



Sustainable Steps Wales Case Study

The John Burns Foundation: Community Led Action For Sustainable Horticulture



May 2024



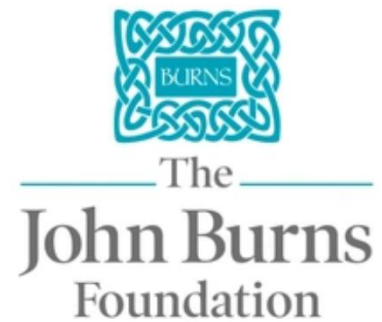
Case Study – John Burns Foundation.

Community Led Action For Sustainable Horticulture

THE ORGANISATION

Burns Pet Nutrition Foundation was established in 2006. From the outset, its founder John Burns was determined that the company should become a force for good within the community. The John Burns Foundation became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in 2016 as a vehicle to make the vision a reality.

Based at the Canolfan John Burn Centre, Kidwelly the charity aims to help enhance the lives of disadvantaged people by offering practical recreational facilities and life skill opportunities, as well as using the arts, the outdoors and events to bring enjoyment to the whole community.



THE PROJECT

The Community Led Action For Sustainable Horticulture (CLASH) project operates from Canolfan John Burns.

The aim of CLASH is to actively reduce the carbon footprint of hard to reach individuals by engaging them in activities that support the green agenda.

The project is built on evidence from community consultations that showed that members of the community are very concerned about climate change but lack the knowledge and understanding of how they can reduce their own carbon footprint. Knowing how to eat more healthily and sustainably has been identified as a barrier to

reducing carbon emissions by changing the way people purchase and prepare food.

The CLASH EOI indicated that the project was targeted at young people, but the recent update report demonstrates much wider community of engagement.



The project is run in partnership with a range of local organisations including local schools, Carmarthenshire Youth Service, University of Wales: Trinity Saint David and third sector organisations such as Mencap.

PROGRESS TO DATE

Although still in its early stages, the CLASH project has already been able to engage with a range of recipients, including schools and adults with learning disabilities. Sessions include a mix of outdoor activity such as gardening and cooking in the Centre's own kitchen, where nutritious food, using produce grown in the raised beds and polytunnel on site is prepared.

Participants sit together to eat the prepared food, thus providing opportunity to share quality time and exchange experience.

Building on links with local schools, the project emphasises the concept of field to fork. Pupils have been able to increase understanding of where food comes from, and what constitutes good nutritious food.

HOW DID THEY GO ABOUT INSPIRING PEOPLE?

Lack of knowledge has been recognised as one of the major barriers preventing people engaging with climate change conversations. By showing simple techniques through practical action, knowledge can be improved.

CLASH can point to several examples where people's attitudes and skills have been developed. Little steps are indicative of a person's development. For one person it may be their willingness to get their hands dirty planting, for another it could be through gently being introduced to a new skill in the kitchen.

Rory is a member of the Mencap Group and writes a blog about the project on the John Burns Foundation Facebook page. In one post he writes about how, one week they made Broccoli Broth using some freshly picked ingredients. For Rory, writing this blog has been a major achievement, boosting his self-confidence as well as putting in his own words the skills learnt through CLASH.


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Myself, Peter, Christian, Steve and Gareth helped Chris to do jobs outside up at the glamping site.

Some of the jobs that we did up at the were stacking firewood in the hand made log store, helping to clean the hot tubs outside the glamping pods, and filling the onsite empty log stores with fresh firewood.

After working hard up at the glamping site, we travelled up to the orchard to do a few jobs up there.

Some of the jobs that we did were tidying the areas around the trees , and moving the pruned tree branches from one location of the orchard to the top where we made a home for hedgehogs and a variety of wildlife to live in.

Whilst we were working outside, Dai, Lynda and Matthew stayed behind at the John Burns Centre to do cooking in the kitchen with Kate.

In the kitchen this week, they made Bridget's Broccoli Broth with homemade cheese on toast,

Some of the ingredients that were put in the broth were freshly picked broccoli from the polytunnel, freshly picked spinach, peas and cream.

For pudding they made healthy flapjacks

Once me, Peter, Christian, Gareth, Chris and Steve were finished up at the orchard, we went back to the John Burns Centre to have food

Everyone really enjoyed their lunch.

After lunch, Matthew, Dai and Lynda went back upstairs to help Kate do the washing up

While they were doing that, me, Peter, Gareth, Steve and Christian helped Bridget to plant some potatoes in the raised beds.

After this was done, we helped to clean the mud off our gardening tools using a hosepipe and a brush.

All in all a very busy but productive day at the John Burns Centre this week

School groups have been able to learn ideas from other parts of the world. The picture shows a simple idea for recycling plastic bottles as a vegetable bed. The bottles help to retain heat and provide an excellent growing medium for local produce.

The idea was shared by a visiting school from Lesotho.



School pupils visiting CLASH built a vegetable bed from recycled plastic bottles.

Some people think that growing your own food is difficult or expensive. These are major barriers for engaging people and inspiring them to think about growing more of their own food.

The simple bed in the picture is a frame, placed over cardboard and filled with soil. Showing people these simple techniques can help to break down barriers.



WHAT IMPACT HAS THE PROJECT HAD?

The impacts of the project are already beginning to be felt amongst the participants, the staff and the organisation.

The Mencap group spoken to by the Evaluator during a site visit highlighted the individual impacts the project was having on confidence, skills and life opportunities.

Richard's story has been written up as a case study. Richard is a Mencap service user. After seeing his enthusiasm and progress grow by cooking lunch every week, he has attended additional cooking courses, has displayed a genuine enthusiasm to try new foods and a talent and real interest in learning to cook. Richard has found his "niche". He has volunteered on other activities and events within the Foundation which involved cooking or kitchen preparation sessions. These include preparing meals for the socially isolated older people group, helping to prepare cakes and apple crumbles to be sold at a charity event, facilitating in the kitchen for a St David's Day meal and he took great pride in making lunch for a Trustees meeting at the Foundation.

In an additional hugely significant step for his personal development, Richard began to take responsibility for his own travel to attend sessions at the Foundation by catching a bus or train on his own instead of being brought in by car by his parents. This small step to increasing his independence was another surprising outcome of his growing confidence associated with the



cooking session. Richard has recently started on a new employability course which will see him receive on-the-job training and an introduction to hospitality in a work-based community café based in Llanelli. He will receive training to become a barista and food hygiene training to enable him to work within the café in a range of roles, including making coffee, helping to prepare light meals and serving customers. The personal growth, due to the CLASH project has been transformative for Richard.

Christian is another member of the Mencap group who began engaging in the gardening and outdoor elements of the project but who was quite reluctant to go anywhere near the kitchen, even just to have a look! There was a significant change in January 2024 when Christian decided that he wanted to try a cooking session in the kitchen.

Since that initial activity, his interaction within the group has been transformative. Initially he was very hesitant to use sharp knives and handle hot pans but his confidence grew week after week. Since then, he has not looked back and has thrived both in the garden and in the kitchen.

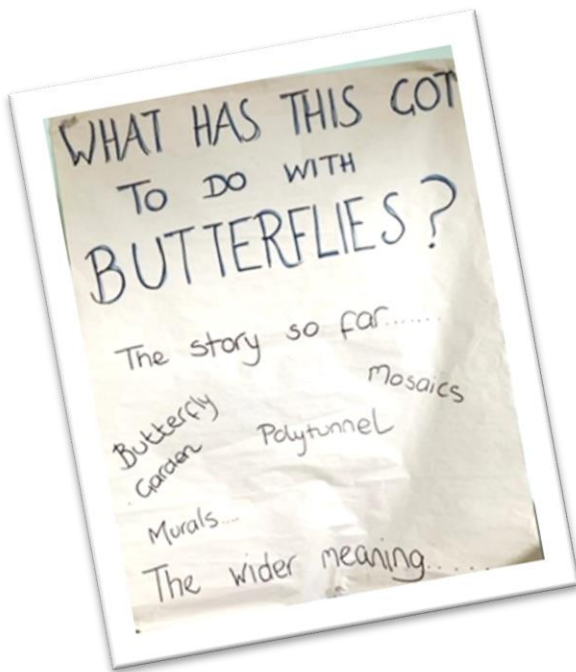
Both these examples show how hard to reach individuals have been supported through CLASH to engage with activities that cut individual carbon footprints by learning how to grow food and create nutritious meals from it.

Participants spoken to by the Evaluator described how they had taken inspiration from CLASH activities back into their own lives. This included cooking more frequently and even starting to grow some of their own food.

The impacts have been felt by members of staff as well. One member of staff was inspired to make chutney from produce on site, something she would never have contemplated before getting involved in the project.

Future developments will provide an opportunity to engage in discussions about the impact of climate change e.g. through the creation of a wildflower meadow.

The Foundation, supported by Egin, are learning about how to measure impact in a project which is locally focussed and with particular hard to reach groups. They found that online tools which asked people to calculate their carbon footprint by reporting on things like air travel were just not relevant for the people supported by the project.



Making connections. How the project will help nature.



LEARNING

The following learning can be extracted from the CLASH experience.

Nurturing ownership of the project is important for people to take the first steps towards new and transformative experiences. The two examples quoted above demonstrate how individuals have taken huge personal steps, supported through the nurturing approach of the Foundation.

Ownership of the solutions is important. Real change comes about when people relate the changes to their own lives. It does not come through just being told about issues of climate change.

Changing behaviours by doing is important. People react better to developing new knowledge and skills through participation in practical activities, in this case gardening and cooking.

The social aspect is important - growing produce and cooking together. People eat a meal, prepared using produce, at the end of each session to reinforce personal development and behaviour change through social interaction.