

Sustainable Steps Wales – Action Grants and Egin Grants



Case Study - Innovate Trust: One Planet
November 2025



1. The Organisation

Innovate Trust is a supported living provider that works with people with learning disabilities, autism, and other additional needs to achieve independence the way they want.



The organisation began as a student volunteering project at Cardiff University in 1967. It was the first charity in the UK to set up a supported living home.

2. The Project

Innovate Trust was awarded £148,000.00 over 3 years (July 2023 –August 2026) from the Sustainable Steps Wales (SSW) – Action Grants programme. The total project cost is anticipated to be £194,800.00, with the match funding coming from Innovate Trust reserves.

The One Planet project aims to enable 300 individuals with learning disabilities from across Wales to take climate action and live more sustainably. The project has 4 key outcomes.

Outcome 1: Reducing Energy Consumption.

People with learning disabilities and their carers are supported to make reductions in their energy use and learn how to live more sustainably.

Outcome 2: Circular Economy

Participants are supported to reduce the amount of waste they dispose of and learn about the 4 Rs, (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Recover).

Outcome 3: Sustainable Transport

Participants are encouraged to use public transport more frequently and alternative transport options such as walking and cycling.

Outcome 4: Low Carbon Gardening

People with learning disabilities and their carers are supported to garden the low carbon way, carrying out initiatives that have a direct beneficial and proven impact on the climate.

The SSW - Action Grant is being used to fund a full-time project officer, a part-time project assistant, recruitment costs, training fees, travel, marketing, monitoring and evaluation, translation, and IT equipment.

3. Progress to Date

By the end of Year 2 (July 2025), Innovate Trust had recorded 453 individuals and a network of organisations engaged with the project.

More than 75% of these individuals were new to climate conversations. Innovate Trust works closely with a network of referring agencies, other third sector organisations, (for example Meadow Street Community Garden in Pontypridd and Coalfield Flower Farm in Tonyrefail) and public sector (for example Cardiff & Vale Park Ranger Teams).

Reducing Energy Consumption

- An energy saving booklet including energy challenges for participants to use in a home setting.
- 54 home sessions.
- 22 energy reduction workshops.



One Planet Participant with Energy Saving Resources

Circular Economy / Reducing Waste Activities

- 85 reducing waste workshops delivered over the first 2 years on topics including healthy eating/ reducing food waste, carpentry (for example building compost boxes), "sew easy" basic sewing skills.
- 3 litter pick sessions.
- 49 home visits on the topics covered in the workshops either 1:1 or with a small group of co-tenants as a way of embedding learning.
- A visit to a Dŵr Cymru/ Welsh Water treatment site to learn more about how waste is managed.

Sustainable Transport

- 20 practical travel sessions, focussing on one aspect (rail, bus and cycling) including in Year 1, 5 sessions in the field travelling, meeting Transport for Wales staff for example meeting guards and familiarising people with ticket machines.
- 37 home visits to support sustainable travel.
- 2 sustainable travel workshops in a community setting.
- 4 sessions of a travel confidence course.
- 11 groups walks and in Year 1 the project engaged 17 people in walking and wheeling challenge.



Participant and Transport for Wales Staff Member



Low Carbon Gardening

- 23 hands on sessions in the community with Cardiff & Vale Park ranger teams, and Coed Caerdydd.
- Support for other third sector organisations working with people with learning disabilities, for example a community allotment in Barry, Vale of Glamorgan.
- 29 sessions on low carbon gardening.
- 19 community allotment sessions.
- 28 home visits to support low carbon gardening.
- 4 school sessions.

4. The Language of Climate Conversations

Identifying language and communication barriers

Even accessing activities through which people with learning disabilities can engage with climate conversations can be challenging. Community gardening activities for example are difficult to access through a lack of support, anxiety regarding mixed public events, poor physical access and difficulty in understanding how to find and sign-up to opportunities.

Once engaged, Innovate Trust soon found that, language and terminology were issues. Staff recognised that they needed to talk to individuals in a stripped back way. Almost no-one had a concept of what 'energy' was so, although staff were able to speak to individuals about how they currently used appliances and what small changes they could make, the project was in danger of pushing ahead with something that would be tokenistic.

Engagement in the One Planet project has been positive across all outcomes, although challenges have been experienced under Outcome 3, Sustainable Travel. Innovate Trust believes that this is due to a range of factors. Safety can be a concern and confidence in general can be low. Some people with learning disabilities tend to favour car use, either because it best meets their accessibility needs, or because it represents something positive in their lives, such as independence.

How the project addressed the barriers.

Innovate Trust provides opportunities for people with learning disabilities to participate in climate conversations. A “**strengths based**” approach is adopted, working with people from the perspective of their own lives.

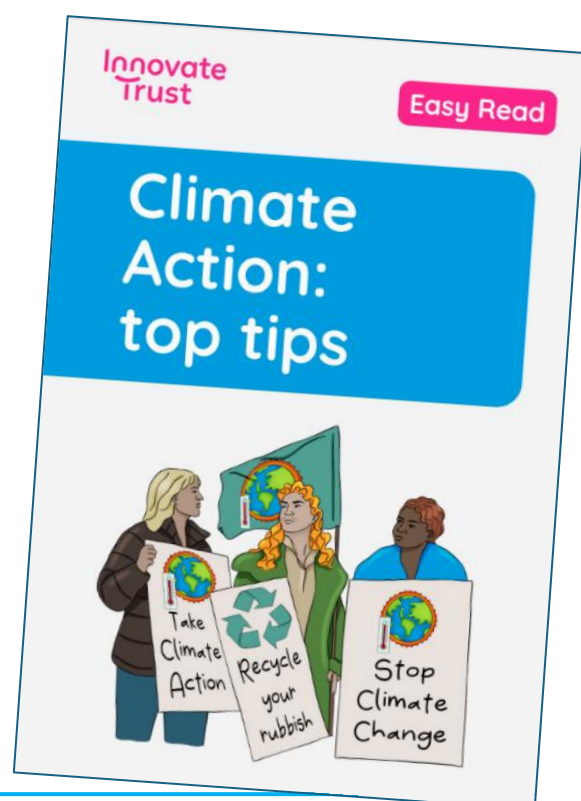


Innovate Trust report much greater buy in when individuals are first able to understand the benefits of taking action, for example that taking public transport will save money and may enable them to afford to save up for a particular purchase. Specific, concrete benefits have made individuals more open to discussing climate change and more receptive to moving on to thinking about how it might affect their community, the UK, and beyond.

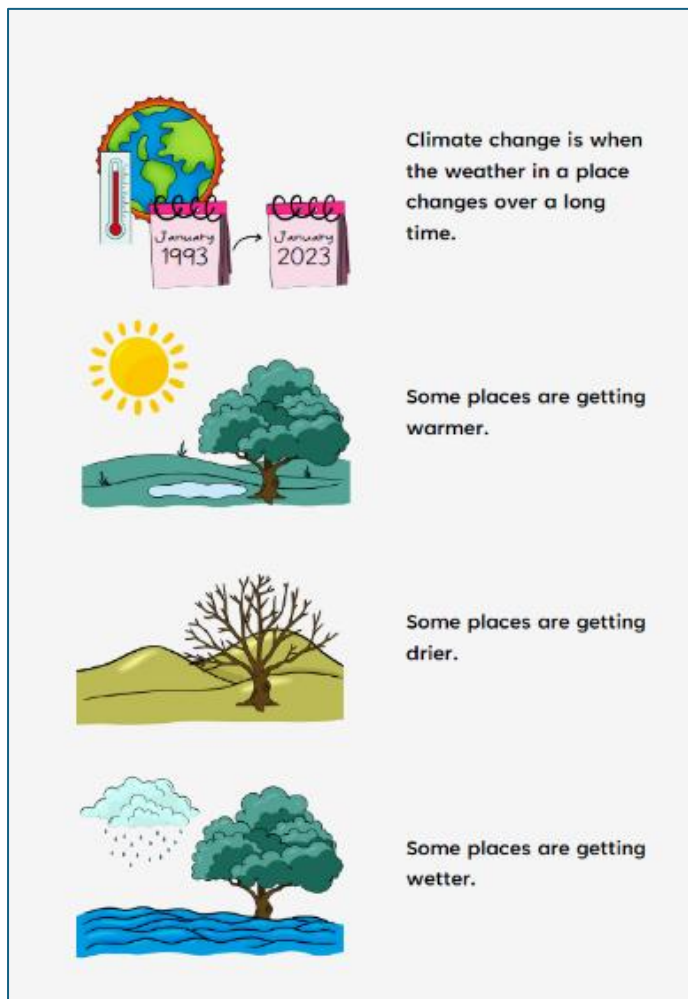
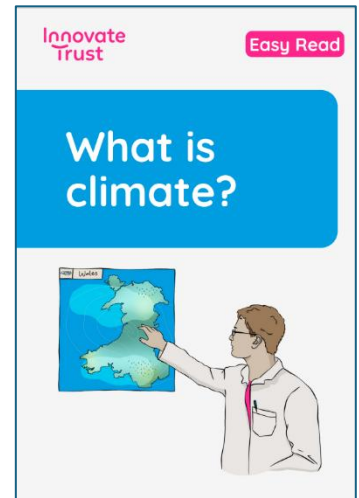
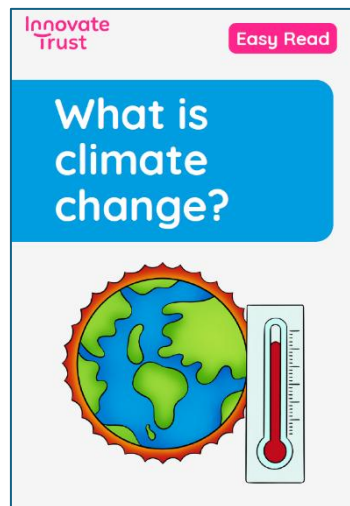
Innovate participants discussing climate change

The approach taken by the project is very much for Innovate Trust to go to the participants, whether that's to their home or a setting they're already frequenting in the week (for example a day centre), rather than trying to get participants to come and join activity out in the community. Innovate Trust feel that this approach has enabled them to make the project much more accessible and inclusive. They report much higher engagement numbers as a consequence and have been able to engage harder to reach individuals.

A Top Tips Easy Read booklet has been produced which outlines simple ways in which people can stop climate change.

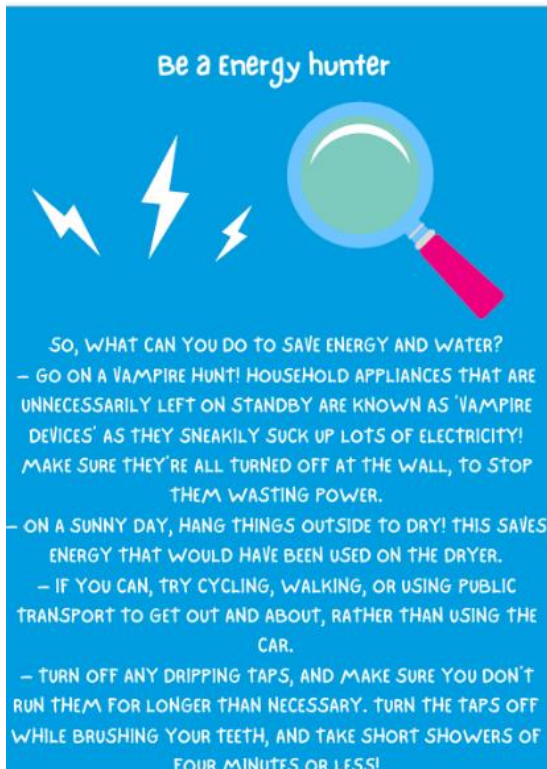


Learning resources are written in simple language with lots of images which support individuals to reflect on their current behaviours around energy use. Easy Read booklets have been written about Energy, Climate and What is Climate Change.



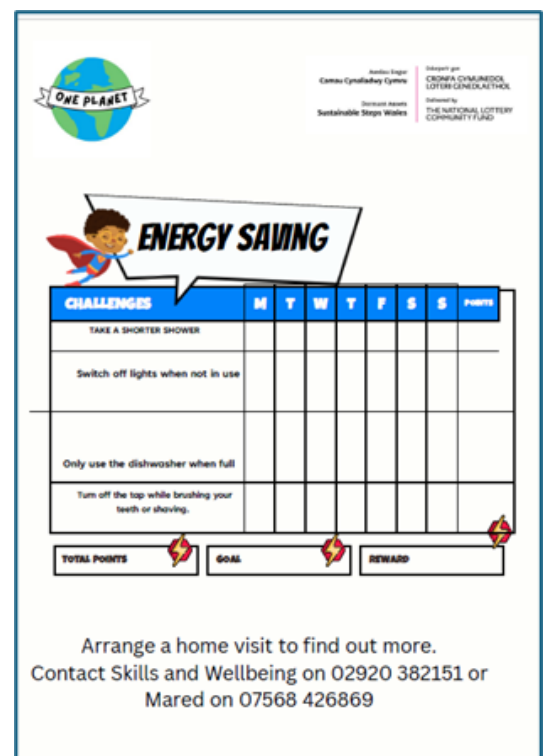
The booklets use simple language and pictures to explain difficult concepts.

The resources are constantly under review and have been streamlined since the start of the project. This ensures that people first grasp key foundational concepts—such as "What does energy mean?"—before progressing to explore energy in specific contexts, such as electrical energy.



Sessions are engaging, incorporating fun and imaginative elements, like inviting participants to become "energy vampire hunters." These interactive approaches have helped bring the content to life and boost engagement.

Challenges are used as a way of encouraging people and keeping them engaged. Innovate Trust has developed the idea of "energy vampire hunters" as a challenge for participants following a home visit. The challenge involves identifying which appliances or behaviour are sucking energy (like vampires) from the home and encouraging participants to track new behaviours.



ONE PLANET

ENERGY SAVING

CHALLENGES	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	POINTS
TAKE A SHORTER SHOWER								
Switch off lights when not in use								
Only use the dishwasher when full								
Turn off the tap while brushing your teeth or shaving.								
TOTAL POINTS								
GOAL								
REWARD								

Arrange a home visit to find out more.
Contact Skills and Wellbeing on 02920 382151 or
Mared on 07568 426869

'S has kept to her energy saving challenges and is now excellent according to staff about turning all lights off. She is getting better at not leaving her phone on charge all the time and is going to start trying to take shorter showers.'

'C reports often on how well she is doing on her challenges and how she encourages others where she lives to do the same. She has also got her parents and her cousin involved.'

Quotes from Innovate Trust Reports



Peer group meetings, involving people with learning disabilities with an interest in the environment, have been used as a way of discussing what language is used when explaining climate change and climate action. In Year 1, 30 people took part in over 19 peer group meetings.

Trips to the Dŵr Cymru Wastewater facility at Cilfynydd and to Bridgend solar and renewable energy plant have introduced concepts of waste and energy in a visual, experiential way.

Successes in climate conversations

The One Planet project has given people the opportunity, language and confidence to speak up in climate conversations. Innovate Trust talk about a sense of involvement which has resulted.

'I feel I can't take part in discussions about climate change. I don't think that people will listen to me, so to be honest I don't bother.'- Participant.

"I think it is very important that we look after our planet as we only have this one that we can live on. We should not waste energy or make the earth dirty for others, we should look after nature. I don't want it to get too hot that we cannot live here. The sessions made me happy and feel good about what I can do about saving the planet."- Participant.



This confidence has led to behaviour change and improvements to wellbeing through having the skills to travel independently. People are using this language to spread messages to others.

"I loved taking part and learning with my friends. I want to tell all my friends and family what I have learnt and why they should change what they do so that we can all be safer." - Participant

"I am probably going to give it a go in telling friends and family to try and save the planet as it is important, but they might not listen, so I will try again until they do." - Participant

Innovate Trust is using their learning to work with Cynnal Cymru and the Carbon Literacy Project to develop an accessible version of the well-established Carbon Literacy Training. This is the first time that the course will be adapted for people with learning disabilities.

Challenges in climate conversations

Innovate Trust has reflected that an individual's ability to change their behaviour is strongly influenced by the level of control they have over their own lives. Success often depends on whether their support networks are willing and able to help them make changes, whether they themselves understand the importance of the changes, and whether these changes are a personal priority. They point out that some participants live in shared accommodation, which can either be supportive or present a barrier, especially when conflicting views exist or when staff are stretched providing complex care for multiple people.

Engagement across all outcomes has been positive but early engagement with Outcome 3: Sustainable Travel was initially lower. Innovate Trust believes that this was due to confidence and fear of loss of independence as described in the barriers section above. New approaches such as promoting car sharing are being considered.



5 Key Learning

The key learning about language and communication from Innovate Trust's One Planet project can be summarised as follows.

- **Use peer groups** as a way of designing project resources and communication.
- **Use straightforward language** in resources including the use of much simpler resources which cut back to the basics of what energy is and what this means in the context of someone's own home.
- **Adopt a "strengths based" approach.** Innovate Trust has demonstrated that by providing accessible, tailored educational activities, individuals are enabled to engage and to act in a way which is meaningful to them. Innovate Trust has sought to ensure that concepts such as climate change make sense to individuals in the context of their own lives before trying to talk about the impact of climate on other people or the wider world.
- **Use challenges and simple games** as a way of communicating and encouraging positive action.



About Sustainable Steps Wales - Action and Egin Grants

Sustainable Steps Wales is delivered by The National Lottery Community Fund and supported with money from the Dormant Assets Scheme. Action Grants and Egin Grants are two of the four Sustainable Steps Wales programmes. They support The National Lottery Community Fund's commitment in Wales to:

- create a sustainable future
- reach new audiences who want to take action on climate change.

Egin Grants (2023–2030) aim to help community groups to take action on climate change and live in a more sustainable way. Funding is available for up to £15,000. It is open to groups that receive support from the [Sustainable Steps Wales – Egin Mentoring Service](#).

Action Grants (2022–2028) aim to address climate change in communities and help people live in a more sustainable way. Funding has been awarded to 14 projects, ranging from £10,001 to £350,000. You can find out more about [Egin Grants](#) and [Action Grants](#) on the Fund's website.

About the evaluation

Severn Wye Energy Agency, with Liz Bickerton Consulting, was appointed by The National Lottery Community Fund in 2022 to evaluate the Sustainable Steps Wales – Action Grants and Egin Grants programmes. The evaluation team aims to generate programme-wide learning and evidence of impact, focusing on how the grants engage new people and groups in climate action, motivate behaviour change, and reduce carbon emissions. The evaluation will run until 2027.

About this case study

This is one of three project case studies from research that explored language and communication barriers when engaging communities on climate change, and how projects have worked to overcome them. The methods and findings are summarised in the Insight Report #2 “Net Zero – Net What?”.