

Torfaen Voluntary Alliance

Your local county voluntary council

2. Running your organisation

2.13 Community Action to tackle Climate Change



Climate change is an issue for all of us, but we often don't know where to start. Communities and community organisations play a vital role in engaging with people on the ground and developing grass roots action and awareness. This information sheet points to some ways we can start the ball rolling.

What is climate change?

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges us all. Climate change is caused by the release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, which cause heat from the sun to be trapped. This results in a changing climate, often leading to more extreme events. The consequences will often be felt most by world's poorest and most marginalised communities. Climate change is a global issue with a local impact that directly affects us and our communities.

What causes greenhouse gas emissions?

Most greenhouse gas emissions are caused by our use of fossil fuels, such as oil, gas and coal. We all have an affect on the climate through what we do and what we buy. For example, the journeys we make or the food we eat. We can all reduce our impact on the climate through the choices we make. Many of those choices are simple, easy to make and do not cost any money (in fact, some can save money). Others require more thought and more difficult choices.

Why is it important to my community?

Why should we tackle climate change? If saving ensuring our survival is not reason enough! Here are just a few:

- **You can save money** - reducing your use of energy and other resources can save you money and reduce waste. It will allow you to spend more money on the things you want to achieve and the people you support. The more people involved, the bigger the savings for individuals and the wider community.
- **Find out how it will affect you** - climate change affects us and the people we work with. It is likely to lead to increased flooding and higher food prices. In addition, taking action on climate change can have other benefits. Future rising energy prices will have a big impact on people with low incomes and vulnerable people who spend a lot of time at home. Making homes energy efficient is a positive action that can be taken on climate change that can also reduce people's energy bills, make homes

warmer and improve people's lives.

- **Helping communities support themselves** - there are lots of renewable energy and recycling projects springing up in communities all over Wales. They can generate an income that unlike funding, will keep earning money into the future.
- **Do our bit, be role models** - let people know we are doing something about climate change.
- **Make change happen** - community action has been a driving force for change across the world, we can help make change happen. Not only can we influence the people we work with, but we can help them to influence others and make change happen locally.

What can we do?

There are lots of practical things, for example, we can:

- Make any buildings we use more energy efficient (through insulation, double glazing or a new boiler) (see websites for the EST, WWEC and the Carbon Trust in section 1 below).
- Generating your own energy using solar or wind power (see websites for the EST, WWEC and the Carbon Trust in section 1 below).
- Use our appliances and heating appropriately and efficiently (not waste energy by leaving lights on, leaving unused appliances on or having the heating/air-conditioning on and the windows open) (see websites for the EST, WWEC and the Carbon Trust in section 1 below).
- Leave the car on the drive and catch a bus or train, or try cycling or walking once a week instead (see website for Sustrans in section 3 below)
- Buy locally produced food when we have an event, to reduce transport emissions.
- Reduce the amount of waste we produce, reuse what we can recycle what we can and compost our food waste.
- Join in with activities at your nearest eco-school (see website for Keep Wales Tidy in section 3 below).
- Encourage our colleagues and volunteers to do something to tackle climate change together (investigate websites for organisations in section below).

One thing we can do is raise awareness by getting people involved, we can:

- Start a community project, this can range from a planting a tree to a renewable energy scheme (see website for Environment Wales in Section 2 below).
- Be creative and involve people in producing a play or DVD.
- Put questions to politicians and ask them what they are doing to tackle climate change.

Any action we take on climate change will have lots of other benefits, so if we:

- Reduce driving, we will get fitter by walking or cycling more.
- Improve the energy efficiency of our home or office, we will save money on bills and feel warmer and more comfortable.

- Buy local food, we will put money into the local economy. Even better, grow our own food, it will benefit both your health and the environment.

So what are we waiting for?

Useful sources of help and information

1. Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

- Household Energy Service www.h-e-s.org
- Energy Savings Trust www.energysavingtrust.org.uk
- Ynni'r Fro – support & funding for community scale renewable energy projects e-mail ynnirfro@est.org.uk or look online at <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/wales/Communities/Finding-funding/Ynni-r-Fro-programme>

2. Community Action - find out what others are doing

- Environment Wales - community projects www.environment-wales.org
- Cynnal Cymru - information and ideas on sustainability www.sustainwales.com

3. Sustainability, Recycling and Improving the Local Environment

- Groundwork Wales - environmental advice <https://www.groundwork.org.uk/sites/wales>
- BTCV Cymru - practical conservation and local food-growing projects www.btcv.org.uk
- Sustrans - cycle routes www.sustrans.org.uk
- Keep Wales Tidy - improving the environment www.keepwalestidy.co.uk
- The Welsh Government – relevant policies, links and activities <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/sustainabledevelopment>

4. Community Information and Local Sources of Help

- Contact WCVA for information and advice, including contact details for your local County Voluntary Council, who can help with local sources of funding
0800 2888 329 www.wcva.org.uk

Disclaimer

The information provided in this sheet is intended for guidance only. It is not a substitute for professional advice and we cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned as a result of any person acting or refraining from acting upon it.

For further information contact

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