Institution: University of South Wales	
Unit of Assessment: 33A Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies	
Title of case study: Storytelling for Wellbeing: Moving From Vision to Best Practice	
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014 - 2020	
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:	

Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
1. Professor Joseph Sobol	1. Director, George Ewart Evans Centre for Storytelling	1. 2017-present
2. Dr Emily Underwood Lee	2. Centre Research Fellow	2. 2015-present
3. Prof. Mike Wilson	3. Centre Director	3. 1997-2009
4. Karen Lewis	4. Centre Co-Director	4. 2009-2015
5. Prof. Hamish Fyfe	5. Centre Staff, Co-Director, Director	5. 2004 -09, 2009—15, 2015-17
6. Dr David Llewellyn	6. Centre Research Fellow	6. 2014 to 2017

Period when the claimed impact occurred: Jan 2014 - Dec 2020	
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N	

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words):

Environmental action, women's wellbeing, and healthcare sector initiatives often fail to get their messaging across to insulated groups of potential stakeholders. Research conducted by the George Ewart Evans Centre for Storytelling (GEECS) at the University of South Wales has bridged communication gaps to promote understanding and enhance individual and community well-being through three strands of storytelling research:

* **Environmental action:** The *Stories of Change* project led to successful bids by Welsh valley towns for extensive funding for post-coal community regeneration. The *Reducing Industrial Carbon Emissions* project models the synergy of using digital storytelling to spotlight clean industrial technologies.

* **Healthcare:** GEECS co-produced *Storytelling for Health* conferences in Swansea (2017, 2019) have led to digital storytelling trainings for staff in all 7 NHS Wales Health Boards. The *Kicking Up Our Heels* project has informed the design of Ormond Street Hospital's new £258 million children's cancer centre.

* **Women's wellbeing:** The *40 Voices, 40 Years* exhibit in partnership with charity Welsh Women's Aid, helped raise public awareness of issues around gender-based violence, helped change policy, victim support training, policing practice, and legal frameworks.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words):

Storytelling methodologies provide powerful frameworks for bridging communication gaps and promoting understanding between siloed groups of stakeholders. Since 2014, the George Ewart Evans Centre for Storytelling (GEECS) at the University of South Wales has leveraged the power of its storytelling methodologies to develop far-reaching collaborations with a number of different organisations and create a body of research on storytelling for wellbeing. This work is in accordance with the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Welsh Assembly, 2015) in that our projects yield powerful stories of efforts to enhance environmental, community, and individual health, safety, and capacity to thrive. GEECS research can be themed as follows:

a. **Theoretical Explorations of the Effects of Storytelling in Media and Society (3.1, 3.2)**
In 2014, GEECS researchers provided essential framing for the movement from live to digital storytelling **(3.1)**. This work captured the continuity in values between antecedent storytelling performance scenes in UK and USA and the 21st century turn towards multi-media and digital storytelling. Later, in 2020, GEECS researchers drew connections between performance storytelling and applied it for targeted social purposes **(3.2)**. Both strands of research explored the values and conceptual frameworks that underpin

GEECS's work and determine its projects--framing storytelling as a medium for empowering community voices.

b. **Designing Narrative Interventions to Collect Experiential Data through Interviews, Focus Groups, Case Studies, Themed and Coded Collections (3.3, 3.4)**
Research published in 2017 **(3.3)** reported on the impact of the ground-breaking BBC/GEECS collaboration *Capture Wales* [2001-08]. Local, ethnic, vocational, and avocational communities across Wales were seeded with digital storytelling workshops, tools, and equipment in order to democratise the production of user-generated content.
In that spirit of cultural democracy, GEECS researchers devised the *Everyday Lives* strand of the UK-wide AHRC project *Stories of Change* (2014-17). This digital storytelling work package probed social and environmental impacts of energy sector transitions in former coal-mining communities in the South Wales valleys **(3.4)**, facilitating dynamic public and policy conversations about energy. *Stories of Change* offered engaging routes to contemplate past and present and to imagine possible futures through stories, festivals, and exhibits, helping communities affirm the transformation from extractive to renewable economies.

c. **Action Research for Raising Awareness and Practice through Workshops, Training Processes, and Targeted Story Collection/Dissemination Projects (3.5, 3.6)**
GEECS academics created the exhibit *40 Voices, 40 Years* in 2019 **(3.5)** in concert with national charity Welsh Women's Aid to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the movement to eliminate gender-based violence in Wales: 46 women shared stories of survival and resistance in their own words, which were showcased in digital stories and associated artefacts such as photos, news clips, and posters at the National Museum of Welsh History and the Welsh Assembly among other prominent public exhibition sites.

d. **Creative Process and Performances Designed to Generate Impact through Aesthetic Experience (3.2, 3.6)**
GEECS researchers worked with NHS Arts Officer and Centre Associate Prue Thimbleby of the Swansea Bay University (SBU) Health Board to devise the first and second Storytelling for Health conferences in 2017 and 2019. These gatherings brought together artists and health care practitioners from four continents. The special issue of the journal *Storytelling, Self, Society* (2019) reflected the seamless integration of creative practice, performance, therapeutic interventions and artistic research that is the hallmark of this discipline-shaping work **(3.6)**—creating a framework for the development of *Kicking Up Our Heels* (2019), a storytelling self-care project for parents of paediatric cancer patients at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)
3.1. Wilson, Michael and Fyfe, Hamish. 2014. 'A Public Voice: Access, Digital Story and Interactive Narrative' in Popple, S and Thornham, H (ed) *Content Cultures: Transformations of User Generated Content in Public Service Broadcasting*, IB Tauris, pp.113-130.
Evidence of quality: Report was commissioned and distributed nationally by the BBC before being revised and included as peer-reviewed chapter in edited volume of media research from a respected academic press.

3.2. Sobol, Joseph. 2020. 'Contemporary Storytelling: Revived Traditional Art and Protean Social Agent.' Book chapter in, Sobol, Joseph. 2020. *Liars, Damn Liars, and Storytellers: Essays on Traditional and Contemporary Storytelling*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
Evidence of quality: Peer-reviewed book chapter that defines and surveys the disciplinary alignment uniting the fields of Performance and Applied Storytelling—an alignment fundamental to GEECS' mission. [Listed in REF 2021]

3.3. Lewis, Karen and Matthews, Nicole. 2017. 'The Afterlife of Capture Wales: Digital Stories and Their Listening Publics,' in Dunford, M and Jenkins, T (eds) *Digital Storytelling: Form and Content*, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 103 – 118.

Evidence of quality: Peer-reviewed chapter with a leading academic publisher. Publication emerges from and builds on the Centre's longstanding relationship with key industry partners in digital storytelling.

3.4. Llewelyn, David, and Joe Smith, Robert Butler, Rosie Day, et al. 2017. 'Gathering around stories: Interdisciplinary experiments in support of energy system transitions.' *Energy Research and Social Science* (2017).
Evidence of quality: Peer-reviewed article in a leading academic journal in the field.

3.5. Underwood-Lee, Emily, with Catrin James, Tina Reece, Angelina Rodriguez, Eleri Butler, Becky James, Rose Davis. 2019a. *40 Voices, 40 Years*. Exhibition. St. Fagan's National Museum of History, Welsh Assembly Pierhead Building.
Evidence of Quality: exhibition in central institution of Welsh national identity, with subsequent showing in the Welsh Assembly, the national legislative headquarters. Comprised of 46 stories plus archival documents, photographs, and objects from the history of the Welsh Women's Aid movement. Exhibited in venues including the Cynon Valley Museum (Aberdare), The Welfare Hall (Ystradgynlais), Swansea University (Swansea), St Fagans National Museum of History (Cardiff), the Cardiff Story Museum (Cardiff), the Pierhead and Senedd buildings of the National Assembly of Wales.

3.6. Underwood-Lee, Emily, and Prue Thimbleby, eds. 2019b. 'Storytelling for Health: Special Issue." *Storytelling, Self, Society: Interdisciplinary Journal of Storytelling Studies.*'15:1, 1-140 (Spr., 2019). Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
Evidence of quality: Special edition of a leading peer-reviewed journal in the field of Storytelling Studies, drawn from proceedings of the 'Storytelling for Health' conference in Swansea, Wales in June, 2017. Extended introduction used original research to explore the context for the conference, outlined key debates in the field of Storytelling for Health, and presented research showing the growth of the field and key impacts on professional practice.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)
GEECS' digital storytelling and live events have facilitated our community and professional partners to bridge gaps between ideas and their embodiment in action, enhancing impact across sectors through skilled narrative communication. These projects have marked seminal convergences of storytelling practitioners with community advocates and policymakers, elevating perceptions and practices in several key areas, including:

- Storytelling for Environmental Action
- Storytelling for Health
- Storytelling for Women's Wellbeing

1. Storytelling for Environmental Action:
The Stories of Change (SoC) project (2014-17) collected 229 stories in an online platform which also included an interactive archive, maps, timelines, and story-making tools--a vibrant public resource for visualizing transformation of the energy economy. The Creative Energy Festival in the village of Ynysybwl in South Wales, the SoC culminating event for the GEECS' project strand, *Everyday Lives,* resulted in community conversations that led to successful bids by Treherbert and Ynysybwl to obtain £1.1 and £1.27 million of additional funding respectively through the Big Lottery Fund in Wales' Create Your Space programme (Llewelyn et al 2017, **3.4**). These grants supported the purchase and re-purposing of the local library as a community centre and headquarters for a number of ongoing craft, recycling, and fitness enterprises under the heading of Ynysybwl Vision. Local project partner Barbara Castle (OBE) of Ynysybwl Regeneration Partnership writes, *"The Creative Energy Festival and the interaction this encouraged with the local community has left a legacy in the form of a permanent local history 'exhibition' in the YRP base. Local people have come in with artefacts and photographs and these are on display for any visitors who come in."* **(5.6a)**

In response to GEECS work with Capture Wales, Stories of Change, and Storytelling for Health, Welsh government evaluators recommended that a GEECS digital storytelling strand be included

in in [Reducing Industrial Carbon Emissions (RICE)](#) (2018-21), a Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) grant of £10 million, with GEECS' work package of £233,000. WEFO evaluators now recommend that similar projects should be conceived from the outset with storytelling components **(5.7)**. Additionally, a memorandum of understanding has been prepared between the Centre and the Welsh Government Environment Ministry to incorporate these digital storytelling communication methods into national decarbonization strategies. According to RICE PI, "*the array of video stories now available on the RICE web site (https://www.rice.cymru/en/videos) has been a focal point for journalists, industry, academia and policy makers trying to find out where the future of technical development and implementation is going in UK….*" **(5.2a)**

2. Storytelling in Healthcare:

[Storytelling for Health](#) Swansea-based conferences in June 2017 and June 2019 initiated a new phase in the establishment of this field. In 2017, one hundred presenters and 174 delegates -arts practitioners, care providers, and researchers from four continents- gathered under the auspices of the Centre and the Swansea Bay University (SBU) Health Board to present, network, and build awareness; in 2019, 83 presenters and 200 delegates convened. One Australian participant wrote: "*The Storytelling in Health conference was unique among my experiences of conferences... Here's why: the absence of silos…. It is [here] in the distant north… where I have found 'my tribe', a trove of vibrant, passionate, intelligent folk who are as excited as I am by the gifts each and every one of us brings to our work.*" **(5.3a)** As indicated by participant responses **(5.3a, 5.3b)**, 82.2% verified that they would make changes in their professional healthcare practice based on their conference experiences.

Presentations given to policy makers in the Welsh Assembly Government Cross-Party Working Group on Arts and Health (6 July, 21 Sept. 2017) resulted in storytelling becoming embedded in a robust Arts in Health sector with numerous ongoing service projects throughout Wales. One participant in a conference workshop on storytelling to help foster parents to bond with children from traumatic backgrounds wrote, "*I had no idea storytelling was so powerful. I told my foster daughter one of the stories and we had the deepest connection that we have had in the whole six years she has been with us…*". **(5.3b)**

The first Clinical Nurse Specialist in Storytelling was appointed at ABMU/SBU Health board from 2017-18 due to GEECS research. The SBU Health Board Arts Officer noted: "*We appointed an experienced forensic mental health nurse who was also a storyteller and this opened the door to a significant increase in creative work in our mental health delivery unit.*" **(5.4)** The appointee confirmed: "*The research of the George Ewart Evans Centre for Storytelling has had a significant impact on my practice, which has impacted my own professional life and also the lives of the staff and patients with whom I engage. It has also led to a cultural change within my organisation… I now provide creative supervision with staff and use metaphor as a way of thinking about difficult issues during supervision. This has been very helpful in enabling staff to approach challenging situations and to find creative solutions.*" **(5.5)**

USW researchers and SBU Health Board Arts Officer developed an accredited module in Storytelling for Health **(5.4)** now being offered to staff of all health boards in Wales and England. Since launching the accredited training in March 2019, 36 staff from across Welsh health boards have completed the module (England rollout scheduled pre-COVID-19). The SBU Health Board Arts Officer said: "*Our research collaboration with the George Ewart Evans Centre for Storytelling, particularly the collaboration with Emily Underwood-Lee on 'Storytelling for Health' has had significant impact on attitudes, behaviours and professional practice within the Swansea Bay Health Board…. Trainings grounded in the S4H Conference have significantly improved the quality of services and increased the transference of learning into practice.*" **(5.4)** In recognition of the impact of this work on patient satisfaction, the SBU Health Board patient story programme received the 2020 Patient Experience Network National Award in the Turning it Around category.

The [Kicking Up Our Heels](#) project (2019) provided storytelling and arts-based workshops to 100 paediatric cancer patient family members, to facilitate parents' self-care and to better understand family members' needs. This has profoundly impacted family services at Great Ormond Street

Hospital, (GOSH), modelling patient engagement and self-care through effective arts interventions. GOSH Arts Manager (**5.6a**, **5.6b**) stated that project findings have informed the design of the new £258 million children's cancer centre and have spurred full-scale reviews by the Patient Experience team of facility- and program-design to improve care provided to parents of children in treatment.

3. Storytelling for Women's Wellbeing:

40 Voices, 40 Years (2018-19) has significantly impacted policy and service provision for Welsh women, children, and families, influencing training with police, local councils, Welsh Government, Welsh Women's Aid (WWA) 22 member organisations. Policy makers, service providers, and viewers reported notable changes in awareness, behaviour, and attitudes as a result of experiencing these stories. In the course of the project (**5.5**):
* 68 volunteers from WWA trained in oral history capture techniques.
* Over 21,000 visitors viewed the exhibition.
* Over 20,000 individuals--pupils and students, community groups, and others--attended exhibitions and lectures in their local communities and educational spaces
* Approximately 10,000 individuals accessed project information via online resources and social media.

Feedback from participants (**5.7a**, **5.7b**) indicated that it had changed their attitude and understanding of violence against women. Viewers heard powerful survivor stories, learned about background and motives, challenges and achievements over the past 40 years of the women's movement, and understand better why such programs are still vital. The Head of Engagement at WWA stated: "*University of South Wales has helped Welsh Women's Aid to tell our story…. It's helping us [with] public awareness, helping us change policy and laws, but also helping us save the lives of women and children….*" (**5.7**)

5. Sources to corroborate impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

5.1 Stories of Change Sources
a. Stories of Change Ynysybwl testimonial letter
b. Stories of Change Weblink
c. Ynysybwl Vision/Create Your Space Weblink.

5.2 Reducing Industrial Carbon Emissions Sources
a. Director, Energy Safety Research Institute, Swansea University, testimonial letter.
b. RICE Digital Stories Weblink

5.3 Storytelling for Health Sources
a. Reports by Storytelling for Health conference delegates
b. Arts and Health in Wales case studies. Weblink

5.4. Arts Officer, SBU/ABMU Health Board, testimonial letter.

5.5. Hospital Director, Elysium Healthcare, testimonial letter.

5.6. Kicking Up Our Heels Sources
a. GOSH Arts Manager, Great Ormond Street Hospital, testimonial letter.
b. Kicking Up Our Heels Final Report, by Anna Ledgard

5.7 Forty Voices Forty Years Sources
a. Forty Voices Forty Years report.
b. 40 Voices Digital Story. Weblink