Environmental Volunteering

Toolkit

Introduction

So you want to help the environment but are unsure how to start?

Environmental volunteering is a great way to **support the planet** whilst **giving back to your local community** and there are many opportunities that can fit into your schedule.

There are **hundreds of activities** you can get involved with but **how do you know which ones are right for you?** This toolkit aims to **help you decide** which aspects of environmental volunteering **most appeal to you** based on your **skills, interests**, and **circumstances**.

Each **themed section** of the toolkit includes different **skills and interests** that can be used or developed through volunteering, the **benefits** of taking part, **additional information** you may need to know, **inspiring ideas**, and **example projects**. Whichever activities you choose you will be helping to improve our environment for now and future generations!

If you would like to do more for the planet check out our **Going Further section** for ideas on how to **green up your daily life.**

There are over 33,000 voluntary, community and not-for-profit organisations in Wales and 938,175 volunteers. (WCVA, 2016)

Why Become an Environmental Volunteer?

Choosing to give your time and energy for free has many benefits including:

• Providing you with **new skills** or improving the ones you already have which can **boost your CV** as well as your **confidence**

• Getting the opportunity to **try new things** which you may not otherwise be able to experience

• **Passing on skills** to other people in your community and **making new friends** by spending time with people who might otherwise feel isolated or undervalued

• Improving your **physical and mental health** and well-being

• **Earning time-credits** to spend on things like courses, professional advice, and leisure activities

• **Supporting your community**, making it a nicer and possibly greener place to live

• **Helping to protect habitats** and wildlife for the benefit of current and future generations

If our ecosystems were properly cared for they could add an extra £30bn to the UK's economy (UK National Ecosystem Assessment, 2011)

Every year volunteers in Wales contribute 221 million hours of activity, which is worth £2.2 billion. This is equivalent to nearly 4.6% of Wales GDP (WCVA 2014)

How Do You Get Started?

Before you sign up to start environmental volunteering there are a couple things you could consider to help you make an informed decision:

• If you are new to volunteering **try starting out with a small commitment**, if you take on too much responsibility immediately you may find you become overburdened and miss out on the fun side of volunteering!

• **Try out a few different opportunities that play to your various skills, strengths, and interests -** you may be surprised which project or role you find the most enjoyable! Remember there are many 'backstage' roles to every project so your organisational or social media skills may be more useful than physical abilities or specialist knowledge.

• **Think about what you want to get out of your volunteering experience**; are there any goals which you would like to achieve?

• **How much time can you dedicate to volunteering** and when are you most likely to be available? Do you want to volunteer regularly or would you be more comfortable with occasional or one-off events?

• **Can you afford to travel to the opportunity?** Something in close proximity to your work or home may be more suitable for your schedule and budget than a project far away. Some opportunities may cover travel expenses so this is worth investigating.

• **Reading volunteering case studies** is a great way to figure out what you would like to do - for example, **'Volunteering Spirit Wales'**

*For more advice on getting started check out the **WCVA Volunteering web-pages** and the '**Thinking About Volunteering**' guide (produced by **Third Sector Support Wales**).*

Where Can You Find Opportunities?

• Contact your local **County Voluntary Council** for advice on voluntary organisations and opportunities in your community

• Search for volunteering opportunities on the **Volunteering Wales Website**

• There are many **national environmental and conservation organisations** which advertise opportunities directly, such as:

- **Canal & River Trust**
- **Keep Wales Tidy**
- **RSPB**
- **Wildlife Trusts Wales**
- **Woodland Trust**

• Your **local library or community hub** may advertise ways to get involved

• Talk to your **neighbours, relatives**, and **members of your community** about local needs and projects

• Details of how you can apply for the **example volunteering opportunities** listed, and ways to search for more, are also **provided throughout the toolkit**

What Are You Interested In?

People and Community!

- Helping people and making friends
- Being part of my community
- Organising activities

Practical Action!

- Practical skills and conservation work
- Getting my boots muddy
- Being outdoors and exploring

Food and Growing!

- Feeding people and the planet
- Growing food
- Looking after the land

Art and Creativity!

- Using my art for nature
- Designing and making beautiful things
- Using natural and recycled materials

Digital Technology!

- Investigating nature
- Social media and data management
- Researching and writing online content

Healthy and Active!

- Making myself and nature healthier
- Getting fit and exercising
- Tidying up my community

PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY

Skills and Interests...

- Teaching and Communication
- Empathy
- Organisation
- Working with vulnerable adults, the elderly, or children
- Knowledge or interest in nature and science

Benefits...

- Making new friends
- Reducing loneliness and isolation in you community
- Learning new skills

Need to Know...

- Some projects may require a Disclosure and Barring Service Certificate (DBS check)

PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY

Inspiring Ideas...

Inspiring Others!

Teach and advise people about the natural world by leading tours at a wildlife centre or by taking part in eco-, forest-, or coastal-schools.

Raise Funds and Spirits!

Host a fundraising event for a charity and get to know your neighbours or have fun with friends at the same time.

Have a Natter for Nature!

Join a coffee morning or 'friends of' group where you can share stories about your love of nature, or spread the word about new projects or campaigns.

Powers of Persuasion!

Become a board or trustee member of a nature based project or become a nature ambassador and use your people skills to get things done.

Be a Friend!

Get involved in a befriending or community transport service and take people on outdoors adventures so they can appreciate the health benefits of nature too.

Natural Retail Therapy!

Help run a cafe or shop for a nature based charity or at a wildlife centre.

PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY

Example Projects...

Amelia Trust Farm
Provide therapeutic support for vulnerable people in society in a care farm setting. Look after over 20 species of animals and manage 28 acres of woodland.
www.ameliatrust.org.uk

Vision 21
Take part in a choice of 17 projects covering Catering, Horticulture, Retail, ICT, Woodwork, Pottery, Creative Choices and Card Making and Life Skills.
www.v21.org.uk

Green Days (Innovate Trust)
Help adults with learning disabilities and / or mental health problems gain skills and confidence. Carry out practical conservation activities, like coppicing and biodiversity surveys, in parks, nature reserves and green spaces across South Wales.
greendaysproject.wordpress.com

Find more people and community themed environmental volunteering opportunities at: **www.volunteering-wales.net**

Practical Action

Skills and Interests...

- Being outdoors, getting muddy, and going on adventures
- Cleaning up your local area
- Looking after wildlife
- Exploring and observing nature
- Knowledge or interest in nature and science

Benefits...

- Spending time in nature
- Making new friends
- Supporting healthy ecosystems
- Learning new skills

Need to Know...

- Some projects can help you gain vocational qualifications
- Some projects may only run at certain times of the year

Practical Action

Inspiring Ideas...

Build Homes for Wildlife!

Build bird, bat, bee and other wildlife boxes to help give nature a safe home. You could also help take care of rescue animals at a farm, shelter, or nature reserve.

Nature Discoveries!

Take part in wildlife surveys to help keep track of population and migration levels, or monitor local air, soil, and water quality.

Love Where You Live!

Help keep your community green by taking part in litter-picks, planting up verges, or removing invasive species.

Learn New Skills!

Join conservation activities to learn hedge-laying, hay making, wall building, planting, coppicing, and other practical skills.

Give Nature a Lift!

Use your driving skills to help redistribute waste and natural materials in your local community, or lend a hand sorting goods at a recycling project warehouse.

Safety First!

Provide healthy and safety know-how or become the first aid officer for an environmental project.

Practical Action

Example Projects...

Cardiff Conservation Volunteers
Take part in different weekly activities including; maintenance of footpaths, fencing, dry stone walling, hedge-laying, scrub removal, ponds and canals tasks, and tree planting, coppicing, and felling.
www.cardiffconservation.org.uk

Sea Trust
Help marine life by volunteering in marine wildlife surveys (land and boat based), aquarium tours and maintenance, assisting with school group visits, administrative roles, DIY, and front of house.
www.seatrust.org.uk

Centre for Alternative Technology
Volunteer short or long-term at CAT as part of the woodland trail, sustainable woodland, organic gardens, or marketing teams. Volunteers can stay on-site in a community setting and gain discounts on CAT courses.
content.cat.org.uk/index.php/volunteers-vacancies

Find more practical action themed environmental volunteering opportunities at: **www.volunteering-wales.net**

Food and Growing

Skills and Interests...

- Teaching and communication
- Being outdoors and getting muddy
- Caring for your community
- Knowledge or interest in horticulture (growing), preparing, or eating food

Benefits...

- Growing and eating nutritious food
- Providing food for vulnerable community members
- Reducing food waste
- Supporting healthy ecosystems
- Learning new skills

Need to Know...

- Some projects can help you gain vocational qualifications
- Some projects may only run at certain times of the year

Food and Growing

Inspiring Ideas...

Green Fingers, Warm Heart!

Get involved in a community garden, allotment, or orchard to make friends and grow food. If you don't fancy a "grow", you can also help by picking, packing collecting, and distributing food.

Edible Streets!

Help fill the streets with fruit trees and planters which will provide easy access to healthy food and green space in your community.

Feed Friends and Neighbours!

Give back to your community by catering with local produce at an event or by teaching cooking skills to all ages.

Cut the Waste!

Help redistribute food in your local area at a food bank which reduces food waste sent to landfill and provides for those in need.

Give Back to the Land!

Take part in a sustainable farming enterprise, keep bees or chickens for fresh produce (which can support ecosystems too), or shepherd for a conservation grazing project.

Let Them Eat Cake!

Put on a bake sale with your friends, family, co-workers, or community to raise money for a wildlife project.

Food and Growing

Example Projects...

Cae Tan
Take part in activities including; fencing and carpentry, making compost, sowing seeds, harvesting, weekly distribution, running events, and fundraising.
www.caetancsa.org

Edible Mach
Get involved with community food growing in public spaces around Machynlleth. Anyone can plant, anyone can harvest!
www.machmaethlon.org/edible-mach

Buzzin (NewLink Wales)
Care for bees whilst improving your own and community well-being through bee-keeping activities with NewLink Wales.
www.newlinkwales.org.uk/buzzin

Find more food and growing themed environmental volunteering opportunities at: **www.volunteering-wales.net**

Art and Creativity

Skills and Interests...

- Communication, teaching and networking
- Creativity and artistic skills
- Up-cycling and restoration
- Knowledge or interest in nature and science

Benefits...

- Making new friends
- Inspiring others and showcasing your work
- Learning new skills

Need to Know...

- Some projects may require a DBS check
- Some projects may require provision of own materials

Art and Creativity

Inspiring Ideas...

Dash of Inspiration!

Create inspiring and informative art installations or signs to be displayed at wildlife centres. Use natural materials in your work to avoid plastic and chemical consumption.

Hit Record!

Get involved by submitting your photographs, paintings, or sketches of nature sightings for monitoring and preservation to a wildlife organisation.

Timeless Fashion!

Give back by up-cycling and restoring clothes and furniture to reduce wasted resources. Share your flare by enthusing others through talks or demonstrations.

Under the Hammer!

Put on an art auction to raise money for a wildlife charity. Alternatively show your support by purchasing wildlife inspired or eco-friendly art, music, and creative products.

Treats for Wildlife!

Get your needles at the ready to knit comfy nests for rescued wildlife. You could also get creative by turning plastic bottles into arty bird feeders.

Testing 1, 2 3!

Help out at your local college or environmental project by teaching nature inspired art or by providing technician support.

Art and Creativity

Example Projects...

The Furniture Revival (Groundwork)
Help the Furniture Revival reuse and recycle household furniture, electricals and paints to enable them to reduce waste, increase skills, and alleviate poverty.
www.thefurniturerevival.co.uk

Wildlife Rescue Nests
Knit or crochet nests for the rehabilitation of birds and small mammals. Over 400 wildlife rescues centres around the world are provided with handmade nests by volunteers. Free online patterns are kept up-to-date and new centres are regularly added so volunteers can send nests where they are needed most.
www.wildliferescuenests.weebly.com

#ShowTheLove (The Climate Coalition)
Each February, Show The Love for your favourite things that are at risk from climate change by crafting a green heart. You can make your heart any way you like: cut it out, craft it out of wool, or even plant a heart and watch it grow. Show off your green heart on social media with the hashtag #ShowTheLove, or send it to The Climate Coalition.
www.theclimatecoalition.org

Find more art and creativity themed environmental volunteering opportunities at: **www.volunteering-wales.net**

Digital Technology

Skills and Interests...

- Teaching and Communication
- Getting people online and connected
- Administration and marketing
- Website facilitation
- Knowledge or interest in nature and science

Benefits...

- Preserving environmental knowledge
- Contribute to global data collection and network
- Share your stories and findings
- Learning new skills

Need to Know...

- Some projects may only run at certain times of the year
- Some projects require internet access

Digital Technology

Inspiring Ideas...

See it, Like it, Share it!

Get involved in digital comms by providing online marketing and website support for environmental groups. Spread campaigns via social media networks and join online communities.

Nature at a Click!

Take part in wildlife and weather surveys you can do close by or from your home, and submit your findings via websites or apps. You could also help monitor wildlife webcams online.

Charity Begins Online!

Use your admin know-how to help projects input and manage sales data, visit info, or volunteer rotas, or become an online fundraising champion.

Insert Nature Here!

Help digitise and sort scientific data to help monitor species or management of natural resources. You could also contribute to online information hubs to preserve nature knowledge.

Turn it Off and On Again!

Help provide technical support or computer maintenance for an environmental project. You could also help recycle or redistribute ICT equipment to reduce electronic waste.

Mind the Digital Gap!

Sign up to be the eyes for blind people and help them explore the natural world. You could also get people in your community to access nature virtually by teaching them digital skills.

Digital Technology

Example Projects...

Big Butterfly Count (Butterfly Conservation)
Take part in the Big Butterfly Count by looking out for 18 species of common butterflies and moths during the summer. Join in on events leading up to the count and record sightings online or via the app.
www.butterfly-conservation.org

Zooniverse
Help scientists protect wildlife from your computer! Your image annotations will help monitor breeding and migration patterns, ecosystem shifts, and train computers to decode images for future analysis of a variety of species and habitats. Current projects include; bats, penguins, seabirds, seals, and many more!
www.zooniverse.org/projects

Spot a Bee
If you spot a bee in Cardiff, use your mobile to take picture, audio, or video recordings of the plants they're buzzing around. Submit your findings to Spot a Bee to help them identify the most useful pollinator plants for public spaces and create a bee map of Cardiff.
www.spotabee.buzz

Find more digital technology themed environmental volunteering opportunities at: **www.volunteering-wales.net**

Healthy and Active

Skills and Interests...

- Being outdoors, getting muddy, and going on adventures
- Sports and active lifestyles
- Health and fitness
- Supporting your community
- Knowledge or interest in nature and science

Benefits...

- Making new friends
- Getting and staying healthy
- Physical and mental well-being
- Reducing social isolation
- Supporting healthy ecosystems
- Learning new skills

Need to Know...

- Some projects may require a DBS check
- Some projects may require specific mobility levels

Healthy and Active

Inspiring Ideas...

Get Outdoors!

Celebrate nature whilst getting fit and making friends in your community by joining outdoor sporting activities or local walking and cycling groups.

Outside for All!

Help make the natural world more accessible by restoring, maintaining, and campaigning for public rights of way.

Paws for Thought!

Support your local rescue centre by taking their dogs for a walk or improving their outdoor play and rehabilitation facilities.

Healthy You, Healthy Streets!

Give back by joining an exercise group which supports community projects through hands-on tasks whilst getting fit.

Raise Your Heart Rate and Funds!

Raise money for environmental projects by taking part in a sponsored swim, run, cycle, climb, bounce, or whichever sport you love.

Take a Dive!

Help clean our coasts and waterways by collecting plastic debris when you swim, snorkel, or surf.

Healthy and Active

Example Projects...

Good Gym

Get fit whilst helping your community by joining Good Gym in doing physical tasks for organisations and supporting isolated older people with social visits on an exercise route.
www.goodgym.org

Valeways

Promote and maintain an accessible network of Public Rights of Ways in the Vale of Glamorgan. Join in on walks, repairing paths, and campaigns whilst enjoying beautiful scenery.
www.valeways.org.uk

Gwent Wild Health (Wildlife Trusts Wales)

Help improve your own and community well-being by running regular workdays and recreational activities at nature reserves. Take part in biodiversity enhancing habitat management tasks and help people across Gwent participate in green exercise.
www.gwentwildlife.org/wildhealthproject

Find more healthy and active themed environmental volunteering opportunities at: **www.volunteering-wales.net**

Going Further

Environmental Volunteering is just one tool at your disposal to **help the planet,** there are many other **things you can do** to **Green Up Your Daily Life** and thereby **reduce strains** put onto **natural resources.**

Check out our resources for further advice and guidance on how to support nature and wildlife:

- **Invest In Nature Resources**
- **Making Space for Nature**
- **Greening Your Organisation**

Going Further

Find out, understand, and improve your resources use:

- Find out your **Carbon Footprint**
- Join a car sharing scheme or use public transport
- Take part in community energy schemes or change to a renewable energy supplier: such as **Good Energy,** or **Ecotricity**
- Purchase goods with an eco-label: such as **Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance,** or **FSC**
- Reduce the amount of meat, dairy, and fish you consume, and consider taking part in a local food box scheme or growing your own food
- Buy eco-friendly cleaning products and clothes made from organic natural fibres
- Check out other ways to reduce or offset carbon with advice from **CarbonFund**

- Find out your **Water Footprint**
- Collect and recycle rainwater by installing a water butt
- Check out other ways to save water with advice from **WaterWise**

- Find out your **Plastic Footprint**
- Stop using single use plastic and instead switch to reusable or bio-degrable products: such as bags, straws, cups, and utensils
- Check out other ways to reduce plastic use with advice from **MyPlasticFreeLife**

Going Further

Take Action by participating in longer-term campaigns:

- 30 Days Wild
- Actif Woods
- Beachwatch
- Be My Eyes
- BTO Surveys
- Bug Champion
- Cardiff Environmental Champions
- Divesting from Fossil Fuels
- Go Green for Health
- Grow Wild
- Groundwork
- Hope Rescue
- Litter Champions
- Living Landscapes
- Long Forest
- Love Food Hate Waste
- Love Your Clothes
- Marine Conservation Society
- Nature Detectives
- Neptune's Army of Rubbish Cleaners
- Sky Ocean Rescue
- Tidy Towns
- Tree Charter
- World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF)

Consider helping causes financially:

- Make a one off-donation to a charity or cause
- Become a member of an organisation
- Adopt or sponsor an animal, tree, or resource
- Leave a legacy donation in your will

Contact Information

If you would like any more information about environmental volunteering, making your spaces more nature friendly, how to apply for funding for environmental activities, or any other queries, please get in touch:

www.wcva.org.uk/environetcymru

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environet cymru

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