

AI was used within the scrapbook, for identifying plants and trees using google lens and google maps.

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Part two A: Scrapbook reflection script:

Hello I am Kelly Evans, and today I would like to reflect upon the area I have chosen to create my scrapbook for the John Muir award. The John Muir award was created in honour of John Muir himself who was a conservationist, originally born in Scotland, however moved to America, who had a passion of discovering, exploring and conserving natural environments.

The area I have chosen is Coed Gwilym park, in Clydach. I choose this park as it is the heart of the community and is an area where I grew up and visited often. I really like how the park has so many amenities to suit all, and all within proximity to each other. Alongside these amenities is also the vast amount of natural surroundings the park has to offer. The park is surrounded by a variety of trees, wildlife and plants, with views of Glais mountain and River Tawe which flows alongside. The park also has the Swansea canal adjacent with a path that is over 3 miles long.

From taking time to discover the different areas of the park, I learned how the canal is a vital part of the area's History, due to once being the main route for transporting coal, via horse drawn barges down the canal, to the Swansea Copper industry. I discovered this through visiting the parks heritage centre, which displays information for visitors, alongside reading information boards and the monuments around the area.

I visit regularly and it holds found memories of when I once took my now adult niece and nephew, when they were younger. The park would keep them entertained for hours as it had something to suit both their interest. We also would love exploring the areas throughout the seasons, as each season would provide us with new experiences and opportunities, from collecting leaves and conkers in the Autumn, to seeing the ice on the canal in the winter, to then spotting ducklings in the spring and wildlife in the summer. However, being younger myself at the time, looking back I don't feel we fully explored this area in as much depth as we could have done. We spent more time in the man-made sections, than exploring the natural environments. Unfortunately, as the children got older, they began to spend less time with me and I did not visit it as often, until some years later, when I became an auntie again. I began to relive those years of exploring the park with my new niece, however, this time being older I seemed to value this area even more. I became intrigued in finding

different species of plants, trees and wildlife, unlike my younger years. Now I embrace studying what we see, and I am keen to inform her exactly what the names are and their roles within the environment. This change in me is described in the poem I wrote, describing how as I am getting older, I began enjoying these types of places more. Through creating this scrapbook for the John Muir award and looking at the history within the park I also discovered two other walks, which also hold some historical links to Clydach within the area.

Throughout my walk around the park and the canal, I used my natural senses to explore the surroundings, alongside the canal and amongst surrounding trees. Firstly, I focused on what I could see, a variety of different birds, from sparrows, crows, wood pigeons and stopped to watch a bluetit returning to its nest, where I could hear the chicks chirping inside. Another thing I noticed was the shadows the sunlight made through the trees, which allowed me to witness how some plants grew in a certain direction to reach the sunlight, to noticing the moss on sections of the trees, due to the lack of sunlight. Secondly taking note of what I could hear, as I was walking, I knew I was getting closer to the waterfall, as it gradually got louder as I approached it. I also strained to identify the various bird calls above my head. I then explored the different textures of the tree trunks, the rough bark of the oak tree, to the smoothness of the chestnut tree. Lastly, what I could smell, from the various flowers, lavender being a personal favourite, bring back memories of my grandparent's garden and my granddad cutting some and placing it in my car as an air freshener, to also the rather unpleasant odour from the canal due to the recent heat and stagnant water.

Throughout exploring I experienced how important trees are for providing natural shade, visiting on one of the hottest days of the year, I could really feel the temperature difference when under the trees. Experiencing this I could see how vital trees are for shelter, food and habitats for many creatures. Alongside the trees was the various plants surrounding the park and canal, not being very knowledgeable on plants, I discovered google lens, which helped me identify the plants and gave me some key information, to which I discovered how some can be toxic to both humans and animals, as well as being used to create medicines or even cosmetic products.

Coinciding with the trees and plants is the abundance of wildlife within the area. The surroundings offer opportunities for insects and animals to thrive due to having opportunities to collect food, shelter and evolve. One of the animals I discovered on my visit was an eel on the canal bed. Never seeing one before I was fascinated with how it slithered across the canal bed and burrowed under the soil. This inspired me to try and use different materials to draw some of the animals I saw, in hope to capture, the vibrant colours or movements.

The volunteers of the park seemed to be really invested in conserving the area, as they have recently planted a few fruit trees, created flower beds, and regularly hold many clear up events, inviting the community in for litter picks, canal cleanups. I hope to contribute to the conservation of this area, by volunteering in future events. However, on my walk I did do a litter pick, placing any litter I seen in a bag and taking it home to recycle and dispose of properly. It also inspired me to plant more flowers in my own garden, especially purple ones, as I discovered during lectures that bees are attracted to purple flowers and being the biggest pollinators, this would be good for conserving plants. I also planted my own vegetables in hope that this would make some impact on the global footprint of food transportation. Alongside leaving areas within my garden untouched, to provide habitats for wildlife.

I then shared my scrapbook with family, who were intrigued with my discoveries and decided to also plant flowers, grow their own vegetables and build a bug hotel, to attract wildlife. I further shared my scrapbook with my colleagues and children within my school, to which they then created a bug hotel on the top of our school field. The children now like to run up to the bug hotel to see which insects have moved in. The school also asked the people who come to cut the grass within our grounds to leave an area for natural growth.

I personally have really enjoyed creating the scrapbook and being a part of the John Muir award, as it has allowed me to take time to appreciate nature and realise how self-efficient and magical it is. It also allowed me to stop and see things I would never have noticed before, whilst inspiring me to protect, teach and inspire future generations to do the same.

Part two B, script: Critically evaluate how undertaking experiences such as those in part one., could support the philosophy and principles of early childhood education for sustainability:

Hello I am Kelly Evans, today's discussion is based on how undertaking programmes like the John Muir award, can support philosophy and principles within early years education, towards developing sustainability.

This presentation will firstly define sustainable development and how it links with children's rights worldwide. To moving on to discussing how Wales's ambition to become a more sustainable country through the *Well-being of future generations of Wales Act (2015)*, alongside the new curriculum for Wales, in supporting children towards the four purposes. To finally, looking at how participating in programmes such as the John Muir award, can develop fundamental skills, for both children and practitioners, whilst also ensuring settings become more sustainable. Coinciding with research discussed will be well-known theorist, who acknowledge the importance of child-led learning and children connecting with the environment and discussing how practitioners can develop confidence to facilitate children's learning and knowledge on sustainable development.

Matthew Mason (2026) firstly cites Brundtland Commissions definition of sustainability as "*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*". Although this definition dates to 1987 according to Mason (2026) it is still the key foundation of today's society understanding of sustainable development. Whereas the Welsh Government (2015) describes sustainable development as a process which enhances the environmental and economic well-being. Mason (2026) continues to discuss how sustainability is about measuring natural systems, retaining biodiversity, whilst producing resources to create an ecological balance. Creating a balance allows humans to coexist alongside the natural world, through protecting it whilst maintaining human welfare (Mason, 2026). However, within today's society it is estimated that current consumption of natural resources is raising by 40% every year, which is more than the Earth can naturally regenerate (Mason, 2026). This imbalance can therefore affect freshwater supply's, soil fertility and have atmospheric effects (Mason, 2026).

Mason (2026) continues to discuss, how there are three pillars for sustainability, which the World summit of 2005, identified as being the “core areas” to tackle regarding challenges. This led to frameworks and national standard being raised for countries to follow. One of these pillars is Economic development which focuses on encouraging organisations to exceed standards, through offering incentives to individuals to be more sustainable through waste reduction and use of renewable energy (Mason, 2026). Secondly, Environmental protection, focusing on preserving the ecosystem, looking into climate change and protecting natural habitats (Mason, 2026). Lastly the third pillar is social development, ensuring the health of the public through, installing legislations, promoting equity and access to good quality life and education (Mason, 2026).

Hedefalk, Almqvist and Ostman (2013) state how climate change, pollution and global issues are discussed by the media, politicians and academics across the world and are even used for educational purposes within schools, with a strong emphasis on educating children how to live in a more sustainable way. Discussing and teaching about sustainability was raised through the Brundtland report, which acknowledged teachers as having a “crucial role” in educating children about the changes that needed to be implemented to develop sustainability (Davis and Elliott, 2023). Agreeing with this statement and highlighting how all children have the right to information, alongside access to quality healthcare, food, water and environments, was the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (hereafter UNCRC: UNICEF, no-date). The UNCRC created a legally binding document between 192 countries, stating how governments have a responsibility to ensure these rights are implemented, through educating and informing children who will become ethically informed citizens, who understand and respect their own rights as well as others, to become active participants in preserving the environment (UNICEF, no-date).

This is a key priority within the Wales, which aims to create a more prosperous, cohesive and globally responsible country, which are just some of the seven well-being goals within the “*Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*” (Welsh Government, 2015). Two key elements of the Act are to develop the environmental and economic well-being within Wales, these implementations will provide a better quality of life for the future generations and current society (Welsh Government, 2015). Through developing on the seven well-being goals, the aim is to educate

society, to understand the global limits, through developing low carbon and resourceful societies, who maintain and develop the biodiverse system within the environment, which will create a healthy ecosystem and effective contributors to global well-being (Welsh Government, 2015).

Supporting the Well-being of Future Generations of Wales act, the Welsh Government (2022) created the new curriculum for Wales, which focuses on children developing four main characteristics throughout life, to become ambitious, creative, informed and confident individuals, who enjoy challenges, learning, and grasp opportunities, whilst understanding and respecting others. Alongside learning how to conserve the planet, to become healthy and active members of society (Welsh Government, 2022). The design of the curriculum focuses on the enabling learners to have pride and passion within themselves, where they live and their country, to develop a sense “*cynefin*” and identity, from the history and landscapes surrounding them (Welsh Government, 2022). Included within the humanities section, is how through children learning about sustainability, children grow an appreciation for the landscapes and environments around them, developing an understanding of the interconnections between both humans and the environment, and the impact humans can have (Welsh Government, 2019). Supporting the teaching and learning is the Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (hereafter ESDGC) guidance for schools, which emphasis how ESDGC should link with all areas of learning and experiences both inside and outside the classroom (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008, p13). Continuing the Welsh Assembly Government (2008, p17) adds how schools need to model how to respect the environment through demonstrating to the children how to recycle and reduce waste.

To enhance this the Welsh Assembly Government (2008, p17) discusses how introducing awards or schemes which focus on educating sustainability through participation is a good starting point for children to get involved. Joining environmental education programmes, such as the John Muir award and Eco Schools, help motivate and educate children how to care for the environment and make their setting more sustainable. Through encouraging children to find outdoor spaces, to discover, explore, and be proactive in helping to conserve the areas, enhances sustainable development, through a hands-on approach (John Muir Trust, 2025 and Eco-schools: early years, no-date).

According to Lopez-Alcarria *et-al* (2016), environmental education programmes are a helpful tool in supporting and building knowledge, skills and experiences, which encourage children to work collaboratively or independently to solve present and future environmental issues. Lopez-Alcarria *et-al* (2016, p6) study discusses how teachers found incorporating environmental education programmes, to be effective and easy to implement within daily routines. Discussing how it offered opportunities to visit environments and develop areas within their settings, whilst also promoting engagement and participation with parents, the community and other external agencies. Ardoin and Bowers (2020, p2) state how environmental-based programmes within the early years provides “*direct, nature-rich experiences*” which develops children’s physical, cognitive and emotional health, through increased physical activities, problem solving and emotional regulation, alongside developing an appreciation for the natural world. These programmes link well with theorist Maria Montessori and Rudolf Steiner, who both understood the value of sensorial experiences through being connected with nature (Boyd,2018, p14). Montessori and Steiner believed children should experience nature, through their natural senses. Montessori and Steiner stated children experiencing the different textures within nature and being able to listen to the birds or taking note of the smells is a way of making connections with the world (Boyd, 2018, p14). Other theorists such as Friedrich Froebel and John Dewey, also place emphasis on the importance of child-led learning, which encourages children to take part in experiences, interactions which are hands-on, with natural materials and within the environment, to support a child’s holistic development (Early Excellence, 2026 and the education Hub, 2021). Although Dewey built upon Froebel’s theory, both believed “free play” encouraged individual, social and democratic learning, through experimental, voluntary and social participation (Beatty ,2017, p424). However, Lopez-Alcarria *et-al* (2016, p6), states how teachers found aspects of the environment education programmes hard to implement due to having little authority over actions or developments and a lack of funding. Additionally, Ardoin and Bowers (2020, p10) discuss how some reviews on environmental education programmes can be bias due to researchers being “*hesitant to publish negative findings*”.

Alongside child-led learning, is the Curiosity Approach. The curiosity approach allows practitioners to “*embed environmental education*” according to Watson (2025, p83)

through firstly allowing children to develop independence, creating future “*active global citizens*”. To gradually developing children’s curiosity, through inviting children to learn through igniting interest, developing discovery and investigations skills (Watson, 2025, p83). However, Watson (2025, p85) states to support children to be effective thinkers who are willing to be challenged, practitioners themselves also need to be willing to be challenged. Tinney (2020, p469) discusses how some authors have recorded, how practitioners are not confident in supporting and teaching sustainability, due a lack of knowledge on the subject or are focused on teaching traditional facts, rather than prioritising values. Another barrier Tinney (2020, p469) discusses is how practitioners felt certain themes were too complex for children within the early years. However, research by Dymont *et-al* (2014) discovered, providing professional development workshops, based on Early Childhood Education for Sustainable Development (hereafter ECEfSD), provided practitioners with confidence in delivering lessons on sustainability, through developing their knowledge and understanding, which is tailored to teach within the early years. Tinney (2020, p469) continues to discuss how practitioners accessing training, builds understanding that teaching sustainability is not about knowing everything, however more about facilitating children’s learning through play and supporting the development of skills, which effectively enable children to respond to global issues.

To conclude on the research discussed, it is clear to see that educating sustainability is not just teaching about the natural environment. However more about teaching the current generations to become more aware of the impact they have and the difference they can make. Through working towards the Welsh Governments well-being goals and the curriculum for Wales four purposes, as practitioners providing children with the opportunities and experiences to be independent, confident informed and healthy individuals, through child-led, hands-on experiences, creates a future generation who are active members of society.

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