Green volunteering in Wales: Building on good practice
# Contents

## Introduction

- Focussing on outcomes and impacts: 31

## What is green volunteering?

- Volunteering Impact Assessment reports:
  - RSPB: 32
  - Cardiff Pedal Power: 47

## Benefits of green volunteering

- Making volunteering a ‘memorable experience’ – Come Outside!: 57

## Who are green volunteers?

- How do we know we have got it right?: 65

## Barriers to successful green volunteering

- Investing in Volunteers: 66

## Overcoming barriers or issues

- Health Check example: Centre for Alternative Technology: 66

## Conclusion

- Conclusion: 67

## Sources of help to overcome general issues

- Further information: resources and publications: 69

## Background to the project

- Background to the project: 70
Introduction

‘Green volunteering in Wales – building on good practice’ is the result of a one-year project, funded by Welsh Government, with the aim of working with organisations to expand opportunities for, and engagement in green volunteering.

Here you will find a mixture of useful materials and examples, developed by organisations in Wales, for improving good practice in volunteer management and demonstrating the impact of volunteering. The focus of this project was with organisations involving green volunteers in their work, however the good practice suggestions and many of the impacts of volunteering highlighted could also apply just as well to volunteers in any other setting.

During the project volunteer-involving organisations examined their volunteering practices and introduced new ways of working to attempt to overcome difficulties they faced in areas such as recruiting volunteers from deprived areas, communicating with volunteers and improving efficiency.

Two organisations also undertook a volunteer impact assessment to demonstrate the difference volunteering is making and the impact that volunteering has on volunteers, the organisation, the environment and other stakeholders.

Important aspects of involving volunteers are motivating and retaining volunteers and you can find out more about the Countryside Council for Wales’ approach to making volunteering a ‘memorable experience’ called ‘Come Outside!’

As volunteer-involving organisations we need to know whether our approach to working with volunteers is the best way to make use of this valuable people resource. You will find further information about the Investing in Volunteers standard and Health Check which can help with benchmarking what you are doing.
Green volunteering is a way of involving individuals and groups in activities that make a positive environmental difference in the community. By taking small steps locally, big environmental difference can be made globally.

Green volunteering can involve lots of different activities undertaken by people who give unpaid help which contributes to environmental and sustainability objectives. There is a huge amount of diverse activity carried out for a wide range of purposes.

It can take place in towns and cities, in the countryside, woodlands or wetlands, indoors and outdoors, on the coast and waterways and could be as part of daily life or as a holiday experience. Green volunteering can be formal and organised or can be informal and self-organised.

Examples of activities could include:

- clearing green space
- growing fresh produce in a community garden
- litter picking
- helping school pupils to set up a community garden
- path clearing
- recycling or waste reduction activities
- teaching others to compost
- monitoring species
- completing surveys
- maintaining habitats
- supporting other volunteers to access volunteering opportunities
- encouraging/increasing access to sustainable transport
- leading walks
- helping the public engage with nature
Volunteers do not necessarily have to get out in the outdoors. Other roles include:

- administering a conservation organisation
- being part of a management committee/steering group
- engaging new audiences by using social media
- designing promotional materials for environmental groups
- raising awareness e.g. giving talks and presentations
- helping with catering facilities
- promoting local nature to the general public
- promotion/awareness-raising at events
- delivering educational activities

There are hundreds of different activities that volunteers can choose from. Here are some examples:

(A full version of these examples can be found on this [link](#))

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**Gibbonsdown and Court Communities First People’s Allotment Group**

The People’s Allotment Group is a group set up to enable local residents to gain access to a community garden, whereby local people can learn how to grow produce, meet new people and spend time in the outdoors. Communities First recognised that many residents in the local community have limited garden space, so the site has been designed with everyone in mind with the development of a shelter, children’s area and with raised beds and level paths making the site accessible to all.

The local community designed and created the garden layout and purchased equipment and materials to make the project possible.

The project is used by resident volunteers, as well as great partner organisations such as Scope, Keep Wales Tidy, local primary and secondary schools, Gibbonsdown Children’s Centre, The Princes Trust and Business in the Community. The project, in partnership with Communities First, has also set up training and best practice visits according to the individual needs of volunteers to encourage new skills and learning in the local community.
North East Wales Wildlife

North East Wales Wildlife (NEWW) is a small environmental charity based just outside of Mold that manages 11 reserves around North East Wales. Volunteers are a vital part of the group and are of great value to all staff. There are many different ways people can get involved. Some of the volunteers specialise in certain aspects of NEWW’s work such as amphibian population monitoring and others like to get involved in a variety of tasks which boost their skills set and help them to meet new people.

Volunteers are encouraged to get involved in a range of activities including species monitoring, habitat maintenance, education, events and other tasks such as website maintenance, admin tasks, leading walks and courses and Welsh translation. Most volunteers tend to come from the Mold and Buckley areas (5 and 15 minutes away) and other volunteers with a particular interest travel much further to volunteer.

‘Grow and Swap’ – Communities First Ebbw Vale North & South

Communities First is a flagship programme of the Welsh Government aimed at helping to improve the lives of people in communities across Wales. During 2011 the Communities First Ebbw Vale North & South team ran a pilot project, ‘Grow and Swap’. The purpose of the project was to develop a community growing and swap project whereby local residents would grow vegetables and swap the produce with their neighbours. Other aims of the project were to increase knowledge and understanding of food growing, sustainable nutrition and improve health and well-being and social interaction.

At the start of the project an introductory session was planned and all participants were invited. The session was a chance for the group to all get to know each other. All participants were given an induction pack/starter pack which outlined the project, included growing advice, participant details swapping sheet, records of swap sheets and the variety of fruit & vegetables being grown by the group. The group also did their first planting session.

Swap sessions were held every month. The sessions included cooking demonstrations, planting sessions and quizzes.
Benefits of green volunteering

There are many reasons why people want to take part in green volunteering and why groups, projects or larger organisations want to establish or promote green volunteering. Below are some benefits we found and others have told us about.

For the individual
- provide opportunities to try something new
- learning through getting involved
- the opportunity to meet other people
- developing interpersonal skills and confidence
- collaborative interest in the outdoors
- increased wellbeing (physical, social and mental)
- increased skills and experience to develop employability

- increased knowledge and understanding of a range of issues
- training and development opportunities
- access to other activities

(See case study for an example of benefits of green volunteering to the individual)

For the group/organisation
- further develop your organisations profile and reputation in a local area
- being positively acknowledged by local residents
- invaluable resource of willing volunteers
- people with new and fresh ideas
- raising awareness/promotion
- community involvement/support

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1 Environmental Volunteering in Communities 2011: Groundwork UK
Green Exercise – the natural health service – Briefing October 2008
Green volunteering in Wales: Building on good practice

For the wider community
• better ownership of local green spaces
• developed and used by local people creating a greater sense of satisfaction and achievement in a local area
• increased levels of community cohesion through people working together jointly on a project for the benefit of the wider community
• providing a route for people to share knowledge and expertise to benefit the wider community
• appreciation of the environment and needs

For the environment
• benefits the local area and the planet
• benefits the environment, nature and biodiversity
• improve the physical environment
• behaviour change – environmental awareness/environmentally friendly behaviour
• the environment provides a language for all, regardless of background, physical ability, socioeconomic status or previous experience
Green volunteers come from all backgrounds and areas of the country. Each volunteer will have their own personal set of motivations for volunteering.

A Forest Research study (2008)\(^2\) found that the primary overarching motivation for volunteering in the environment was an appreciation of being outdoors and an awareness of the environment. However people may become green volunteers for similar reasons as one would volunteer in other areas e.g.:

- to gain training and new skills
- the need for activity and structure
- to meet new friends
- to complete a challenge
- altruistic reasons
- to support a cause
- to work in a team
- to develop as an individual
- contribute to a community asset
- step to (re)employment
- to regain a purpose

Barriers to successful green volunteering

There are barriers to people getting involved, some are real and some are about a person’s perceptions. Real barriers could include those which relate to a person’s personal circumstances e.g. access needs, health issues, lack of confidence, costs of getting involved, fear of the outdoors, and dislike of bad weather.

Perceived barriers could include misconceptions about the time and commitment needed, stereotypes of ‘green volunteers’ and what they do or concerns that volunteering may affect welfare benefits.

Also, partly due to the huge range of different ‘green volunteering’ possibilities, information about opportunities can be confusing to navigate.

There are, of course, barriers for organisations and groups who would like to, or already, involve volunteers in their work. These include capacity, time commitments of staff, costs involved, legal liabilities, transport and access issues, insurance, health and safety.

The Forest Research study also found that there were also potential problems or issues once people are involved in volunteering, including not being able to voice concerns, carrying out mundane tasks and not getting any feedback. These may lead to someone giving up volunteering or make volunteering a less than wonderful experience.

Volunteers could feel:

- unsure of their role
- unsupported
- their time/skills are not being used to the full
- they are expected to do more than they want to
- undervalued
- they are being treated unfairly
- unable to voice concerns or frustrations
- worried and/or anxious
- apathetic and bored
- not able to give feedback
Critical issues and barriers identified by green volunteer-involving organisations:

WCVA worked with several organisations in Wales to identify the barriers or issues that volunteer-involving organisations face when working with green volunteers.

- recruiting young volunteers
- recruiting volunteers from less advantaged areas
- marketing opportunities to attract diverse volunteers
- perceptions of green volunteering
- perceived barriers e.g. loss of benefits
- supporting volunteers with extra support needs
- retaining volunteers
- maintaining volunteers’ enthusiasm and commitment
- ensure a quality experience
- encouraging volunteers to follow new processes/embrace change
- formal vs. casual volunteer management
- communication with volunteers
- ensuring volunteers are occupied
- volunteer reviews
- including volunteers with extra support needs
Overcoming barriers or issues

**Solutions to some of the barriers faced by organisations were identified using an action research approach.**

Action research is a reflective process of progressive problem solving led by individuals working with others in teams or as part of a “community of practice” to improve the way they address issues and solve problems.

**Action research:**
- involves a purposeful cycle
- focuses on a problem and actions to solve it
- involves a group
- seeks improvement

It begins by establishing a group and defining the problem, involving all relevant stakeholders. The cycle below is followed. Each cycle takes between 6 – 8 weeks.
Using an action research methodology, a range of organisations was approached to form a community of practice where:

- critical issues for the success of green volunteering were established
- current barriers to the expansion of green volunteering were identified
- organisations identified an area for development which addresses the critical issues and/or current barriers
- over a six month period, organisations were supported to implement changes in policy or practice, reflect on the impact of the changes and record important factors, internal and external, in the change process.
Critical issues and barriers identified by groups in this study:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>Solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruiting volunteers from deprived areas</td>
<td>- Promotion at local events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Volunteering posters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Links with groups from deprived areas</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Restructuring volunteer roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Volunteer celebration event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with volunteers</td>
<td>- Volunteer feedback box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Day-book</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Monthly newsletter</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Creation of requirement cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving efficiency/keeping volunteers</td>
<td>- To-do list/task reminder checklist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>occupied</td>
<td>- Creation of new volunteer roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Schedule for school-support volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer reviews and training</td>
<td>- System of reviews started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Volunteer training requirements identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- System for implementing training and recording this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Review of induction training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Review of ongoing training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two of the organisations who were involved in initial green volunteering workshops decided to go ahead with an action research project in order to identify and overcome issues.

Pembroke 21C wanted to ensure they recruit volunteers from the more disadvantaged areas in Pembrokeshire and have a diverse group of volunteers which reflects the local community. The focus of their action research was to recruit volunteers from disadvantaged areas.

Once volunteers are recruited and involved it is vital to make volunteering a positive experience in order to retain and motivate volunteers. Cardiff Pedal Power wanted to improve the volunteer experience through communication, reviews and training, whilst improving efficiency and performance in the bike-shed project.
Pembroke 21C

Mission Statement:
Pembroke 21C exists to work closely with the whole community to provide a focus for activities that are open to all in order to encourage pride and community spirit in Pembroke in an environmentally and economically sustainable way.

As part of achieving the mission statement, 21C aims to recruit volunteers for the Community Association’s range of projects. These include two conservation projects.

The aims include increasing biodiversity, improving access and encouraging local people to enjoy and become involved in their local environment. This includes through children’s’ and family activities, guided walks and work parties. Training is provided such as species recognition. One of the projects provides accredited training with the aim of assisting people towards employment. It manages woodland for the National Trust and a willow coppicing project. The willow is to be sold to be used to stabilise river banks, bringing in money to continue to fund the project. The other conservation project provides care and monitoring of the millponds in the centre of Pembroke, together with nearby woodland.

21C also manages a recently refurbished community centre which is used by a wide range of local groups and activities. It produces and delivers a quarterly local newsletter. It has a local heritage project and organises events such as the Pembroke Festival.
The task

21C aim to increase involvement and access from the more disadvantaged areas of Pembroke in order to both serve and reflect the local community more effectively. Volunteers and staff at 21C have expressed concern that disadvantaged people are relatively less involved. However, prior to the Action Research, there had been no review to ascertain to what extent this might actually be the case.

The goals of the Action Research were identified as the following:

1. Establishing whether and to what extent the relatively more disadvantaged local areas are represented in terms of involvement with 21C.
2. Taking action to improve the extent to which 21C reflects the whole local community.
3. Reviewing the effectiveness of action taken.
4. Learning from the experience as to what has worked.

Making decisions about the work

Initially Bryan Collis (WCVA) met Elizabeth Gossage (Development Officer) and David Wall (Volunteer Coordinator). This meeting provided an opportunity to consider how Action Research could effectively be applied at 21C. Recruiting more volunteers and striving to reflect the wider community of Pembroke were already 21C goals and provided a suitable subject for Action Research. The intention was that applying Action Research would enable evidence based evaluation regarding both the need for change and effectiveness of action.

Bryan Collis and the Volunteer Coordinator arranged to speak at regular intervals to review progress, identify tasks and for Bryan to provide advice regarding Action Research methods. Other 21C volunteers and staff were involved with specific tasks in connection with projects they coordinated. 21C Trustees were updated through use of an interim report part way through the project.
**Actions taken**

**A review of the current situation**

Bryan Collis analysed the distribution of volunteers both prior and during the project. The analysis confirmed people’s perceptions within 21C that people from the more deprived areas of Pembroke were under represented. However, there were indications of progress during the early stages of the Action Research.

**Promotion at local events**

A 21C stand providing information was provided at local events during the summer. These included a local hospital fete, Pembroke Carnival, National Vegetable Championship (held locally), Springboard Fair, Monkton Fair, Pembroke Show and at two volunteering events. Mostly, the stand also sold second hand books or in one case provided catering. A couple of ‘Big Book Sales’ were also held at the Community Centre. A weekend of events was also held to celebrate the official opening of the refurbished Community Centre.

**Volunteering posters were distributed locally**

Articles regarding volunteering were provided in 21C’s newsletter, Monkton Communities First newsletter, The Pembroke & Pembroke Dock Observer, and on Facebook.

Information on volunteering events was also provided for Pembrokeshire Radio. The local volunteer centre was also very supportive in publicising 21C volunteering through channels they provide.

**Links with groups from deprived areas**

Information on volunteering and community centre activities were provided to numerous local organisations having valuable connections with under-represented people. This included organisations specifically working in Communities First areas. It also included organisations often accessed by people not in work, single parents and/or people with health problems. These included Monkton Communities First, P.R.P. Training, Want to Work, Plant Dewi, SNAP Cymru, Genesis, Prism Coastal, Careers Wales, Probation Service, Pembrokeshire College and Workways. As well as providing written information, the Volunteer Coordinator also offered to visit any of these groups to discuss volunteering opportunities. This has so far been taken up by Plant Dewi and on several occasions by P.R.P.

Ongoing cooperative working with P.R.P. involved the provision of a team building day for unemployed trainees, volunteering on a conservation project.
Restructuring volunteering roles

Volunteering roles were considered flexibly to enable people to volunteer who might otherwise be excluded. These included amending tasks in response to risk assessment for specific individuals, changing delivery rounds to suit the needs and wishes of specific volunteers, establishing volunteering roles to suit people who cannot sustain regular commitment, and offering a highly flexible and slow, gradual introduction for people overcoming anxiety in order to volunteer.

A Volunteer celebration

A Volunteers Celebration was held. The main aim was to express gratitude for current volunteers, however it also to provided an opportunity for people to find out about other projects and new developments. The event was also open to people interested in volunteering. Staff used their own time and resources to prepare dishes in order to express appreciation. A couple of optional silly quizzes and token prizes were also provided for entertainment. A volunteers’ feedback chart was also provided. This was to provide feedback to assist 21C and also because it was required by funders.

The outcomes of new actions

31 volunteers were recruited between May and December 2011 (Table 1). The source of 22 volunteers recruited between May to 8th November was:

- 7 new volunteers recruited through volunteer centre
- 1 by referral from Want to Work
- 2 directly through 21C publicity
- 12 recruited through contact with 21C related activities (3 Millpond conservation group, 1 accessing 21C computer project, 3 via staff, 1 at a big book sale, 2 visiting the Heritage Project, 1 through conversation at reception, 1 through the Over 50’s Club.)
The distribution of volunteers between the different areas was recorded and compared with the Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation. The areas were divided into quintiles of the index for the whole of Wales. The proportion of volunteers from the lowest two quintiles was 56 per cent in April 2011, and rose to 61 per cent in December 2011 (Figure 1). The distance from Centre was also a significant factor in determining the profile of volunteers (Figure 2).

**Figure 1: Distribution of volunteers between WIMD quintiles, April 2011**

**Figure 2: Distribution of volunteers between WIMD quintiles, December 2011**
### Table 1: The distribution of volunteers and recruited volunteers May-Dec 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Quintile</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>April Volunteer Number</th>
<th>Vol per 1,000</th>
<th>May - Sept New Volunteer Number</th>
<th>Oct - Dec Volunteer Number</th>
<th>Distance from 21C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monkton</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1204</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.3</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1502</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pemb St Mary South</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1114</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pemb St Michael</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carew</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1266</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hundleston</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1445</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lamphey</td>
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<td>1342</td>
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<td>1.4</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1045</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Haverfordwest: Portfield</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>104</strong></td>
<td><strong>119</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There have been two additional groups of one off volunteers (not included in the statistics). One group was of Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services staff, the other was of trainees on vocational training with locally based P.R.P. training.

In December, 94 volunteers came from the four areas closest to the community centre base. These areas had a population of 5,773 (2010 midyear estimate), showing that 1.6 percent of the local population volunteers with 21C. Other volunteers come from further afield, and none of these come from areas in the most deprived quintile.

What worked well and what didn’t

The most prominent sources of volunteer recruitment have been the local volunteer centre and through direct involvement with 21C activities or groups using the community centre.

Providing a 21C stand at local events and displaying posters locally have not demonstrated a direct result. However, 21C has not had a system in place to evaluate whether people have participated in activities after obtaining information at stands. The stands also provide support to other local organisations holding events and might increase the overall profile of 21C. There has not been a direct, immediate response to media publicity but it is possible that people might still respond.

Developing cooperative links with other local organisations has led to the addition of one new volunteer and also provided a one off large volunteering group. As much of this work has been undertaken in the autumn it is still too early to evaluate the outcome of this work. Additionally, there are several enquiries still pending from people interested in volunteering and organisations working with 21C more closely. These would need to reach an outcome before evaluating the impact.

Feedback from volunteers and the volunteer centre has confirmed that adopting a flexible approach to roles has enabled people to volunteer who would otherwise have faced obstructive barriers in doing so.

There has been an increase of 12 new volunteers from the relatively more deprived parts of Pembroke (Monkton and Pembroke North). This represents a significant increase in the proportion of residents from these areas who volunteer with 21C (from 5 per 1,000 to 12 per 1,000 in Monkton), bringing them close to that for the other areas in Pembroke. Also, 29 percent of 21C volunteers now come from these two more deprived areas, compared to 26 percent in April 2011.
Next steps

A number of activities will be continued following this action research:

• Maintain the approach to volunteer tasks, making them fit the abilities and capacity of new volunteers.

• Continuing to develop cooperative links with local organisations, particularly those working with people from the more deprived parts of Pembroke.

• Continuing to evaluate volunteer recruitment statistics to assess the outcomes of different recruitment activities.

In addition, the Volunteer Coordinator will discuss with colleagues whether it is feasible for 21C to also record how people are introduced to activities as well as to volunteering.

Evaluation of the Action Research method

The action research project came at a time when volunteering recruitment was highlighted as a vital part of increasing the capacity of 21C. The opportunity to talk over with colleagues the results of activities and what to do next was valued.

Recruiting volunteers from deprived areas:

• Promote your volunteering opportunities at local events

• Promote volunteering through newsletters, via social media and local newspapers and radio

• Register with the local volunteer centre who will promote your opportunities

• Make links with groups who involve people from disadvantaged areas

• Be flexible with volunteer roles to enable people to volunteer who might otherwise be excluded

• Volunteer celebration events can be used for publicity as well as recognition
Volunteers are involved in every aspect of the organisation e.g. there are volunteering roles in cycle hire, bike maintenance and the cafe. Pedal Power has 100 volunteers registered with them (some regular, some events volunteers who volunteer a few times per year) and of these about 50 are active, regular volunteers.

The task

Pedal Power was keen to improve some of their practices in relation to involving volunteers in their work. They decided to get involved in the action research project and the aim of their action research was ‘to improve the volunteer experience through communication, reviews and training, whilst improving efficiency and performance in the bike-shed’.

The goals of the action research were to:

1. Establish the barriers faced in the areas of communication, reviews and training and improving efficiency
2. Taking action to improve these areas
3. Reviewing the effectiveness of action taken
4. Learning from the experience as to what has worked
Making decisions about the work

The project formed a ‘community of practice’ which included people affected by the identified problems, people who can make a decision and people who provide the service. In this case this was the Cycle Hire Manager (left Aug 2011), Volunteer Support Officer, Child Physiotherapist, Operations Manager (joined PP July 2011), Cycle Hire Supervisors x2 (joined PP end Aug 2011), and bike-shed volunteers x2 (1 has left, replaced by another). All other volunteers were involved via feedback and consultation. The Pedal Power Director was also involved through consultation.

During the process significant staff changes have occurred at Pedal Power with the loss of the Cycle Hire Manager post and Future Jobs Fund workers and the gain of Operations Manager and 2 Cycle Hire Supervisors.

The ‘community of practice’ identified action that could be taken to overcome some of the barriers the project was facing with regards communication, reviews and training and responding to feedback from volunteers that they were not always fully occupied.

Actions taken

Communication

The need to improve volunteer communication identified:

- volunteer feedback box put in bike-shed and volunteers given comments cards for suggestions
- daybook created (for staff and volunteers to make suggestions and/or comments) to improve communication between staff and volunteers in the bike-shed
- bike requirement cards for adult cycles created
- importance of staff greeting and thanking volunteers at start and end of session identified
- simple monthly newsletter with important regular features proposed
Reviews and training

Very few volunteer reviews had been undertaken and only a few records of volunteer training had been kept.

- system of volunteer reviews instigated
- volunteer training requirements identified during reviews
- system for implementing and recording training set up
- importance of explaining to new volunteers the role that volunteers with extra needs play at Pedal Power

Improving efficiency

Feedback from volunteers and staff had revealed that volunteers sometimes did not feel fully occupied during their time spent volunteering:

- bike-shed ‘To Do’ list and volunteer reminder checklist created
- creation of new volunteer roles
- scheduling of volunteers to support individuals and school groups initiated

The outcomes of new actions

Communication

Volunteer feedback box put in bike-shed and volunteers given comments cards for suggestions. Initially suggestions for improvements were made by volunteers but they now tend to write their suggestions in the daybook (see below). This is a better option as staff and other volunteers can provide feedback when actions have been taken on suggestions made.

Daybook created to improve communication between staff and volunteers in the bike-shed. The daybook has proved very effective. Suggestions are made by volunteers. Some suggestions made have been concerning what might appear to be very small issues e.g. kitchen equipment, issues with toilets, etc. however staff are able to communicate what changes they have made in the day-book, so volunteers can see that their suggestions have been acted upon.

Cards for adult cycles created. Previously all records for individual’s assessments of their requirements for adapted cycles were kept electronically and it was often difficult for volunteers to access the records when customers arrived at the project. Cards were created which are now kept in the bike shed. Volunteers can now access the records with ease and prepare bikes with specialist requirements before the customer arrives.
Importance of staff greeting and thanking volunteers at start and end of session identified. Two new bike-shed supervisors now take on this role and feedback from volunteers confirms that they are beginning to feel more valued.

Simple monthly newsletter with important regular features. The volunteer newsletter was quite infrequent before the start of the project. A volunteer has now been identified to develop a volunteer newsletter. The newsletter is produced on a monthly basis and will feed into the general quarterly Pedal Power newsletter. The newsletter contains information about volunteer stories and achievements, upcoming training sessions, Pedal Power events and organisation updates.

Reviews and training

System of volunteer reviews instigated. Previous to the action research project, few volunteer reviews had been undertaken. Since the beginning of the project 42 volunteer reviews have been undertaken by staff at Pedal Power. These reviews have been helpful for both staff and volunteers.

Responsibility for volunteer reviews will now sit with new Cycle Hire Supervisors. A system for booking review dates has been put in place. Volunteers have commented that they now have the opportunity to review their role and involvement and they are pleased their comments are acted upon following reviews.

Volunteer training requirements identified and system for implementing and recording training set up. Before the start of the action research project no records of volunteer training had been kept. Now individual training records exist for all bike-shed volunteers. Two accessory training sessions have been undertaken. Individual audits were useful but time consuming. Regular specialist training sessions have now been planned (to take place every month) to ensure existing volunteers with incomplete training can be trained. This may become less frequent when the backlog of training has been undertaken.

The training audit has resulted in more topics and activities being included in the induction training for all future volunteers. The specialist training is then delivered whilst volunteers are active. This activity has enhanced the recruitment and induction process for new volunteers – staff can now be clear with potential volunteers about the training requirements and commitment needed before they make a commitment.
**Importance of explaining to new volunteers the role that volunteers with extra needs play at Pedal Power.** Feedback from staff and volunteers was that some of the ethos of Pedal Power and some of the aims and objectives of the project were not being communicated adequately. Communication about the involvement of volunteers with extra support needs has been sensitively communicated to both staff and volunteers and there appears to be a better understanding of the issues and the ethos of the project. Information about the supported volunteering programme will be included in induction training as well as the volunteer handbook.

**Improving efficiency**

Bike-shed ‘To Do’ list and volunteer reminder checklist were created to ensure volunteers always have a useful role when at the project. Feedback from some volunteers was that they sometimes did not have enough to do and were not occupied. Since the introduction of the ‘to-do’ list volunteers have been more occupied however it is not yet used to its full potential. The to-do list is put up on wall in bike-shed, included in induction pack and highlighted to volunteers during reviews.

The Cycle Hire Supervisor will take more of a role in referring volunteers to the to-do list and to use it in reviews with volunteers.

**Creation of new volunteer roles.** The need for accessories to be inventoried and regularly checked was highlighted by the community of practice group. This process started with Tomcats project. An individual volunteer has been identified and trained to undertake the inventories. The Tomcat inventory is very useful and is working well for volunteers as well as for Pedal Power. This role will be extended to inventories in other areas of the project and volunteers will be allocated as responsible for the inventories.

**Scheduling of volunteers to support individuals and school groups initiated.** School groups are invited to Pedal Power and often they will have school children with extra support needs. A new volunteer role was created where the volunteer would take responsibility for particular individuals or groups while they are spending time at the project. One volunteer was recruited specifically for one school. In future school groups who need additional support are to be identified and volunteers to be matched to the schools.
What worked well and what didn’t

Reviews were very helpful and impacted on other areas such as induction training, specialised training and have been very well received by volunteers. The activities regarding communication with volunteers worked very well and combined with volunteer reviews seem to have made a positive difference.

Next steps

Pedal Power will continue with monthly meeting set up as the ‘community of practice’ – these will be bike-shed management meetings. Volunteering will also be a standard item on the staff meeting agenda with volunteers invited to attend. Volunteer reviews will continue with all volunteers and any issues will be addressed as soon as possible.

The monthly volunteer newsletter will continue and quarterly recognition events for volunteers will be arranged. Pedal Power is also going ahead with the Investing in Volunteers Health Check to examine their practice and identify any gaps and receive a development plan.

Communication with volunteers:

- Enable volunteers to give feedback and suggestions - feedback box or day book
- Respond to the suggestions and feedback and show how this has been acted on
- Ensure volunteers have access to the information they need to perform their role
- Encourage staff to thank volunteers to help them feel valued
- Use newsletters to keep volunteers informed and to celebrate achievements
Volunteer reviews/training:

• Offer regular reviews (formal or informal)
• Respond to feedback and suggestions
• Offer feedback to volunteers
• Carry out a training audit to identify gaps
• Provide ongoing training for existing volunteers

Improving efficiency:

• Create a ‘to-do’ list and/or a ‘task reminder’ list
• Create new volunteer roles
• Give volunteers responsibility for ensuring certain tasks are completed
Focussing on outcomes and impact

The Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit was developed by the Institute of Volunteering Research (IVR) and is available to organisations that involve volunteers in their work. Using the toolkit can help organisations to demonstrate the difference that volunteering is making.

It can also be a useful part of the planning and development of a volunteering programme. It can also help organisations and groups to:

**Internally:**
- use feedback from those who benefit from your activities to improve the services you provide
- identify what works well and how you can better manage your volunteers
- provide feedback to volunteers on the difference and contribution they make
- better understand how volunteering makes a difference to your organisation
- provide evidence that can be used to get more support and funding for volunteering within your organisation

**Externally:**
- raise the profile of your organisation
- demonstrate to other organisations and the community what volunteers are achieving
- provide evidence to funders outlining the difference their contribution has made
- provide evidence to attract new funding into your organisation
- showcase the social and personal benefits of volunteering to attract new volunteers
- provide information for local agencies and policy makers on the role and importance of volunteering, to help to influence policy and legislation

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3 Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit. Institute of Volunteering Research 2010
Two of the organisations who were involved in initial green volunteering workshops decided to go ahead with a Volunteering Impact Assessment: RSPB’s Date with Nature project and Cardiff Pedal Power’s supported volunteering project. Full versions of these reports and copies of questionnaires used can be found here.

Showing volunteers and others the impact of green volunteering: RSPB Cymru volunteering impact assessment

**Background:**
RSPB Cymru speaks out for birds and wildlife, tackling the problems that threaten our environment. The RSPB is the largest wildlife conservation organisation in Europe with over one million members. Wildlife and the environment face many threats. Its work is focused on the species and habitats that are in the greatest danger.

Thousands of volunteers donate their time and talents to the RSPB every day. Volunteers are at the heart of what RSPB do and achieve – and without their help, our work would be greatly diminished.

They work in all areas and at all levels of the Society, including Council (our trustees) which is made up entirely of volunteers. The RSPB is task led in its work with volunteers — this means we only recruit volunteers when we have tasks for them to do and we aim to create clearly defined and meaningful roles for volunteers to take on.

It should be noted that the RSPB considers all its volunteers to be ‘green’ volunteers, whether they are maintaining habitats, completing surveys, delivering educational activities or helping in our catering facilities. All our volunteering activities contribute to the charitable objectives of the organisation – conservation of birds and nature.
The RSPB:

• recognises volunteering as a means of fulfilling its charitable and strategic objectives

• recruits volunteers on a task-led basis to match RSPB needs with volunteers’ skills, knowledge, experience and motivation

• recognises that, as a way of getting people and local communities committed to conservation, involving them in our work as volunteers is second to none

• appreciates volunteering is an act of participation that is itself important in developing awareness, commitment and understanding of biodiversity and promoting the RSPB’s work

• recognises that successful volunteer involvement takes account of individuals’ motivations, aspirations and needs

• acknowledges volunteering as of wider benefit to society and a key part of active citizenship

• respects volunteers’ views by both listening to and learning from what they have to say.

• distinguishes volunteering from employment, and puts its flexibility and informality to best effect by complementing the work of paid staff.
Reasons for this work

RSPB Cymru was approached by WCVA to take part in a piece of Welsh Government funded research looking at ‘Green Volunteering’. RSPB decided to undertake a Volunteering Impact Assessment as it would:

1) allow it to look at the impact of non-traditional volunteering activities

2) enable it to raise the profile of the varied nature of volunteering within the organisation

3) gain a broader understanding of volunteers’ experience and of the advantages gained by individuals and user groups through volunteering

The RSPB identified and prioritised which differences they wanted to assess and which groups to focus on. It agreed that the focus would be on—‘a Date with Nature’ (DWN) volunteers.

These have been in existence in one form or another since 2003 – under the then title ‘Aren’t Birds Brilliant’. These changed in 2009 to become a ‘Date with Nature’ and are a move away from how we traditionally interact with the public, in the sense that we highlight local nature and show it to the public rather than getting the public onto our reserves. This has enabled us to engage a new audience and show off such delights in Wales as the ospreys at Glaslyn, peregrines in Cardiff and red kites in mid Wales. With this came the need to recruit whole new swathes of volunteers – with slightly different skills. Whilst an interest in birds and nature is a bonus, it is not essential. So what is? The ability to engage with members of the public about the nature on their doorstep and the ability to ask for support for our work.

Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit

The Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit is a toolkit that has already been used extensively to assess the impact of their volunteers in organisations. The toolkit uses the framework of five types of ‘capital’ which may illustrate how volunteering might create capital or have capacity impacts on the volunteers. The five capitals are:

- **Physical capital** – tangible benefits.
- **Human capital** – personal impact on the volunteers and on staff or patients.
- **Economic capital** – impact of cost to the organisation, volunteers value for money.
- **Social capital** – increase participation and increase community networks.
- **Cultural capital** – appreciation of other cultures.
These capitals are examined with respect to the range of stakeholders – volunteers, the RSPB and its staff, the environment/beneficiary and the wider community. This is a useful framework which allows the development of measures of impact that are appropriate to the situation. The toolkit also contains suggested questionnaires and outlines for focus groups or other information gathering tools. These were adapted by the project team for use here. The questionnaires contain a number of ‘tick box’ questions, which are in a format that allows a scoring system to be used.

Volunteering within the RSPB is task led and ultimately undertaken to achieve our charitable objective of Saving Nature. Whilst there are other outcomes and impacts and volunteers are beneficiaries, our beneficiaries are nature with birds as a focus and an indicator. The impact matrix took a long time to complete and was at times difficult.

The community outputs and impact have not been a focus in this project – partly due to time constraints and other priorities – that is not too say that RSPB would not come back and work on this further in the future.
## Green volunteering in Wales: Building on good practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>What is green volunteering?</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Who are green volunteers?</th>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Overcoming barriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes and impacts</td>
<td>A ‘memorable experience’</td>
<td>Investing in Volunteers</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Sources of help</td>
<td>Further information</td>
<td>Background</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Physical Capital
- Goods and services received

### Economic Capital
- Benefits or costs with a financial value

### Human Capital
- Knowledge, skills and health of people

### Social Capital
- Cooperative relationships between people

### Cultural Capital
- Sense of one’s own and understanding of others identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th>Physical Capital</th>
<th>Economic Capital</th>
<th>Human Capital</th>
<th>Social Capital</th>
<th>Cultural Capital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Induction</td>
<td>Goods and services received</td>
<td>Benefits or costs with a financial value</td>
<td>Knowledge, skills and health of people</td>
<td>Cooperative relationships between people</td>
<td>Sense of one’s own and understanding of others identity</td>
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<td>Support</td>
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<td>Experience</td>
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<td>Health benefits of volunteering</td>
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<td>Meeting friends</td>
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<td>Community engagement</td>
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<td>Community spirit</td>
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<td>Team spirit</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Physical Capital
**Goods and services received**
- Equipment (from sponsors)
- Volunteer time
- Specialist volunteers

## Economic Capital
**Benefits or costs with a financial value**
- Money from recruitment
- Pin badge income
- Match funding
- Cost of training/staffing
- Membership
- Sales
- Training & set up costs
- Staff time
- Expenses
- Achieve more staff costs
- Donations

## Human Capital
**Knowledge, skills and health of people**
- Raising awareness
- A reason to get up and go
- Increases understanding of species
- Skilled workforce

## Social Capital
**Cooperative relationships between people**
- Creating partnerships
- Reach more people
- Engaging with new stake holders
- Working with new vols
- Community involvement/support
- Social inclusion
- People with new & fresh ideas
- Skilled workforce
- Working partnerships
- Funders/other charities

## Cultural Capital
**Sense of one's own and understanding of others identity**
- Diversity – widen the organisations perspectives
- Greater understandings
- How individuals can impact on nature
- Strengthen community
- Community links & diversity
- RSPB understanding communities needs

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### Organisation

### Contents
- Introduction
- What is green volunteering?
- Benefits
- Who are green volunteers?
- Barriers
- Overcoming barriers

### Outcomes and impacts
- A ‘memorable experience’
- Investing in Volunteers
- Conclusion
- Sources of help
- Further information
- Background

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### Green volunteering in Wales: Building on good practice

### Introduction
- A ‘memorable experience’

### What is green volunteering?

### Benefits
- Investing in Volunteers
- Conclusion

### Who are green volunteers?
- Sources of help
- Further information

### Barriers
- Overcoming barriers

### Overcoming barriers

### Conclusion
- Sources of help
- Further information

### Sources of help

### Further information

### Background
## Physical Capital
Goods and services received

- Birds protected
- Habitat protection
- General species protection & biodiversity nest/species protection
- Food cycle
- Protection habitat creating food for wildlife
- Monitoring activity

## Economic Capital
Benefits or costs with a financial value

- Money raised is reinvested in nature and local business & infrastructure
- Fledglings of birds
- Increasing bio diversity
- Saving species for the future
- Unrestricted donations biodiversity

## Human Capital
Knowledge, skills and health of people

- Health of species & environment
- More people aware of how to conserve nature
- Health of species nationally/global
- Red list protection
- Bird life partnership
- Awareness of species healthy population of birds/wildlife
- People involvement in species protection

## Social Capital
Cooperative relationships between people

- Relationship with partners carried forward to better protect nature
- Local council
- Religious organisations
- Other wildlife organisations
- Farmers
- Land owners
- Vol/org partnerships gives collective knowledge
- Knowledge used for benefits on global scale
- Education
- Think global hit local

## Cultural Capital
Sense of one’s own and understanding of others identity

- Increased awareness of nature & how to conserve
- Appreciation of local environment and needs
- Greater awareness so more nesting sites are made available
- Connections between small thing (e.g. DWN) and the bigger picture
- Cultural icon of a bird/species e.g. Sea eagles & mull
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Physical Capital</th>
<th>Economic Capital</th>
<th>Human Capital</th>
<th>Social Capital</th>
<th>Cultural Capital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raised profile events in local area</td>
<td>Goods and services received</td>
<td>Benefits or costs with a financial value</td>
<td>Knowledge, skills and health of people</td>
<td>Cooperative relationships between people</td>
<td>Sense of one’s own and understanding of others identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreting nature</td>
<td></td>
<td>More spending in local community</td>
<td>Connection to nature on their own patrol</td>
<td>Community pride on show to others</td>
<td>Greater sense of ownership &amp; connection &amp; nature &amp; rest of community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits of tourism on local economy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Increase skill based / wildlife knowledge</td>
<td>Social aspect of volunteering</td>
<td>Ownership of birds/ involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Footfall</td>
<td>Healthier community</td>
<td>Breaking down social barriers</td>
<td>Our birds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of training</td>
<td></td>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Less disaffected people</td>
<td>Involve excluded groups</td>
<td>Understanding neighbours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs of improvements to local infrastructure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Less petty crime/ vandalism</td>
<td></td>
<td>Involvement with kids/ adults/groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income to B&amp;Bs etc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Community Pride</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Volunteer surveys

Most DWN volunteers are seasonal as they are involved when birds are breeding as this is when they are most visible to the public. There are some exceptions to this – ie red kite feeding station in Bwlch Nant yr Arian. As a result and due to time and travel constraints – volunteers were given the questionnaires at the end of season thank you events in September 2011 with an explanation from their volunteer line managers as to their purpose. Over 5 out of 6 projects, 41 questionnaires were completed and the data was inputted and collated by a volunteer.

Staff have been involved in a mixture of focus groups and questionnaires depending on availability and timing. The focus groups were combined with work on our corporate strategy to ensure that time was utilised fully. In future the focus groups would focus specifically on the impact assessment and not combined with another topic as the volunteering impact was not discussed in enough detail.

Headlines from our Volunteer Surveys

Age range of volunteers – the largest proportion of volunteers are in the 55 – 64 age range (32%), and the 65 – 74 age range (29%); 17% of volunteers were aged 25 – 34, 7% 35 – 44 and 7% 45 – 54. Volunteers aged 24 and under and 75+ were both at a level of 3%.

Ethnicity – the vast majority of volunteers are white (98%).

Gender – 66% of volunteers are male; 32% female (2% did not answer this question).

Disability – 10% of volunteers consider themselves to be disabled; 88% do not; (2% did not answer this question).

Length of service – 10% of volunteers have volunteered for more than 10 years; 24% have volunteered for 6-10 years; 20% have volunteered for 1–2 years; 29% have volunteered for 3–5 years; 17% for less than a year.

Regularity of volunteering – Almost half of volunteers (49%) volunteer for 1 day per week or more; 38% volunteer one or two days per month; 13% volunteer a couple of times per year.

Recommend volunteering with RSPB – 95% of volunteers said that they would recommend volunteering with the RSPB.
## Benefits of volunteering – comments from surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team work and community</th>
<th>Meeting people, helping RSPB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making new friends</td>
<td>Social interaction, working in groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enormous sense of wellbeing</td>
<td>Social environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping to support a worthwhile project, knowledge, making friends</td>
<td>Interest – knowledge improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting like minded people</td>
<td>Enhanced CV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork, customer awareness, enjoyment</td>
<td>It improves your life, more nature, meeting people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of doing something worthwhile</td>
<td>Participating in something you believe in social contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship &amp; community spirit</td>
<td>Gaining knowledge, pass on skills, meeting new people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting the environment &amp; wildlife, supporting the local economy</td>
<td>Rewarding experience &amp; social contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safeguarding the environment, benefitting the local community</td>
<td>Usefully using time when retired, meeting people, helping the environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning new things, meeting new people</td>
<td>Networking, new skill acquisition, new environments to explore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in confidence, meeting new people</td>
<td>Friendship, teamwork, getting out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping nature, sense of involvement</td>
<td>Involvement and a sense of giving back something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking after the environment</td>
<td>Increased knowledge of wildlife and confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting new people, doing something positive</td>
<td>Enjoy working with wildlife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities, environmental awareness</td>
<td>Benefiting the environment &amp; nature/biodiversity, getting outdoors, keeping active, meeting people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of purpose, opportunity to learn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Support through good management – answers to this set of questions were reassuring. Volunteers are aware of what is needed of them, what support they can get from the RSPB, feel valued and well utilised.

Personal gain – personal development has stayed the same or increased since volunteering with RSPB, as well as skills and general health and well being. No responses to these questions were answered with a decreased or greatly decreased – there were 3 that thought it not relevant.

Out of pocket expenses – nearly a third saw this section as not relevant; slightly worrying is that some volunteers find themselves out of pocket or did not realise that they could claim expenses. This is a staff training issue as our expenses policy is clear and universal.

Employability/increased earning power – a surprising result – over half did not see this as relevant. And a further 5th neither agree nor disagree.

Social Capital – most volunteers felt that access to new contacts and networks, sense of trust in others and participation in local activities had stayed the same or increased since volunteering with RSPB. A large proportion of volunteers felt that sense of trust was not relevant or neither agreed or disagreed.

Cultural Identity – volunteers said their sense of being part of this community, willingness to get involved in other activities, interest in doing more volunteering and opportunities to take part in local campaigns had increased or stayed the same since volunteering. However volunteers (17) felt that taking part in political activities was not relevant. This is what we would expect as this is not a campaigning or advocacy role.
Results from staff surveys

Physical capital

Quantity of volunteer time – All staff questioned felt that volunteers significantly increase the organisation’s capacity; most staff disagreed that the organisation was over-reliant on volunteers; none of the staff felt they had enough volunteer time put into the organisation.

Quality of volunteer time – all staff agreed that volunteers bring added value to the work of the organisation. Half of the staff questioned agreed that volunteers provide a wide range of services but half disagreed or neither agreed or disagreed. 83% of staff felt that the quality of volunteers’ work could be improved.

Innovation from volunteers – 67% of staff agreed that volunteers enable RSPB to introduce and develop innovation; 33% of staff agreed that volunteers bring in fresh ideas but the remainder disagreed; the majority of staff felt that volunteers prefer to do things the way they always have.

Human Capital

Staff development – all staff agreed that volunteers helped make their job easier and that they enable staff to do work which they otherwise would not have time for. Only a small proportion felt that volunteers take up too much of their time and energy.

67% of staff agreed that volunteers contribute to their own awareness and thinking; 50% of staff felt that volunteers contributed to their own personal and professional development. Staff disagreed that volunteers distracted them from getting on with their own jobs.

Diversity of the organisations workforce – 67% of staff agreed that volunteers have a wide variety of backgrounds; 50% agreed that volunteers have a wide variety of ages; 83% agreed they are a good mix of men and women. 33% of staff agreed that volunteers encourages diversity in the paid workforce but 33% disagreed. 50% of staff felt volunteers are happy to work with a diverse group of people and 50% felt they are a homogenous group who prefer working with people similar to them.

Organisation’s development – 67% of staff agreed that volunteers bring good ideas into the organisation; all volunteers disagreed or neither agreed or disagreed that volunteers have too much influence over the way the organisation develops; 83% agreed that volunteers increase the sustainability of the organisation; 33% felt that volunteers keep the organisation in touch with the community and it’s needs; 16% agreed that volunteers manage and guide the organisation well through trustees and committees; 67% neither agreed or disagreed and 16% disagreed.
Economic capital

Value of the organisation’s work – all staff agreed volunteers are good value for money; 83% agreed that volunteers enabled the organisation to do work they would otherwise not be able to do; 83% of staff disagreed that volunteers are not cost effective; 83% of staff disagreed that it was a mistake to try and place an economic value on volunteers.

The income of the organisation – 83% of staff agreed that volunteers are a significant source of fundraising; 67% agreed that they are able to use volunteer time to match fund grant aid; 50% of staff disagreed that involving volunteers costs more than they represent in income (50% neither agreed or disagreed); 67% agreed that by involving volunteers they were able to attract grants from funders.

Creation of new jobs in the organisation – 67% of staff agreed that volunteers often go on to get paid work within the organisation – 33% disagreed; 16% of staff agreed that without volunteers it would be easier to make the case for funding for paid jobs – 33% neither agreed or disagreed and 33% disagreed. 50% of staff agreed that by helping to establish the need for a particular service, volunteers contribute to the creation of paid jobs within the organisation – 50% neither agreed or disagreed; 67% of staff disagreed that volunteers take the place of paid staff in the organisation – 33% agreed or strongly agreed.

Social Capital

Recruiting and retaining quality volunteers – 67% of staff agreed that volunteers work well together – 16% disagreed; 67% of staff agreed that volunteers have high morale – 16% disagreed; 83% of staff agreed that volunteers help to attract new people to volunteer in the organisation; 83% of staff agreed that volunteers are likely to stay with the organisation for a long time.

Recruiting and retaining quality paid staff – 83% of staff agreed that paid staff and volunteers complement each other well – 16% neither agreed or disagreed; 83% of staff agreed that volunteers have a positive effect on staff morale - 16% neither agreed or disagreed; 50% of staff disagreed that volunteers make it easier to attract high quality paid staff - 50% neither agreed or disagreed; 33% of staff agreed that volunteers make it more likely that staff will stay with the organisation - 33% neither agreed nor disagreed and 33% disagreed; 33% of staff agreed that some staff are not happy with the role and influence of volunteers – 16% strongly disagreed and 50% neither agreed nor disagreed.
Enhancing the organisation’s reputation – 83% of staff agreed that volunteers act as good ambassadors for the organisation; 83% of staff agreed that volunteers make the organisation and its work well-known locally; 67% of staff agreed that volunteers make the organisation known for the quality of our work – 16% neither agreed or disagreed and 16% strongly disagreed; 67% of staff disagreed that volunteers make the organisation look amateurish – 33% neither agreed or disagreed; 67% of staff agree that volunteers enhance the organisation’s reputation in the community – 16% disagree and 16% neither agree or disagree.

Creating a diverse organisational culture – 67% of staff disagree that volunteers help create a varied cultural atmosphere in the organisation – 33% agreed; 67% of staff disagreed that volunteers are representative of the cultural diversity of the community – 33% agreed; 67% of staff disagreed that the volunteers presence means different cultures and backgrounds are varied – 33% agreed; 33% of staff agreed that volunteers presence helps to remove any racism or cultural barriers from the organisation’s work – 50% strongly disagreed and 16% felt this was not relevant.

Providing culturally appropriate services for the community – 50% of staff agreed that volunteers have helped the organisation to be culturally sensitive to the local community – 50% disagreed or disagreed strongly; 67% of staff agreed that volunteers enable the organisation to provide services that take account of people’s different cultural needs and preferences – 16% disagreed and 16% neither agreed or disagreed; 50% of staff disagreed that there is a mismatch culturally between their volunteers and some of their users – 33% agreed and 16% neither agreed or disagreed.

Creating an open and inclusive organisational culture – 67% of staff agreed that volunteers have helped the organisation to create an atmosphere in which everyone is welcome; 67% of staff agreed that volunteers are treated as equal to paid staff – 16% disagreed and 16% neither agreed or disagreed; 50% of staff agreed that volunteers help the organisation to create an organisational culture where everyone is listened to – 16% disagreed and 33% neither agreed or disagreed; 33% of staff disagreed that volunteers have few opportunities through which to influence the development of the organisation – 67% agreed.
Recommendations for improvements

We are reassured by the results from our volunteer surveys that on the whole our management, practices and procedures are at a good standard; volunteers feel supported, valued and utilised. Added to this, staff working with and line managing volunteers feel that volunteers add value, increase the Society’s capacity to achieve our conservation objectives and enable us to complete work that we would otherwise not be able to.

Economically volunteers are seen to be good value for money and enable the society to do work we would not otherwise be able to afford. Furthermore volunteers are seen as a significant source of fundraising and able to use their time to match-fund grant income.

There is a slight concern over out of pocket expenses in that some volunteers find themselves out of pocket or did not realise that they could claim expenses. This is a staff training issue as our expenses policy is clear and universal. This will be dealt with through refreshing staff regarding our expenses policy and ensuring that all volunteers are communicated to existing and new volunteers.

There appears to be a small number of staff who feel that volunteers take up too much time and do not always enhance the organisation’s reputation. We will carry out some additional work to investigate this further and address any perceived or real problems. This will include highlighting best practice around recruitment and selection of volunteers – ensuring that we have the right volunteer, with the necessary skills assigned to the correct role. Furthermore we will offer guidance around volunteer motivations and addressing performance as required.

There is a clear need to explore the cultural diversity, or lack of it, within our volunteering pool and of how volunteers contribute to our cultural diversity. An objective of our Welsh volunteer strategy has been to “broaden the range of people involved in volunteering and community action”. We will continue to address this across Wales where appropriate.

Undertaking an impact assessment has reaffirmed our position and reassured us that the way we work with volunteers is working well and that involving volunteers in our work has a positive impact on all stakeholders involved. There are very few recommendations for improvements which is, in itself, reassuring. We are committed to maintaining our high standards and volunteers will remain at the heart of the Society. It has been a really helpful process and has enabled us to examine the way we involve volunteers.
Executive summary
This report presents the results of an assessment of the impact of Pedal Power Supported Volunteer scheme in Cardiff. It was conducted between September 2011 and February 2012.

Aims and scope of the report
The main aim of this evaluation was to provide an overview of the Supported Volunteer scheme, including an impact assessment of the scheme.

The aim of the Supported Volunteer scheme is:

“to offer volunteering opportunities to those that need support to volunteer, providing opportunities to work with disabled people, while developing the confidence and self-esteem of the volunteer. The volunteers will be encouraged to volunteer independently and to learn new skills”

The objectives of this study were:

• to evaluate whether the aims of the existing scheme are being met

• to demonstrate the value of the scheme to participating volunteers themselves and their families where relevant, to Pedal Power including paid staff and regular volunteers and to organisations referring volunteers to the scheme

• to highlight areas for improvement, where possible
Methodology

The evaluation used the Institute of Volunteering Research (IVR) Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit (VIAT) as a basis. This looks at impact as planned and unplanned, positive and negative from the perspective of the different stakeholders in a service or activity. It uses a framework of five capitals: physical, human, economic, social and cultural, and examines each in turn for each stakeholder group identified.

A VIAT matrix as applied to the Supported Volunteer programme was completed to identify anticipated impacts across the framework of different capitals. This enabled priorities to be set and suitable means of assessment to be identified. The VIAT tools were adapted as appropriate for the purpose of this particular evaluation.

Stakeholders assessed were the Supported Volunteers themselves, their families where appropriate, Pedal Power staff and regular volunteers and organisations that had referred people to the scheme. Information regarding Supported Volunteers was gathered from the records kept as part of ongoing monitoring of their progress, questionnaires done on completion of the 12 weeks and after 3 months of independent volunteering as well as interviews of two graduates of the scheme. For other groups information was gathered using amended VIAT survey questionnaires. The impact assessment was carried out by the Volunteer Support Officer.
## Green volunteering in Wales: Building on good practice

### Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>What is green volunteering?</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Who are green volunteers?</th>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Overcoming barriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes and impacts</td>
<td>A ‘memorable experience’</td>
<td>Investing in Volunteers</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Sources of help</td>
<td>Further information</td>
<td>Background</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Physical Capital

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goods and services received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to volunteer with support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to volunteer independently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the job training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taster sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 weeks; one-to-one support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-shirt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycle assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer social event</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Economic Capital

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits or costs with a financial value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Free cycle hire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel expenses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of free training provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased employment prospects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Human Capital

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge, skills and health of people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skills learnt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to try new things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferrable skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved mental health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved physical health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved fitness level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Social Capital

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cooperative relationships between people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friendships, contacts and networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of trust in others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking part in Pedal Power activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking part in other local activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cultural Capital

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of one’s own and understanding of others identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural identity – own and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture, leisure and environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Green volunteering in Wales: Building on good practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Capital</th>
<th>Economic Capital</th>
<th>Human Capital</th>
<th>Social Capital</th>
<th>Cultural Capital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goods and services received</td>
<td>Benefits or costs with a financial value</td>
<td>Knowledge, skills and health of people</td>
<td>Cooperative relationships between people</td>
<td>Sense of one’s own and understanding of others identity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Organisation
- Quantity and quality of supported volunteering work
- Added value to service by supported volunteers
- Supported volunteering impact on service innovation
- Impact of supported volunteers on:
  - Value of Pedal Power’s work
  - Income
  - New jobs
  - Increased employability of staff and volunteers
- Staff development
  - Impact of supported volunteers on duties
  - Increased awareness
  - Personal and professional development
  - Volunteer diversity
  - Organisation development
- Recruiting and retaining quality staff and volunteers
- Pedal Power reputation
- Diverse organisational culture
- Culturally appropriate services for users
- Open and inclusive organisational culture

#### Beneficiaries – service user
- Supported volunteers bring special qualities
- Increased employability through recognising potential
- Personal development
  - Confidence
  - Self-esteem
  - Motivation
  - Willingness to try new things
- Friendships
- Trust in Pedal Power
- Less isolated
- Pedal Power is a safe place
- Community belonging and participation
- Supported volunteers make volunteering seem like an option for self
- Sense of identity
  - Increased levels of cultural/leisure activities
### Green volunteering in Wales: Building on good practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>What is green volunteering?</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Who are green volunteers?</th>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Overcoming barriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes and impacts</td>
<td>A ‘memorable experience’</td>
<td>Investing in Volunteers</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Sources of help</td>
<td>Further information</td>
<td>Background</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Physical Capital
- **Goods and services received**
- Volunteer placements for clients: quantity and quality

#### Economic Capital
- **Benefits or costs with a financial value**
- Lack of other options for placements
- Placement are free
- Increased employability of clients

#### Human Capital
- **Knowledge, skills and health of people**
- Personal development for clients:
  - Confidence
  - Self-esteem
  - Motivation
  - Willingness to try new things
- Transferrable skills:
  - Communication
  - Social
  - Team work
  - Decision-making
  - Problem solving
  - Organisation
- Improved mental health
- Improved physical health
- Improved fitness level

#### Social Capital
- **Cooperative relationships between people**
- For clients:
  - Friendships
  - Contacts
  - Networks
  - Sense of trust in others
  - Taking part in Pedal Power activities
  - Taking part in other local activities

#### Cultural Capital
- **Sense of one’s own and understanding of others identity**
- For clients:
  - Cultural identity – own and others
  - Culture, leisure and environment
### Physical Capital
- Goods and services received
- Volunteer placement: reassurance that supported volunteering is safely/usefully occupied
  - Volunteer placement is freeing personal time for work/social/leisure activities
  - Travel expenses/costs
  - Value of free training/cycle hire if otherwise liable

### Economic Capital
- Benefits or costs with a financial value
- Investing in Volunteers
- Volunteer placement freeing personal time for work/social/leisure activities
  - Friends, contacts and networks
  - Sense of trust in others
  - Taking part in Pedal power activities
  - Taking part in other local activities

### Human Capital
- Knowledge, skills and health of people
- Personal development for self and supported volunteer
  - Confidence
  - Self-esteem
  - Motivation
  - Willingness to try new things
- Transferrable skills
  - Communication
  - Social
  - Team work
  - Decision-making
  - Problem solving
  - Organisation
- Improved mental health and behaviour (self and volunteer)
- Improved physical health (self and volunteer)
- Improved fitness level (self and volunteer)

### Social Capital
- Cooperative relationships between people
- Volunteer placement freeing personal time for work/social/leisure activities
  - Enhances community cohesion

### Cultural Capital
- Sense of one’s own and understanding of others identity
- Cultural identity – own and others
- Culture, leisure and environment
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>What is green volunteering?</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Who are green volunteers?</th>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Overcoming barriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes and impacts</td>
<td>A ‘memorable experience’</td>
<td>Investing in Volunteers</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Sources of help</td>
<td>Further information</td>
<td>Background</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Capital</th>
<th>Economic Capital</th>
<th>Human Capital</th>
<th>Social Capital</th>
<th>Cultural Capital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goods and services received</td>
<td>Benefits or costs with a financial value</td>
<td>Knowledge, skills and health of people</td>
<td>Cooperative relationships between people</td>
<td>Sense of one’s own and understanding of others identity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carers, supported housing</th>
<th>Volunteer placements for residents: quantity and quality</th>
<th>Lack of other options for placements</th>
<th>Personal development residents</th>
<th>For residents:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Placements are free</td>
<td>Increased employability of residents</td>
<td>• Confidence</td>
<td>• Friendships, contacts and networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freeing staff for other duties</td>
<td>Occupying staff for transporting accompanying resident</td>
<td>• Self-esteem</td>
<td>• Sense of trust in others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cost of transport</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Motivation</td>
<td>• Taking part in Pedal power activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Willingness to try new things</td>
<td>• Taking part in other local activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Transferrable skills</td>
<td>Seeing volunteering as an option for residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Communication</td>
<td>Increased belief in residents’ capabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Social</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Team work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Decision-making</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Problem solving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<th>For residents:</th>
<th>Cultural Capital</th>
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<td>Cultural identity – own and others</td>
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Findings

Supported Volunteers have benefited across all five areas of capital. In physical capital they have had access to supported training, recognition of their volunteering and half have attended Pedal Power events. For human capital, positive impacts on personal and skills development were strong, and general health has also benefited. In addition to free training, Supported Volunteers have benefited economically through increased confidence around paid work, access to references, free cycle hire and assessments. Significant economic costs for two volunteers are in taxi fares to get to Pedal Power. Social capital improvements are in having more friends or support and taking part in other activities. Cultural capital appears to be the least important and affected aspect of taking part.

The outcomes of the impact assessment for Pedal Power staff and regular volunteers were very similar. The majority of impacts across all capitals were felt to be positive to very positive with some neutrals but a few negative opinions expressed too. In particular the scheme was felt to contribute to human capital, cultural, diversity and equality issues and the organisations profile and reputation.

Problems identified by a small minority were associated primarily with Supported Volunteers who had stayed on after completing the 12 weeks who might take up time and energy and there were some concerns about maintaining standards. A third of the staff disagreed that Supported Volunteers helped Pedal Power to recruit and retain quality staff and volunteers, and one said that regular and Supported Volunteers did not work well together.

Five families completed questionnaires and reported noticing positive impacts on the volunteers and on direct positive impacts on themselves too. For the volunteers, the most striking benefits were for human capital personal and skills development and general health. There were some physical capital positives, but the economic benefit of improved employability was tempered for the two taxi paying volunteers by the cost to them of travel. All would recommend volunteering to others. For direct impacts there were clear social and human capital benefits from the family member(s) being freed to do other activities, improvements in general health and well-being and one strongly agreed that their own confidence or self-esteem had improved.
Organisations referring people to the scheme range from statutory service providers, supported employment, training or tenancy agencies and charities with full-time supported living houses. Each was asked about changes they had noticed in the volunteer and any direct impacts on the organisations themselves. Where relevant, all impacts reported on volunteers were positive to very positive, particularly in terms of personal development and social skills, but also health, support, participation in other activities and confidence around paid work. All organisations would recommend volunteering to others. Again where relevant, direct impacts on the organisations themselves were also positive to very positive, in particular in helping them meet their objectives or targets, that the volunteer was doing something constructive and also the positive effect the volunteering had had on staff’s belief in service user abilities. For one statutory service provider the fact that two of their service users had been able to continue as independent volunteers had allowed them to stop providing support staff to the volunteers. They were all very pleased with the scheme and the support given to the volunteers who had participated.

Conclusions

The aim of the Supported Volunteer scheme is:

“to offer volunteering opportunities to those that need support to volunteer, providing opportunities to work with disabled people, while developing the confidence and self-esteem of the volunteer. The volunteers will be encouraged to volunteer independently and to learn new skills”

The evidence gathered shows that this aim has been achieved very successfully in the main. The majority of the participants who have completed so far have stayed on with Pedal Power as independent volunteers and are making a highly valuable contribution to the organisation.

Management and support for the volunteers are critical to the scheme’s success. This applies to Supported Volunteers during the 12 weeks but also crucially, not just for them but for Pedal Power staff and regular volunteers as well as our Service Users, for those who remain with us after completing the 1:1 supported period. This is the principal area of concern highlighted by the impact assessment and will be addressed by increased levels of on-going support, careful scheduling of volunteers and improved communication with the volunteers new supervisors and regular volunteers.
Beyond the positive impacts for the volunteers themselves, in general for Pedal Power as an organisation, our staff and regular volunteers the impact is a positive one. This has been particularly true for our reputation and profile, and has allowed us to develop very good relationships with a number of organisations who have referred volunteers to us. It is important that where staff or regular volunteers have found things difficult that their concerns are addressed. An unexpected benefit has been to family members and this also has a positive impact on our reputation and profile.

The Supported Volunteer programme has happened over a period of staffing and structural change for Pedal Power, coinciding with clear efforts to improve the quality of our core services including volunteer training and management. Although not measured directly, the programme is felt to have had significant positive influence on this general process.

Future developments

Addressing the need for higher level of support for the volunteers who stay with Pedal Power after the initial 12 week period is paramount. This will be done by the Volunteer Support Officer spending more time on a regular basis with each of the volunteers and by consulting with the volunteer’s supervisors as to the nature of any problems. Attention needs to be paid to the scheduling of volunteers with extra needs and times when the bikeshed is very busy.

With limited capacity for volunteers with extra needs and the ending of the funding for the Volunteer Support Officer post in September this year, the number of volunteers requiring support that we can take on will fall. Funding is being sought for volunteer development that will include a similar support function as exists now, but it is anticipated that new intake will fall from the current four to five at a time to one or two.

We will also seek to find ways of promoting of our experience of the benefits of having volunteers with extra needs and how we have supported and managed them in order to encourage other organisations to provide further volunteer opportunities of this kind.
Green volunteering in Wales: Building on good practice

Making volunteering a memorable experience

Allan â Ni! Come Outside!
The Concept of ‘Memorable Experience’

Introduction
When people have a ‘memorable experience’ they talk about it, tell people about it, think about it, even dream about it, and are inspired and motivated to repeat the activity that gave them that memorable experience!
The value of ‘memorable experience’ to volunteering is its potential to motivate volunteers to keep volunteering, and to inspire them to motivate others to get involved.

Background
An approach to reconnect communities with their outdoors has been developed by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW). The approach is called Come Outside! It enables communities to gain the benefits that involvement in outdoor activities has to offer. Outdoor activities are recreation, play, volunteering, outdoor learning and skills development and active travel.
The Come Outside! approach suggests that 3 components need to be in place to reconnect communities with their outdoors:

- Voluntary Community and Outdoor sector organisations delivering through Local Come Outside teams
- Working with under-represented groups through community development principles
- Introducing people to the outdoors through memorable experiences

The concept of ‘memorable experience’

A volunteer can spend an afternoon with a group, busy on a range of tasks and have a perfectly pleasant time. If the memory of that afternoon is easily forgotten, as other activities fill the rest of their day, then the volunteer task has failed to make an impact on their life. Where then, does the motivation come from, to turn up for the next task, especially if the weather is cold and grey and there are other pressures on their time?

For committed volunteers, perhaps one of their motivations is that the experience of volunteering has an impact on their lives and becomes a valued part of it. They perhaps talk to friends and family about the tasks they have been doing, think about the people they worked alongside and it maybe even creeps into their dreams! Perhaps they turn up at the next volunteer task because they want to experience more.

The concept of ‘memorable experience’ is about making an impact on people’s lives, which is especially important when people try out an activity for the first time. The experience they have will have a huge influence on whether they choose to return and get more involved. This is important in developing volunteer groups.

We can’t make people have a memorable experience. However, it is possible to design and deliver activities which maximise the opportunity for participants to have a memorable experience.
Memorable experiences are nothing new!

Probably every volunteer leader will recognise elements of the memorable experience concept described below, and probably will have, intuitively or consciously, incorporated elements of the model into the tasks they have organised.

When we presented the following models to a group of experienced outdoor activity providers, they told us that whilst the models didn’t teach them many things they didn’t know, their value was that they put their knowledge, from years of experience, into words. They saw the value of the memorable experience concept as:

- a guide to training new activity leaders
- a valuable checklist for less-experienced activity leaders
- for all leaders, it helps explain why some activities aren’t working well and how to respond, to improve the activity to give the group a memorable experience!

Designing for memorable experiences

CCW has worked with a company called Manzoku Development Training to develop a model for designing outdoor activities for memorable experiences. It is adapted from a definition of personal growth published by psychiatrists Burton Giges and Edward Rosenfeld.

![Diagram of Upward, Outward, Inward, and Downward]

4 R Greenaway 1998 In Search of Respectable Adventure. Available at: http://reviewing.co.uk/outdoor/respectad.htm
The strength of this model is that it recognises that people are influenced by differing experiences. The model suggests that we need to incorporate all four elements, upward, downward, inward and outward, into the design of activities to maximise the chance that at least most of the participants will have a memorable experience that they want to repeat.

Probably most, if not all, green volunteering tasks include at least one or more of these elements, in the way they are planned. The model offers a way of identifying the elements which may have been overlooked, so the task motivates a wider range of people.

**Applying the model**

The following example illustrates how the model can be used in the planning of even a simple volunteer task like litter-picking. At its simplest level, a litter-picking volunteer task involves the volunteers being given litter-pickers, gloves and rubbish sacks; given a health and safety talk; they pick up litter; and then they go home.

Experienced volunteer leaders could easily improve on the following example and they will probably recognise some elements that they already plan into their activities!

As can be seen in this example, the more a volunteer leader knows about their group, the greater chance they have of designing a task that inspires and motivates them.

**Designing to incorporate the Upward element – to achieve full potential:**

At the start, in discussion with the group, you could work out what they think they can achieve, use your experience of what is possible and encourage them not to be over-ambitious (you want them to reach and if possible exceed their potential):

- how many bags do they think they will each fill up – you could record it on a badge they can wear (visible or hidden), or on an elastic band on their wrist, as a reminder of their potential
- record how many bags they think the whole group will fill
- record the size of area of ground the group thinks they will clear of rubbish – it’s easier to draw on a map or aerial photograph rather than measuring
- if the area to be cleared is already agreed, record how long the group thinks it will take to clear all the litter

At the end of the task, together, everyone counts the bags and marks the area covered on the map. People can choose to say whether they have filled as many bags as they thought they would. There can be prizes – extra biscuits for the most bags collected! Take photos which are later displayed or sent to the volunteers.
Bring some ‘before’ photos with you and pass them round at the end, so before the group leaves they can see the impact they’ve made and share the sense of achievement. Have a picnic at the end which the volunteer’s friends and family are invited to join, so the volunteers can share their achievement with them and maybe they will be inspired to join in next time!

The point is to recognise and celebrate the achievement of the group and of individuals, so there is the opportunity for some (maybe not all) of the group to feel they have reached, maybe exceeded their personal, and group, litter-picking potential!

**Designing to incorporate the Outward element – to make contact and encounter others:**

Create time during the task for people to talk to each other. Unless the group already knows each other, use simple ‘ice-breaker’ techniques which get strangers talking to each other. Introduce people to each other, encourage the volunteers to form small groups to litter-pick together, so no one is left working on their own (unless they obviously want to). At the end of the task, finish by encouraging people to talk about the task, something funny or ‘ughy’ that happened, something weird or curious that was picked up, etc – even better if it can be done over a hot/cold drink and a snack, or at the picnic with family and friends!

The point here is to enable people to get to know each other and to encourage everyone to end the task feeling like they are part of a group – as involved as they want to be and are comfortable being.

**Designing to incorporate the Downward element – to be grounded and connected:**

Create time during the task for volunteers to share their knowledge about the plants and wildlife around them or read-up before hand and have a few interesting ‘snippets’ of information to pass on to the group, as they are working. Over a break, encourage the group to chat about the impact of litter on wildlife and the difference their litter-picking will make to the habitat. Encourage volunteers to call out if they find any interesting plants or sign of wildlife, to share with the others. If children are involved they can be encouraged to collect (but not break-off/pull-up!) natural objects to show everyone or make into a natural sculpture.

The point is to help the volunteers to look beyond the litter and see the plants and wildlife around them, to appreciate the beauty of the area, especially when they have cleared it of litter.
Designing to incorporate the **Inward** element – to increase our self-awareness:

Encourage the volunteers to ‘stand back’ for a moment, think about what they are doing, where they are, who they are with, let it all sink in. You could have some cameras so individuals can wander off and take a few photos (at any point during the task) so they focus-in on images that mean something to them – send them the prints. Hand everyone a piece of paper, perhaps cut into a relevant shape, and encourage them to write a few words that captures how they feel about the task.

The point here is to enable the volunteers to reflect on what they have achieved, the impact they have made on the area, the people they’ve talked to and the things they’ve heard. A chance to take it all in, to form the memories, before they head home.

The ability to incorporate these 4 elements into the volunteer tasks, without it appearing contrived, rests with the skills of the volunteer leader and their knowledge of the group they are working with. It’s about creating opportunities which the volunteers can choose whether to engage with or not.

Delivering for memorable experiences

CCW has further developed this work by exploring how outdoor activities are delivered, to maximises the opportunity for participants to have a memorable experience.

Taking the work of the Czech psychologist, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (pronounced chicks-sent-me-highy!) and his study of happiness, creativity and the study of ‘flow’ we have adapted his work to produce the following model.

![Flow model diagram]

5 Reference: M Csikszentmihalyi 1997 *Finding Flow.*
The diagram suggests that people enter different ‘states of being’ depending on the balance between the challenge they are presented with and their abilities or skills (which includes social skills and self confidence, as well as practical skills and ability). Csikszentmihalyi suggest that a state of ‘flow’ is reached when the challenge and a person’s ability is perfectly matched. Flow is described as “a state of effortless concentration and enjoyment”.

The useful learning for volunteer leaders to take from this model is that:

- boredom and disinterest can develop in under-challenged participants
- over-challenged participants may become anxious and worried

Volunteers may not want to come to another volunteer task if their memory of the last one is of feeling bored or anxious. Also they are less likely to suggest to family or friends that they get involved!

Taking the litter-picking example above, the volunteer leader will be keeping a careful watch on individuals within the group. The leader will be looking out for individuals which are being over-challenged, perhaps by the weight of their rubbish sack, the constant bending required or lack of confidence about what they are doing, so they are becoming less intrigued by the challenge/task and becoming anxious. The leader will be keen to reduce the challenge for the individual by chatting to them to check how they are feeling and then perhaps swapping their full sack for an empty one, finding a less back-breaking job for them, suggesting they take a break or distracting them from the task for a while so they take a break without looking like they are slacking!

The leader will also be looking out for individuals who are under-challenged, perhaps by the repetitive nature of the task, so they are moving from a state of confidence/in control, towards boredom. The leader will want to talk to the individual and perhaps find other tasks they can get involved in, suggest they help out a less-able volunteer or talk about their interests and maybe recommend they join another, more challenging, volunteer task that is being organised.

By focussing on the type of experience participants are having during a volunteer task, leaders could be even more successful at encouraging volunteers to come along to the next task, and maybe to even bring their friends and family along!
Adding a memorable experience to a walk in the waterfalls areas of the Brecon Beacons National Park!

CCW and Manzoku Development Training are currently developing a Memorable Experience Training and Support Package to pass on this learning.

For more information contact:

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How do we know we have got it right?

**Investing in Volunteers** is the UK quality standard for volunteer management. If your organisation involves volunteers, working with the Investing in Volunteers standard will enable it to make the best use of this valuable people resource.

By working through the Investing in Volunteers process you can ensure you deliver the highest standard of volunteer management.

The Standard comprises nine indicators of volunteer management best practice, supported by 46 practices, based on four key areas of volunteer management:

- planning for volunteer involvement
- recruiting volunteers
- selecting and matching volunteers
- supporting and retaining volunteers

For more information on the IIV standard you can view the [Investing in Volunteers website](#).
The Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT), in Machynlleth, decided to opt for an Investing in Volunteers (iIv) ‘Health Check’ to benchmark the organisation’s practice against the UK Investing in Volunteers Standard.

CAT has successfully involved long term, residential volunteers for many years now. With additional short term funding they have recently sought to involve local people as volunteers, employing a volunteer co-ordinator to develop and support the new trial programme.

‘Funding is coming to an end and we will have to start making further funding applications. The Health Check was a timely opportunity for us to see if we are on the right track, and whether there is anything we need to change’, said Candy Bedworth, Volunteer Co-ordinator.

‘Our advisor was brilliant. She quickly picked up on what we were doing and pointed out where we were missing a few tricks. Her suggestions were entirely realistic and let us know how to develop if we want to achieve accreditation. It was great to have instant advice on some issues.’

‘This is the only external review we have had of the project and it was important to us to have outside eyes to look it.

It certainly gave us a good overview and, in conversation, it was reassuring to know how we compare with other organisations.’

Since undertaking the Health Check, CAT has begun to address the development recommendations as far as they are able. For example, more consistent feedback is given to team meetings and trustee meetings, there is now a regular newsletter and there are social events for volunteers. They are reviewing the requirements regarding criminal records checks and volunteer related policy documents have been reviewed.

‘We have made positive changes, and this has already made a big difference’, said Candy Bedworth. ‘Investing in Volunteers accreditation is certainly a long term goal, but this has been useful in its own right. I would definitely recommend it’.
Conclusion

Groups or organisations involving volunteers in their work can enhance the practice of volunteers and help to improve the quality of volunteers’ experiences. This publication has summarised some of the findings of organisations which used an action research approach to put practices into place to attempt to overcome some of the barriers that they faced.

WCVA works closely with the Wales network of volunteer centres which provide good practice guidance locally. You can find your local volunteer centre on the Volunteering Wales website. Volunteer centres in Wales can promote your volunteering opportunities to a wide range of people in the community.

If you register your opportunities with your local volunteer centre they will appear on www.volunteering-wales.net and will be promoted at various outreach events.

It will also become increasingly important to demonstrate the impact that volunteering has on volunteers, the organisation, beneficiaries, the environment and all other stakeholders. The Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit (VIAT) is aimed at anyone who involves volunteers in their organisation or coordinates their activities. This includes those who have broad managerial responsibilities for volunteers and those who run specific volunteering programmes in the government, private or voluntary and community sectors.

Investing in Volunteers is a UK quality standard for working with volunteers and is an invaluable tool for groups and organisations that want to ensure they deliver to a high standard.
Sources of help to overcome general issues

The good practice advice and resources in this toolkit make some suggestions and signposts to other points of information and support.

You can find generic information sheets on the WCVA website which give advice about issues such as developing a volunteer strategy, recruiting, selecting and inducting volunteers and how to retain volunteers. You will also find some model volunteer policies for example a volunteering policy, complaints policy and volunteer expenses policy.

There are also examples of policies, role descriptions and health and safety issues from organisations involving green volunteers. In the links and publications section you can also find some useful resources created by other organisations.

We would like to build a bank of good practice resources for organisations and groups to use. If you have an example of good practice in volunteering please send them to volunteering@wcva.org.uk and we will include them in the WCVA volunteering resources section of the website.
Links and publications

In this section you will find links to useful resources and publications:

‘All woolly hat and wellies: what non-volunteers can teach us about environmental volunteering’ – Nick Ockenden and Jennifer Russell, Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR), 2009
http://www.ivr.org.uk/events/Papers+and+Presentations#Papers

‘Environmental Volunteering in Communities 2011’ – Groundwork UK

http://www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/INFD-7GDHD3

‘Green Exercise – the natural health service’ – Briefing October 2008


‘The positive impact and behavioural change achieved through environmental volunteering with BTCV’ – British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
http://www2.btcv.org.uk/BehaviourChange.pdf

‘Volunteering in forests in Scotland and Wales’ – Social and economic research group (with Forestry Commission Scotland and Forestry Commission Wales)
http://www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/INFD-8G2BRY

‘Volunteering in the Natural Outdoors in the UK and Ireland – a literature review’ – Nick Ockenden, Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR), 2007
http://www.ivr.org.uk/evidence-bank/evidence-pages/Volunteering+in+the+Natural+Outdoors+in+the+UK+and+Ireland+a+literature+review
Under the ‘People and Environment’ section of the Welsh Government’s Environment Strategic Action Plan it is stated that ‘... we shall work with our partners to provide more opportunities for everyone in Wales to enjoy the environment, in ways that support wide participation’ and specifically to ‘aim to work with organisations to expand opportunities for, and engagement in, volunteering’.

In 2008 a preliminary assessment of green volunteering in Wales was undertaken by WCVA on behalf of the Welsh Government.

In 2011 funding was made available from the Welsh Government to WCVA to fund a part-time post to:

- build capacity of smaller organisations to increase the number of volunteers they can accommodate
- support and promote good practice in recruitment, management and training of volunteers
- promote green volunteering with the general public, particularly disadvantaged and excluded groups

This included an element of action research to look at the critical issues and current barriers to the increase of green volunteering in Wales, volunteer impact assessments and the production of this green volunteering publication.