

HAWKWOOD

centre for future thinking



RSA Report on Catalyst Funding / CATMIN-2365

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01. Catalyst Grant

In April 2019 I was granted a Catalyst grant of £2,000 to support changemakers with retreat time to work on their projects. I thought it would be interesting to support RSA fellows and those from the South West with a new opportunity to strengthen the network, make new connections.

This seed funding forms part of a wider changemaker programme, which has supported 12 changemakers from January to December 2019.

We created an application form and a framework to help the panel, consisting of Nick Parker FRSA, Michelle Preston FRSA and myself. I am hugely indebted to Lou Matter, Regional Manager, RSA South West who collated and managed the entire application process. We received applications from 19 fellows for 4 places.

Four residencies were granted to:

- Elizabeth Wainwright
- Phily Page
- Nick Snelgar
- Sarah King

In addition, two further fellows who had applied to our wider residency programme (and were supported in their entirety by a Hawkwood crowd fund from 2018) were also in residence at the same time – Ruth Davey and Sophie Lizoulet

Residency week

The residency took place during the week of 14th October and the individuals were given a group room to work in.

On Thursday 17th October, the four changemakers each gave a 10-minute presentation of the work to an audience from the RSA South West network and Hawkwood's wider audience who are interested in social change. The evening was attended by approximately 35 people, followed by group Q&A and networking.

The detailed feedback from each changemaker can be seen at the end of this report.

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Feedback

In addition, the whole project received positive feedback from various sources:

Dear Alicia,

Nick Parker has been in touch to share his excitement at the outcomes of your Changemaker residencies. He was particularly impressed with the collaborative energy that had emerged. Thank you for putting the idea forward and thank you to you, and your team for making it a success.

Thanks

Matthew

Matthew Taylor

Nick (Parker)

We had a brief conversation at Hawkwood last week at the Meeting the Changemakers evening. In the light of that I wanted to say what good value that project seemed to be to me (and) how much value the participants clearly got from it. It seemed to me an extremely good model, cost versus effectiveness being so good, and a really valuable offer for RSA Fellows.

I hope you will give some thought to making a programme such as that a regular offering.... I can then imagine a good number of Fellows lining themselves up for a future event, possibly on a waiting list such that their turn comes round in due course.

Best wishes

David

David Perry

Trustee, The Comino Foundation

www.cominofoundation.org.uk

In addition, the networking at the sharing of events provided further connections for fellows and I was asked to connect several people following the evening.

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Feedback from the participants

The changemakers believed that the group size of 6 worked well as a cohort and allowed for more in depth conversation and feedback between them than the originally planned cohort of four people.

The sharing of their work was a good focus for the week and gave direction.

The retreat like nature of Hawkwood with the mix of people, disciplines and time without distraction enabled the fellows to achieve far more than they ordinarily would in a working week.

Finance

The funding covered 75% of each fellow's residential stay and Hawkwood covered the rest

Management of the project

The support of Nick Parker and Michelle Preston on the panel for the applications was invaluable.

The support of Lou Matter in ensuring a clear framework for the decision criteria and the administration around the applications ensured a smooth and supportive process for all.

The project took more up a fair amount of management time. Hawkwood put in several days work to match the funding - working on the applications from changemakers, arranging the publicity for the sharing of work and hosting the evening. The RSA, via Lou Matter, also put in their time to support this project.

It was also crucial to the success of the project that there was an element of holding and facilitating the group at certain points in the residential week. The feedback to the unsuccessful applicants took a fair amount of time and quite a lot of business mentoring.

I ended up giving around a day of my time in support to those changemakers who weren't successful but wanted feedback, advice, connections and ideas to take their projects forward elsewhere.

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Feedback from the four changemakers for RSA blog

"The solutions to the societal, cultural and environmental challenges we face are bound to come from bold innovative thinkers". This is the key message behind the Changemaker Residencies at [Hawkwood College](#) in Stroud. Their CEO Alicia Carey FRSA received RSA [Catalyst](#) funding to provide four Fellows with a weeklong residency to offer a period of project incubation, allowing changemakers to focus entirely on the development of their work, away from the demands of everyday life and within a relaxing environment.

Alicia explains "the idea behind these residencies are to allow changemakers the opportunity to harness their ideas in the calm atmosphere of Hawkwood, uniquely for the Fellow residencies there will be the opportunity for individual thinking but also group working, facilitating peer learning and positivity".

We received many strong applications, and the following Fellows received residencies and came together for a week in October. Read their testimonies below.

- Philiy Irish-Page, time to develop a book about the importance of Risk, Play and Creativity across both the creative industries and corporate environments.

"The RSA Residency at Hawkwood has been life changing, and I don't say that lightly. We are all busy with our lives and to-do-lists and find it very hard to press pause on all that life throws at us. That week at Hawkwood allowed us all to take a break from the minutia of our daily lives and really have time to think. By day two, nearly all of us had some breakthrough with our work...Apart from taking out shares in post-it-notes, I was able to lie out the contents of my second book Messy: - Why we need to innovate in a risk adverse world. Much of this wouldn't have happened without the inspiring input of the other fellows. We were from a diverse range of backgrounds, which made this experience unique. Each fellow was able to look at all of our work with fresh eyes and offer new perspectives. Six fellows was a perfect number in terms of sharing and support. It wasn't so intimate that you felt intimidated to share, and not so large that your voice got lost.

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Phil's post-it notes

After three days of deep diving into our respective projects, myself and the other changemakers in residence we were able to share our work in progress with an audience of RSA Fellows. Both the changemakers and myself: Sarah King, Elizabeth Wainwright, Nick Snelgar and Ruth Davey and Sophie Lizoulet found this useful. We made contacts and other ideas were shared.

My big take away from this experience is time. Time to interact with others working in different creative fields, time to have your work shared and expanded by those other changemakers, time to dive deeply into the thinking process without forcing outcomes and time to be in a place that believes in this type of work.

We need these moments of pause, to really look at the creative work we are creating. Working in isolation is like working inside an echo chamber, Hawkwood understands this, and by bringing fellows from such diverse backgrounds, it has allowed all of our projects to bloom and grow. My book has organically grown into something new thanks to Hawkwood and my fellow changemakers. It is better for the experience that we all went through during that week. I made breakthroughs, connections and a list of contacts that wouldn't have been possible without this residency. I have left feeling supported and hopeful that these individuals really can make a change to our societies for the better."

- Sarah King, to work on Re-inventing Leadership – Leadership for Good – developing the mindset, qualities and behaviour that prioritise people and planet. Working with leadership 'being' from the inside out, so organisations, individuals, communities and the planet all benefit.

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"I left home for my RSA/Hawkwood residency so excited to be given this gift of headspace, time away from work, time away from MSc study, time away from day to day family life, time to just be me, time to..just time.....As my mind became clearer, my ideas became clearer, uncluttered like the clear blue skies, interspersed by fluffy meaningful clouds of thought. With my new-found clarity I found myself pulled away from the big skies and drawn to the enveloping woodland, full of its diversity, detail and sensory richness. Watching the worms wriggle, listening to the bees' hum and smelling the leaves rotting. The final burst of energetic life in the low October sun, before the winter rest arrives.

From that spaciousness and diversity emerged my creativity, I was able to listen to what wanted to emerge from me. Not a single book came out of my packed bags, admittedly I was already familiar with most of their content, but my innovation didn't come from cognitive learning, it came from being in tune with my environment and inner wisdom. I so appreciate that was only possible by feeling very nourished. Nourished by the inspiring connections of fellow changemakers and Hawkwood staff, who couldn't do enough for us, nourished by the amazing food grow meters from where I was standing, nourished by silence and deep listening, and nourished by nature. But first I had to let go, let go of everyday life to open up to that nourishment and deliver the best I could.

I was able to listen to the things that serve me, the things that make me feel alive, with a bigger purpose than me. I felt so alive, so in tune with the world and ready to take that learning forward.

I wonder what the world would be like if we allowed ourselves more time to watch the big skies, listen to the diversity around us, be nourished by deep authentic human connection, oxygen rich air and honest food? How would it be if we encouraged greater spaciousness, diversity and nourishment into our lives? I'm going to continue to explore this by developing the Conscious Leadership concept, of inspiring leadership mindset and qualities that encourage people and planet thriving."

- Nick Snelgar, Maple Field Milk/Off the Plot project Change farming by becoming a customer of a farmer. Through direct sales and a devoted very large customer base the MFM system describes alternative ways of supplying local/regional food ; producing profits alongside excellent nutrition while preserving and increasing the soil fertility. It provides answers and examples to many questions and comments made in the RSA Report on the Countryside

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(2019) and the recent (8/08/2019) IPCC UN Report on global warming and the farming contributions.

“For 5 days the six of us Fellows analysed, dissected and gave voice to our projects for change. In the lovely dining room three times a day we talked and laughed and wrestled with our demanding subjects. In our beautiful Georgian sitting room (set aside for us for the 5 days) we waved felt tips at white boards, talked like a torrent, or stared at the view from the enormous windows.....I came away less a lone campaigner for different farming outcomes.....more a member of a team of change makers, happy with their response to OFF THE PLOT. Now to megaphone the news out. It can be done. I shall perform my recital of modern demand-led farming – everywhere.

What the Hawkwood 5days taught me is just how far reaching our attitudes on the PLOT could become. How our co-operative response to the unbending schedules of farming/food processing made our performance unbeatable: our interests in ‘no boss’: no hierarchy: shared skills and equal pay: with 6 women and 4 men and thousands of well informed, well-nourished customers – it may be a winner. A winner for workplace harmony, the climate, nature and soil fertility forever. We may help to solve the heptathlon of concerns: carbon: waste: biodiversity: songbirds and soil.

So, thank you RSA and Hawkwood. I am now emboldened, launched and primed.

Our project is called OFF THE PLOT. It is the result of 10 years work in building up a micro dairy which processes its own milk and delivers it to the doorstep of the customer together with meat eggs, and veg. It is a system of farming motivated, not by magnitude and volume, but by the needs of individual customers.....and all of us are ‘customers’ for fresh food. THE PLOT is driven by demand and by the desire to earn a living wage for all of us (10 people). By doing this we farm with nature. We return fertility to the soil, as perhaps our most immediate goal, after paying everyone a good wage in return for sensible hours. Plenty of people.... not much stress.

We aim for a landscape with large and medium landowners inviting a series of Plot Systems onto their land with very good financial returns for them and for us. This will become most attractive in a ‘post-subsidy’ world with the additional bio-alignment we provide. And it is fantastically interesting.”

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- Elizabeth Wainwright, Trees, talking and our shared tomorrow: Consolidating ideas and experiences from local conversations, networks and nature, and shaping these into formats that might provide new low-cost ways of working, and new pathways to change, locally and globally.

“Learn how to see. Realise that everything connects to everything else” – Leonardo da Vinci

Our daily, weekly, annual routines are necessary, grounding and reassuring. But the routines that contain our weeks can, if we're not careful, also restrict our vision and our idea of what's possible. Stepping outside of our usual routines can be life-giving; it can teach us how to see, and so how to connect our ideas, challenges, solutions. And so I was grateful to recently receive a funded RSA residency at Hawkwood College in Stroud, and to be able to step outside of my usual routine.

I went into the week hoping to immerse in both solitude and connection. I also wanted to explore some ideas that have been forming about the complex challenges we face and the collaboration that is necessary to overcome them.

My working life involves running a small international community development organisation, serving as a Green District Councillor, as well as undertaking freelance facilitation, consultation and writing. In all of these contexts, I find myself increasingly working amongst diverse groups of people with competing goals and priorities. More and more I find myself looking for the skills and ways of being that encourage a search for the common ground and collaborative solutions. It is this that I ended up exploring during my residency. How do we find solutions to 'messy', complex challenges? How do we experience and respond to the perspective of someone who is completely unlike us? From my own experiences amongst tribes in Africa, diverse political parties, and issues that the media can tend to pit against each other (e.g. farming and our environment), I have come to notice the ways of being and of seeing that might move us from our silos and into a more just and sustainable future. The residency gave me the space to document these and think about whether they might add value to others. A lot of my work takes inspiration from, or is based in our natural world, and bringing the insights of nature (e.g. how trees network) into my own work has also helped me to see things from new perspectives.

The residency has given me a springboard into next steps – not least because of the

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other people I met there. Their ideas, work and curiosity motivated and encouraged me on my own path. The blend of personal exploration and collaborative questioning provided an environment that can be very hard to find in our busy lives. This was nurtured by good food, peaceful spaces and beautiful surroundings. And the chance to present our emerging ideas to a wider audience of RSA fellows on the final evening was encouraging and very helpful.

I am grateful to the RSA and Hawkwood, and will continue to share outcomes with the wider community. You can follow me on Twitter @LizWainwright “

- Ruth Davey FRSA and Sophie Lizoulet (were not recipients of the Catalyst funded residency but joined alongside them). Developing practical, innovative and creative programmes to empower people within organisations.

"As leaders in our respective fields of Mindful Photography and Phototherapy / Strategic Transformation Consultancy, we decided to join forces to develop practical, innovative and creative programmes to empower people within organisations.

We based our methodology on the Agile transformation model, created by Gille Carlier D'Odeigne (Dancing with Life), to iterate our framework and hypothesis. We used nature, mindfulness and creative photography as experiential and facilitative tools for leadership and organisational change.

During the first three days, Ruth and I deep dived into the needs we have encountered with our vast client base and reflected on how the methodology would solve organisational challenges to adapt to the ever-changing world.

On the fourth day we delivered a workshop to leaders in the field of well-being to confront our theory within the context of the workplace. The objective being to provide the experience to leaders and get feedback to adjust the research.

In the evening, we had an opportunity to present our findings to a large audience, together with four other RSA fellow changemakers in residence: Sarah King, Philiy Page, Elizabeth Wainwright, Nick Snelgar.

Specific areas covered in the research are: well-being, innovation, culture and vision.

The methodology developed will also be adapted to help groups of individuals facing specific challenges and help them build resilience: gender equity, mental health and wellness, and climate change.

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We hope to bring new ways of thinking and being in order to catalyse positive change for the future.”

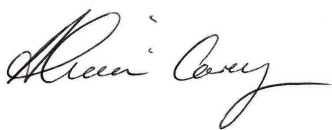
02. Conclusion

The combination of the quality of the work of the changemakers, the setting, the connections and the wider interest in the programme sparked regional interest and felt good value for money.

Hawkwood matched the RSA contribution with staffing and by providing additional grants to other fellows.

I was also interested in the nature of the application – many wanted to write books, or do research. This worked brilliantly this time, but in the future I would also be keen to see applications from social entrepreneurs who are working on a live project to transform societal challenges or practical solutions to address our planetary climate change.

It would be interesting to see whether we could replicate this programme with a national call out - developing and supporting further changemakers aimed at supporting people to work on projects to make the world a better place.



Alicia Carey, FRSA

CEO

*“Not only a place people come to learn, but a source of ideas,
challenging dialogue, art and artistry, new understandings,
personal growth and human development.”*