

Gwlân to Oo

A report on the preliminary project to create beneficial economic links between the Welsh and Shetland wool industry



Cyngor Sir
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Background

This report has been researched and presented by Emily Victoria McLeod O'Reilly, following discussions with the LEADER team on potential preparatory support for developing a cooperation project. The costs included travel from Wales to Shetland, accommodation in Aberdeen and Shetland, car hire, food, and research materials on island. This was to provide preliminary investigation into a collaborative link between the rural communities of Shetland and Wales, with an emphasis on wool production and economies relating to this.

The project was proposed to Cynnal y Cardi, as its approach represented the core elements of the LEADER scheme. Both areas have LEADER schemes which are led by Local Action Group areas. The proposed project supported the principle of LEADER with bottom up collaboration from independent individuals and small scale producers and organisations; potential for innovation with regard to proposed events and facilities going forward as well as networking and collaboration.



Background:

The initial idea was seeded at the local Lampeter based knitting group, of which Emily is a member. For several years they have discussed the idea for a skills exchange between the wool and textile enthusiasts here in Wales and those in the Shetland Islands. What beneficial connections and mutual learning opportunities could be created?

A tutor at the college (Carmarthen School of Art) indicated that a volunteer opportunity was available on the Island of Yell at the weaving studio during the final weeks of June 2017. This was seen as an opportunity to further Emily's knowledge of a working studio.

One of the biggest issues and questions is: “Where is the Welsh wool?”

There are many people producing small batch breed specific yarns and more recently on a slightly larger scale with the Cambrian wool initiative. One of the most exciting trends of the last few years has been the return to wool and the real value amongst hand crafters in searching for breed-specific wools. However, there are several highlighted problems we have perceived that are prohibiting people, be it mills or individuals, from exclusively investing in real Welsh wool.

- ***People perceive the cost to be too high.***

For example; a fellow student at Carmarthen School of Art was recently interviewed by S4C (Welsh television in partnership with BBC Cymru) about the garments she was producing. This was an incredibly exciting initiative that involved several business and individuals in the Lampeter area, however, when interviewed it was suggested that it would be too expensive to weave her garments using Cambrian Mountains Wool (local-provenance wool). I believe that this shows disconnect between supplier and artisan that should in truth, be a beneficial relationship.

- ***The degradation of local mill industry in Wales.***

Further evidence might be suggested of this disconnect between artisan and supplier, provenance and consumer would be the collapse of the working local mills in Wales over the last hundred years. A recently published book, *Melinau Gwlân*, documents the few surviving mills in Wales but each one is treated as an individual case rather than a network of industry. We are the second highest wool producing area of the UK, yet the sheep industry is focused on Welsh lamb rather than the textiles we should also be valued for.

There are of course, a larger list of other benefits that come from re-invigorating the local mill industry and re-connecting the provenance of local wool, including;

- *Keeping crafters, artisans, and tradespeople in the areas they love, with the animals and products they love.*
- *Producing a much more environmentally friendly product.*
- *Providing employment and skills training for often sorely deprived areas.*

Why Shetland?

The provenance of Shetland wool is world renowned, both in terms of quality and its industry. People travel from all over the world to visit their mills, workshops, and their beautiful islands. These are all things that are shared in Wales, yet there appears to be lacking in the microrhizome-like connections between each part of their industry; from farm supplier to local mill, to artisan, crafter, and eventually to market.

There are also many other similarities between Shetland and rural Wales. Consider our largely rural economies, our (perhaps scant) public investment in trades, services, or infrastructure. Our strong and historic textile cultures. Our smaller populations, and of course the ‘economic

exodus' that sees a lot of artisans leaving these beautiful areas in favour of more metropolitan areas where employment might be easier to obtain.

A rhetorical question, then - how is it more feasible and financially viable to buy cones of Shetland wool as a textile producer, than it is to buy from a producer a few miles down the road?

We truly believe that mutually beneficial skill sharing and other opportunities between Wales and the outer Scottish Islands, could boost the economic value of both wool industries. Valued networks could be established and traditional skills and industries could be rekindled.

How can this be done?

Initially, the first stage would be a preparatory visit to Shetland to coincide with Emily O'Reilly's own work-experience visit, which would involve a visit to relevant industries and individuals to gain potential exchange visit interest. This would centre on all stages of the production, from farmers to textile producers and similar groups to our knit group. This would also involve creating links between the Shetland Wool Week organisers and our own Wonder Wool Wales groups to facilitate a joint event at the two festivals.

Eventually the group that is currently forming here in Wales and the similar Shetland based group could then organise exchange visits and talks/demonstrations. Bringing people to the areas that could benefit, is far more effective and adds the human value that other means might not.

This has the potential to become a UK wide textile network of local-producers, small-mills and artisans, including groups in England and Ireland, which can only add value both economic and knowledge based to our combined industries.

Local potential partners identified:

- Lampeter knitting group – all members of the group hold individual skills in both the textile arena and with a view to assisting the professional organisation and administration of the proposed group. A few members have smallholdings and are involved in the rural farming community and thus would both benefit from and contribute to the project.
- Cambrian Mountains Wool project – would offer insight into operating an independent small scale batch specific wool product. They also clearly demonstrate the importance and also consumer desire for a Welsh provenance wool product.
- Carmarthen School of Art – the potential to offer skill exchanges between Shetland College and Welsh colleges.

Preparatory support aims to achieve the following with the desired outcomes to include:

- Creating a strong **network** between the Shetland area and Ceredigion in order to learn from their experiences of developing a world renowned textile industry in a sparse geographical location. Looking at the use of connected supply chains (producers/sellers/artisans/public), island based processing, and textile/tourism based events that combine to enhance the economic viability of the Shetland textile industry.
- An opportunity for transferring skills and new knowledge to widen local views with the following:
 - Existing cluster i.e. the knitting group.
 - Carmarthen School of Art.
 - Other interested groups/individuals in Ceredigion.
 - Making links with Cambrian Mountains Wool project supported through the Cambrian Mountains Initiative (CMI).
- Networking and sharing experiences with regard to two festivals/events being run – the Shetland Wool Week and Wonder Wool Wales.
- Cooperation activity such as this can provide opportunities for developing innovation across boundaries by learning from areas that have similarities in terms of the economy, rural population and strong cultures in this area.
- Creating a new group in Ceredigion that facilitates exchanges, skill shares, and further network connections throughout the UK.
- Producing a report on the outcomes of the visit.
- Long term aim would be to strengthen the links with possible future return visits and ongoing sharing of knowledge.
- On a personal level, learning practical skills such as professional workshop management and AVL weaving which can be transferred to others.

Details of visit

This specific route was chosen as a means to both emphasise the distance travelled i.e. the distance products travel and the imperative of local resources and production, but also to use the extra time travelling as an opportunity to further network and introduce fellow travellers to the idea of the project. Two days are required to travel over land and sea from Wales to Shetland and this allows for the project to reach a much broader personal audience.

On Shetland itself the route was dictated by specific well known wool producers, textile artists, tourist destinations, and a work experience opportunity on Yell.



Figure 1 Distance travelled by train and ferry

The visit was separated into three main segments:

- i. Collecting information and creating contacts at the island's wool producers, artisans, and teaching institutions.
- ii. Collecting information and creating contacts at the island's heritage and tourism sites relating to the wool industry.
- iii. Visiting and working at Global Yell weaving studio, again to create contacts as it is a well-established hub of education, textile industry, and tourism - but also to gain personal skills and further my understanding of small-scale cloth production. (Whilst my stay was not long enough to undergo a full-scale project or accreditation, I have been invited to return for a longer period on an internship programme).

Lerwick

<u>Relating to wool production and manufacture into consumable items</u>		
Place visited	Website	Summary
Jamieson and Smith	http://www.shetlandwoolbrokers.co.uk	World renowned wool producer, responsible for the clip from over 700 crofts on Shetland. Also manufacturing items from their wool such as jumpers, lace items and accessories as well as working with other companies such as Vi Spring to further its range.
Ninian	http://www.ninianshetland.co.uk/index.php	Small boutique shop in Lerwick that offers gifts and local items, but also houses the knitting workshop for Joanna Hunter Knitwear. It produces the majority of its garments here, but also works with the local university to produce its finer gauge racked garments. It sells all over the globe.
Jamieson's of Shetland (shop outlet)	http://www.jamiesonsofshetland.co.uk	The main shop in Lerwick that sells both the wool range and a large number of machine knitted garments.

<u>Relating to tourism and heritage in wool</u>		
Place visited	Website	Summary
Shetland Textile Museum	http://www.shetlandtextilemuseum.com	Situated in a reinstated 16 th Century Böd, this is a small exhibition of some of the most notable areas of Shetland's textile history.
Shetland Museum and Archive	https://www.shetlandmuseumandarchives.org.uk	Much larger than the Shetland Textile Museum, this houses a broader history of Shetland's heritage, however there is a substantial range of textile exhibitions included here as it's clearly a valued part of the islands' history.
Lerwick Tourist information	https://www.visitscotland.com/info/services/lerwick-icentre-p333461	Tourist information site housing textiles and some information regarding its wool heritage.



Figure 2 Global Yell weaving studio, Yell

Yell

<u>Relating to wool production and manufacture into consumable items</u>		
Place visited	Website	Summary
Global Yell	http://www.globalyell.org	Home to an education centre, a textile archive and a textile manufacturing studio.

Sandness

<u>Relating to wool production and manufacture into consumable items</u>		
Place visited	Website	Summary
Jamieson's of Shetland (factory and production site as well as shop and information centre)	http://www.jamiesonsofshetland.co.uk	Main manufacturing site that houses the wool processing and machine knitting industry. It also has a large shop and visitor centre.

Hoswick


<u>Relating to wool production and manufacture into consumable items</u>		
Place visited	Website	Summary
Niela Nell	http://www.nielanell.com	Small-scale boutique shop housing Niela Nell's unique take on Shetland inspired designs.
Laurence Odie Knitwear	http://www.hie.co.uk/about-hie/projects/archive/laurence-odie-knitwear-ltd.html	Very traditional Shetland wool garment shop.



Figure 3 Niela Nell's studio, Hoswick

<u>Relating to tourism and heritage in wool</u>		
Place visited	Website	Summary
Hoswick Visitor Centre	http://www.shetlandheritageassociation.com/members/south-mainland/hoswick-visitor-centre	Exhibition of local heritage including weaving machinery and examples of locally produced items.

Sumburgh

<u>Relating to tourism and heritage in wool</u>		
Place visited	Website	Summary
Sumburgh Head Lighthouse	https://www.sumburghhead.com 	Visitor centre and lighthouse tour - one of the venues for workshops during the Shetland Wool Week.
	<i>Puffin at Sumburgh Head Lighthouse</i>	

<u>Connections made but not visited</u>		
Connection	Website	Summary
Ella Gordon	https://ellagordon.wordpress.com	Spokesperson for the 2016 Shetland Wool Week. Textile designer and works at Jamieson and Smith.
Hazel Tindall	http://www.hazeltindall.com	Renowned knitter and designer.
University of Highlands and Islands	https://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/	Wonderful contact and really helpful, unfortunately my visit coincided with the new designers show in London, so have only contacted by email.
Shetland Guild of Spinners, Weavers, and Dyers	http://www.shetlandheritageassociation.com/members/shetland-wide/guild-of-spinners-weavers-and-dyers	Part of the UK wide network.

Each of the places visited or contacted was chosen either prior to visiting, from extensive literature available on island, or through recommendations from places visited. This highlighted two significant factors:

1. There is a substantial range of literature available on even the most remote places to visit - some of the studios and workshops were in people's houses, yet they were just as accommodating as some of the bigger venues and eager to talk about the industry as a whole. Craft trail booklets, Island maps with wool production sites listed, and extensive road signage were all implemented throughout all the area visited.
2. The connection between each business was apparent. Whilst visiting one place there would always be many others that I would be advised to visit. This is not something that I have witnessed as much in Wales. One of the most striking examples was on visiting Jamieson's and Smith. They are responsible for dealing with the clip from over 700 crofts equating to over 80% of the islands' wool. They sort and grade on island then ship to Yorkshire where it is spun and dyed. They had noticed recently that out of the 4 main grades, the 4th (roughest and most likely to be used in rugs etc.) had fallen in price recently. They were instigating new projects in order to raise its value in order that the farmers would receive a better price. Whilst this makes obvious economic sense to Jamieson's, it also expresses the connection at all levels of their industry and the desire to see Shetland wool succeed.

Importantly, it was clear that many of the businesses diversified their output, either by their range and collaboration with other businesses and individuals, for example by incorporating studios and gift shops, or by engaging in collective workshops, networking and advertising.

Examples of this can be seen in:



Ninian's gift shop and knitting studio



Jamieson and Smith expanding to use their wool in mattresses with Vi Spring whilst also reinstating traditional methods of yoke jumper production by machine knitting the bodies of jumpers then having the fair isle of the yoke hand knitted by a collection of individuals. This method of production reinstates value to traditional practices and provides a larger scope for people to be employed in its practice. It furthermore adds value both economically and intrinsically as an heirloom product.



Ideas for development

- **Our own “Shetland Wool festival” to work alongside the Shetland Wool Week to highlight both Shetland and Wales, promote exchange programs, and heritage in a modern age.**

One of the key events in the Shetland wool producer and artisan year is the Shetland Wool Week. Whilst this has parallels in our own Wonder Wool Wales, it extends and develops upon this to include events and venues in the majority of the islands that make up Shetland.

A warden at the Sumburgh Head lighthouse spoke of its significance, in that it extends their tourist season for an extra month, as it is held in September. This highlights venues that probably wouldn't normally be associated with a wool festival benefiting from it. The promotion of the event occurs on a year round basis through social network events, promotion at other festivals, and links to multiple websites offering promotion of Shetland based facilities and products. There is also promotion on the ferry crossing to Shetland and during the festival workshops are even held on the ferry. A booklet is produced highlighting

the tours and workshops available throughout the festival, but it also has important information regarding retailers and producers that can be visited all throughout the year, making its impact last even further.

The key differences between Shetland Wool Week and other wool festivals held in the British Isles are firstly because it is a week-long event. This may be a reflection of the difficulty in reaching Shetland, thus warranting slightly longer than the traditional 2 day format, but in doing so it obviously extends what can be included in this time. It is made of events and workshops at multiple sites of interest resulting in a large number of venues benefiting rather than just one. This filters into hire car businesses, restaurants, hotels, and other local economies benefiting also.

The format of the festival focuses on education; providing workshops taught by well-known exponents in various fields and catering for a range of skill levels and abilities. This is far more than just selling ready-made items, as it also encourages the exchanging and sharing of traditional skills.

1. The working group plans to organise a similar event here in Wales to coincide with the Shetland Wool Week, capturing the extended tourist season created by an event later in the year.
2. To include organised and guided tours around the Welsh wool sights of interest-creating added economic value for more venues throughout Wales.
3. Concentrating on the workshop and learning format - inviting speakers and teachers from Shetland and likewise encourage Welsh based specialists to travel to Shetland to teach.

- **Re-identifying what is meant by Welsh Wool.**

One of the key questions at the beginning of this project was where does the wool come from to make up what is branded as Shetland wool, and how is it produced so effectively in Shetland compared to our dwindling wool industry in Wales?

One of the surprising facts that became apparent on speaking to the wool mills in Shetland is that a large proportion of what is produced as Shetland wool doesn't actually come from the traditional Shetland sheep breed. Travelling around Shetland I came across several isolated crofts containing what would appear to be the traditional sheep breed, but the majority held crosses and Mule breeds that may well be found on any farm in the UK. This perhaps shouldn't be a surprising fact, as in such a harsh landscape the cost and what is available should fit with what is farmed, and it would appear that in order to be considered Shetland wool, the sheep need only come from Shetland.

Whilst the Shetland breed has proved favourable in Shetland's harsher climate, it being considered a rare breed may make it more prohibitive in terms of cost and accessibility making crossed breeds more inviting. The wool produced from the Shetland breed is also to some extent, coarse as would be expected from its environment and evolution in adapting to

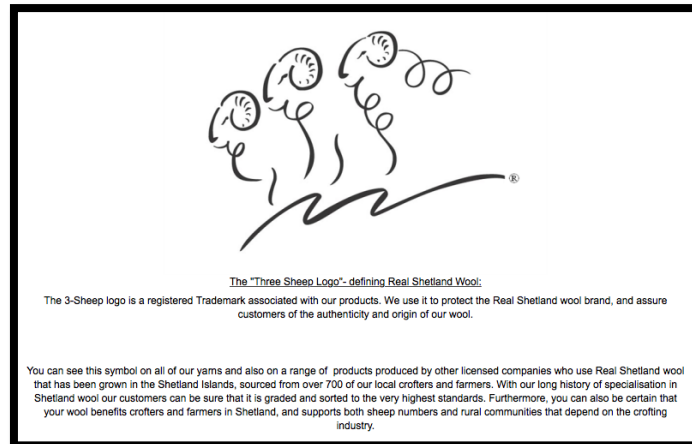
its environment, so in diversifying what is included under the banner of Shetland wool may help to improve the overall quality. Jamieson of Shetland is one of two manufacturers processing and producing their own yarn completely on island. On speaking to their owner it became apparent that they had tried to incorporate lamb's wool into their output, however their machinery is not equipped to deal with a much shorter staple of fibre. The size and scope of their business means that they also cannot deal with as vast quantities as those companies outsourcing their production to the mainland. However, by keeping their production within the Shetland isles, they provide additional work for Shetlanders and reduce their costs by not having to add in extensive transporting at that level of production. This saving is marked in the reduced costs of manufactured items passed on to the consumer.

1. Redefining what is meant by Welsh wool is key to moving forward here for our own economy. Dispelling the myth that Welsh Wool equates to itchy harsh wool as is stereotyped with the Welsh Mountain breeds. Further research at the Welsh Woollen museum resulted in the fact that they had decided to spin an un-specified merino based wool, in their refurbished industrial machines. This was again rooted in the myth that Welsh wool was of poor quality and that the staple was too short to be spun on traditional industrial machines. I believe that the Cambrian Mountains wool brand has sufficiently begun to debunk this idea by creating a blend of traditional British breeds grown in Wales.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the spinners concerned with producing the Cambrian Mountains Wool range had doubts as to its suitability to being processed in their machines. However, as the group concerned with making this wool demanded the highest quality of fleece within the correct provenance at the grading level, they were able to provide the spinners with a more than adequate item for spinning. The result is a lustrous wool compared to other highly sought after breeds such as Merino and Blue Faced Leicester. It has multiple applications across a variety of sectors including baby products where the specified requirements are naturally high. This shows a collaborative approach across a variety of levels within the production and farming process to produce a high quality product that should be employed intrinsically to better the economic value of the Welsh wool industry.

2. By accepting and classifying Welsh provenance as sufficient merit to be branded as Welsh wool, similar to the process in Shetland, would add economic value and increased diversity and quality to the Welsh wool industry.
3. Increased education about the variety of traditional Welsh specific breeds is also important and will help to highlight the economic and heritage based value of the Welsh wool industry.

- **Rewarding Welsh producers by providing a classification like the three sheep Jamieson and Smith brand.**



The above is an image taken from Jamieson and Smith's promotional material and can be seen on all of their products. Whilst not universal to Shetland, as there is no designated standard like the 'Harris Tweed' Orb, it speaks of a need and a recognition of values for Shetland products.

Other classifications like the 'Woolmark' might be seen to be prohibitively expensive, with licensing costs ranging from £2,800 and upwards. Something that uniquely brands Welsh wool products as Welsh would be an important benefit for producers and consumers.

- **Working with farmers to understand their constraints in producing viable wool from their sheep and understanding what would be needed to produce higher quality wool.**

One of the key limitations of accessing a viable and quality Welsh wool product is the fact that it may not remain profitable to farmers to produce sheep for their fleece. One of the key differences between Shetland crofters and Welsh farmers is that they have slightly more self-governance in where their fleece is sold. In the UK we are required to sell through the Wool Marketing Board excepting certain exemptions such as organic standard and rare breed status. Whilst there are also a limited number of businesses for Shetland's crofters to sell their fleece to, they are not required to sell to one specific company.

It was highlighted to me that many of the people working at the companies that buy fleece had ties to the crofting community, either by having been crofters themselves or through relation. At Jamieson and Smith I was shown how one of the grades of fleece (grade 4 - a rougher quality likely to be used in rug making) had received a much lower price recently. They in turn had invested in developing new products to improve sales of this grade of fleece, thus improving the outcome for the crofter. This shows an intrinsic connection at all stages of the wool and the contribution from the Royal Commission of

£1k production that desperately needs to be implemented in Wales.

1. To do this we would need to work with not only farmers, but small scale manufacturers of wool and wool artisans to find mutually beneficial outcomes for all.
 2. Further research and interviews of what is needed to encourage farmers to produce high quality fleece is being undertaken.
- **Looking at ways to bring all stages of the wool manufacturing back to Wales i.e. a micro mill processing plant.**

Whilst there are only two on island wool manufacturers in Shetland, their economic and social benefits were apparent. They provide a reduction in costs during the manufacturing stage as there are limited transportation and outsourcing costs. They provide additional jobs and expertise to their locality, and they offer added tourism benefits to the area. There are little current opportunities for this in Wales and on speaking to a number of local wool producers they feel the only economically viable spinning and processing choices are to use companies outside of Wales.

Working with a Young Farmers Club member and a group of current textile students, we are looking at ways to fund and develop a sustainable micro mill in Wales. This would offer a closed loop manufacturing stream and add economic benefits to the Welsh wool industry, creating jobs and expertise training. Being a micro mill it would naturally look to deal with smaller quantities of fleece, however, this may encourage the development of smaller and rare breed farm models which add autonomy and self-governance to the fleece prices to the farmer (as seen in the Shetland model).

- **Exchange programme between Global Yell textiles and Carmarthen School of Art or similarly interested individuals.**

One of the key contacts and allies created during the visit to Shetland was at Global Yell studios. Andy Ross is the dynamic character at the centre of Global Yell, where he offers tuition in weaving as well as organising tours of Shetland and producing textiles and opportunities for new designers. Andy is keen to facilitate exchange programmes between his studio and ones in Wales and has been key in pushing this idea forward.

His studio also offers a fantastic model of a teaching facility and independent production site. Since visiting his studio where I was taught in the use of AVL looms and sectional weaving, I have raised funding to buy a workshop that I can also offer textile based tuition and use to manufacture textile products. I would hope to use this as one of the bases to facilitate the exchange programme.

- **Producing a Welsh/Shetland wool to highlight the links and possibilities.**
One of the suggested outcomes highlighted by the working group here in Wales, is to produce a wool combining breed specific fleeces from both Wales and Shetland. This could be used as a tool to highlight connections and the importance of both wool industries. This would provide mutually beneficial outcomes to both industries.

Summary of achieved and intended action points

<p>Collaboration with the Young Farmers Club in Wales to achieve insight into wool production limitations and development of Micro Mill project</p>	<p>I have created links with members of the Young Farmers Club network as a means to expand the interested members of the working group, provide real life limitations experienced in producing Welsh wool fleeces, and I am working to create a micro mill setup with interested members who would benefit from its creation. To do this we have organised a visit to a working micro mill in north Wales and have been negotiating with a company in America who manufacture industrial equipment specific to the needs of small mills. This has been invaluable as I only have a textile background, so insight from working farms and problems they face can be integrated into solutions.</p>
<p>Working with “Layers in the Landscape” multidisciplinary group.</p>	<p>“Layers in the Landscape” is the outcome of a collection of different artists and academics to highlight land based art and knowledge. It presents work displaying implications and changes to the Welsh landscape through archaeological findings, poetry, performance, pottery, and textiles. I was asked to contribute work to the current exhibition and in doing so have raised the idea of expanding the research and study to include work focusing on Shetland and other areas of the British coastline. My work included images from my visit to Shetland as well as work generated in response to it. As a result, I was able to use it as a platform to talk</p>



Figure 4 work on display at Layers in the Landscape



Figure 5 installation and work on display at Layers in the Landscape

about the Shetland/Welsh wool project and create further interested networks.

Creating an exchange programme between Wales and Shetland	Andy Ross from Global Yell and myself have been in contact to push this idea forward and since returning I have fundraised the finances to establish a workshop that could work as one of several bases for the exchange to take place in. I have also talked with students and staff at Coleg Sir Gâr to establish an interest in this project.
Developing a Welsh Wool Week	I have been in contact with various teachers and businesses to create interest and possible workshops for a Welsh Wool Week to be held. A working plan was created for it to be run this year to coincide with Shetland Wool Week, however, due to time limitations this was unable to go ahead.
Cementing relationships with contacts made in Shetland	This has largely been done through email and blog posts from the group website.
Instigating regular meetings from the working group to develop into an established group	<i>In development</i>
Looking into public promotion of work done by group	Initial investigations and costings have been made to produce a Welsh/Shetland wool.
Development of a branding that recognizes Welsh wool	<i>In development</i>
Workshops and resource facilities in textile traditions	<i>In development</i>
Promotion of collaborative project through existing wool festivals	<i>In development</i>
Creation of a network of Welsh wool producers and artisans	<i>In development</i>

Limitations and difficulties

So far the biggest issue has been time management in navigating unforeseen barriers. This also includes facilitating the full scope of the project as it deserves to be represented, whilst undertaking a degree and work commitments. However, as the project has moved forward, more parties have become involved and interested, which means more can be undertaken across a wider remit of people. This has also opened up the project to new and unforeseen avenues that can only serve to benefit the overall outcomes.

Conclusion

The research trip to Shetland was an invaluable starting point to a project that will truly see the economic benefit of the Welsh wool industry increasing, through knowledge, collaboration, and increased production of services. The opportunity to see a thriving wool industry in a remote and sparse environment offered a wide range of solutions and ideas to tackle the issues faced here at home in Wales. It also highlighted the value of creating multidisciplinary solutions and connections, as well as the possibility for strong ties and networks to be created between Wales and Shetland. It was evident that many venues and facilities benefitted from the increased development and publicity associated with the Shetland wool industry.

The realisation of this project can only be achieved through collaboration across a range of sectors and institutions. However, at this point, considerable interest and enthusiasm has been generated and once the working group develops to an established, regularly meeting group, its outcomes should be significant.

The most important starting point would be to a) work with farmers to understand their limitations currently in producing a high quality wool, b) working with artisans and textile producers with farmers to understand their limitations and begin working together to foster these solutions. We would also need to be organizing public relation events to better publicise what is so wonderful about the variety of breeds that are both traditionally Welsh and Welsh by provenance. Producing a product like the Shetland/Welsh based wool would be a valuable aid to this, but it also bears consideration that this idea should not be limited between these two connections. We should be highlighting and celebrating links between all the UK based wool industry and its traditions and hopefully in the future, further afield as well.