



University of the
West of England

Health: The Design, Planning and Politics of How and Where We Live

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

Shape My Town: A critical perspective on community well-being in Wales

- **Format:**

Presentation (in-person)

- **Author(s) Name:**

Dr Matthew Jones (1) & Amanda Spence (2)

- **University or Company Affiliation:**

(1) Department of Architecture and the Built Environment, Faculty of Environment and Technology, University of the West of England; Coombs Jones Architects

(2) Design Commission for Wales, Cardiff, Wales

- **Abstract (300 words):**

The *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015* is a unique piece of legislation which embeds healthy and sustainable development into Wales' legislative framework, committing 44 public bodies to improving social, economic, cultural and environmental well-being. The *Act* introduces seven well-being goals and five 'ways of working', creating a shared vision for these public bodies to work towards. Alongside this top-down approach, there is an emerging intent to increase engagement of individuals and communities in sustaining and improving the quality of their health and well-being. However, at present, examples of the implementation of well-being agenda at community level is limited and there is little guidance or support available for local people in considering the well-being of their community.

This paper critically examines an innovative approach to bridge this gap and engage local people in considering the health and well-being of their communities, now and into the future. The *Shape My Town* toolkit is designed to increase opportunities for local people to have a voice in the planning process through the creation of community-led Place Plans. The tool combines objective and subjective assessments of place and community through a series of interlinked themes which together build an evidence base for decision making. Through these themes, the tool aims to capture shared values and shared understandings of place and culture as a means to identify interventions which enhance community well-being. The sense of increased self-determination the process facilitates is linked to an increased sense of well-being, purpose and community cohesion (Deci and Ryan, 1985). However, questions are raised about the capacity of communities to deliver effective long-term change and the capacity of overburdened, under-resourced local authorities to help deliver on these aspirations.

- **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Dr Matthew Jones

Dr Matthew Jones is an architect with expertise in making places and communities. He is senior lecturer and programme leader for BSc Architecture at the University of the West of England, a partner at Coombs Jones Architects, an Advocate in Practice for the Design Commission for Wales and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

Matthew has particular experience in socially engaged and participatory place-making; community-led planning; design in sensitive and rural contexts; and public engagement. He is part of the 'Hands On Bristol' collective, a collaboration between UWE, community groups and practitioners in the Bristol region that connects students, academics and communities through participatory and creative design processes.

Amanda Spence

Amanda Spence is an architect, Design Advisor for Design Commission (DCFW) for Wales and studio tutor at the Welsh School of Architecture. An architect with significant experience, Amanda gained First Class Honours BSc Architectural Studies and BArch Architectural Studies, Commendation, from Cardiff University with Part 3/MA Professional Practice, Merit, at University of Portsmouth. Amanda worked as Project Architect at Hudson Architects, Norwich and as Architectural Assistant at Bennetts Associates and the Design Research Unit Wales before joining DCFW.