



DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

Wrexham City Board's Engagement Journey (so far!)

DECEMBER 2024

FOREWORD

A note from our chair ...

2024 has been a whirlwind year for the Wrexham City Board.

In September 2023, the UK Government announced that Wrexham was one of 55 places across the country to receive funding under a 'Long-Term Plan for Towns programme', which will invest in local people's priorities over a 10-year period. Under the programme 'Town Boards' were to be established, and our 'City Board' came into being in April.

The 'Wrexham City Board' (and we plan to have a new name soon!) is completely independent and brings together a range of elected leaders, business and community representatives from all over the area. Our vision is a 'thriving, playful and vibrant city centre', and in our first months of existence we have brought together our 'Long Term Plan' for Wrexham, which we have shared with UK Government. In the years ahead, we will be responsible for overseeing millions of pounds worth of investment into the city we love.

We can't do this without you!

Central to our success will be working closely with all those who live in, work in, invest in, and visit Wrexham: everyone it is a special place for, and everyone who calls it home. This short report tells the story of how well over one and a half thousand of you have already supported us on this journey. It talks about the things we've done, the things we've learned, and the things we're planning to do next.

We're immensely grateful, and excited for what 2025 (and beyond) will bring!

Rachel

Rachel Clacher - Chair of the Wrexham City Board



OUR ENGAGEMENT PLAN

And a timeline of our activities ...

Our work got underway in April, when we starting bringing together our engagement plan.

The plan sets out what we mean when we say 'engagement', what our engagement goals are as a board, and what kind of engagement activities we want to undertake. To help us bring it together, we spoke to all sorts of engagement experts working in and around Wrexham, to help us test and refine our ideas.

In a nutshell, we decided that, for us engagement means **all those who our decisions impact upon will be given meaningful, accessible, and regular opportunities to inform and shape those decisions with us.**

And in practice, we want to do this through focusing on five interconnected 'engagement elements':



The Community: bringing together everyone with an interest in engagement in Wrexham, to share knowledge, ideas and work together.



The Bank: a free-to-access resource bringing together all of the research, reports, data and information about Wrexham and its people in one place.



The Agents: a network of people within our communities who can ask questions, share information, and promote opportunities to get involved.



The Big Questions: a focus on the big questions, which everyone in Wrexham can work together in asking, and benefit from knowing the answers to.



The Movers & Shakers: working with the best engagement experts from around Wales and the world, to help us, inspire us and challenge our thinking.

We've achieved a lot in our first eight months, but we're just getting started.



JUST ONE THING

What we did ...

If you could change just one thing about Wrexham City Centre, what would it be?

Our first big engagement activity was 'Just One Thing'. This fell under the 'Big Questions' theme of our engagement plan. We wanted to ask as many people as possible 'If you could change just one thing about Wrexham City Centre, what would it be?' We wanted to see how people's ideas compared with our own, and to use the findings to help us decide where to focus our energy and attention in the coming month and years.

To do this, we provided our board members with all of the information they needed to go and ask this question to all of the people in their teams, their networks and their wider communities. We also provided them with a mini budget (£250) to cover the costs of bringing people together to have a conversation. With the help of the Children's University at Wrexham Uni, we also took our Just One Thing question into dozens of local schools.

Everyone answered the questions in their own way. Some had informal chats and meetings, sharing their feedback over email. Some made posters and mind maps, and shared photos of their ideas. Some filled in postcards and sent them back to the board. Some held pop up stalls at events, to capture insights from their local communities.

All that mattered to us, was they as many people as possible got to answer this question, and in ways which were interesting and meaningful to them.

We had an amazing response. In total:

- Over **35 school and community groups** took part
- Over **1,500 people** shared ideas
- Over **3,600 unique insights** were gathered.

People's ideas were analysed by experts at Wrexham University and organised into five key themes.



JUST ONE THING

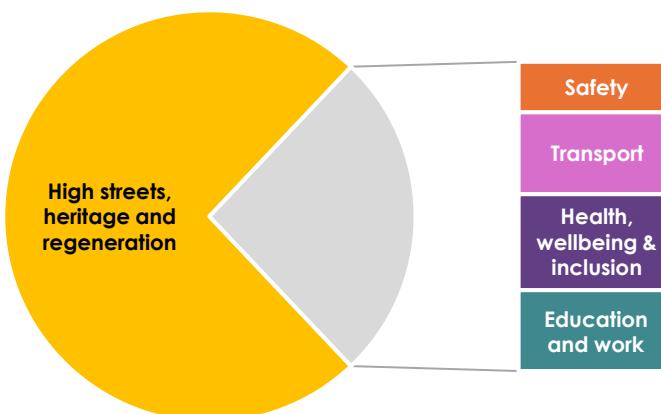
What we found out ...

The overarching finding of our Just One Thing engagement was that young people want more stuff to do in the city centre.

And beneath this headline finding was an awful lot of detail.

- **74% of all of the ideas shared with us, were about heritage, high streets and regeneration:** people want a thriving and vibrant city centre they can be proud of.
- **4% were about safety and security:** people want to feel safe and welcome whenever they come to Wrexham.
- **7% were about transport and connectivity:** people want it to be easy to get in and out of Wrexham and between all the neighbouring villages and workplaces.
- **8% were about health, wellbeing and inclusion:** people want Wrexham to be a compassionate place, which cares for the vulnerable.
- **7% were about education and work:** people want the best possible life chances in Wrexham.

Over 90% of ideas shared with us came from children. So whilst these big themes give us a really good sense of what matters to our young people in Wrexham, every idea counts – if it matters to one person, then it matters to us.



Get more street lights because its scary in the dark

My idea is to add more activities to the streets, such as, dance workshops, signing, and more museums

[We need] more associations like CAMHS to help teens, we need places they can feel safe to talk, where they can feel loved and supported and not alone."

Maintain pavements for wheelchairs, they are not flat and difficult to get onto.*

Make a health and safety team to help homeless people and people in need

[We need a] children's Board – because children do not get any input so if you have ideas you can say them load and proud.

*Only one out of 3,600 ideas related to this, but it still really matters!

THE WREXFACTOR

What we did ...

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

Building on Just One Thing, in October we invited everyone in Wrexham to come together and help unleash Wrexham's 'WrexFactor!' The WrexFactor connected with 'Big Questions' and 'Movers and Shakers' themes of our engagement plan. We worked with community engagement experts Cwmpas to bring their 'community hackathon' approach to Wrexham, and invited people to work together in teams to come up with ideas for huge projects which could completely transform our city centre!

The event wasn't just about what people came up with, but more importantly, how they came up with it. We put people into teams at random (depending on the chocolate bar they chose on the way in!). We wanted people to make new friends, challenge their assumptions, and come up with ideas they wouldn't have been able to come up with otherwise. It was about generating great ideas, and it was about having fun (and as you can see, we all left with a free scarf thanks to the generosity of our hosts at Wrexham AFC).

In total 128 joined us from the WrexFactor, from all sorts of local charities and businesses, alongside our MP, local councillors, and lots of people who simply love their home city.

Over two three-hour sessions, 16 teams each created hundreds of ideas and a pitch for their own 'hero project', from green travel routes to international skate parks, and from five-star hotels to a new youth zone for the city – and the whole thing was captured by the Welcome to Wrexham film crew.



THE WREXFACTOR

What we found out ...

The team at Cwmpas analysed everything that was written, shared and spoken at the WrexFactor and identified seven recurring themes across everyone's ideas.

- Community collaboration:** with the best ideas coming when we draw upon knowledge and perspectives from across our diverse communities.
- Joined-up thinking:** with a need to connect and coordinate local projects which have shared visions and goals.
- Brand identity:** with a need to promote a strong, confident and positive picture of Wrexham locally, nationally and internationally.
- Getting here:** with Wrexham becoming an easier place to get to and get around.
- Safety:** with 'feeling safe' an essential precursor to the city centre's wider revival.
- Arts and entertainment:** building on Wrexham's vibrant arts scene and supporting its bid to be UK City of Culture 2029.
- Scale of ambition:** with an appetite to 'think big' and really do things differently.



The doodle on the left was sketched out by Owen Davies, a member of the Wrexham City Board team during the event. It neatly captures how many of the event's discussions clicked together. If the city centre is full and vibrant, if it's easy to get to and if we can communicate clearly why people should want to come – great things can start to happen.

And the city doesn't exist in a vacuum. Much of the conversation focused on the city centre's relationship to our local villages, our industrial estate, and our new-found global fame. A thriving city needs a thriving region, and a thriving region needs a thriving city.

WHAT ELSE?

And what next ...

Whilst we've been busy, it's not the end of the story – we're only just getting started!

Alongside Just One Thing and the WrexFactor, lots of other invaluable engagement activity has been getting underway over the last few months. Here are a few highlights ...

An engagement community get together

Taking place in July, our get together connected with the 'Community' and 'Bank' themes of our engagement plan. Led by experts from Wrexham University, it brought together a small group of engagement professionals from in and around Wrexham, to spend an afternoon exploring how we currently collaborate and share insights and information with each other, what opportunities there may be to do this more effectively in the future, and what the role of the Wrexham City Board might play in making this happen. The key themes identified through the discussions were captured in a short report, and our helping the Board to plan its next steps.

Website

We are taking the first steps to develop and launch a dedicated website for the Wrexham City Board. Our website will be a place to tell people what we're up to, promote opportunities and help more people to get involved in our work.

Our website will also have a dedicated 'knowledge base' where all research, reports, blogs, podcasts and all things 'Wrexham' can be freely searched and accessed. This is in connection with the 'Bank' theme of our Engagement Plan and should help to ensure local decisions are always made with the best possible information at hand.

Branding

We are working with local branding and design experts EM Creative to help establish a clear brand identity for the Wrexham City Board. With a clear brand, the Board can more effectively raise its profile, communicate its message, and engage communities in its work.

Continuous Conversation

We are always talking to those we want to be more involved in our work and exploring ways to keep getting better. For example, we are working with Wrexham's Youth Parliament (Senedd Yr Ifanc) to find more effective and creative ways to involve young people in our work and decision making as a Board.

In the coming year, we will be building on everything we've talked about in this report, and much more. We want to get more and more people involved in our work, see our progress accelerate as a result, and lead the way when it comes to doing engagement right!

And we will keep you updated at every step along the way.

This document was prepared by Mike Corcoran on
behalf of Wrexham City Board. December 2024.