



Connecting  
Threads

# HANDBOOK

2022-2027



Connecting Threads is a Southern Uplands Partnership project. It is the cultural strand of Destination Tweed and is supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

**The Southern Upland Partnership** was established in 1999 as a charity to develop resilient and sustainable communities. Traditional industries are declining and new approaches are needed if people are to be able to continue to live and work in rural locations.

The south of Scotland has a rich natural and cultural heritage which if wisely used can help sustain jobs. The Tweed is a major asset for the region and we are delighted to be working with our partners to explore ways of adding value to the culture of this world-class river.

The Southern Uplands Partnership has 22 years experience of working with communities and businesses. Connecting Threads closely aligns with our wider ambitions and aims and brings a new way of broadening the support we offer.



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Introduction

Water is essential to life: the river Tweed, and its catchment, is a vital life force in the south of Scotland and north Northumberland.

Connecting Threads is a placemaking project. It will connect creative practitioners with conservationists, environmentalists, scientists and river specialists with communities (of place and purpose) to celebrate and protect the river Tweed through cultural activity which seeks to effect positive change.

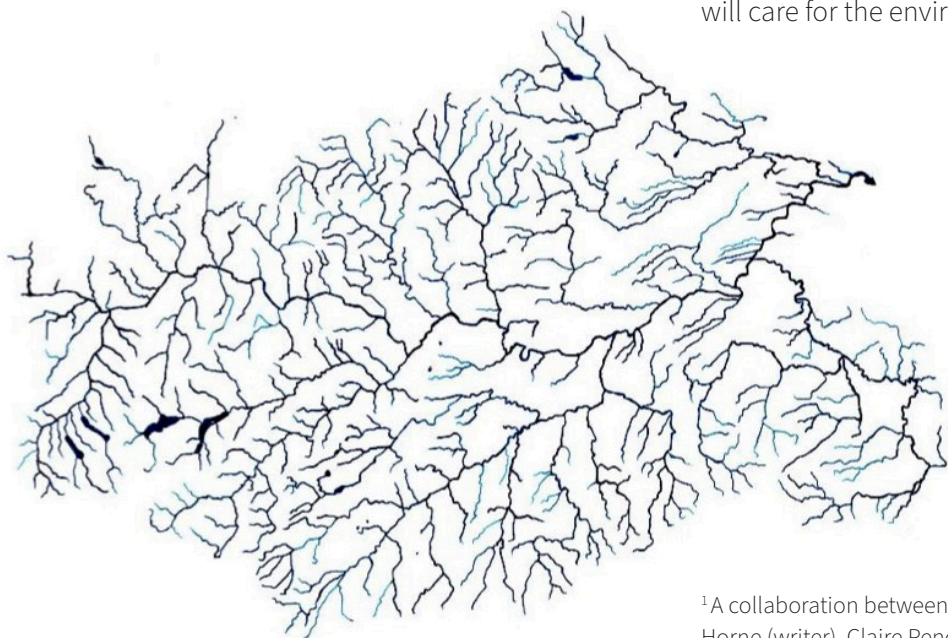
Since November 2020, Rachel Hunter and Emily Cropton have been exploring how this might work by conducting a year-long period of research, consultation and pilot activity. This has resulted in this 5-year handbook, which shows how the development work has formed the foundations for a set of principles and proposed activities.

Pilot events tested, questioned and confirmed the way the project will be delivered, by building capacity, fostering partnership and collaborative working, engaging communities, drawing on the expertise of deep local knowledge and connecting with the wider world.

Initially inspired by the precursor project *Working the Tweed*<sup>1</sup>, we went on to look at other river and place-based cultural projects and have gathered an understanding of the local and wider context. This has influenced a bespoke approach to delivering Connecting Threads. We consider the Tweed as a cultural landscape - tangible and intangible, changing seasonally and, over time, imperceptibly, just as the river changes its course.

The cultural events, art works and activities generated by Connecting Threads will invite communities and visitors to make deeper connections to the river environment, stimulate new relationships, strengthen cultural leadership and contribute to a sustainable, locally driven economy.

This handbook can be used both as a guide for the Connecting Threads team and as a description of Connecting Threads for those who want to know more about the project. It describes the work that has taken place in the development phase, what this has taught us, how this has influenced ideas for the proposed activities and how these will link to other Destination Tweed projects. The handbook illustrates the delivery programme and costs as well as principles for how we will work, how we will behave towards others, and how we will care for the environment (and the river in particular).



<sup>1</sup>A collaboration between artists Kate Foster (visual artist), Jules Horne (writer), Claire Pençak (choreographer) and James Wyness (composer) and Tweed Forum and Southern Uplands Partnership - [workingthetweed.co.uk](http://workingthetweed.co.uk)



Above and front cover: River portraits painted with 'mud' tempera. Made by Connecting Threads pilot programme workshop participants. Left: 'River Ways' catchment map by artist Kate Foster, 2013. Produced as part of the Working The Tweed project.



Tweed River Culture

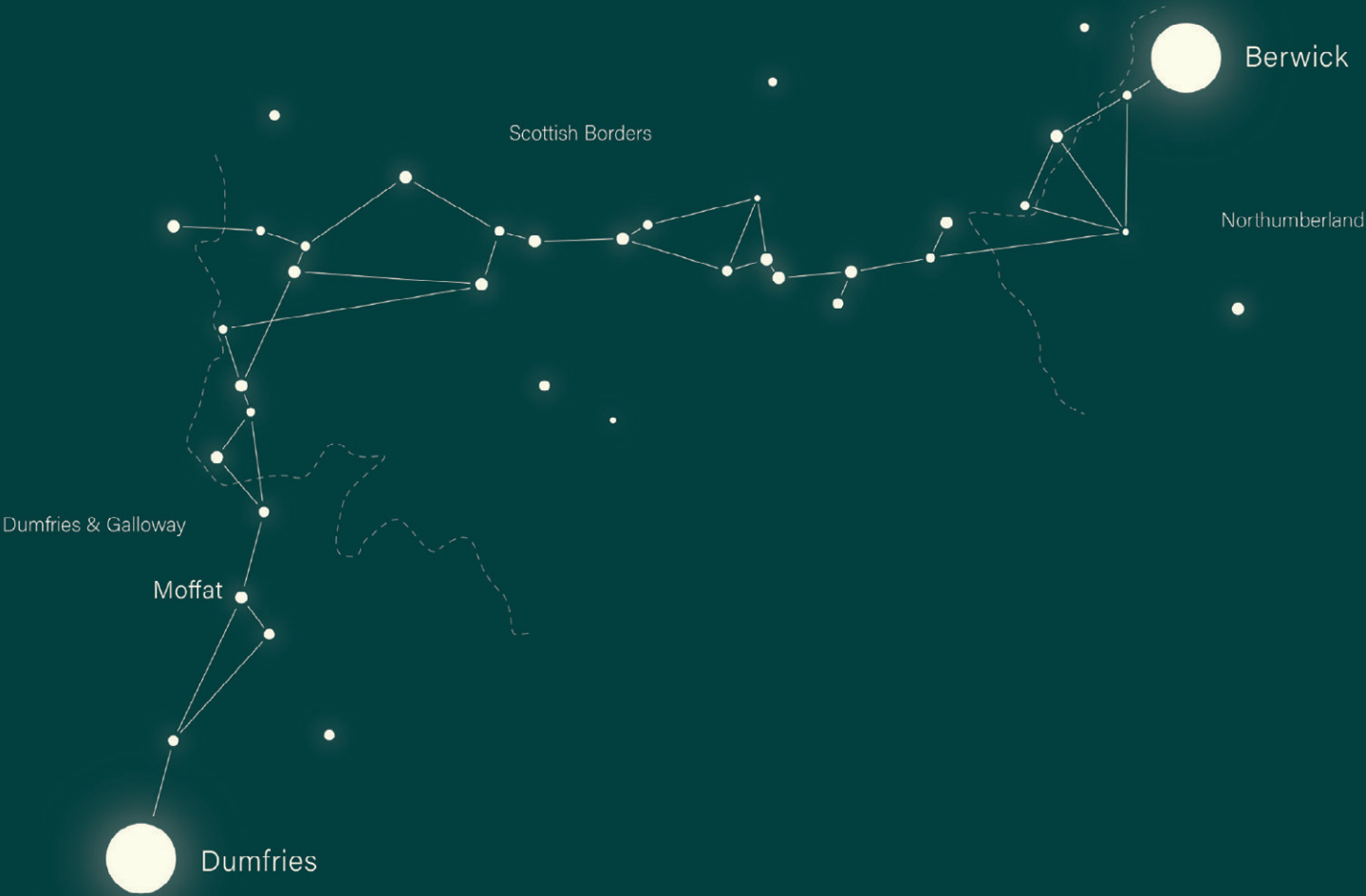
The river Tweed runs through the south of Scotland and into north Northumberland. These distinctive environments of the Tweed are laden with rich cultural heritage and lively, contemporary creative practice, shaping the identity of the area, generating local distinctiveness and creating recognition that we are all part of something culturally and environmentally bigger.

‘River culture’ is the relationship we have with the river through the routines, rituals, traditions, beliefs, stories, music, industries and agricultural activities which connect us to it.

We have used our development phase to gain a deeper understanding of the Tweed’s river culture, and of the cultural sector that is such an essential part of it. We have also explored the identity of the cultural sector of this diverse area and have gained an impression of it. The illustration below shows a ‘constellation’ with strong cultural hubs in Dumfries in the west and Berwick-upon-Tweed in the East. These places, with already established

cultural organisations, act as focal points and connect with their rural hinterlands. Between these two points, along the course of the Tweed, lies a delicate but very active network of individual creative practitioners, living and working in an area which has no obvious urban centre but rather consists of a string of small towns and villages. The cultural activities of these places, in total, is vibrant and inspiring and contributes significantly to the identity of the Borders. This illustration also includes the community development trusts, third sector organisations and environmental groups which contribute to the cultural life of the area. Connecting Threads can act as a link between all of these.

Connecting the ‘hubs’ of Dumfries and Berwick through a constellation of cultural activity, with and around the river.



Clockwise from top left: River Blessing at Norham; Isabella Hermiston, Kelso fly maker; Innerleithen mill lade; Young salmon caught during a professional development workshop in Melrose; Swimming in the Tweed Valley; Rowing boats on the river at Peebles; Head to Mouth by Tania Kovats, 2019; Nature Weaving workshop with young people at Dryburgh; Common Riding river crossing





The River

Working with the Annandale Way and the Tweed, which together run through three local authority areas and two nations, enables us to get beyond borders and territorialism to engage with communities of place and purpose through a common interest in the connecting device of the Tweed.

This beautiful river emerges from boggy fields up in the Lowther hills, a sparsely populated area 6 miles north of Moffat, sharing the same watershed as the Annan and the Clyde. It progresses through open uplands, close to the A701, connecting the tiny farmland communities of Tweedsmuir, Drumelzier, Dawyck and Stobo. As it flows on down into the ‘Tweed Valley’ from Peebles to Tweedbank, it becomes more enclosed, passing through steeper-sided hills, grazed by sheep or blanketed in Sitka spruce tree plantations, an area formerly thick with textile mills with consequences for the river still being dealt with today. The river broadens out as the land becomes more arable around Melrose and beyond, moving swiftly and powerfully through the flat, open grain fields of Berwickshire.



Tweed at Upper Tweeddale, *Upper Tweed: Close to the Source*



Tweed Valley from Thornielee forest, April 2019, *Iain MacLean*



River Tweed at West Ord, September 2020, *Days Out in the Borders*

Another significant feature of the Tweed is its catchment area; this landscape is characterised by a dense network of burns, rivers and multiple river crossings. Connecting Threads is a catchment project – whilst focusing our activities on the Tweed, we also want to draw people in from beyond the river corridor and connect people up, down and across the river.



Regional Context

Supporting the cultural sector in the predominantly rural south of Scotland and north Northumberland has traditionally been challenging. However, what we have discovered during the development phase suggests that things are changing. Organisations like The Stove, D&G Unlimited, CABN (Creative Arts Business Network) and many other informal groups and individuals are working hard to raise the profile of creativity at a strategic level, regionally and nationally. Publications such as the SBC Cultural Strategy (2014)<sup>2</sup>, The Stove’s Embers report (2018)<sup>3</sup>, and D&G Unlimited’s strategic plan show a positive way forward for the sector. The recently established economic agency, South of Scotland Enterprise, recognises culture and creativity as critical to the sustainability of the area.

Future strategic direction has to be viewed in the context of the global climate crisis. For the Tweed this means responding to threats relating to biodiversity loss, flooding, soil degradation, salmon population decline, acidification of the river, travel and transport emissions, light pollution, changes in insect phenology, pesticide and herbicide use. Connecting Threads can contribute to this agenda by bringing creative practitioners to work with communities to create positive alternative visions for the future. We can build on people’s personal connections to the river, and help these grow stronger, as a means for catalysing action.

We will be delivering our 5-year plan at a time when the world is still tackling/recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic. Locally we intend Connecting Threads to generate activities that will contribute positively to people’s health and wellbeing. We can also see ways that Connecting Threads will add to the economic recovery of the region, by enhancing the attractiveness of the area for nature and volunteer-based tourism, and by creating employment opportunities for artists<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/file/2896/cultural\_strategy  
<sup>3</sup> thestove.org/projects/ongoing-projects/embers/  
<sup>4</sup> Throughout this document the term ‘artist’ is used as short-hand for creative practitioners in all art forms

Wider Context

Recognition of the value of culture and nature is not only increasing locally but it is changing at a regional and national level too. This can be seen, for instance, at South of Scotland Enterprise, through their Regional Economic Strategy<sup>5</sup> (which highlights culture) and through their creation of a new post at the end of 2021– Strategy Manager: Creative and Cultural Capital.

At Scottish Government level, identification of natural capital as being of equal value to people, social and economic capital, in the 2021-26 *Land Use Strategy*<sup>6</sup>, again shows an important shift. The government’s *A Culture Strategy for Scotland*<sup>7</sup>, February 2020, celebrates the contribution of culture to society. The inclusion for the first time of a dedicated outcome for culture in the *National Performance Framework*<sup>8</sup> affirms the Scottish Government commitment to culture.

National organisations such as Nature Scot, English Heritage, Historic Environment Scotland, Scottish Environment Protection Agency and utilities companies such as Scottish Water, Northumbrian Water and Scottish Power are all demonstrating, in their strategic documents and public-facing communications, that they recognise the importance of communities, and are directing resources (staff time, grants and guidance) to support this.

The geographic area that Connecting Threads will work within is being recognised politically, with Scottish and UK governments coming together to invest in a number of projects (Destination Tweed included) under the banner of the *Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal*. This new term, Borderlands, is increasingly being used to describe the often overlooked south of Scotland and north England.

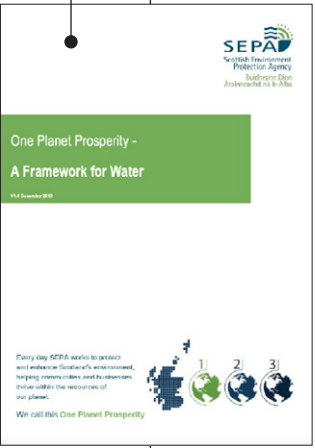
Across the board, priorities are aligning, nationally, regionally and locally, confirming that this is the perfect time to deliver Connecting Threads.

<sup>5</sup> sosrep.dumgal.gov.uk/media/24921/South-of-Scotland-Regional-Economic-Strategy/pdf/South-of-Scotland-Regional-Economic-Strategy.pdf?m=637684500893370000 – in particular, see page 5 and page 32  
<sup>6</sup> gov.scot/publications/scotlands-third-land-use-strategy-2021-2026-getting-best-land/documents/  
<sup>7</sup> gov.scot/publications/culture-strategy-scotland/  
<sup>8</sup> nationalperformance.gov.scot/national-outcomes/culture



“We want a Scotland where places and quality of life are transformed through imagination, ambition and an understanding of the potential of creativity

Creative Scotland  
Strategic Plan 2014 - 2024



“We aim to protect and restore water environment to support rich & diverse wildlife”

SEPA  
Framework for Water



“Protecting, enhancing & enjoying our abundant natural capital; cultural & heritage assets and vibrant arts & festivals backdrop.”

South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership  
Regional Economic Strategy, 2021



“Scotland is a place where culture is valued, protected and nurtured. Culture is woven through everyday life, shapes and is shaped by society, and its transformative potential is experienced by everyone.”

Scottish Government  
A Culture Strategy for Scotland



“Build mutually-rewarding relationships with new current partner organisations”

English Heritage  
Strategic Priorities



Project Description

Connecting Threads is a creative placemaking project in a rural area, focusing on a river rather than a centre of population. For Connecting Threads we use the term ‘creative placemaking’ to mean using the power of arts, culture and creativity to serve the interests of the Tweed whilst driving a broader agenda to engage people with environmentalism. We intend the project to be activist in nature, working with artists to:

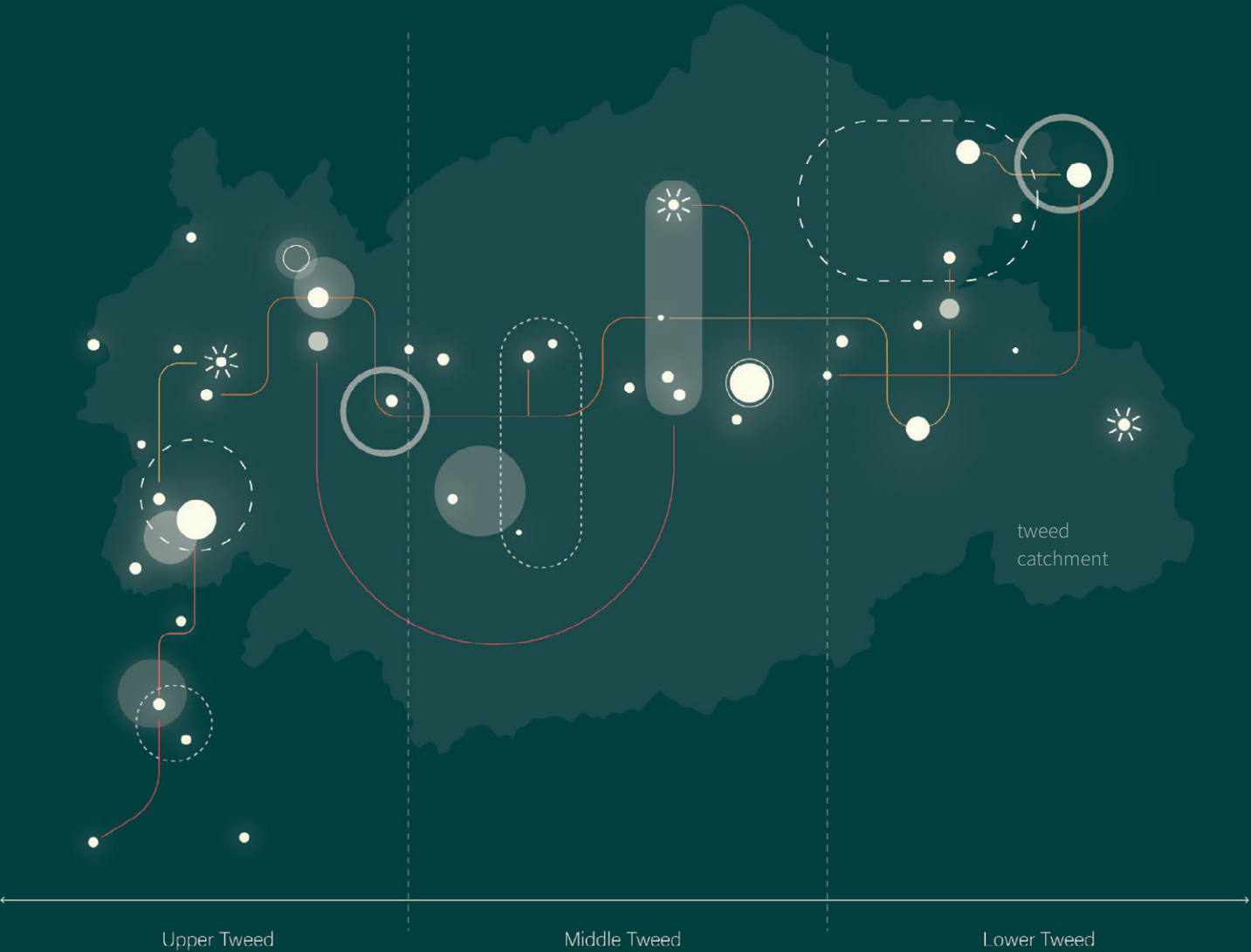
- create a positive vision for the future
- change individual behaviours
- influence decision makers

We believe that culture and arts speak to people in ways that other means cannot - offering ways to ‘enter the room through different doors’ – to generate cultural change. By working in combination with artists, scientists and river specialists we can achieve a broader reach. We will bring the benefits of the project to young people in the area, people who are socially isolated or recovering their mental or physical health (including farmers) and to creative practitioners.

Within Connecting Threads we will devise projects relating to the river that are responsive to the needs of the communities (human and non-human) that we work with. These projects will vary in size, scale, duration, some may be one-offs, some may be designed to be repeatable or adaptable for other locations or situations. Some will be targeted to a specific place or audience; others will be for the whole river. In this way, we will create an ecosystem of cultural activity.

“Creative practices can combine ways of relating to place, and offer alternative meanings and insights that escape conventional appraisal. Artists can act as connectors between disparate approaches, and re-enchant what is overlooked.”

Kate Foster & Clare Pençak, Working the Tweed



Aims

- 1 | Through culture, encourage river stewardship by helping people understand their place within the world’s ecosystems.
- 2 | For communities
  - offer opportunities for people to take part in cultural activity in their local area
  - involve people in shaping programmes of activity
  - encourage young people to engage in culture and see opportunities for future employment in the cultural sector
- 3 | For visitors
  - provide a stronger local experience, inspiring people to explore the hidden side of place
  - raise awareness of the ‘constellation’ and help people gain an understanding of the identity of south of Scotland
- 4 | Provide support for the cultural sector through creating employment, running CPD events and building networks and partnerships.
- 5 | Work with other Destination Tweed project partners to bring audiences to them who might not otherwise have engaged with them, and vice versa.

Objectives

The small Connecting Threads team, consisting of a River Culture Curator, three River Culture Animateurs and a River Messenger, will fulfil these aims by running a project composed of:

Artist Residencies

bringing socially/environmentally engaged artists into the project, embedded in local organisations (e.g. Tweed Forum, Tweed Commission, Green groups), research based and/or producing artworks

Seasonal River Celebrations

social and activity-based events on and alongside the river to engage people with the Tweed

River Conferences

focusing on river-related topics that take people from the personal (local) through to community (catchment) and outwards to the global level

Evolving Programmes of Activity

various workshops developed in tandem with communities, partner organisations and other Destination Tweed project leads

River Culture Mapping

a series of workshops to gather and record what people value most about the Tweed

Paid Internships

create opportunities for work experience

Volunteering Opportunities

work with local organisations to identify volunteering opportunities

The coloured strands above relate to the 5-year choreography drawing which can be found on page 34.

Opposite: Connecting Threads will create a cultural ecosystem around the river, responding to the needs of human and non-human communities with activity of different scales, duration and context.



Consultation and Research

The Connecting Threads consultation and research phase was carried out over the course of a year, between November 2020 and October 2021. The first six months of this coincided with a full and then partial lock-down, so meetings were held virtually or through outdoor walks (often Tweed-side). Emerging from full lock-down in spring 2021 allowed more travel to meet people in their own locations and to see more of the river environment.

Connecting Threads was invited to give presentations at Berwick Creative Guild’s Pecha Kucha evening and at the Scottish Borders Cultural Forum. These events sparked connections which led to invitations to engage with other initiatives (Norham Arts Group, Tweed Estuary Protection Group, Marchmont House, and Elemental Festival, Berwick Visual Arts), creating potential for future collaborations.

Sharing the outline concept for Connecting Threads has generated conversations which have influenced (and continue to) the development of the project, as our understanding of the issues around the Tweed and the cultural sector have increased. Over the year we have talked to and met with creative practitioners, arts and heritage organisations (at local and national level), environmental organisations, youth organisations, community development trusts and potential funders. By researching other projects online and investigating funding sources we have gathered a sense of how Connecting Threads sits within a wider context of current movements in arts and environmentalism.

Our consultation and research have encouraged us to think of Connecting Threads as a combination of consolidator and catalyst, building on existing activity and prompting new. We want to bring high quality culture and opportunities for engagement and employment to where people live, using the river as our platform, working outside wherever possible and using as venues local village halls, fishing bothies, community gardens and estates.

Our exploration of the Tweed and the communities that live along its length has led us to identify a range of organisations, activities and initiatives that Connecting Threads can work with. The diagram on the following page encapsulates our findings so far, but is by no means definitive. It shows the great potential that lies ahead and can act as signposts for River Animateurs coming in to work on the project.

Erica Reid lives by the Tweed at Boleside and is part of the writers collective, 26characters. In Summer 2021, inspired by a conversation with Rachel Hunter and Emily Cropton, she wrote this poem, Listening, for a Wildlife Trust project.

Listening  
Erica Reid

Listening to Tweed, as Silurian greywacke grumbles.  
Remembering overwintered salmon, deep in arctic waters.  
Are they coming home?

Hear above Tweed, screaming swooping swifts.  
Sand martins glide to riverbank nests.  
Where are the swallows?

Look along Tweed, meadows sway with pollen clouds.  
Nettles feed caterpillars, butterflies.  
Have the moths gone?

Overlooking Tweed, ancient susurrations of sycamore,  
Grieving losses of centuries’ seasons.  
Why are the warbling willows silent?

Tribes of Tweed, ghosts of Abbey monks cast long shadows.  
Cuthbert’s modern pilgrims ford and pass.  
Oblivious of their destructive tread?

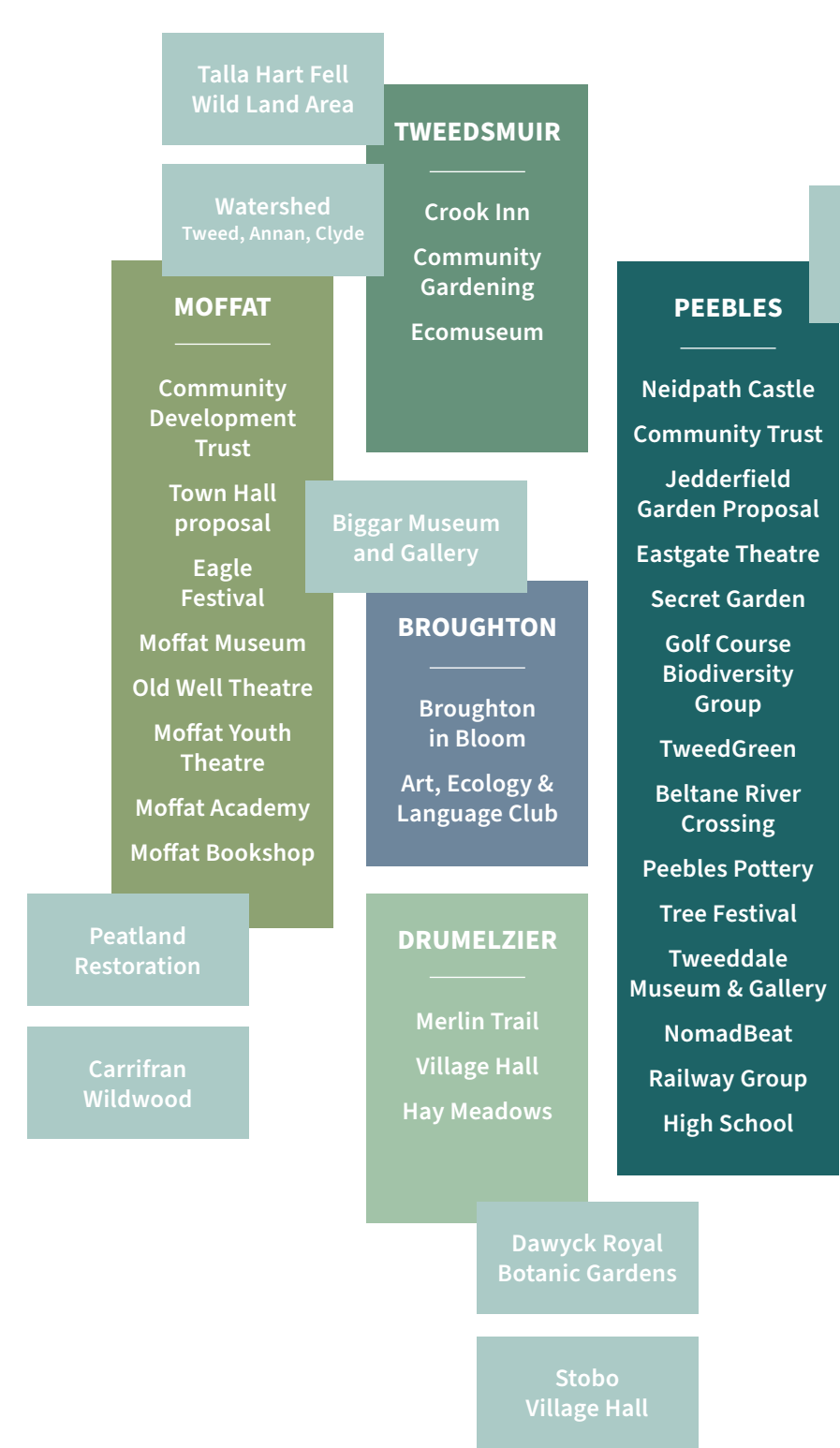
Waters flow, shifting restlessly rumbling Silurian greywacke.  
Are we listening to Tweed?



Over 50 individual artists, makers, designers, creators, educators, musicians, poets, growers, community activists, architects, writers & facilitators



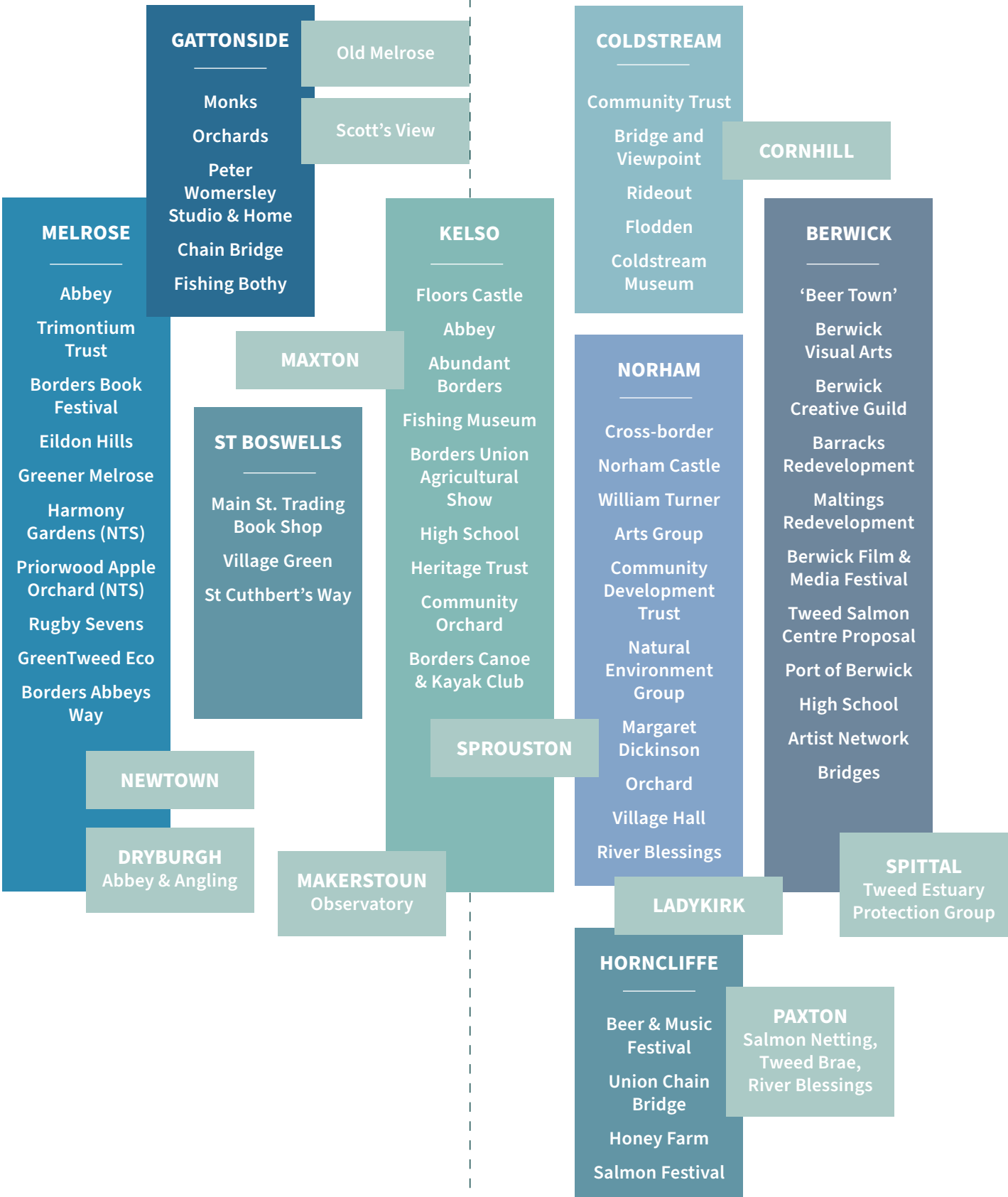
UPPER TWEED



MIDDLE TWEED



LOWER TWEED



This word map illustrates some of the existing organisations, activities and initiatives that we have identified along the river's course and that Connecting Threads can work with. It is not definitive, but aims to provide a starting point for future Animateurs.



## Collaboration and Partnership Working

From our meetings we have identified how we can work with various types of organisations to realise the potential of Connecting Threads.

### Arts and Cultural Organisations

Mutual sharing of expertise and learning; access to networks of creative practitioners; develop collaborative projects; provide locations for residencies and venues for activity; support cross-border working; appeal to shared audiences

### Community development organisations

Routes into communities; local knowledge; expertise and learning; partners for collaborative projects; routes into local audiences; hosts and venues for residencies and activity

### Health and wellbeing organisations

Routes to audiences; develop collaborative projects; provide good practice advice and guidance

### River organisations

Access to specialist river knowledge; organisational archives as a resource for creative practitioners; hosts for residencies; contributors to workshops, river celebrations and conferences; route to river boatmen

### Education

Academic research interests; skills and knowledge; hosts for residencies; links to creative practitioners; teaching of rural studies, boat building, textiles and design; expertise in evaluation and community mapping; route into local authority Community Learning Development

### Youth organisations

Routes to young people as audiences; opportunities for collaborative activity; skills and experience development

### Creative practitioners

Access (locally, nationally and internationally) to networks of socially/environmentally engaged creative practitioners, arts and environmental organisations and relevant projects; suggestions for project ideas relating to the river, path and environment; river/water/peat connections; venue ideas

### Destination Tweed partners

Shared knowledge and expertise; cross-cutting themes; citizen science; outdoor ‘venues’; cross-border working



Above: Making rafts and painting sails with natural inks as part of the Mini-Festival of Foraging, Food and Art at Traquair Estate.



Pilot Activity

The pilot phase was conducted between June and October 2021. (Pilot activities could not begin before this time, due to Covid 19 lock-down and restrictions.) The programme was developed through consultation with partner organisations, and was used to trial methods of working and types of activity, subsequently influencing the design of the 5-year programme. The programme was enhanced through securing additional funding from Fallago Environment Fund, Creative Carbon Scotland and Creative Arts Business Network. This funding supported a summer residency for artist, Jules Bradbury, a 10 week internship awarded to Kayleigh Adam, a recent graduate from Heriot-Watt University, and a professional development workshop for creative practitioners.

Activities were planned and delivered by Emily Cropton, River Animateur, with paid and voluntary contributions from creative practitioners, subject specialists and Connecting Threads intern, Kayleigh Adam. Audiences included communities, children and young people and creative practitioners.

The pilot activities included: a partnership with Heriot Watt University to provide a summer school for students; two CPD events for creative practitioners (River Portrait in Melrose and Telling Tales in Birgham), river-related events for young people (weaving with Earslton Youth Club, and foraging with Tweeddale Youth Action and Traquair Estate) and community events (botanical drawing in a community garden in Innerleithen, and a celebration of the Jules Bradbury’s residency at Merlindale, which included an outdoor exhibition of her work, music, food and drink and community cutting of the meadow with scythes.)

During the pilot phase we used Fair Work principles for the artist residency and internship. We established a presence on Facebook and Instagram attracting 233 and 370 followers respectively (at time of writing). Together the consultation and pilot work generated a high level of interest, with people asking for a Connecting Threads website and making requests for workshops and projects (all of which will be followed up in the delivery phase).

“To say that the event was a success is an understatement, I finished the day genuinely more optimistic about the future than before – much of the afternoon was spent speaking with people about how to create their own wildflower meadows and so the event has been genuinely effective in restoring some of these. I appreciate your giving up time and effort to make it all possible.”

Participant, Gathering Together

“Since taking part in your drawing workshop at the Wells, I’ve started attending a weekly botanical illustration class. It’s down in Kelso but I’m enjoying it so much it’s worth the journey.”

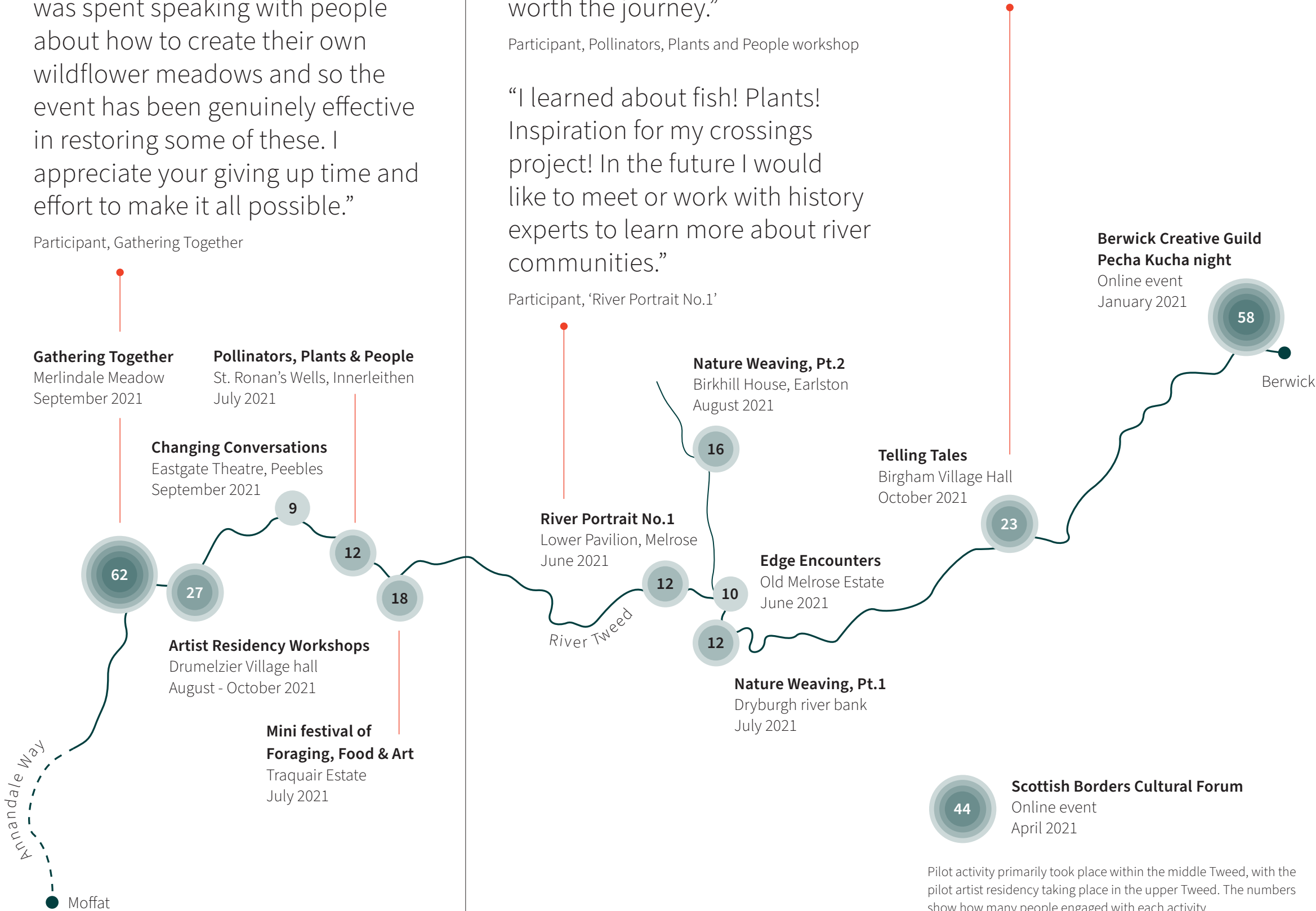
Participant, Pollinators, Plants and People workshop

“I learned about fish! Plants! Inspiration for my crossings project! In the future I would like to meet or work with history experts to learn more about river communities.”

Participant, ‘River Portrait No.1’

“Is there anything that would have made the event more enjoyable? More exchange and thoughts towards future”

Participant, Telling Tales



Pilot activity primarily took place within the middle Tweed, with the pilot artist residency taking place in the upper Tweed. The numbers show how many people engaged with each activity.



Learning from Pilot Activity

The pilot programme has revealed and confirmed preferred ways of working that suit the nature of Connecting Threads and matches the needs of proposed audiences. We will consider accessibility on all its forms to overcome exclusion and will work with audiences to develop ideas and establish relationships of trust. The conclusions of our learning from the pilot events are summarised below:

1 | Fresh Eyes

- Take people to parts of the river they may not have seen before.
- Give people a new perspective, physically from on the river itself.
- Give people a new perspective, by introducing a new voice to an old place.

2 | Accessible

- Bring activity to where people live; barn, farm, hamlet, village, town
- Facilitation which is friendly and approachable.
- Take time for introductions, questions, pauses.
- Consider terrain, warmth, light and sound
- Get advice from others - eg. third sector

3 | Long-term

- Consider how connections are made, long term.
- Share attendee details with participants (if agreed)
- Have a plan for what next or ask what participants would like to see happen next.
- Add participants to the mailing list.
- Create opportunities for people to gather again.
- Support others to take on the organisation of activity

4 | Collaborate, truly

- The most fruitful collaborations are those where there is a genuine exchange.
- Find out what each collaborator wants to achieve.
- Ask how the sum of the parts is bigger than the pieces.
- Consider the environment of your activity as a collaborator too, try not to be extractive of place.

5 | Take time, give time

- Take time to build relationships.
- Take time to listen.
- Take time to formulate the intention of each activity.
- Take time to speak with activity participants
- Give people the time to just sit by the river.

6 | Conceive in Conversation

- Devise activity ideas in-conversation with the intended audience, particularly when working with specific groups in mind (young people, refugees, recovery, older people)
- Bring people with you and take the time to test something on a small scale first.

7 | Seasonality

- Plan the annual programme around seasonality.
- Work with seasonal materials, sourced locally.
- Make a calendar showing the cycles of human and non-human life around the river.
- Play with seasonality to create unexpected experiences which present questions.

8 | Chance Encounters / Planned Encounters

- Create opportunities for both
- Consider the orchestration of people’s encounters and interactions with the project and each other.
- A diversity of ‘encounter scenarios’ can help reach different audiences.
- Consider how the spaces in which activity is held influences the dynamic of encounters.

Threads:  
Ideas for Engagement & Collaboration

During this year of consultation and pilot projects we have gathered together ideas, inspired by the river’s story, people we have met and our own research. These ideas can act as a preliminary ‘menu’ to draw upon throughout the project. Once all project staff are in place, they will be able to extend this by adding ideas that emerge from their own work on the Tweed. We will work individually and collectively, and with our audiences and partners, to develop these ideas into projects. The following lists are by no means definitive but gives a flavour of the ideas that have come to the fore so far.

Mapping

Possible themes and ideas and starting points include:

- swimming spots
- lost crossings
- riverside benches
- river larder - wild & cultivated
- food resources
- local skills and knowledge
- tweed herbarium
- put-in and get-out locations
- anatomical river drawing



stone  
shallows  
flow

Activity

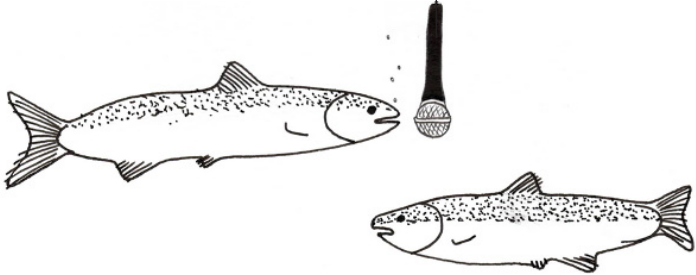
Possible themes, ideas and starting points include:

- guided walks & walkshops
- social prescriptions
- travelling exhibitions
- postal activity packs
- river blessings and rituals
- river cleaning & monitoring
- mobile kitchen
- journeying & journalling
- verges, edges and hedges
- meanderings & migrations
- oral histories of lost
- biodiversities
- swim sundays
- floating workshops
- alternative river Tweed
- newsletter
- Trees
- Mark Zygadlo’s WaterOrgan
- John Wallace’s Same Hillside

Young People

Working with schools, Borders College and youth support organisations, we could create:

- river portraits
- message in a bottle
- canoe & camp expeditions
- living laboratories
- alternative curriculum
- source to sea exchanges
- design competitions
- forage & cook classes
- youth-led conferences



Residencies

Possible subjects, locations and hosts include:

- plant fibres
- the shifting river border
- beelines
- fishing bothies
- bridges & crossings
- The Crook Inn
- Dawyck Botanic Gardens
- Heriot-Watt University
- DigVentures archaeology
- Makerstoun Observatory
- Tweed Foundation archive
- Sprouston Breviary
- Tweed Carbon Club
- Ba Haugh
- pubs & hotels
- fish taxidermy





Integration of Destination Tweed Strands

There is great synergy between the various projects within Destination Tweed. During the pilot phase we began to explore this, working in tandem with colleagues from Tweed Forum and Bug Life in the delivery of pilot activities. Further opportunities for collaboration and shared audiences will continue to emerge through the life of the project, but from the outset we see the potential to:

- work with their specialisms to bring expertise into Connecting Thread projects. (During the development phase, Emily Iles and Derek Robeson contributed to pilot projects.)
- bring creative practitioners into their projects (e.g. placing a writer, musician or choreographer into the archaeology programme through a residency).
- create content for the path interpretation of the Tweed. This could be the result of workshop programmes and residencies, and could be physical, permanent, ephemeral or digital. It can contribute to the digital and printed resources and creative features on the trail, as described in the path Interpretation Plan.
- bring Connecting Threads activities to the path and to ‘orientation hubs’, gathering spaces, seating and viewpoints located on the path
- contribute to creation of resources for other project strands (e.g. imagery for educational resources).



Derek Robeson speaking at a Connecting Threads pilot event.

Comparator Projects

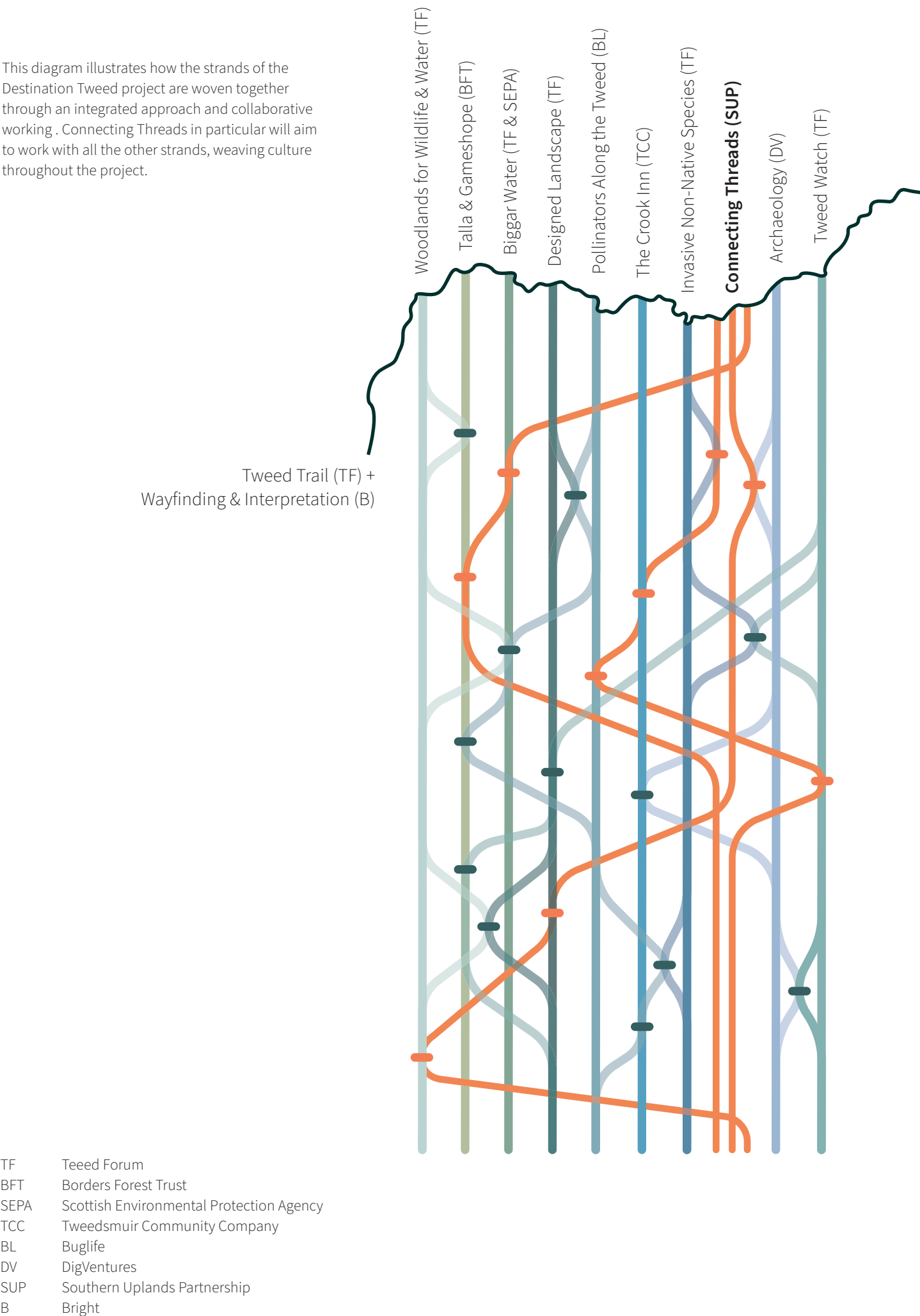


We feel that Connecting Threads is part of a wider, important movement. Looking at other similar projects has helped to firm up our thinking, particularly our approach and ethos.

We have looked at projects which are based on rivers and water (the Stour, Wye, Thames estuary, Forth, Nith and Dee, UNESCO Water Museums, Salmon School, Beach of Dreams, The Leven Project), place (Skye, Deveron, Sutherland, North Uist, Portobello), trails (Cateran Ecomuseum, Slow Ways, The Adventure Syndicate: From Source to Sea) and environmental issues or food production (Peatland Connections, Season for Change, Kultivator Art & Agriculture Project).

We have been drawn to projects that are built on strong community engagement, working with socially engaged artists and environmentalists to offer programmes of co-created and cross disciplinary activities, exhibitions or annual festivals. These inspirational examples have influenced the principles and proposed content of the five-year plan, detailed in the next section.

This diagram illustrates how the strands of the Destination Tweed project are woven together through an integrated approach and collaborative working. Connecting Threads in particular will aim to work with all the other strands, weaving culture throughout the project.





Audiences & Intersectionality

We recognise the concept of intersectionality; people have multiple aspects to their individual identities (race, class, gender, age), so we will take care to design projects that do not categorise people or which perpetuate discrimination or exclusion.

Through our development work we have identified priority audiences that we wish to work with initially. These may change during the life of project in response to changes at a local level. Animateurs will be eyes and ears on the ground, able to recognise these changes and to identify key groups to work with.

Young people, 14-25

We will work with young people to help them develop creative skills and confidence, combat climate anxiety and present positive, active futures; we will connect young people to each other along the river and inspire through contact with established creative practitioners.

Farming community

Farmers are living with stressful working conditions, financial uncertainty and isolation, in combination leading to high levels of depression and suicide. We will work with the farming community and farming-specific mental health support organisations to help address these issues.

Socially isolated people

Geographic and socio-economic factors in the South of Scotland can lead to social isolation; we will bring activity to where people live and generate projects that facilitate networking and social interaction.

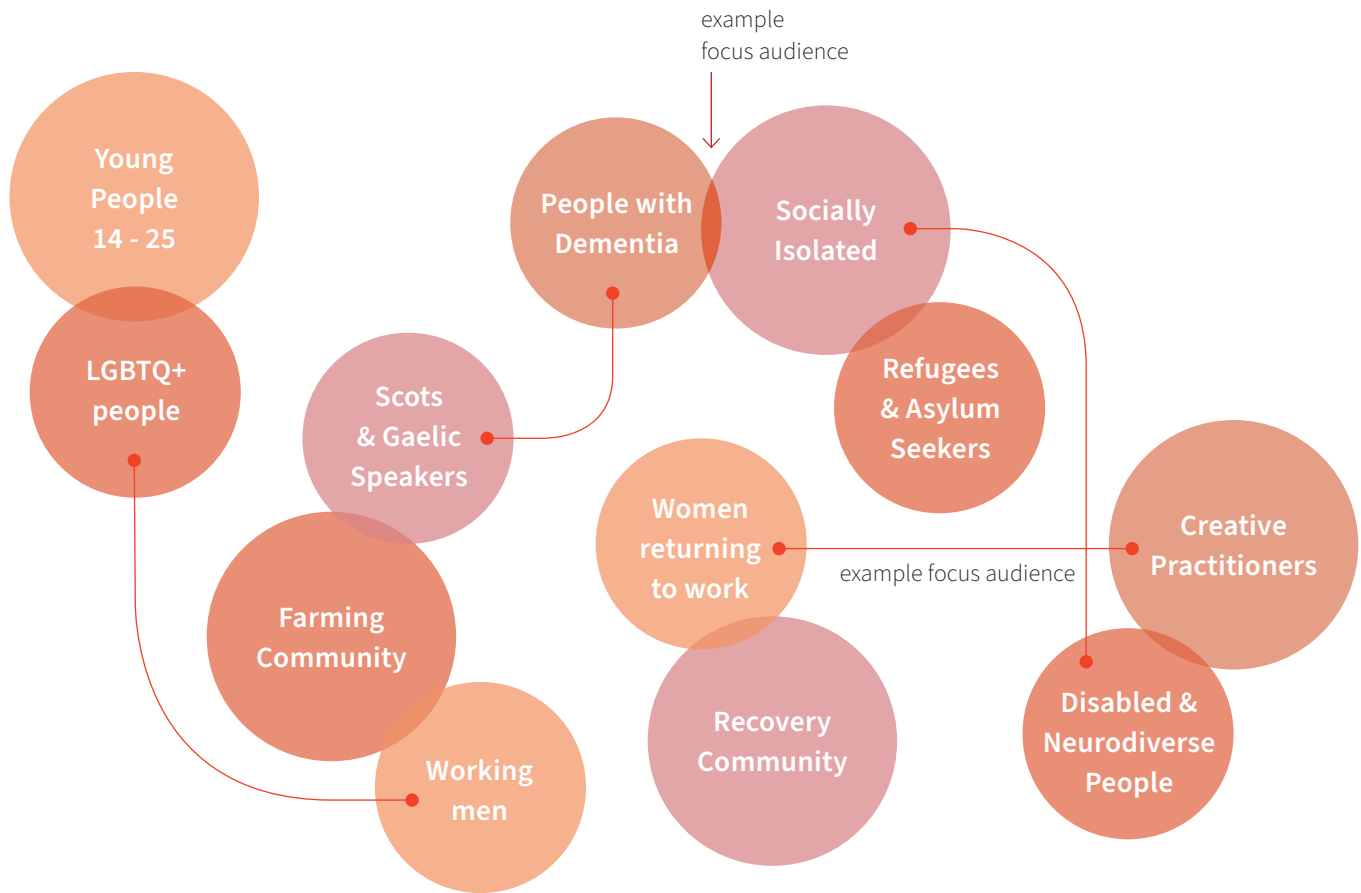
People recovering from mental or physical ill health

We will offer activities that support Social Prescribing, a form of community referral which allows GPs, nurses and other healthcare workers to signpost patients to support outside of health services, through community organisations, local support groups and holistic hubs.

Creative practitioners

We will support and strengthen the ‘constellation’ that is the creative sector in the south of Scotland and north Northumberland, by creating work for people who live here as well as facilitating connections locally, nationally and globally through our conferences and CPD events.

We will use the Tweed as the focus of attention for our activities with these audiences, building on or establishing personal connections to the river, generating a sense of achievement for individuals and, collectively, a greater concern for the river, leading to greater desire to take responsibility for its wellbeing.



Conclusions

From this year of researching, investigating, exploring and testing ideas, we know that communities on and around the Tweed are interested in each other and their shared experience of the river, but they lack opportunities to mix and meet. We are confident that there is a strong appetite for creative activity as a means of bringing people together, to care for the river and to tackle the climate crisis.

Our consultation and research have also revealed a creative sector that is environmentally and socially conscious, excited by the idea of the river as connector, looking for opportunities to work in their own locality and to interact and be inspired by other creative practitioners.

As a result, we have arrived at a project that over the course of five years will offer a diverse mix of river-related activities. Activities will take place at many different locations along the length of the river. Some will be static and some mobile. Activities will differ in scale and duration. Some will be cross-authority and some cross-Border. We aim to hold activity predominantly outdoors, beside or on the river, or in non-traditional venues. Activity will connect communities up and down the length of the Tweed with each other and with the river itself.

Activities will be developed in collaboration with others – community groups, arts and environmental organisations, creative practitioners, scientists and river specialists – to exchange knowledge and spark new ways of seeing, thinking and doing. Connecting Threads will coalesce this activity around the Tweed, with the river as a democratic space where people are free to think big and project a positive future.



Principles and Values

1 | Respect and value what is here already

We will be reactive and responsive, building on existing activity, interests and systems; we will also be proactive and challenging, shifting dialogues and introducing alternate perspectives.

2 | Participatory community engagement

We will offer people high-quality cultural activity in the place where they live (rather than having to travel to Edinburgh, Carlisle, Newcastle) and we will embrace principles of equality, diversity, inclusion to ensure access for all.

3 | Slow growth and continuity

For meaningful engagements with communities, we intend to work slowly and offer continuity in order to build lasting relationships and trust.

4 | Cultural Ecosystem

We will create programmes which balance different scales, types and duration of activity, responsive to the needs of the communities we are working with and the environments that they inhabit.

5 | River catchment

We will work with and within an environmental system rather than political, administrative boundaries; our project spans the Tweed catchment and so our thinking is bound by the limits of our environment, not by our administrative structures.

6 | Partnership working

We will work collaboratively with other Destination Tweed projects and external organisations; we will initiate partnerships and be responsive to invitations to partner with others.

7 | Non-venue based

Connecting Threads is travelling light, not dependent on a physical venue. We will work with others, bringing activity to village halls, fishing bothies, the riverside etc.

8 | Environment

In all our actions we will consider our environmental impact and work to minimise this. We will employ the *in-situ*<sup>9</sup> code of ethic for working with communities and the environment and will follow Creative Carbon Scotland guidance and work towards joining their Green Arts Initiative <sup>10</sup>.

9 | Climate emergency

Our activities will respond, directly and indirectly, to the climate emergency. We believe that creative practitioners have a strong role to play in addressing this problem, especially in conjunction with other academic and scientific disciplines, and that the arts have the power to be transformative.

10 | Fair Work

We will apply *Fair Work* <sup>11</sup> principles when employing people.



“We will be responsive to the needs of the communities we are working with and the environments that they inhabit”

<sup>9</sup> in-situ.org.uk/ethics  
<sup>10</sup> creativecarbonscotland.com/green-arts-initiative/  
<sup>11</sup> fairworkconvention.scot

Above: Drawing daisies at *Pollinators, Plants and People*, a workshop held at St. Ronan’s Wells Community Garden, Innerleithen, as part of Connecting Threads’ pilot programme.





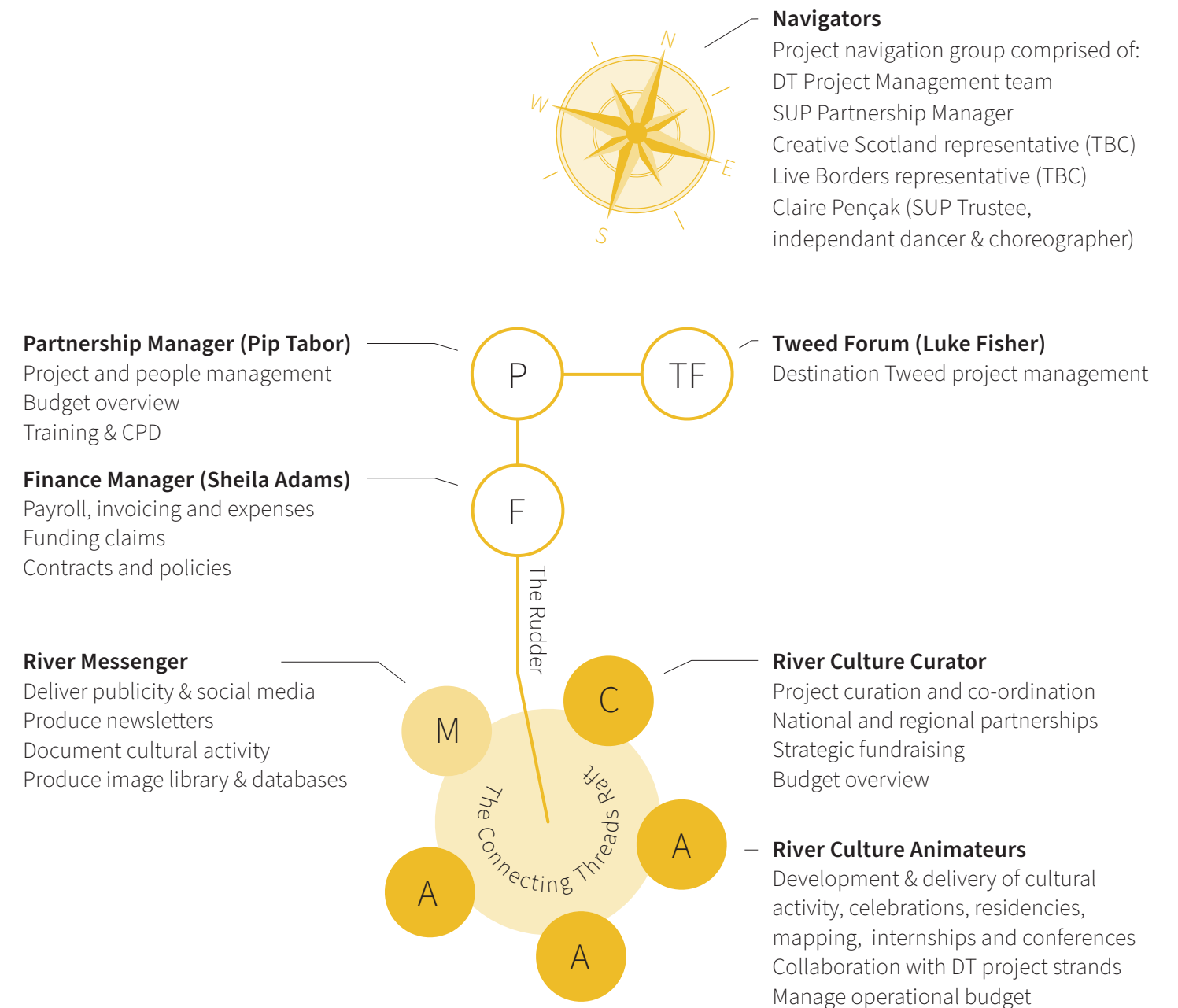
“You [Connecting Threads] are the yellow rattle, making space for others to grow, inviting a diversity of voices. You are the seed which enables the meadow”

**Jules Bradbury**

Artist in residence at Merlindale Meadow, 2021

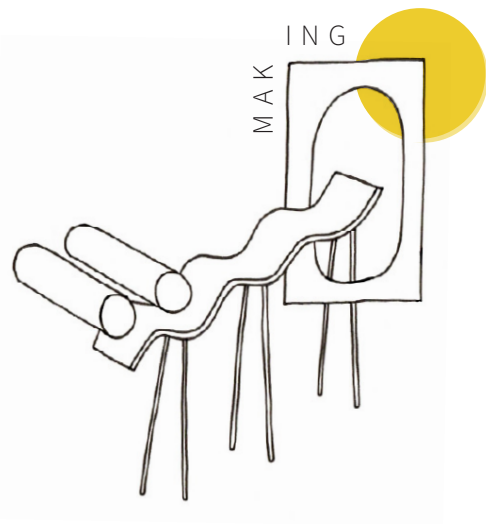
## Staff Structure

Connecting Threads will use a largely flat staff structure, with the River Culture Curator, Animateurs and Messenger having an equal seat on the raft. The Messenger role is designed to suit an applicant with less work experience and this position would include an element of mentoring from the other members of the team. Experience will be rewarded by a sliding pay scale and each member of the team will have the opportunity to progress over the 5 years.





Elements of the 5 Year Programme



15 Residencies

Each Animateur will run one residency per year. They will determine what type of residency, when and for how long, dependent on the priority audiences and issues that they wish to address in any given year. Residencies could be:

- An Artist developing their own practice
- An Artist embedded within an organisation
- An Artist situated within a community
- An Artist responding to place
- An Artist responding to theme
- An Artist-led project

150 workshops

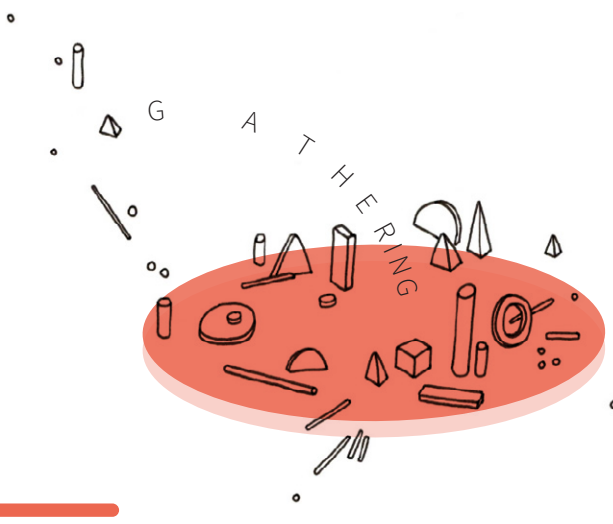
Animateurs will work with partner groups and organisations to develop programmes of workshops (10 per Animateur per year), facilitated by Animateurs and/or with creative practitioners. In total, each year will see 30 workshops taking place across the south of Scotland and north Northumberland, adding significantly to the cultural vibrancy and attraction for people living in or visiting the area. Workshops will consist of:

- Individual / Day workshops
- Multi-day activities
- Regular sessions

CPD / Cultural Sector Development

Animateurs will organise Continuous Professional Development sessions for creative practitioners, responding to needs identified through ongoing consultation with the sector. This will take the form of:

- Individual / Day workshops



14 Seasonal River Celebrations

Animateurs will organise one Seasonal Celebration for their stretch of the river each year. These celebrations will mark the culmination of each Animateurs programme of workshops. Animateurs will work with their local communities to agree when these should take place (to avoid clashed with other local events). Celebrations may include participation with, or showcasing of work from artists residencies and can be planned to coincide with conferences. Celebrations could include:

- Performances (arts/theatre/dance/literature/music)
- Exhibitions
- Creative workshops
- Community events
- River walks & outdoor activities
- Talks & conversations
- Food & drink
- Family activities & activities for young people

3 River Conferences

The Curator and Animateurs will organise three river conferences during the life of the project: one in Year 1 to draw attention to the work of Connecting Threads, one in Year 3 to review progress, and one in Year 5 to draw the project to a conclusion. These conferences will be an opportunity to highlight the working methods, output and outcomes of Connecting Threads and will bring people together to debate topical issues. They will be timed to coincide with a Seasonal Celebration and will be developed with communities. They are likely to include:

- Talks and seminars
- Artist performance / durational work
- Social activities, e.g. guided kayak trip
- Workshopping / Peer to Peer sessions

Current thoughts are to work with young people to organise the first conference.



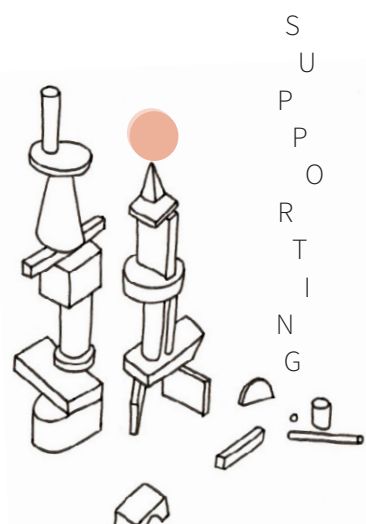
River Culture Mapping

The intangible cultural heritage of the Tweed is rich but uncharted. Connecting Threads will run workshops to ‘map’ this heritage, facilitated by Animateurs and/or with assistance from organisations with cultural mapping expertise. We will work with community groups, of place and of interest, to identify places and experiences related to people’s engagement with the river, e.g., pools for fishing, swimming, paddling, points of inspiration, favourite walks, stories, personal myths, floods, big freezes, dog walks, birds, trees, river crossings, journeys.

Data collected can form a digital or hard-copy resource; decisions about the form of this will emerge from the workshops and through further research but current thinking is to create a ‘map’ or artist-led guide book from a river-level perspective rather than an aerial view.

Digital engagement

The Curator and Animateurs will work within the digital strategies of Destination Tweed and Southern Uplands Partnership to ensure that Connecting Threads has a strong website and social media presence to connect with audiences and to promote the project nationally and internationally. Whenever possible equivalent analogue methods will be used for those without access to the internet.



10 Internships

Each Animateur will create one internship per year to support the work of Connecting Threads and to offer work experience for people who are:

- In early career
- Returning to work
- Changing career

Volunteering

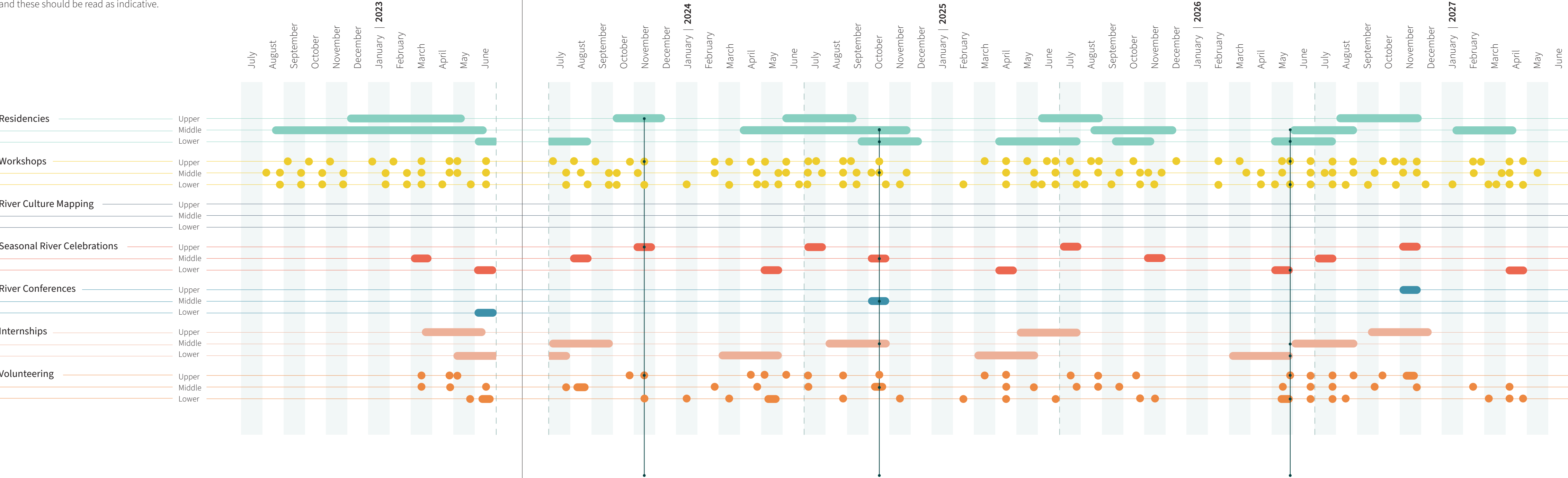
Animateurs will create volunteering opportunities: people will be able to assist in events and activities, with differing levels of involvement and responsibility depending on what the volunteer needs. This may be short-term, one-off or longer term involvement and may be for social / wellbeing reasons, for contributing to career development or a return to work, or for awards schemes.

- ‘Career’ volunteer
- ‘Social / wellbeing’ volunteer
- ‘Awards’ volunteer



Five Year Choreography

The diagram below illustrates how different elements of the programme will relate to each other and create opportunities for connection, collaboration and shared learning. The exact dates and durations of residencies and seasonal river celebrations for years 2 -5 are not confirmed and these should be read as indicative.

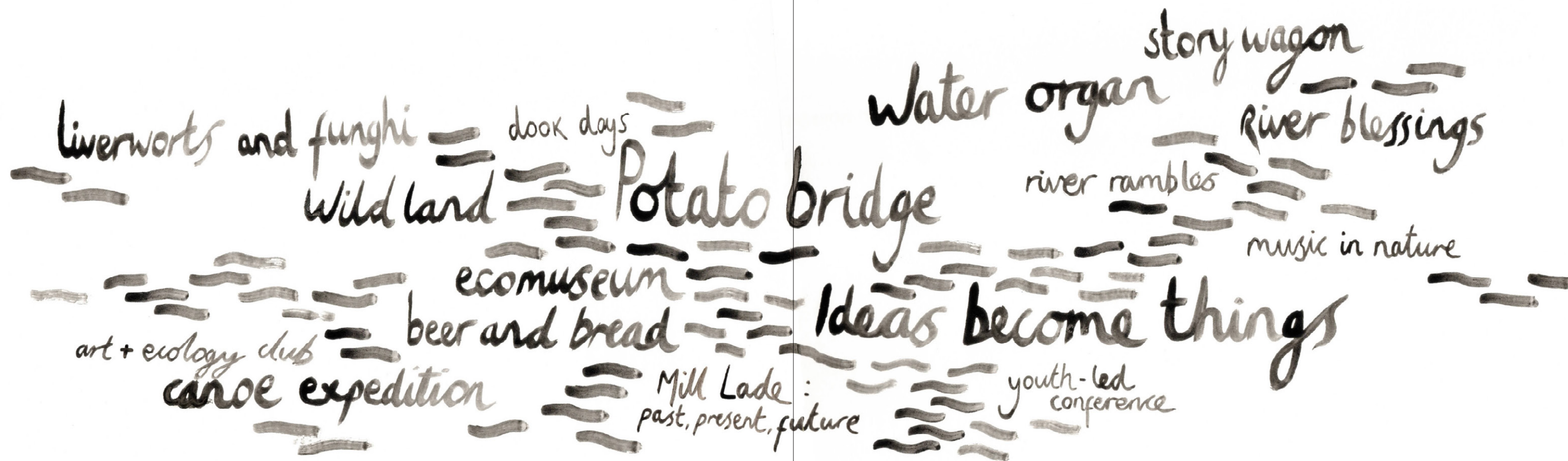


**Example thread**  
A Seasonal River Celebration is focussed around the work of an artist in residence. The event includes a workshop(s) led by the River Culture Animateur and is structured to create a volunteering opportunity.

**Example thread**  
A River Conference forms the confluence at which several ideas, communities and projects can meet. For example; a Seasonal River Celebration is programmed as a fringe event to the Conference, enabling a more diverse audience to take part. Two artists in residence contribute to the conference itself, one of them by running a workshop and the other by programming an afternoon of talks. Animateur's lead sessions at the conference, alongside coordinating a small group of volunteers who support the event and can attend as participants. The conference falls at the end of an intern's placement and there is an opportunity for the intern to take part in the conference as participant, staff and contributor.

**Example thread**  
The crossover of two artist residencies and two internships creates an opportunity for exchange through the format of a seasonal celebration. Volunteers from source and sea also take part in the opportunity to meet people working elsewhere in the catchment and to share and compare learning.





### Upper Tweed

Once appointed, the Animateur for Upper Tweed will spend the first few months getting to know the area, carrying out consultation with community groups, arts organisations and creative practitioners. Opportunities already identified include:

- Investigate potential at Moffat, possibly relating to author events programme at The Moffat Bookshop, the Moffat Eagle Festival, Moffat Academy, Talla Hart Fell Wild Land Area
- Work with Tweedsmuir Community Company – for instance supporting the work of the Tweedsmuir Ecomuseum, including a proposed storytelling project, running activities at the Crook Inn, particularly to coincide with the opening of the new café and bunkhouse
- Build on contact made with Dawyck Botanic Gardens
- Pick up on contact made with Peebles Community Trust

### Middle Tweed

Emily Cropton, Animateur for Middle Tweed has already established working relationships with various groups and organisations, resulting in project ideas which will be taken forward in Year 1. These include:

- A 10-month Artist Residency with Abundant Borders and Kelso High School, focusing on a new community garden by the banks of the Tweed being developed by Abundant Borders in partnership with Eildon Housing Association. August 2022 - June 2021
- Innerleithen Mill Lade artists exhibition and community participation programme at St. Ronan's Wells, in collaboration with Live Borders, Innerleithen Community Trust and Doors Open Day. September - October 2022
- Residency in collaboration with Heriot-Watt School of Textiles and Design. December 2022 - May 2023
- Canoe trail expedition with Tweeddale Youth Action and Beyond Earlston, June 2022

### Lower Tweed

The Animateur for Lower Tweed will also spend a few months getting to know this section of the river and building on development phase consultation. For instance, collaborations with:

- Union Chain Bridge project staff
- Paxton House
- Norham Arts Group and English Heritage
- Tweed Estuary Protection Group
- Elemental Festival, Berwick
- Storytelling along the border project with Luke Winter and the Story Wagon (Paxton House / Ladykirk / Coldstream), September 2022

### Whole Tweed

Some activities in Year 1 will be run along the whole of the river, or have yet to have locations confirmed:

- WaterOrgan installations and commissions x 3 (dance / music / spoken word)
- WaterOrgan Residency (e.g., with Norham silver band), dates TBC
- Youth-led River Conference, July 2023
- Seasonal celebration around the blessing of the river, February 2023
- Mental health & wellbeing activity with We Are With You and the Wellbeing College
- After-school activities for young children: Music & Nature with Katie Fairgrieve, and Art & Ecology with Phoebe Cope
- Community river clean / monitoring activities in collaboration with SEPA and the Great Borders River Clean



## Monitoring and Evaluation

We intend to use Creative Scotland’s monitoring and evaluation toolkit, *Is This The Best It Can Be?* to help us monitor and evaluate Connecting Threads. This guide has been produced in conjunction with Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh, and is designed to promote quality, reflection and discussion. It is intended to:

- Support curiosity, questioning and positive criticism
- Encourage reflection and give breadth and depth to discussions
- Recognise where good practice exists and celebrate it
- Promote a true sense of partnership between artist, partners and participants
- Gather qualitative information about the project

The toolkit offers sets of questions which can be adapted for each of the following aspects of the project:

- Artistic intention and integrity
- Developing skills and capacity
- Authenticity and social relevance
- Facilitation, participant focus and engagement
- Purpose, planning and professionalism

The toolkit is designed to be bespoke for individual projects. At the outset we will commission an experienced facilitator to help us adapt the toolkit for Connecting Threads and establish an evaluation framework and process. They will review this periodically and provide an external assessment of progress, with recommendations for further adaptations of the toolkit whilst the project is underway. We will record this process and gather qualitative and quantitative data as we go along, which will then be given to the evaluation facilitator for final review and the production of a report at the end of the project.

We will use the monitoring process to examine how the proposed distributed, non-centralised placemaking model for Connecting Threads is functioning, and to seek methods for sustaining this model post-project. We see the potential to extend the benefits of Connecting Threads to the Tweed tributaries, reaching even further into the south of Scotland. By the end of the five-year programme, we hope to see that the ‘constellation’ of cultural activity, described at the beginning of this handbook, is stronger and brighter.

The Connecting Threads team, members of the Steering Group, partners organisations and participants will be involved in the monitoring and evaluation process. We will also contribute to the overarching evaluation framework for Destination Tweed.

## Funding

Attendance at various funding workshops during the course of the project development phase, and online searches for potential funding sources to support Connecting Threads, has revealed that during the 5 years of the project there will be funding available to support arts and creativity in relation to Covid recovery, health and wellbeing, environmentalism, community engagement and development and supporting creative practitioners. We are confident that the multiple elements of the Connecting Threads project are relevant to all of these themes and we will continue to stay alert to the emergence of new themes and represent the project accordingly, where appropriate.

In searching for potential funding sources, we have looked at charitable trusts and foundations, corporate ‘social responsibility’ funds and government grants (national and local) and have produced the following, by no means definitive, list:

- Creative Scotland
- Scottish Government Investing in Communities
- Visit Scotland Themed Years Funding
- Northumbrian Water: Community Foundation
- English Heritage
- Historic Environment Scotland
- Dumfries and Galloway Regional Arts Fund
- Scottish Borders Council Community Fund
- Growing Great Ideas: NL Community Fund
- Creative Carbon Scotland
- Sustrans
- Greenspace
- Inspiring Scotland
- Paul Hamlyn Foundation
- Finnis Scott Foundation
- Scottish Forestry Community Fund
- The Naturesave Trust
- The Holywood Trust
- The Austin and Hope Pilkington Trust
- Scops Arts Trust
- Turtleton Charitable Trust
- Mrs Lascelles Charitable Trust
- William Syson Foundation

During the development phase Connecting Threads made successful applications for additional funding which enhanced the pilot programme. Funding from Creative Carbon Scotland enabled a CPD event for creative practitioners, and funding from the Fallago Environment Fund supported the Merlindale hay meadow residency. This encourages us to believe that an ongoing concerted drive for funding will continue to attract more funds to the project. Discussion with Creative Scotland during the development phase suggested submitting targeted strands of the project, e.g. artists residency programmes or professional development activities, within the context of the wider Connecting Threads project.

The whole team will work on this throughout the life of the project, seeking multiple-year funding to support the project overall, and funds for individual components of the project within each annual programme. Some funds may be more readily available through partnership with others, e.g. community groups, so we will explore this potential when developing project proposals with partners.



