



Case Study / Renew Wales



Comisiwn Cymru ar y
Newid yn yr Hinsawdd
Climate Change
Commission for Wales

Renew Wales



Renew Wales is a practitioner led programme, delivered through the Big Fund, to help Welsh communities tackle the impact and causes of climate change. It has been led by the Development Trusts Association of Wales (DTA Wales) in partnership with a consortium of pioneering, grassroots, climate change practitioners from across Wales. Funding of £620,000 was awarded over 2 years through Sustainable Steps - a non-Lottery funding programme which is being delivered through the BIG Fund using money that has been dormant in bank and building society accounts across the UK.

It provides support through a network of 30 part-time, community based Co-ordinators working to engage groups, assess needs and facilitate the development of action plans; and a pool of over 60 Peer Mentors, who represent existing community organisations and Social enterprises and have firsthand experience of delivering a wide range of projects tackling Climate Change.

In a little over 2 years Renew Wales has met with and supported **over 200 communities** throughout Wales with over 60% of them going on to receive mentoring support to develop their projects. Renew has been granted a further year of funding in order to continue to deliver this support to more communities across Wales throughout 2015. Renew hopes to support a further 90 communities in 2015 and to continue to evaluate the impact of the programme in supporting Community Action on Climate Change.



Renew Wales' key achievements include:

Engaging Groups

Renew Wales has been very successful in engaging a wide range of both place-based communities and communities of interest. Examples include Sports Clubs, Faith groups, Community Councils, Transition Groups, Social Enterprises, Youth Groups and many more. What is more 58% of these groups have not been involved in Environmental projects before so they are not the usual suspects. This led to Renew Wales winning the **Community Engagement Award** at Wales Green Energy Awards 2014 organised by Renewables UK Cymru.



Identifying Projects

Renew Wales has benefitted from being very flexible in the support it can deliver and the type of project it can support. Often Climate Change is not the main motivator for the project; groups are often looking to tackle particular local issues, such as saving money, generating income, improving health and wellbeing and improving a local space or building. This has led to Renew being able to support a wide range of [projects](#).

Delivering Support

Renew Wales provides flexible support identified by groups. Through the pool of over 60 [peer mentors](#) Renew has been able to offer a wide range of advice and expertise that meets the direct needs of the groups that we meet.

Achieving Change

A third of the projects that Renew Wales has supported would not have happened without Renew Wales' support. An example of this was [Egni PV Cooperative](#): Dan McCallum, Director of Wales' first PV Co-operative, credits Renew Wales with being able to provide critical support without which Egni would not have been able to happen. Renew Wales is a project that stimulates action rather than direct delivery which means there is a challenge for unpicking where action would have happened regardless but through the evaluation Renew Wales is developing tools to measure the direct impact of the programme.



What is different about Renew Wales and how does that attribute to its successes?

Asset Based Community Development
Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is an approach based on the principle of identifying and mobilising individual and community 'assets', rather than focusing on problems and needs (i.e. 'deficits'). Renew Wales was set up by a group of Community Practitioners and based the model on working with existing individuals and organisations to deliver our services. The Peer Mentor network is made up of over 60 practitioners who have built up various expertise, knowledge. The 30 Co-ordinators work for existing community based organisations that are already well connected and networked in the areas they are based. Renew Wales has supported these existing practitioners by paying for them to deliver Renew support rather than parachuting in support from outside.



Devolved and Self Supporting

Co-ordinators and Mentors are paid through not for profit enterprises, meaning that over 50% of Renew funding goes directly to grassroots community based organisations. The worker gets a day rate and the organisation covers their overheads and management. Projects get support but the sector supporting the projects receives support as well. In this way Renew has put a value on the hours of work this developing sector puts in to share knowledge, collaborate and build itself. It has formalised this and enabled more ambitious outcomes.

An example of how this has developed the sector has been through supporting the establishment of 2 Social Enterprises [Datblygiadau Egni Gwledig \(DEG\)](#) and [Carmarthenshire Energy Ltd.](#) Both have been able to establish themselves in part thanks to the resources made available through hosting Renew Co-ordinators and Mentors.

Capacity Building - no dependency

Rather than recruiting full time workers from a single central source, Renew's strategy of part funding people already based in strategic positions means that if the programme had to end it would not create a huge wave of people out of work. It is not just the support system itself which retains its resilience in this model, Co-ordinators and Mentors have limited time available to provide support so it is important for grassroots organisations to achieve their goals themselves rather than the work being done for them, creating a lasting legacy of experience and skills and ensuring they are not dependent on Renew support.

Organic, Flexible and responsive to need

Renew's networked model enables Co-ordinators to respond creatively to the needs of communities. The responsiveness of the programme has really boosted action at a grass roots level because Renew works in the way communities work. Renew Wales is able to easily dovetail with existing programmes and can add significant value to their work. Examples include some excellent work in partnership with Ynni'r Fro and Gwynedd Werdd where Renew Wales has provided some expertise to help move their projects forward. This flexibility of support provided by Renew ensures it does not duplicate existing support but adds value by filling in the gaps that exist. It has also meant that even if Renew do not possess the required expertise we can identify individuals working in the community sector and recruit them to the Pool of Mentors.

Renew is not aiming to produce a handful of exemplar projects but is supporting action to take place more widely. By doing this groups will create Exemplar projects such as Egni Coop and these can be fed back into the network and the experience gained shared through Renew's growing network.

Broad and Diverse

This flexibility has led very naturally to breadth and diversity, something which came out strongly in the interim report. By involving 80 different organisations in delivering Renew Wales it is certainly a challenge and can perhaps come across as a bit unwieldy - but by trusting in existing organisations to deliver the work of Renew Wales it has created incredible diversity. 30 Co-ordinators, each with their own interests, specialities and networks, has enabled us to work with a huge range of groups. Some Co-ordinators specialise in working with young people, BME groups, disabled groups or in rural, urban and deprived areas. Renew Wales also provided the resource for Co-ordinators to engage with different groups that weren't the usual suspects. It has been one of the most successful elements of Renew Wales and has enabled us to reach groups not previously involved in environmental projects.

An example would be a regional event Renew ran in [Llanrwst](#). It was a partnership between Renew, DEG and Menter yr Iaith – the Welsh language initiative. It took a broad focus which reflected the interconnectedness of sustainability issues and localism: the forces endangering our climate are the same as those eroding community cohesion, Welsh language and culture, the food system, our local economies and so on. This enabled us to bring a remarkable range of organisations together, including people who would not have normally attended an event focusing on Climate Change.

Value for Money

This model has enabled mass deployment very quickly and enabled us to exceed our target of engaging 200 community groups in a little over two years. The resource providing Renew Wales 30 part time Co-ordinators would be the equivalent of 3 -4 full time traditional Community Development Officers. It is unlikely that Renew would have been able to meet its targets or engage with the diverse range of groups and projects through a more traditional delivery model. Renew also aims to compliment rather than replace other forms of support and have worked successfully with Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens, Ynni'r Fro, Cynefin, Communities First and others when they have required a specialist bit of support for groups they are working with.

In summary Renew Wales is a very exciting project and it has been able to pilot a different way of engaging groups and delivering support. There is a lot of very valuable learning that will come from this work. Renew's initial interim report focused on how Renew has been engaging communities and was starting to look at the impact of Renew's support. Our next report due out at the end of 2014 will focus in more detail on the impact support has had. This will also incorporate a number of case studies to highlight some the less tangible outcomes of Renew Wales. We hope that this report can be used to influence the delivery of Renew Wales as it continues in 2015 and also share some of that learning to inform future work in this area.