

January 2026



Introduction



In a packed Rhyl Rugby Club in October 2025, over 100 attendees, including employers, funders, charities, local representatives, educationalists and the First Minister of Wales were told about our ambitions to help improve the life chances of the young people of Rhyl.

To put this in context, West Rhyl has some of the highest levels of deprivation in the UK, including worklessness, low incomes and poor educational outcomes. Unemployment is 43% compared to 16% in the rest of Wales. The crime rate is 25% higher than the Welsh average, and 20% fewer adults have a level 3 qualification than the Welsh average. 25% of adults have no qualifications compared to the Welsh average.

The summit was a starting point for what will be a long and difficult process to improve how things are today. Over the years much has been promised yet, so little has been achieved.

This has led to huge scepticism from the local community. However, it is our ambition that working with organisations such as Place Matters and Right to Succeed, we can overtime succeed in our ambitions and we will do this by taking the voices of the people of Rhyl with us. They will speak and we will listen and together we can make things happen through place-based change.

Thank you.

Peter Neumark LVO, Chair of The Neumark Foundation



We were all determined that Your Voice, Your Rhyl was not going to be just another consultation event and that it would instead be an opportunity to listen in a different way, enabling people to work side-by-side to create long-term and lasting change in Rhyl.

My heartfelt thanks to everyone who joined us in Rhyl on that day and who made it possible to start this journey.

We heard voices from the community and what really matters to them, we were inspired by stories of change from elsewhere in the UK, and we heard from funders, local authorities and Welsh and UK Government who all committed their support.

We all went home that evening with a sense of what could be possible when communities and partners come together with shared goals, and barriers that we all face are pulled down.

This report gives us the platform for taking that next step and turning that hope into reality. Community Foundation Wales is very proud to work with The Neumark Foundation and our other partners to create this opportunity to listen and connect.

Now, the next steps belong to the people of Rhyl, who will lead and shape how this work moves on, bolstered by the support they heard from the funders and governments.

We at Community Foundation Wales will be here, supporting in any way we can – whether that be through convening funders and donors, the work of our own local grant programmes or by sharing our expertise in philanthropy and endowment funds.

My hope is that this report not only captures the story of the Your Voice, Your Rhyl event, but creates an opportunity to deliver meaningful and lasting change.

Diolch o galon – Thank you.

Judi Rhys MBE, Chair of Community Foundation Wales

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Why Your Voice, Your Rhyl?

Rhyl is a vibrant coastal town in Denbighshire with a population of around 27,000 people, home to a diverse community that includes a higher proportion of young families than the Welsh average, with over a fifth of residents under 16. The town faces real and significant challenges: 35% of children live in relative low-income families, and historically some wards have featured among Wales's most deprived areas. Yet these statistics tell only part of Rhyl's story. This is a community with deep roots, strong connections, and voices that deserve to be heard. The people of Rhyl possess invaluable insights born of lived experience, and their perspectives on the issues affecting their town are essential to understanding how services, support, and opportunities can better meet their needs.



The Your Voice, Your Rhyl vision was created to bring the community together at a moment of both challenge and opportunity. It was born from a series of conversations with residents, community groups working to support local people, funders and local authority representatives, many of whom spoke of their frustrations and recognitions that progress to improve the area was slow, that the world had moved on and the old ways of 'doing generation' are no longer relevant. It was widely felt that too often, decisions about Rhyl have been made elsewhere, and investment has failed to reach the people it was meant to serve.

The Your Voice, Your Rhyl event in early October 2025, offered a new way forward, one based on co-design, collaboration, and listening. It was hosted by The Neumark Foundation, a charitable foundation supporting organisations across North Wales to have a long-lasting positive effect on the welfare and quality of life of children and young people and Community Foundation Wales, a charity that works across Wales to connect philanthropically minded people and businesses with grassroots community groups and charities working to improve the lives of local people. The event was held in partnership with Welsh Government and the National Lottery Community Fund.

At the heart of this event were the voices of young people, our future generation. Insights from over 500 young residents who took part in the BRHYLiant Youth Consultation held during the summer, alongside the powerful youth film shown at the event, set the tone for the day.

Their message was clear: they love Rhyl, its community spirit, and its potential, but they want safer spaces, more opportunities, and a genuine role in shaping the town's future.



At the event, over one hundred people came together, including local residents both young and old, community leaders, educators, police, councillors, charities, local businesses, funders, UK and Welsh Government representatives, and experts in place-based change. This report captures those community voices, sharing the wisdom, concerns, hopes, and solutions that emerged when we simply took the time to listen.

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The day generated great energy, enthusiasm & momentum. Along with the impressive array of highly engaged attendees, from the public, private & voluntary sectors, this itself gives cause for optimism on the hugely important ambition of Your Voice, Your Rhyl. Success will only come from shared & collective endeavour, sustained over the long-term & driven by the community itself. The task is not easy but the honesty, desire & determination evident at the launch event certainly provided a promising start.

Nick Wright,
UBS Social Impact and Philanthropy

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Building a Coalition of the Willing

A community-led vision for long-term renewal and shared leadership.

Why Rhyl, why now?

Rhyl is a town of extraordinary resilience. It has weathered decades of economic and social change, yet remains a place of warmth, creativity, and belonging. Across every conversation at Your Voice, Your Rhyl, one message came through clearly: Rhyl's greatest strength is its people.

We have heard clearly from Rhyl people that for too long, regeneration has been something done to Rhyl, not led by it. Projects have come and gone, often promising transformation but leaving little lasting change.

In March 2024, it was announced that Rhyl is to receive £20 million of investment as part of the UK Government's 'levelling up' agenda. News reports often described the area as 'left behind' in fact, in 2023, it was subject to a scathing review from the Telegraph, which ranked it among the country's 'worst' seaside resorts. The publication gave it a dismal rating of 5/100, arguing that efforts to make Rhyl a 'desirable destination' had fallen flat.

The Rhyl Neighbourhood Board is working to form a 10 year vision alongside a 4 year investment plan to show how it will disperse the £20million of capital and revenue funding into Rhyl, making it a place full of character and opportunities for generations to come.

The Your Voice, Your Rhyl vision is separate and independently developed. While it will not seek to deliver or follow the Rhyl Neighbourhood Board's agenda, it will work in a way that is compatible, non-competitive, and open to collaboration where appropriate. The event was an opportunity to listen to the voices of local people, to hear from those who have managed successful place-based projects in other areas and to make a plan for the future, and to create a movement, building on what was learned, one step at a time.

This report captures the voice of that movement. It is both a reflection and an invitation: a chance to turn the energy of the Your Voice, Your Rhyl event into a coalition of the willing, a powerful partnership of residents, local leaders, local business, community groups and funders ready to co-create Rhyl's future. We believe Rhyl will be a thriving coastal town defined by opportunity, creativity, and wellbeing, a place where young people can see a future for themselves, where families feel secure, and where local pride is visible on every street.

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It was fantastic to see such shared purpose and commitment to children and young people of Rhyl focused on building trust for the long term change; to ensure there is equity and opportunities for all to thrive.

Nina Ruddle,
Head of Public Policy Engagement,
Wrexham University

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What we heard

The day started with keynote speakers, First Minister of Wales, Eluned Morgan MS, and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Wales Office, Claire Hughes MP, who both spoke passionately about the strength of the local community, about the importance of local philanthropy and the need to empower young people to stay local and to be the best they can be, whatever that looks like.

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The event was a fantastic opportunity for everyone to come together and shape the future lives of young people and make Rhyl a better place to live in.

Gareth John,
Director of Rugby,
Rhyl Rugby Club

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The scene was then set by the sharing of a film made by young people from Brighter Futures, a small local charity supporting the well-being of local people. We then heard from several leaders from youth and education settings, local government and philanthropic giving followed by a round table discussion on where the energy/momentum is currently and what might be needed to take it to the next level.

To help broaden horizons and to inspire, we heard from Graeme Duncan, Founder and CEO of Right to Succeed, and Nicky Twemlow, founder of Made in Stoke, who both shared successful but very different models of place-based funding, sharing the challenges and the successes of each model. The Right to Succeed model is very much focused on children and young people living in high deprivation areas, with the aim of increasing their future opportunities. A programme from a community in Birkenhead was shared with many similarities to Rhyl.

Made in Stoke's model is one based on the whole community, harnessing the power of philanthropy in the widest sense to encourage people born, raised or connected to Stoke to come together, reconnect and give back in some way, whether that be creative, time or monetary contribution. Again, a concept that resonated with the deep sense of pride and loyalty felt by the people of Rhyl and its diaspora, that has been touched on previously.

The energy within the room throughout the day was palpable. Discussions were lively, ideas were flowing and you could almost feel a momentum shift. Together, we listened, shared, and imagined what renewal could look like if it were truly led from within the community.

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This atmosphere brought a power all of its own to the day with a diverse audience, including many local community groups who, to the surprise of some were saying we will work together to bring about this change. Everyone in the room was an equal and equally respected, which is how it should always be but is very rarely achieved.

Rhiannon Hughes,
Wicked Wales Films Rhyl

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Several powerful themes emerged

● Poverty of Aspiration and Education

Many spoke of the deep connection between aspiration, confidence, and opportunity. Young people want to be proud of Rhyl, but they need to see visible pathways to raise aspirations in education, skills, work and training opportunities locally. Low literacy and limited opportunities have become barriers to attainment.

● Long-term Funding and Local Capacity

Short-term projects cannot solve long-term challenges. Funders and community organisations agreed that tackling inequality in Rhyl requires a 0-15-year commitment, with flexible, patient investment that builds local capacity, not dependency. This means funding the 'connective tissue' the people and structures that make collaboration possible.

● Pride in Place and People

There is pride in Rhyl, it just isn't always seen. Young people want visible, achievable wins: reduce anti-social behaviour linked to drugs and alcohol, cleaner streets, safer spaces, community venues that feel welcoming and affordable. They want to tell a new story about Rhyl which is defined not by deprivation, but by positivity.

● Collaboration and Collective Ambition

We heard that there is more partnership now than there was a decade ago, but services remain fragmented and overstretched. Participants called for joined-up working and a culture of openness, where organisations collaborate rather than compete. The future of Rhyl will depend on how well its people feel encouraged, enabled and equipped to be the changemakers.

● Radical Honesty and Shared Responsibility

Progress will only come through honesty about what's working, what's not, and where power needs to shift. The event showed that Rhyl has the courage for difficult conversations. People want to be involved not as stakeholders to be consulted, but as leaders, collaborators and decision-makers in their own town.

Making Sense of it: Readiness for Change

The energy in the room reflected a deep readiness for change and people recognised that Rhyl meets many of the conditions needed to begin a long-term, place-based transformation:

- **High need:** Rhyl West is the most deprived ward in Wales, yet rich in community assets.
- **Consensus on priorities:** aspiration, education and employment, safety, and pride were named by all.
- **Collective working:** community leaders, funders, local business and local government are open to shared accountability.
- **Evidence-informed:** data, lived experience, and evaluation will shape decisions.
- **Funding potential:** major funders are open to collaborative investment.
- **Structure:** there is an understanding that there needs to be a structure, a local backbone that is formed of local voices, willing to bring people together, communicate openly and hold a shared vision.
- **Time:** the realisation that change will not happen overnight, or all at the same time.



Building a Coalition of the Willing

Change will not come from any single organisation or project. It will come from a coalition of the willing, people and organisations who believe that Rhyl's renewal must be built from within, and who can commit to:

- **Listen and learn** – placing the lived experience of Rhyl's residents at the centre.
- **Connect and coordinate** – building community capacity through increased social capital, linking community action, funders, and local authority in shared purpose.
- **Champion local leadership** – empower local organisations, businesses and groups to take on leadership roles to develop a new generation of individual community and civic leaders of all ages.
- **Work transparently** – sharing progress, promoting success whilst being honest about challenges, and making decisions openly.
- **Model collective ambition** – so the people of Rhyl shape what happens next, not just comment on it.
- **Support place-based development** – working closely to share resources, be a safe space to encourage people to bring ideas that support ambition, fostering collaboration across the sectors.

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Your Voice, Your Rhyl brought together stakeholders, community leaders, and residents not just to imagine a brighter future for young people, but to begin building it together with courage, creativity, and hope.

When a community unites around a shared vision for its young people, change stops being a dream and starts becoming a movement. Rhyl has shown what's possible when belief turns into collective action.

Shane Owen,
Brighter Futures Rhyl

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The Road Ahead

We heard that local people want to codesign, plan, contribute, design and author what next comes next. The Right to Succeed model outlines a 'discovery phase', which is both consultation and research to find out what is, and what isn't, working well. A phase that explores processes, to identify broken links in the chain; some of which are often easily solvable and have an immediate impact to ease frustrations. This phase is likely to take time, typically at least 12 months and should continuously inform and support implementation and delivery. This phase would focus on understanding Rhyl, testing what works, and creating the conditions for long-term investment.

We heard strongly from those in the room, that they want to co-design, plan, and shape what comes next, not just to be consulted, but to contribute as authors of Rhyl's future. There was broad support for a discovery phase, as the starting point from which to build.



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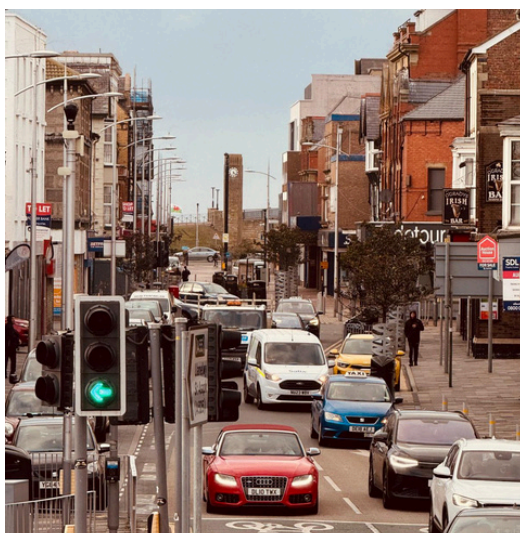
Beforehand I had some scepticism of how meaningful a conversation the event would be, having been invited to many such events before ran by other organisations/bodies that merely paid lip service to the concept of meaningful consultation. But this one felt different, straight away it felt like your ideas and thoughts as a community group were valued and you were a genuine part of the conversation.

James McGuinness
West Rhyl Young People's Project

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Key next steps

- The Your Voice, Your Rhyl concept started with **young people**, it's vital therefore that they feel able to influence the next steps particularly with regard to what's important for them. The young people should be a key part of this journey.
- Establish a **discovery phase** – focus on sense making and collective impact for building shared ambition. Consider what this might look like in a multi stakeholder coalition.
- Identify **community champions**, partners and funders aligned with the focus of this Discovery phase.
- Secure **discovery funding** – enabling the creation of a small Your Voice, Your Rhyl team based in Rhyl.
- Build a **shared evidence base** – blending data with lived experience to inform priorities.



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It was fantastic to see such a wide range of colleagues across all sectors coming together on the day. The energy, enthusiasm and unwavering commitment to overcoming challenges and co-designing a brighter future for Rhyl was clear for all to see. We are really looking forward to hearing what comes next.

Paul O'Neill,
Development Director,
Steve Morgan Foundation

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Closing Reflections

The Your Voice, Your Rhyl event was a great success and it has marked a turning point, a shared recognition that the solutions to the town's challenges already exist within its people. Most importantly, its young people, the next generation who are most invested in Rhyl's future. We must provide them with the skills and the tools and trust them to shape the Rhyl they want to live and work in and be proud of their community.

The story of Rhyl is still being written. The Your Voice, Your Rhyl event showed that people are ready to lead, and funders are ready to listen. Rhyl's future will be measured not just in buildings or projects, but in confidence, connection, and opportunity. It begins with a shared belief, that the people who know this town best are the ones who can transform it.

Let's work alongside them to support and empower community-led change. Together, we can take forward the momentum, the passion and the excitement that was witnessed at the Your Voice, Your Rhyl event to build a vibrant, thriving Rhyl, with a happy, healthy and prosperous community who continue to be proud of where they live and work but with added determination and drive for long term sustainable growth.

Rhyl is ready... are you?



Thank you to the following event partners and supporters



Prifysgol Wreccsam
Wrexham University



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government