

Developing and running community projects on the Climate and Nature emergency

Introduction from Iola Ynyr



Planning a project tied to the climate and nature emergency can be scary as it's such a broad field. Think of your project as creating a whole new creative community. While it may seem like a small step, its limitless potential sow's seeds that will bring far-reaching changes. Any positive and creative contact made between individuals and the land, like a mycelium network may seem hidden at first. But will inevitably enrich lives, communication, and communities.

Don't devalue small steps. It can feel 'difficult' to develop especially if creative projects are unfamiliar to individuals and communities. In the grassroots projects, individuals often see themselves, and each other, in a positive light for the first time in a long time. Its influence can inspire a change in ambition, to give permission to imagine more and to encourage participants to take ownership of their personal growth and to protect their surroundings.

Sense the landscape of this new community. Be sensitive to ideas that generate curiosity. Research the individuals who facilitate opportunities as have gained the trust of the community and be prepared to seek advice. But most of all, listen to the voices that are whispering, the ones that still carry the messages of the land.

Points to consider

Know the community you want to work with

Climate change and the challenges surrounding it affect us all and influence our living conditions and well-being. This impact is said to be felt most strongly on the world's most vulnerable communities although, often, it is the communities that have the least depth on the natural environment.

Ask yourself:

How will your project empower vulnerable communities?

How does your project include or exclude hard-to-reach communities?

Understand climate and nature justice

Climate and nature justice is an additional consideration that must be prioritised when developing a conscious project. Recognising that climate and nature changes is affecting indigenous communities, threatening cultures, and leading to a loss of understanding and recognition of the land through the loss of language is a way of giving us permission to mourn the loss and imagine new ways of protecting.

This recognition can ensure that we place our project in an international cultural and artistic context, in particular, as in Wales, where there are challenges to our minority language. It pays homage to the lost cultures of the world while also considering what world we want to ensure to the generations that have not yet been born, that there is taking responsibility for our way of life and gaining respect for the preservation of a caring and peaceful world.

Connecting with organisations

It is important that we form a link with local organisations which work specifically on local climate and nature changes to support and strengthen our project. The resources and connections they have can introduce us to local networks within the project area to strengthen the drive to recruit participants as well as build on a legacy to the project. Individuals can continue to take action to support the climate after the project is complete.

Make sure you share the vision of the project in a concise manner but that captures your whole vision. Invite the organisation to contribute a hands-on session to the project or attend creative sessions and include them in the celebration at the end of the project.

Ask yourself:

How does your project support the priorities of existing organisations?

Thinking practically

The 'Gwledda' project was accompanied by a session at the start of the project with North Wales Wildlife Trust where participants planted trees on the school grounds with their children.

The digging, releasing the trees from their pots and sealing the roots in the soil was a practical way of setting the intent of the project. The trees testified to the change that had taken place to the participants; the growth in their relationship with the land, the building of new skills and the increase in self-worth and the impact of that on the natural landscape of the community.

Ask yourself:

How consistently are outdoor activities held?

Are the sessions accessible to those who want to participate?

Are you confident in communicating and bringing together different organisations?

Is the time and location of your activity suitable for who you want to work with?

What are the linguistic needs of the participants?

Can challenges be overcome by collaborating with supportive organisations?

How are you developing relationships and gaining trust from participants?

Top tip:

Offering a cuppa and cake as part of a 'tasting' session can often do more to initiate a constructive conversation than anything else.

Starting any new creative project is a brave move. It can be challenging at times but try to trust your vision and remember that failure often leads to more growth than having huge success throughout the project.

If your vision isn't funded at the earliest opportunity, remember that all idea shoots come to fruition in the end. Be curious rather than critical of yourselves and respond creatively to every step in the process.

Recommened reading:

cat.org.uk

www.gwyrddni.cymru

www.northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk

www.wwf.org.uk

Braiding Sweetgrass - Robin Wall Kimmerer

Pridd - Llŷr Titus

Wintering: The Power of Rest and Retreat at difficult times- Katherine May

With thanks to:

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