



Sustainable Steps Wales

Insight Report One - Inspiring People



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1. SUSTAINABLE STEPS WALES

Sustainable Steps Wales is a programme funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, (TNLCF). The programme's vision is as follows.

Tackling the climate crisis is understood to be everyone's business and people and communities are inspired to contribute to a prosperous, low carbon future for Wales. The voluntary sector in Wales is the greenest in the UK and The National Lottery Community Fund is recognised as being a key player in enabling this.

Sustainable Steps Wales consists of 4 strands.

Strand 1 provides mentoring support for communities to engage with climate action. This includes mentoring support and networking. Groups will be supported to produce an action plan and to apply for an Egin Grant.

Strand 2 is a small grants programme, (Egin Grants) available to those groups that have receiving Strand 1 mentoring support and have produced an Action Plan. A total of

£15,000 per project is available for both capital and revenue items.

Strand 3 approved Action Grants for 15 organisations. These awards are for a maximum of £350,000 per project.¹

Strand 4 is a funding stream called "Green Careers" which aims to help young people (aged between 16 and 30) into careers that reduce carbon emissions, restore nature and help adapt to a changing climate.

¹ Since being awarded one project has indicated that they will not proceed and another will finish early.



2. PURPOSE OF THE INSIGHT REPORT

The External Evaluators, (Severn Wye Energy Agency and Liz Bickerton Consultancy) have produced an Evaluation Framework for the programme evaluation. This Framework includes the intention to produce a series of Insight Reports during the lifetime of the project.

The Framework lists the following outcomes of the Insight Reports:

- To capture learning and to inspire others, in particular other community organisations (either potential applicants to TNLCF or not) thinking of embarking on projects similar to those supported by Sustainable Steps Wales.
- Through deep dives into programme activities to provide an opportunity to navigate challenges that arise from community-led initiative evaluation e.g. attribution, additionality and proportionality.

The Evaluation Framework anticipated that data to inform the Insight Reports would come primarily from TNLCF and from the case studies produced as part of the mentoring support programme. The Evaluators have developed their own case studies for the Insight Report and have made site visits to these case study projects.

Insight Reports will be drawn from case studies from both Strand 2 and Strand 3 activity. This first Insight Report draws material from Strand 3 only because of the relatively few Strand 2 projects to come through to date.



3. INSIGHT REPORT ONE

Report Theme

The theme of this first Insight Report is "Inspiring People". This theme was agreed with TNLCF as an appropriate focus in the early stages of the programme and one which fed directly into the aim to inspire communities.

Methodology

The methodology deployed to produce this Insight Report included:

- An analysis of project applications – what projects set out to do.
- Analysis of written reports submitted to TNLCF.
- Semi-structured interviews with project developers to understand the rationale behind the projects.
- Site visits to all case study projects. Notes of the visits were written up and sent for approval to the featured organisations.
- Any further background reading to understand the project background and operating context.



4. Research Questions

The following research questions have framed the deep dives.

Background

- Who is your project aimed at?
- Over what size of geographic area are your beneficiaries spread?

Barriers to Inspiring People

- How did you inspire new people to be involved in tackling climate change?
- What barriers did you identify when trying to inspire new people to take positive action to tackle climate change? Were there people that you could not reach?

Overcoming Barriers

- What did people need to overcome these barriers e.g. information, skills, opportunity?
- How has your project responded to meet these needs and overcome barriers?
- How will your project ensure that positive outcomes are used to inspire even more people?
- How will you keep people engaged?

Learning

- What learning have you gained about inspiring people?
- Have there been any notable successes to date?
- Have you changed the way you deliver your project in any way to address unexpected challenges?
- Which aspects of your project do you think would be most useful for other projects and initiatives to know about?



5. Featured Case Studies

3 case studies were initially selected to be a part of the deep dive but, during the preparation of the exercise, it was decided to also seek learning from a 4th project, Women Connect First, which was considering ending their initiative early. This parallel evaluation experience from Women Connect First has been fed into this Insight Report.

Rationale for Case Study Selection

The 4 projects operate in different parts of Wales (South, West and North). The projects take different approaches to engagement – geographically, segmentally and/or through thematic activity. They are using a range of activities to engage and inspire.

Summary of Projects

Gilfach Goch Community Association - Our Future

Gilfach Goch Community Association Limited in South Wales takes a whole community approach. It aims to reduce waste and change behaviours.

Early engagement has shown that people passionate about climate change and others who question the seriousness or even existence of a climate emergency are poles apart.

Lack of awareness and knowledge about the impact of individual actions have been

identified as barriers. The Community Association says that other organisations have reported similar barriers. Case studies show that, through the uptake of simple actions, people are made aware and empowered to change behaviours.

The Our Future project is focussed on the community of Gilfach Goch but attracts interest from across South Wales.



The John Burns Foundation -CLASH (Community Led Action for Sustainable Horticulture)

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.

The CLASH project is based in Carmarthenshire, West Wales. It became clear during community consultation that members of the community are very concerned about climate change but lacked the knowledge and

understanding of how they could reduce their own carbon footprint. Knowing how to eat more healthily and sustainably has been identified as a barrier to reducing carbon emissions. The CLASH EOI indicated that the project was targeted at young people, but the recent update report suggests a wider community of engagement. An evaluation site meeting engaged with a Mencap group participating in the project.

The Foundation is based in Kidwelly but interacts with groups from across Carmarthenshire.

Y Dref Werdd- Cymuned Cynaliadwy, Bro Ffestiniog

Y Dref Werdd is a well-established organisation based in Bro Ffestiniog. It was set up as environmental community project in 2006. It was formed as a group that would protect and enhance the local environment in Bro Ffestiniog through a wide range of projects.

The Cymuned Cynaliadwy, Bro Ffestiniog project recognises that many people feel powerless to tackle climate change, feeling that they cannot afford to take action. Y Dref Werdd identified a strong appetite in schools

to include nature education in the new curriculum, but not all teachers are comfortable with outdoor education.

The project will convert electric bikes, develop a market garden, establish a tree nursery and plant 3000 trees.

The project aims to work with people who haven't engaged in climate change before. Dref Werdd aims to be a leader for the community and show people that they can make a difference and take actions.



Women Connect First - Diversifying Voices On Climate Change

Women Connect First is a charity based in Cardiff and covers South East Wales. It aims to empower Black and Ethnic women by offering a range of services and training and, by doing so, improve lives and employability.

The Diverse Voices On Climate Change Project aimed to support women, girls and their families from Black and Ethnic Minority communities, to participate in climate action.

After initial issues appointing staff for the project and with a change in senior staff, Women Connect First felt that, because of lack of organisational capacity, they would have to finish the project early. They are currently writing up a report for TNLCF and a new way of delivering may be found.



Volunteers at Gilfach Goch Community Association preparing a meal, whilst discussing food waste.



6. Barriers to Participation

There was a certain amount of commonality amongst case study projects when describing the barriers that prevent people engaging with positive action to combat climate change. These are discussed below.

- a. **Life challenges.** One of the most commonly identified reasons for people not engaging in actions to combat climate change can generally be classed as life challenges. People are impacted by the cost of living, have busy lives and consequently do not have space in their lives to consider climate change. Dealing with day to day challenges is simply too overwhelming for many.

Projects such as those being run by Gilfach Goch and Y Dref Werdd operate close to or in areas of high deprivation, where the cost of living crisis is hitting hard.

- b. **Lack of knowledge** was identified as a key barrier. Some people do not know much about climate change. For those who recognise the importance of tackling climate change a sense of helplessness may exist. *"What can I do?"*, was a common sentiment. People believe that being climate friendly is expensive (eco-friendly products cost too much) or is difficult.

Gilfach Goch Community Association realised through their engagement with community members that there was a wide gulf between those people passionate about climate change and others who question the seriousness or even existence of a climate emergency. The Association recognised that these groups were poles apart and sought to bridge the gap.

- c. **Lack of ownership of the problems** is a similar barrier to lack of knowledge. Projects report that some people felt that tackling climate change was something for governments and policy makers to address. Why, said some, should their lives be inconvenienced when they see in the media politicians jetting off to conferences or big businesses polluting the environment. *"What difference can I make"* is the key question here.

Despite a high interest in climate change, Women Connect First found that people do not necessarily equate this with their own actions. Even those who know quite a lot can feel hopeless and doubt whether individual action makes a difference.

- d. **Lack of awareness** was a big issue. Some people just did not recognise the impacts their behaviours were having on climate change.



The following is a case study from Gilfach Goch.

“

Whilst calculating X's carbon footprint assessment with him, he was surprised by the types of questions he was asked and couldn't understand why some of the questions were relevant. After discussing his results and the impact of his behaviour, relating to each question asked, he admitted to never thinking about his own actions having any impact on climate change, in the grand scheme of things.

”

How climate change messages are communicated is often an issue. Projects reported that how information is communicated is often too complex for people to equate to their own lives or own behaviours.

Projects appreciate that there are many more people that they could reach out to with the actions and conversations. Sharing the learning could be the focus for a future insight report.



Gilfach Goch Community Association supports the community with the cost-of-living crisis whilst also highlighting the environmental benefits of recycling and reuse.



7. Overcoming Barriers

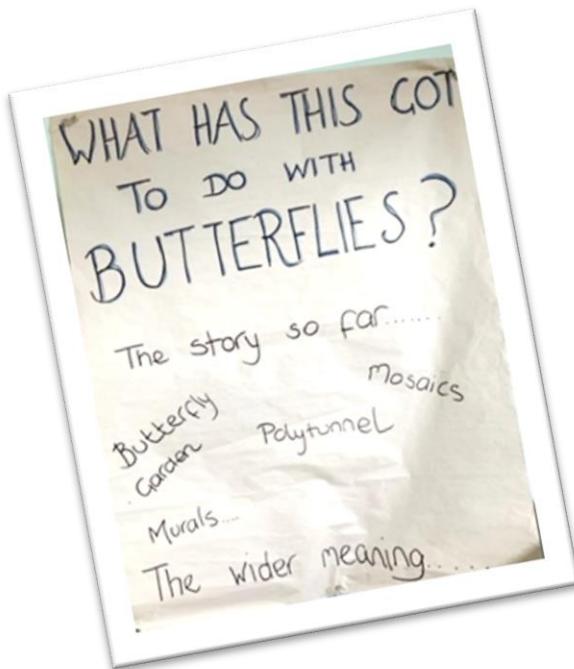
How projects overcame these barriers included:

A. Making the message relevant to people's lives. At a time of cost of living challenges, projects recognised that behaviour change had to make sense for people's lives not just for the planet. Saving money has to be front and centre through, for example, cutting down on food waste, using energy saving lightbulbs or making other changes to behaviour. The health benefits are emphasised by, for example eating locally produced, seasonal produce. The message was that it makes sense for individual financial or wider wellbeing as well as for the planet.

Y Dref Werdd recognised that when people are in debt and relying on a food bank, volunteering isn't high on the agenda. For this reason, Y Dref Werdd supports people to access benefits and sort out debts so they can get involved. This is a recognition of the multiple impacts on peoples' lives and that a holistic approach will enable people to engage more frequently. People are signposted to volunteering once they have been supported with other aspects impacting on their lives.

B. Learning by doing. All the projects used practical activities, sometimes associated with the distribution information, to engage people in conversations about climate change. Examples include:

- In the CLASH project, The John Burns Foundation promotes activities such as community food growing and cooking sessions as ways of giving people the skills to be more sustainable in their everyday lives.
- Women Connect First has learnt that people need ideas for action and need to know how to take action e.g. in a sewing class, a woman used scarves to make sleeves for a sleeveless top. Others have made hair scrunchies and draught excluders out of scrap material. These are great examples of repurposing.
- Y Dref Werdd has a philosophy of "build it and they will come" recognising that tackling climate change may not be the first thing that hooks people into conversations.



These activities are backed up with conversations about their impact on climate change or, "Helping them understand the why they are doing it not just how to do it" (Y Dref Werdd).

The discussion sheet (see left) shows how activities promoted by The John Burns Foundation are linked.

C. Being a trusted voice was important. All the case study projects are run by well respected organisations embedded in their communities. Climate change conversations are coming from a trusted source, not from outside agencies trying to change behaviours.

- One key member of staff at Women Connect First casts herself as the "rubbish police", challenging behaviour and inspiring people to change behaviours. Sometimes strong messages such as, "don't need it, don't buy it!" are deployed.
- A member of staff in Gilfach Goch was enthusiastic about a particular heated throw she had bought, pointing out that, although it was slightly more expensive than a lot on the market, the running costs were far less than competitors. This intelligence was cascaded through word of mouth in the organisation and to the wider community. GGA staff reported a number of people who had purchased the item resulting in them reducing their energy costs as well as keeping warm.
- For Y Dref Werdd it was important to engage with the power holders in the local community who would ensure that the resource was not vandalised. There were some difficult conversations, but this approach proved effective.



D. Keeping it simple.

Simple actions are used to communicate big messages:

- Women Connect First plant seeds in coffee cups as a way of producing food but are also re-using something that is normally discarded after one use.
- Y Dref Werdd is adapting donated pushbikes to electric bikes through the use of simple kits. This activity is upskilling people, providing a climate friendly form of transport as well as, through the hire of the bikes to tourists, providing a revenue stream.
- The John Burns Foundation has shown groups how to make a simple vegetable bed using a simple frame, cardboard and some soil.
- In Gilfach Goch, children have been making simple watering cans out of repurposed plastic milk bottles.

These examples show that positive actions to impact climate change do not have to be difficult or expensive.

E. Myth busting.

Some people believe that their actions as individuals will have little impact.

- Women Connect First has used the analogy of a “piggy bank”. A single person’s penny may not seem much to put into the piggy bank but a lot of people putting in pennies can build up to a significant sum. So, with climate change, although a single person’s action can seem relatively insignificant, when a lot of people make small changes or take small actions, they can build up to something substantial.

F. Word of mouth is a powerful tool to get messages across or to learn new tips for changing behaviours. Sometimes awareness is raised through information or videos, but informal techniques are often more effective. This includes activity to spread the message through conversations and clarifying misconceptions.



- Women Connect First provides opportunities for group conversations and spaces where people can ask questions or clarify information. They often see tips being shared and women encouraging others.
- Gilfach Goch said that group activities are ways in which people learn from each other through tips and exchange of knowledge. Examples may include raising awareness of the impact of turning off lights when not in a room or closing the fridge door, not leaving it open until returning retrieved food.

G. Fostering ownership of the initiatives was important as a way of ensuring individual commitment as well as personal development.

- 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.
- Y Dref Werdd works with pupils from the local High School who find it difficult in school (and are at risk of dropping out or exclusion). They volunteer at the market garden, are learning and, because of the skills of the staff, want to come back and do more.

H. Individuals respond positively to different approaches.

A strong message to emerge from the case studies was the importance of starting conversations about climate change from the position of the individual.

- Women Connect First has found that some people know a lot, others just see the publicity on say the side of a bus but do not know how to take action in their own lives.
- Y Dref Werdd built a food prep/BBQ area for families to use during the day and young people to “hang out” in the evenings. Firewood is provided and people are told, “Don’t go crazy and clean up after yourselves” and that’s exactly what’s happened. Once engaged, the project can move on to work with the community. The project built relationships with



the tough guys in the community who then made sure everyone treated the area with respect. It was built next to a large social housing estate that traditionally wouldn't get involved in community projects. They built the market garden there and made it open access. This gave people a place to be and they could make their own mind up about what was going on. When they were comfy with the space they started to get involved with the project and volunteer. This important step has enabled behaviour change.

Likewise, ways of overcoming barriers need to be bespoke:

- Women Connect First said that some people respond well to signing a pledge as a way of challenging them to change behaviours. Others are amazed at facts such as the use of recycled nappies to make roads.
- Gilfach Goch Community Association has that some people like personal challenges such as how many food waste bags they can cut down their use by.

I. Skilled staff / practitioners are essential to deliver the nurturing, developmental approach adopted so successfully by the projects. This was a point made by projects but was even more evident when the evaluation visits were made. The local projects are led by and involve people who can engage, encourage and help communities to get results.

J. Leading by example. Organisations spoke about how the project had impacted on the way their organisations did things.

- Gilfach Goch Community Association has led by example by changing their own behaviours as an organisation. Examples of this include changing all lights in the building to energy efficient sensor lights and changing the expansion tank for the heating system, resulting in a more efficient and cost-effective heating system. They have also stopped reacting to staff requests and ordering items on a daily basis. By implementing a weekly system, this cut down on the number of deliveries, often from the same supplier.
- Y Dref Werdd spoke about being a leader in the community. They show what can be achieved through their own actions.



8. Cascading Messages and Wider Behaviour Change

The methodologies deployed by organisations to overcome barriers are also effective ways to ensure that messages about climate change and changing behaviours reach beyond the individual projects being supported.

- Women Connect First places great importance on intergenerational approaches. Many of the older generations have lived experience of having to upcycle and adapt because of lack of resources. These are the skills that can now be applied to taking action to combat climate change. Project staff say that, "stuff seems to happen" when women with knowledge from older generations team up with the energy of younger people. A matriarchal figure within a family can help with the messaging.

Some sections of the community continue to be hard to engage whether because they have their own networks or because of other challenges within their lives e.g. people experiencing issues with substance misuse.

- Y Dref Werdd has held open days for the tree nursery and community garden. At these events they talk about what's going on there and highlight climate change and only then ask people to get involved.

The deep dives identified ways in which individuals involved in projects took behaviours back into their own lives. Examples included:

- The Evaluator spoke to an individual at The John Burns Foundation, involved in community growing who had started to grow some edibles at home.
- Y Dref Werdd report that volunteers replicate some of the work that done in their market garden in their own home. There were examples of people growing and planting trees at home.

A notable point to emerge from all case studies was the way in which organisations cascaded the learning and messages across all their activities, not just those supported by SSW. This is a feature that could be picked up in future evaluation.



9. Sustaining Behaviour Change

Ensuring that people are motivated to sustain behaviours and to continue to engage in climate awareness conversations is important.

- Y Dref Werdd spoke about “getting them excited” about projects as a way of sustaining motivation.

Monitoring progress, (showing people what impact has been made) and celebrating success are important as tools for keeping people motivated.

- The John Burns Foundation recognises that 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 skills in the kitchen.
- Women Connect First has used video diaries and digital stories in other projects.

Sustaining change within organisations was an important part of the project journey. Project organisers are leaders who will change behaviours by example. Individual staff have reported changing behaviours:

- A support worker involved with The John Burns Foundation spoke about how she made chutney (used at communal meals) from produce on the community growing scheme. This is something she would never have contemplated previously.



The John Burns Foundation have been demonstrating how to eat more healthily and sustainably with a small and simple raised bed. This has helped reduce barriers to engagement.



10. Learning

Case study projects demonstrate learning that can be adopted by other organisations looking to inspire people to engage with climate change conversations.

- **Making the message relevant to people's lives** is critically important. In financially challenging times this centres on how to save money. The climate change messages of why actions are important can be woven into these actions.
- **Being a trusted organisation in a community** is important and organisations need to build on this position to inspire people through all aspects of the organisation's work. With the trust of the community, they can challenge behaviours as well as instruct. Gilfach Goch Community Association described this as knowing people and knowing which buttons to push to get results.
- **Make stuff fun and engaging.** Using practical activities such as community growing, cooking sessions/classes, sewing sessions or craft workshops can be fun ways of getting the message across as well as equipping people with skills and knowledge to take actions back into their own lives.
- **Providing space for peer to peer learning** is important either through activities or, as The John Burns Foundation does, making time for groups to share and eat produce grown in the garden and cooked on site.
- **The intergenerational approach** taken by Women Connect First can be a powerful way of embedding learning within families and community networks.
- **Celebrating success and progress** is important. Effective monitoring helps to recognise success.



There are some learning points for funders that support organisations promoting climate change awareness. These include:

- **It takes time.** Sometimes the most effective approaches need to engage on an individual basis with people. Although this is not practical across large communities, taking time to identify key people who can promote messages within the community is important. People respond to the personal approach.
- **Changing behaviours is hard work** and needs skilled practitioners to nurture conversations, develop practical actions and embed behaviours within communities.



Y Dref Werdd reduced barriers to engagement by creating a place where young people could just "hang out" without having to be involved with the project. Once they saw what was going on they became curious and started to take part.