

THE
WREX
FACTOR

The
WrexFactor

Executive Summary



Introduction

The WrexFactor was held on 10th October 2024 at The STōK Cae Ras/The STōK Racecourse, Wrexham AFC.

Delivered over two sessions, a total of 128 people took part (71 and 57 in the afternoon and evening sessions). Participants were drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds in Wrexham, including businesses, public bodies, community groups, education, and the football club. Facilitated by the Start Something Good team at Cwmpas, and hosted by the Wrexham City Board, sixteen diverse teams took part over two sessions. Together they addressed the challenge question:

“What are the 'hero projects and ideas' which can transform our city centre?”

This document captures the ideas from the event.

How the WrexFactor worked

The teams were guided through a series of short workshops to identify Wrexham's strengths and what we love about the people and places in the city. Then they looked at the challenges facing Wrexham, what an awesome future could look like, and how we can get there.

The next step was to develop ideas for hero projects which can transform the city centre. In total people came up with 811 ideas! They then refined the ideas in each team down to three, and finally to the one they think would work best.

Each team pitched their ideas to a panel made up of local people, young people, the founder of Our Future, and a representative from Maximum Impact who grew up in Wrexham. The panel weren't looking to choose a winning idea but to give some good feedback on what they heard.

The results

Each of the ideas is a like a sketch drawing of something that has real potential. None of these ideas has been selected at this stage. Each could make a difference on its own, and a bigger difference if they are combined together. They are captured here so that more people can give feedback on them as the panel did on the day. Big ideas won't become a reality unless we all work together to make them happen. The ideas represent the pride and vision that people have in Wrexham.

128

participants

With 63 organisations, including; community groups, businesses, social enterprises among others.

3

emerging
themes

Building on Wrexham's identity
Transforming the City Centre
Travel and Connectivity

16

pitches

A Festival City
A Wrexham Brand Identity
Brand Wrexham as an indie, market, community-based town
A Luxury Hotel
The Wrexham Waterfront
A 'Wrexham High Line' – a green transport network
A Better-Connected City Centre
A Safe Entertainment Area
Strengthening the Independent Business Community
A New Youth Hub
An Active Transport Network – as the gateway to north Wales
An Integrated Transport System
The Wrexpress!
A Digital Travel Card
Free transport for under 25s



The Pitches

Building on
Wrexham's identity...

A Festival City

The idea

We should re-brand Wrexham as 'Wrexham – Festival City'. Over 30 festivals in Wrexham, but they're not joined up and there's huge potential. Share resources across events. Scope to connect and expand festivals – supported by an app (The Wrec-Tec). Appeal to all generations – a multi-generational brand.

The challenges

Would require sponsorship, volunteering, countering of negativity. Connecting to transport etc. to make festivals sustainable.

Panel feedback

"Festival city sounds brilliant. Can we make the whole greater than the sum of the parts?"

"It's fun and joyful – that's what makes people want to come into the town."

"Challenge with all of this is how can we create a sustainable financial model?"

"Festival idea is fantastic. What I wish for is to get the people in the same room. How would we bring them together (there can be a fear of working together)? – we need to look at the bigger picture."

A Wrexham Brand Identity

The idea

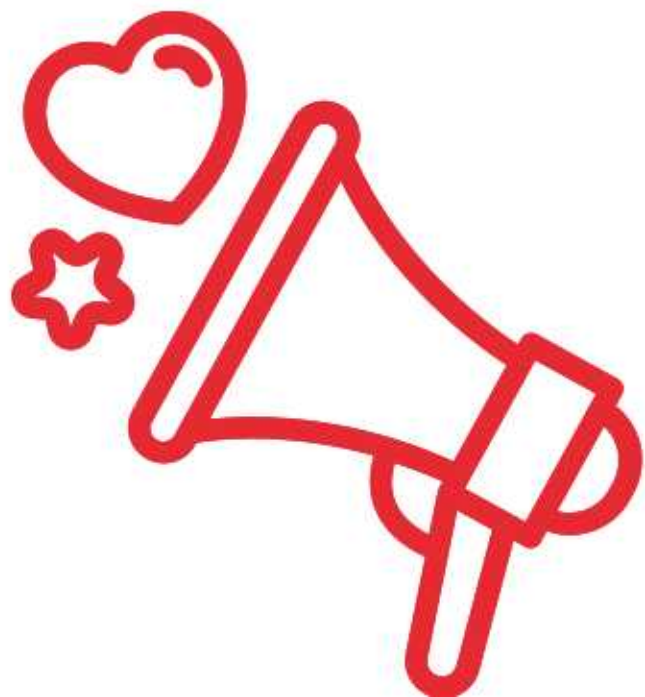
Bottom up not top down – more than a logo. Wrexham to have its own identity. Key people – football club/Eisteddfod etc. Use via an app (info about FOCUS Wales, transportation etc.). ‘Y Ddraig’ (the dragon) as our symbol of Wrexham.

The challenges

Need to connect local businesses and organisations together with activities build around the brand! People need to buy in from all areas of community – some people don’t engage/don’t feel they are part of Wrexham. We need something that helps everybody to engage. How do we ‘use’ a brand – it’s got to have a strapline and pull everybody in!

Panel feedback

“Love the passion! Importance of ‘speaking for the collective’ – something that’s really distinctive about this city. There is such a rich history here and that’s part of the present identify too. Brand identify is key in Wrexham.”



Brand Wrexham as an indie, market, community-based town

The idea

We punch above our weight – worldwide. We need to bring that into the town centre. Complete regeneration of Regent St and Hope St. A vibrant, viable and affordable place to trade. Purchase the biggest, vacant property on Regent St, and start there (as a place for people to trade from).

The challenges

"I've traded in Wrexham for 43 years, but rates prevented me from getting onto the high street. I want young people to have the opportunity that I haven't had." Towns need to be accessible – the only way we can transform our town is to re-brand and re-configure, and work from ground zero upward. Tap into the community and the spirit of the town. It's about scrapping what we used to think and going 'back to the future' or 'forward to the past'

Panel feedback

"Focus on brand is special – what is the identity of Wrexham, go right back to the roots!"



The Pitches

Transforming the City Centre...

A Luxury Hotel

The idea

Something iconic in the centre of the town – to be an icon for the town. Utilise an iconic vacant property. What should it be? (A hotel/conference centre/something else).

The challenges

There is no luxury accommodation in the city centre. Branding – ‘luxury’ may be exclusive and put people off. Local people are the backbone of the community – must start by building on that. Must employ people and deliver economic benefit to the community. Local supply chain and skills are crucial.

Panel feedback

“Hotels are needed. Big fancy hotels can still involve local people – local producers/suppliers/use local bricks.”

“With this and every idea – how do you take one small step towards making it happen?”

“For a hotel – how would you ensure community buy in, and community benefit, and provide suitable infrastructure (e.g. transport)?”



The Wrexham Waterfront

The idea

Wrexham needs a waterfront. We want to create a lake by Saint Giles way, with a hotel overlooking St Giles Church. A family space in the day, but with activities for young people. An international standard skate park, a play area and vernacular lift.

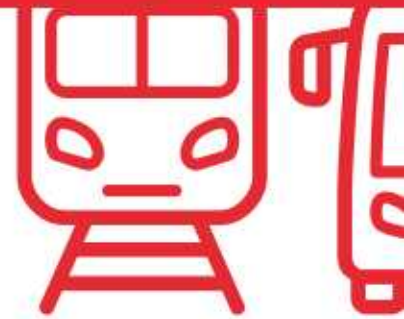
The challenges

Need investors. Would help increase land values in the area How would you phase this project in a way which attracts investment stage by stage? You need someone to lead and to masterplan. You need political will – from council and private landlords.

Panel feedback

"How would you market cold water dips in the Gwenny!? I love the youth focus – young people get moved on – they don't have anywhere to go. I love the idea – I can't wait to visit."

Credit: Born Acorn



A 'Wrexham High Line' – a green transport network

(This idea was put forward independently by teams at both sessions)

The idea

Where is the town centre (Llwyn Isaf/Queen's Square). Learn about our heritage/history/art. Lots of development already happening in the city centre. Work with organisations like incredible edible to maintain spaces and make them useful.

We want to connect, regenerate, and sustain Wrexham. Don't drive around Wrexham, go through. Connect the University, City, and Industrial Estate. We want a centre (old groves) for culture, shopping etc. We need help with legal and planning. What we've got is a brand (Welcome to Wrexham) that we can leverage. "Wrexham is a great place to live, a great place to visit, and a great place to work – come along for the ride!"

The challenges

Public spaces can become ASB hotspots – must involve community. Need uses for empty buildings. Mustn't neglect other parts of town. We've got the people who can do it! Needs support of private landlords and external funding. I've heard all these ideas before – but not on this scale – the right things are being said – there's so much power in this room!

Panel feedback

"High Line is completely unique (resonates with NYC – a great High Line). I'll bring my spade if you decide to do it!"

"I like the idea of walking around Wrexham's natural green routes – but how do we integrate dense urban environments too? Creating green space is really important. There's so much beauty around Wrexham, how can we bring it into the town centre?' This would improve the environment of Wrexham city centre."

A Better-Connected City Centre

The idea

Hub and spoke approach (to a better-connected city centre) E.g. Eagle's Meadow for entertainment. We want areas to flow into each other. Help businesses by reducing rates. Fill vacant property. Support with use of an App.

The challenges

Do we need a ground swell to cut rates and make it easier for new businesses to survive?

Panel feedback

"A lot of empty spaces in town and so many ways we could fill them.

"A wider conversation needed about rates. Lots of places doing things with empty places (e.g. three months free use of empty spaces in Brixton/community ownership schemes in others places)."

"Zoning helps Wrexham have a stronger identity as a destination. 'Built to last' is key – great projects don't always stay around for ever. Heartwarming to say we have to protect what's out there."

"Landlords aren't Wrexham people and that's a battle that we have to fight! Cultural quarter was discussed years ago – not sure what happened."



A Safe Entertainment Area

The idea

People need a reason to come to Wrexham. Re-purpose Eagles Meadow – it can be better utilized. Create a place that people want to come to and feel safe!

The challenges

Not sustainable in terms of weather. E.g. could you put a roof on Eagle's Meadow and make sustainable in all weathers. Could a shuttle bus connect different part of Wrexham for those who don't drive. Use guided tour / familiarisation videos to boost accessibility. Encourage different age groups with activities including wall climbing, arts, bingo etc.

Panel feedback

"Eagle's Meadow would be a great location for this."



Strengthening the Independent Business Community

The idea

Focus on people and community. A Wrexham full of independent ventures (shops, bars, cafes, charities etc.) Organically they will have a local connection, community pride, spirit etc. Would help create a strong Chamber of Commerce, with a greater influence. Need to incentive with business support, networks, and incentives (for example, Business Rate relief).

The challenges

Scaling approach. Bringing current traders together and involving their views in how to move the city centre forward. Opportunities to join with other ideas (e.g. the festival city idea). Clustering/Zoning – the Disney approach – how can the city centre be zones to appeal to different groups.

Panel feedback

"Love that you went right back to roots of Wrexham – entrepreneurial spirit – there are already so many local businesses – love that you're about putting that back on the map."

"Really passionate about Wrexham's great local businesses. Grow areas which are organically flourishing – e.g. Lord Street as an independent quarter."



A New Youth Hub

The idea

An area where young people can be seen, feel safe, learn, make friends, get jobs etc. It needs to feel 'cool.' Activities – learning, community focus, support, safety. Young people are perceived negatively when in a group. Need better WIFI. Activities (e.g. bowling). Better food options (not just fast food).

The challenges

: Transport – people can't get to a youth hub without transport. Perceptions – young people in a big group aren't causing trouble. Money – without investment we can provide this. #YouthHub #CoolSquared

Panel feedback

"One idea would be free transport for youth – why should we have to pay to travel to receive education? E.g. if you live within 5 miles you don't get free transport to college. "What would happen at the Youth Hub during the school day? (Group's answer – nursery? Post-16)."



The Pitches

Travel and Connectivity...

An Active Transport Network – as the gateway to north Wales

The idea

Linking villages, city, business parks and industrial estate. Bike routes, bike storage etc. Raise the whole county borough, not just one area. Equality of opportunity.

The challenges

Integrating transport is difficult – dealing with local, national, and regional road and rail. Finance and funding mustn't leave any community or sector out. How can we change the way people travel (encouraging local employing/visitors etc.)? It won't be cheap.

Panel feedback

"Transport is an issue – love that you got stuck in with that – and made it about equality – and making people feel connected. Also talking about behaviour change – an issue we need to tackle head on."

"A great idea. A lack of safe walking routes can put the older generation off – can work with police etc. to understand root causes and best solutions. Wrexham is unusual in having so many satellite villages – a big opportunity."



An Integrated Transport System

The idea

24 hours per day involving any form of transport. Making it accessible – as a wheelchair user accessibility is a big thing for me. A park and ride and more parking in the city centre. Tackle Net Zero. Could include a map and control centre for the system.

The challenges

Costs, and decision making (for example in Manchester the Mayor has control – it's different here). Attitude of 'things have been tried before.' Co-ordination needed between different forms of transport. You need space (for example, to establish a park and ride). Getting information out is a challenge.

Panel feedback

"This project connects to other ideas like the Digital Travel Card. Transport and young people are key themes."



The Wrexpress!

The idea

A free tramway to link up zones in the city centre. Everywhere is spread out – you want to get people in. We will get people to use it through travel apps. Hop on hop off service.

The challenges

Barriers – cost. Help with infrastructure. We need buy-in. A shared service for everyone who's in the city. It's about linking everything together in the town centre – there's lot of gaps and it's about how we will them.

Panel feedback

"Amazing idea. Wrexham is a bit of a donut. Connecting it together is an obvious path. We have lots of tourists – how do we take advantage? – e.g. a plug in tour guide.

"Connecting everything will make it more cohesive – and made the city centre feel as one."



A Digital Travel Card

The idea

Join digital and physical. A 'SYMUD' card. Student friendly. Open and accessible travel across the county.

The challenges

People staying (and moving) within the county – if it were easy to get around more people would travel/stay here. Could be connected to discounts etc. Would need private sector buy-in (transport companies.) Need for better connected transport infrastructure (road/rail). Importance of convincing people from the beginning – with a strong campaign and brand identity.

Panel feedback

"Brilliant idea! A practical solution but all about keeping people in and connected to the town. It's such a massive idea – what could we do to pilot and operationalise. We need to push people to say, 'let's believe in Wrexham.'"



Free transport for under 25s

The idea

Bring people to Wrexham and help them to stay in Wrexham. Young people find it hard to get a job and get to places. If there's demand it will also improve transport links. Learn from big cities (e.g. Oyster card). Free for under 25s and a subscription scheme for everyone else.

The challenges

Cost. Sustainability to run a service 24 hours a day (buses may be empty at first). Training of drivers and wider set up infrastructure. Need for political will to do it. People need a reason to travel in the first place!

Panel feedback

"This would be really valuable. Love the free transport principle – a great trigger for behavioural change."



