



Come Outside!

Programme Update 3



SUMMER CELEBRATION

To kick off the start of summer, Come Outside!, together with colleagues from Natural Resources Wales and Caerphilly Countryside Service, organised an event at Parc Penallta on 17th July.

Over a hundred people from community groups across South Wales enjoyed a range of activities - pond dipping, solar observation, green wood working, clay sculpting and fire lighting. A display of birds of prey resulted in members of the Sparks Alternative Curriculum group getting friendly with a Harris hawk, shown in the photo above,

There were 15 partner organisations at the event, running activities and helping to make the day a truly special one. It helped that the sun shone from start to finish as well!

One notable person in attendance was the Minister for Natural Resources, Culture, and Sport, John Griffiths AM. The minister had asked to see what kind of work the Come Outside! programme does. This event was a great example of how the programme can bring partner organisations together to deliver opportunities for people to enjoy their natural environment.

Programme Manager Juliet Michael said, "We organised the event to bring together outdoor providers, community groups and support workers. The visitors included parenting, family and mental health support groups, alternative curriculum units and healthy living and weight management groups. The outdoor providers were able to engage with new

participants and the visitors discovered inspirational activities to try out back in their local areas."



The Minister John Griffiths learns about the sun with Alan Trow from Dark Sky Wales



A COMMUNITY EFFORT



It's an increasingly well known fact that being in nature improves our well being. Study after study confirms it. Spending time in natural environments assists mental development in children, lowers stress levels for adults, makes us happier...and the list goes on.

If there's anything at all that can improve on the wonderful benefits of being in nature, it's joining together with other people for a outdoor project with a common goal.

In Caernarfon, members of a mental health support group have been delivering benefits not only themselves but for the local community. Come Outside! funded the help of a garden tutor who started by teaching the group the necessary basic horticultural skills..

They now call themselves 'The Garden Gang' and have been working since January--week after week no matter the weather--turning a site overgrown with weeds and brambles into a community garden.

The site has no facilities, but the neighbours have made up for it by bringing the gang cups of tea and keeping an eye on the garden during the week.

What they said...

"It's the highlight of my week coming to this project. And we have loads of vegetables every week to take home with us."

"The socialising is important. I'd just be stuck at home otherwise."

"I like being part of a group and actually learning new things as well."

"It can be hard work! Feels good though, and it's good for self-esteem"

Some of these kind neighbours have passed on cuttings and plants, and one lets the group use his garage as a tool shed. The gang have won their way into the hearts of the neighbours, who have also donated several tons of decorative bricks and slabs for paths and edgings.

Not lacking in creativity, they have used old pallets and wire to make gates to the site, and used stones dug up from the site to make a decorative herb spiral feature, with the help of the Gwynedd Council Pollinator Project. And as a low-cost solution to screen off an ugly embankment, they planted a hedge from cuttings they gathered from trees and shrubs in the area.

And it seems this one site isn't enough, as the gang are now looking to help some of the neighbours in their gardens. This group are truly an inspiration, doing so much with very little money but a lot of community spirit.

MAKING A CHANGE



Come Outside! Coordinator for North Wales, Nia Williams, has supported a group of young people from the Youth Employment Group to try their hand at gardening. Building on skills and experiences from the project, four young people from this group have now secured jobs.



In Newport, Come Outside! have been working with a local alternative curriculum unit called Aspire.

After consulting with the young people and finding out what kinds of outdoor activities they would like to try, the group had taster sessions in cycling and bicycle maintenance, and in conservation. They were linked up with Kyle Williams of Newport City Cycles, and Marc Benson of

Newport Countryside Services for these sessions.

As a result of these opportunities, one student is now employed full time. The team has built aspects of Come Outside! into the Unit's core provision and is now extending the approach to a second unit in Newport,

Dave Hartery-Smith who works with the young people at Aspire, told us:

"Due to the activities experienced on the previous Come Outside! experience, one of our Aspire group has secured a full time job as a youth engagement leader for Ringland Community Association.

The main responsibilities of this position is to encourage physical engagement and break down barriers which are present with young people trying new activities and experiences."



Two mental health peer support groups in Rhondda Fach have come together to enjoy the benefits of the natural environment. 'MASH' and 'Footsteps', have been on four taster sessions to find out what kinds of activities they enjoy. They've tried geocaching, bushcraft, a heritage walk, and they've done a bird watching nature walk at Dare Valley Country Park.

This group have really benefited from these outdoor sessions.

Jennifer, from MASH, said:

I think we all got the adrenalin buzz at the end and none of us were keen to go home, so I guess that says it all. It has given me the push to do more, so bring it on! I am even thinking of learning to swim now.

One real positive thing what I noticed in particular is that one group member who never wants to do anything threw himself in and said how much he enjoyed the day. I have never seen him so animated!



A FAMILY AFFAIR



One of our main aims in the Come Outside! programme is to break down barriers to accessing the outdoors. In Mayhill in Swansea, a parenting class who did all of their activities indoors told us they didn't know where they could go or what they could do in their local greenspaces.

After doing a geocache hunt, which led them along a nearby nature corridor, the parents and their children just wanted to do more!

So together with Gower Landscape Partnership, Keep Wales Tidy, Rosehill Quarry volunteer group, the Wildlife Trust, and Communities First, a

programme of activities was put together for the group to try. So far, they have found a sneakily hidden geocache, tried their hands at bushcraft, and found newts in their local pond (above). The geocache trail even got them singing along the way.

Over 30 people from the area have been introduced to activities they can do in the outdoors as families, and they're excited to add their own hidden treasures to share their local area with the international geocaching community.

In Barry, the Cadoxton Primary School Parents group met to find out what they could do to

get their kids outside and away from the computer.

Geocaching was introduced and the children and parents took to it straight away. One parent told us that her children love it and spent three hours in their local woodlands searching for hidden treasure.

Come Outside! were able to supply the group with their own geocache units and containers, and the group now arrange regular outings and bring others along to try geocaching.

The group attended training with Come Outside! on monitoring so they can demonstrate how much all their hard work is benefiting families in Barry.

If you would like to get involved in any part of Come Outside! please contact us at ComeOutside@NaturalResourcesWales.gov.uk



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

