uk)  
[www.ruralwisdom.org](http://www.ruralwisdom.org)

