Evaluation of the Communities and Nature Project(CAN) social and community objectives

Final Report: March 2014

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Acknowledgement

We would like to offer our thanks to all those interviewed as part of the evaluation who gave their time so willingly and answered our questions in such detail. This report would not have been possible without all those contributions.

List of acronyms used within the report

CAN	The Communities and Nature Project
CCW	Countryside Council for Wales (now part of NRW)
CO_2	Carbon dioxide
EA	Environment Agency (now part of NRW in Wales)
E4G	Environment for Growth
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GVA	Gross Value Added
N or n	Number of responses
NEET	Not in education, employment or training
NRW	Natural Resources Wales
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SNPA	Snowdonia National Park Authority
SROI	Social Return on Investment
WEFO	Wales European Funding Office
WTSWW	Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Communities and Nature (hereafter referred to as CAN) was a £14.5 million project part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) under the Environment for Growth (E4G) theme of the European Union's Convergence Programme for West Wales and the Valleys 2007 – 2013. The primary ambition of the project was to generate increased economic growth and sustainable jobs by capitalising on Wales' environmental qualities, particularly its landscape and wildlife; this was described as 'Aim A' of the project. However, a number of further aims and objectives relate to ensuring that the benefits of initiative activities are shared with disadvantaged groups (Aim B) and providing high quality local leisure opportunities and improving the attractiveness of each spatial plan area (Aim C).

The focus of this report is largely on Aim B which was included within the project because sustainable development was seen as requiring not just a flow of economic benefits but also a channelling of (at least some of) that flow to disadvantaged groups and local communities. Aim B effectively challenged the initiatives to state, not only what their contribution to GDP (or GVA) would be, but also where at least some of the benefits of that economic benefit would go.

Managed by Natural Resources Wales (NRW), CAN was implemented via three strands;

- Three initiatives delivered by NRW;
- A separate NRW initiative to improve access and habitat at river and still water fisheries, giving anglers more access to wild fishing (Wild Fishing Wales); and
- A suite of 25 initiatives managed by other organisations and delivering various facilities and footpaths for visitors seeking to enjoy the natural environment.

A wide range of activities have been funded including:

- Building and improving facilities at sites including exhibition centres, car-parks, toilets, shops and tea-rooms;
- Development and installation of interpretation materials;
- Building and improvement of paths;
- Provision of way markings on paths;
- Improving cycle routes and multi-use routes; and
- Marketing of sites and activities.

In financial terms, they range from the investment of:

- £900,000 on improvements to the recreational infrastructure at Newborough Forest on Anglesey including access to the beach, a fully accessible car-park, improved pathways through the forest and interpretation; to
- £80,000 on enhancing the infrastructure, interpretation and information available to visitors to the North Swansea areas of Gorseinon, Loughor and Mawr.

This is the final report of an evaluation of the CAN project focused on the activities undertaken and the extent to which the social and community aims of the project have been achieved[1] (primarily Aim B of the project). The research undertaken has included:

- A review of the business plans and tenders for the initiatives that have been funded;
- Interviews with the delivery agents delivering the initiatives (in 2012 and 2014);
- Visits to a number of the initiatives to observe the works and to speak to delivery agent staff, volunteers and participants (in 2013 and 2014); and
- Telephone interviews with a sample of participants, volunteers and representatives of the local community (in 2014).

The following is a summary of the key points from each chapter within the report:

Creating better connections to sites and reducing CO₂ emissions

- When delivery agents / initiatives were asked to describe how their initiative had addressed the objective of better connecting natural heritage sites and reserves to local communities and tourist or visitor 'honey-pots', the most common response was that initiatives had created or improved links between sites and local communities via the physical works that had been undertaken (enabling access and so on).
- The interviews did not identify a substantial number of suggestions in terms of operational strategies to promote pro-environmental behaviour and reduce the level of CO_2 emission associated with the leisure activity. A common theme in the discussion was however that reducing CO_2 was effectively built into the initiatives being delivered. For example, many of the projects were to develop or improve walking facilities or cycling paths; one of the 'by-products' of this could be that visitors use their cars less. The 'strategy' was therefore to fund CAN type initiatives.

Engaging with disadvantaged groups

- There was no common understanding of the term 'disadvantaged groups' and conceptualisation varied between initiatives / delivery agents.
- A wide range of groups had been 'targeted' by the initiatives with the unemployed being the most common. In some instances however there had been no specific targeting and a few initiatives had 'abandoned' any ambitions to engage with disadvantaged groups due to the difficulties of doing so[2].
- Alongside those who identified specific groups which they had 'targeted', a common approach was to focus on targeting places (generally areas of multiple disadvantage) rather than groups.
- The evaluation found that, broadly, four approaches to engagement have been employed by initiatives, each of which have both strengths and weaknesses:
    a) Engagement via other projects / provision;
    b) Engagement directly by the delivery agent utilising *existing* structures;
    c) Engagement directly by the delivery agent utilising *new* structures; and
    d) Re-active approach whereby the initiative 'waits' for disadvantaged groups to engage with them.

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[1] It should be noted that a separate evaluation of the economic impact of the CAN project (as part of the Environment for Growth Programme) is being undertaken by Cardiff University. Further information about that evaluation is available here: http://wales.gov.uk/topics/tourism/developmentl1/e4g/?lang=en

[2] It is important to stress that this does not mean that they had abandoned Aim B completely, only their ambition to engage with / target specific disadvantaged groups.

- The methods used were however not mutually exclusive with most initiatives using a range of different methods.
- The activities and interventions offered to disadvantaged groups by CAN initiatives cover a range of needs and are perceived to have generated a range of different benefits for the participants. Primarily, what was often described as 'soft' benefits, most notably confidence building were identified with initiatives also identifying that this would subsequently lead to participants and volunteers achieving 'hard' outcomes such as accredited training later down the line.

Engaging with volunteers and local communities

- CAN initiative had a clear commitment to engagement with volunteers and the local community.
- The degree of community engagement and approach taken however seemed to depend on three factors:
    a) The progress made by the initiative (don't engage too soon!);
    b) The location of the initiative; and
    c) The extent of the delivery agent's existing ties with the community / volunteers.
- Methods used to engage with the local community / volunteers included gaining access to the community via community councils or other local interest groups, events & open days, through local schools, advertising & marketing, the use of social media and structured consultation processes.
- The staff of a number of delivery agents highlighted the fact that the community engagement process had proved to be more difficult or challenging than they had anticipated.
- The extent of the benefit of community engagement being identified by the delivery agent seemed to depend on the extent to which community engagement was integrated into the delivery of the initiative. In many instances, the initiatives would not have been able to operate effectively had they not been able to engage with the local community. In others, it was not essential to the work that would be undertaken.
- The interviews with volunteers suggest a wide range of benefits as a result of being involved with an initiative including the development of new skills and social benefits such as meeting with new people and improved personal social skills (e.g. confidence). In some instances, interviewees also reported that they had become more aware of the local environment and countryside due to their involvement with the initiative.

Engaging with local businesses

- Engaging with local business should be an important mechanism for maximising the economic benefit of the investment that has been made in CAN initiatives. The process of engaging with local businesses is however generally underdeveloped when compared to the approach being taken to engage with disadvantaged groups, local communities and volunteers.
- Approaches used to engage with local businesses included local sourcing of supplies and services, engagement with on-site businesses and shared advertising & marketing.
- The most effective method for engaging with businesses identified most frequently was to "get out there and speak to them".

The impact of CAN on 'delivery agents'

- A clear divergence emerged between respondents from larger delivery agents (i.e. organisations) such as local authorities and respondents from smaller organisations such as local third sector organisations. Broadly, there was a greater perceived impact (positive and negative) on smaller organisations than there was on larger delivery bodies
- Positive impacts identified included: (1) the opportunity to build on and enhance the work of delivery agents and their previous activities; and (2) developing organisational experience, confidence and capacity.
- Negative impacts were identified much less often during interviews and were primarily seen as outweighed by positive impacts by the respondents. The main negative impact identified was however the administrative burden of managing and delivering a CAN initiative.

Conclusion

The purpose of this evaluation was to explore how the initiatives funded by the CAN project were achieving the social and community objectives of the project; aims 'Aim B' and 'Aim C' of the project. The first thing to note is that, for the majority of initiatives, it is apparent that these objectives have been lower on their list of priorities than the principle aim of the CAN project – Aim A – which was to maximise the environmentally-sustainable economic value of natural capital through increasing the volume, length and value of visits to the countryside. The priority of most initiatives has been to complete the works required in order to allow visitors to access the resource in question. We could not be critical of the initiatives in this respect as that was indeed the primary purpose of the project. Taking the above into account, the success of the initiatives in terms of achieving the social and community objectives had largely been dictated by how much priority they have given to them.

A range of approaches to achieving the social and community objectives have been employed some of which can be accounted for in the differing nature and scope of the projects. A number of initiatives are specifically built around providing benefits for disadvantaged groups and are run by, or in conjunction with, organisations with vast experience and knowledge of working with target individuals. This is in contrast to other initiatives where engaging disadvantaged groups is less ingrained and provides less of a focus in the overall strategy.

The strongest approaches, those which it can be reasonably considered have the best chance of achieving the social and community benefits, include the following elements:

- A clear targeting of one or more disadvantaged group; and
- A coherent mechanism for engaging target individuals.

Whilst some evidence of the benefit to participants who have been engaged by CAN initiatives is set out within this report, that evidence can only be considered as examples of what has been achieved; the case study approach means that the evidence is not substantial enough to be able to clearly demonstrate what has been achieved by the CAN project as a whole in respect to engaging with disadvantaged groups.

As with approaches to disadvantaged groups, the approaches to community engagement were generally well developed. Most commonly, initiatives incorporated a range of approaches to community engagement in their overall strategy. This is an important point as different approaches reach different sections of the community and have different 'strengths and weaknesses'. Whilst the degree of engagement depended largely on the nature of the projects themselves, some initiatives saw community engagement as linked to, or an extension of, their work with disadvantaged groups. This approach allows these initiatives to extend the benefits of their community engagement beyond those groups and individuals who are most likely to become involved with the initiatives anyway, simply through being already active/ involved in their community.

Business engagement was not as high a priority for initiatives and commonly seen as not directly relevant and there is clearly more scope for integrating local businesses into the community engagement strategy, an approach which would help drive community engagement itself (i.e. achieving community engagement through local businesses) and also increase the economic benefit generated within the local economy.

In terms of impact on delivery organisations, the split between larger and smaller organisations is to be expected, with the reported impacts (whether positive or negative) being greater on smaller organisations. What is important is the support which has been provided by CCW / NRW to mitigate these as much as possible, and the notion that smaller delivery organisations should be targeted for support to ensure as little negative impact as possible. Having noted these caveats, it is also important to stress that the positive impacts on smaller organisations have been key ones. Areas such as continuity of provision and the retention of staff are key for smaller organisations like these.

In conclusion, the ambition to encourage initiatives of this nature to generate additional socio-economic benefits in their area, alongside the more direct economic benefit of attracting additional tourists, is a very valid one. Indeed with the onset of continuing cuts in public sector budgets, the case for projects and initiatives that generate multiple benefits becomes even greater. It is important to stress that some of the findings of this evaluation should not be interpreted as a suggestion that the socio-economic aspect of the CAN project has been a failure. There are some outstanding examples where initiatives have been particularly successful in this respect, though better evidence is required in order to assess how successful CAN *as a whole* has achieved those multiple benefits.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the evaluation. A number are directly relevant to the CAN projects itself whilst others apply to the programme funding CAN.

1. The rationale for encouraging projects to generate multiple benefits – in the case of CAN attracting visitors but also generating a local socio-community benefit via Aim B - is clear, especially at a time when the public resource available to implement projects is scarce. In light of the success of CAN projects in this respect, it is recommended that future economic development projects (a) explore the potential to become 'multi-benefit investments', and (b) have a focus on creating opportunities for local disadvantaged groups. However, finding a balance between the need to generate those socio-community benefits and the more traditional economic benefits is important. The potential to allow, at a programme level, for an increase in the priority given to achieving social and community objectives should be explored, for example, including within the project a specific round of funding / procurement for initiatives that would have social and community objectives as their primary, rather than secondary, purpose. We recognise that this may be complex because of the constraints of overlapping ERDF and ESF activities but would argue that it should, nevertheless, be explored due to the benefit it is likely to lead to.

2. There should be greater emphasis on monitoring and recording the implementation of social and community activities within any future projects of a similar nature to CAN. This should include the introduction of a small number of indicators that can be recorded to demonstrate the activities being undertaken and which provides greater evidence to any evaluation of those activities (see appendix 4) and exploring the potential to use SROI as a method (see appendix 3). There should also be a better method for ensuring that the contact details of participants and volunteers are recorded and provided to evaluators so that they can be invited to participate in research to assess the impact of the interventions (see appendix 5).

3. The potential to provide funded initiatives with greater guidance and training on how to engage with participants, volunteers, host communities and businesses should be explored. The potential to employ or designate a member of the CAN / central project team (or alternatively to contract with a third party to provide the service) to support and advise projects on issues relating to engaging with participants, volunteers, host communities and businesses should also be considered.

4. Building on the previous recommendation, in response to the finding that some initiatives have not been able to engage with disadvantaged groups and the local community due to the limited resource available within their organisation, the potential to allow initiatives to jointly employ or commission staff / contractors to provide that service should be explored as should the potential to support such activities from the 'centre' (i.e. by NRW) (i.e. recommendation 3)

5. Opportunities for developing more effective working relationships between CAN type projects / initiatives in the future and other projects and schemes working / engaging with disadvantaged groups should be explored. If such a relationship existed, relationships between those projects/schemes and CAN initiatives could then be 'facilitated' from the centre rather than each individual initiative having to develop their own relationships. Again, we recognise that this may be complex because of the constraints of overlapping ERDF and ESF activities but would argue that it should, nevertheless, be explored due to the benefit it is likely to lead to.

6. With a view to maximising the benefit of the investment being made within the local economy, any future projects of a similar nature to CAN should have a clearer requirement to engage with local businesses and explore opportunities for those businesses / local people generally to 'exploit' the business opportunities being created.

7. Further support should be provided to help initiatives / delivery agents to increase their engagement with local businesses. Possible options include the introduction of an award for business engagement similar to the community engagement award available within the current project. In line with recommendation 8, the potential for a specific round of funding for initiatives that engage with local businesses / help them to 'exploit' the economic potential of the local environment and countryside should also be explored.

8. The potential for future projects of a similar nature to CAN to be more spatially targeted towards the most deprived areas in Wales should be explored. For example, tenders or applications for CAN funding located in areas of high deprivation could be encouraged within the procurement / application process.

9. Additional support should be targeted to smaller 'delivery agent' organisations to reflect the fact that the impact of delivering a CAN initiative is greater at that level. The potential to introduce an 'introductory' version of CAN ("CAN light") specifically targeted at small scale projects and organisations / delivery agents should also be explored. This version / element of the project would, due to the smaller amounts of funding involved, be subject to a simpler application and monitoring process designed to minimise the administrative burden on smaller organisations and encourage them to become involved.

10. Consideration should be given to providing *on-going* support to initiatives funded by CAN (i.e. beyond the end of the current project) in order to help them to maintain and further develop their engagement with the local community and disadvantaged groups especially where the works (e.g. creating a path) has only recently been completed. This will be important with a view to maximising the social and community benefit / impact of the investment that has been made via the CAN project.

11. The potential to include, as part of any future projects of a similar nature to CAN, the provision of funding to support *existing* sites / initiatives to undertake volunteers / community / disadvantaged group engagement at sites (i.e. *not just new sites or those that need to be developed*) should be considered.

12. Due to the nature of the initiatives and the work undertaken, the true impact of the CAN initiatives on the local community is unlikely to become apparent for a number of years. A sample of projects should therefore be selected and supported to monitor their impact on the local community on an on-going basis with a view to providing evidence that could explore in detail the true impact of this type of CAN funded initiatives.

1. Introduction

This is final report of an evaluation of the Communities and Nature project (hereafter referred to as CAN). Part-funded by the European Union and managed by Natural Resources Wales (NRW), CAN's underlying ambition was to increase sustainable economic benefits and create jobs by using Wales' natural environment. With a view to promoting 'sustainable' economic development, the project however also, via what was called Aim B, aimed to foster links with associated communities and provide opportunities for disadvantaged groups to be involved in initiatives, through employment, on the job learning and volunteering. This evaluation focused on the activities undertaken and the extent to which those social and community aims have been achieved[3].

This is the fourth and final report of the evaluation, commissioned in September 2010 and undertaken over four phases alongside the implementation of the project so that findings could feed into its on-going delivery[4]:

- In July 2011, the evaluation team produced the framework that provided the structure for the evaluation (Phase 1). For this phase, informal interviews and discussion were undertaken with a wide range of stakeholders who will be involved in the implementation of the CAN project and the initiatives. The research tools for use in the later stages of the evaluation were also piloted during this phase via visits to three initiatives funded.

- The aim of Phase 2 was to gain an understanding of how initiatives were seeking to address the social and community objectives. As such, Report 2 (finalised in September 2012) summarises the approaches initiatives were or had already undertaken. For this phase, a review of the business plans for all CAN initiatives was undertaken alongside 23 interviews with key staff for the initiatives.

- Completed in October 2013, Phase 3 involved the development of five in-depth case studies of initiatives exploring different perspectives and approaches to addressing the social and community objectives and the progress made to date. For each initiative, a series of stakeholders were identified and interviewed in-depth. These included participants/ volunteers, project managers, project delivery staff and external stakeholders.

This final report concludes Phase 4 of the evaluation by drawing together the findings of all previous reports as well as the findings of a final round of fieldwork which focused on capturing what the achievements of projects were in respect of the social and community objectives and lessons learnt, including:

- Interviews with those responsible for delivering the initiatives funded by CAN (24 in total);
- Interviews with volunteers, participants, local businesses and / or other representatives of the community where the initiatives is located (31 in total); and
- Visits to the location of three initiatives to meet with and interview staff, participants and volunteers.

The fieldwork for the final report was undertaken during February and March 2014.

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[3] It should be noted that a separate evaluation of the economic impact of the CAN project (as part of the Environment for Growth Programme) is being undertaken by Cardiff University. Further information about that evaluation is available here: http://wales.gov.uk/topics/tourism/developmentl1/e4g/?lang=en

[4] An outline of the contents of previous reports can be found in Appendix 2.

A case study approach has been taken in order to explore the benefit generated by the initiatives. This includes examples of the activities and work undertaken by initiatives as well as the experiences of individuals and groups who have participated. This provides an insight into what the initiatives in question have achieved although the relatively small number of interviews undertaken means that the findings cannot be scaled up to a project level.

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 provides an overview of the CAN project as well as the initiatives that have been funded;
- Chapter 3 discusses how the initiatives have sought to achieve the objective of creating links between natural heritage sites and reserves to local communities and tourist 'hot-spots';
- Chapter 4 considers the actions taken by the initiatives to engage with participants from disadvantaged groups;
- Chapter 5 discussed how initiatives have been engaging with volunteers and the local community;
- Chapter 6 reviews how projects have engaged with local businesses;
- Chapter 7 considers the impact, both positive and negative of delivering a CAN initiative on the delivery agents; and
- Finally, Chapter 8 sets out the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation.

Additional information has been provided as appendices to the report including:

- A summary of each of the initiatives that have been funded (Appendix 1); and
- A discussion about the social return on investment (SROI) approach could be used to demonstrate the value of CAN initiatives (Appendix 3).

The evaluation was undertaken by evaluation and social research specialists Wavehill[5].

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[5] Further information about Wavehill can be found here: www.wavehill.com

2. An overview of the project and the initiatives funded

Key points

- CAN is one of six strategic projects funded to deliver the 'Environment for Growth' priority and theme of the European Union's Convergence Programme in West Wales and the Valleys 2007 – 2013.
- The primary ambition of the £14.5 million project was to generate increased economic growth and sustainable jobs by capitalising on Wales' environmental qualities, particularly its landscape and wildlife (Aim A).
- However, a number of aims and objectives relate to ensuring that the benefits of initiative activities are shared with disadvantaged groups (Aim B) and providing high quality local leisure opportunities and improving the attractiveness of each spatial plan area (Aim C).
- CAN was implemented via three strands; (i) three initiatives delivered by Natural Resources Wales; (ii) a separate NRW initiative to improve access and habitat at river and still water fisheries, giving anglers more access to wild fishing (Wild Fishing Wales); and (iii) a suite of 25 initiatives managed by other organisations and delivering various facilities and footpaths for visitors seeking to enjoy the natural environment.
- Summary information about the individual initiatives funded can be found in Appendix 1.

2.1. Introduction

CAN was a £14.5 million project part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) under the Environment for Growth (E4G) theme of the European Union's Convergence Programme for West Wales and the Valleys 2007 – 2013[6]. CAN is one of several strategic projects operating under Priority 4 Theme 3 'Environment for Growth' of the Convergence Programme:

- *Priority 4* - Creating an Attractive Business Environment: This Priority aims to promote sustainable business growth and new business opportunities in relation to future environmental challenges and opportunities.

- *Theme 3* - Environment for Growth: This Theme aims to realise the economic potential of the natural environment by (a) promoting the enhancement and protection of the natural, built and heritage environment; and (b) increasing the economic potential of the environment.

CAN is a strategic project covering the whole of the Convergence Area (the yellow areas as shown by Map 1 on the following page) with the exception of the Valleys Regional Park[7].

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[6] Further details of the Programme are available here: http://wales.gov.uk/topics/tourism/developmentl1/e4g/?lang=en
[7] The *Wild Fishing Wales* element of the project is active in that area although the other elements of the project are not.

Map 2.1: Map of the Convergence Area in Wales (shaded yellow)
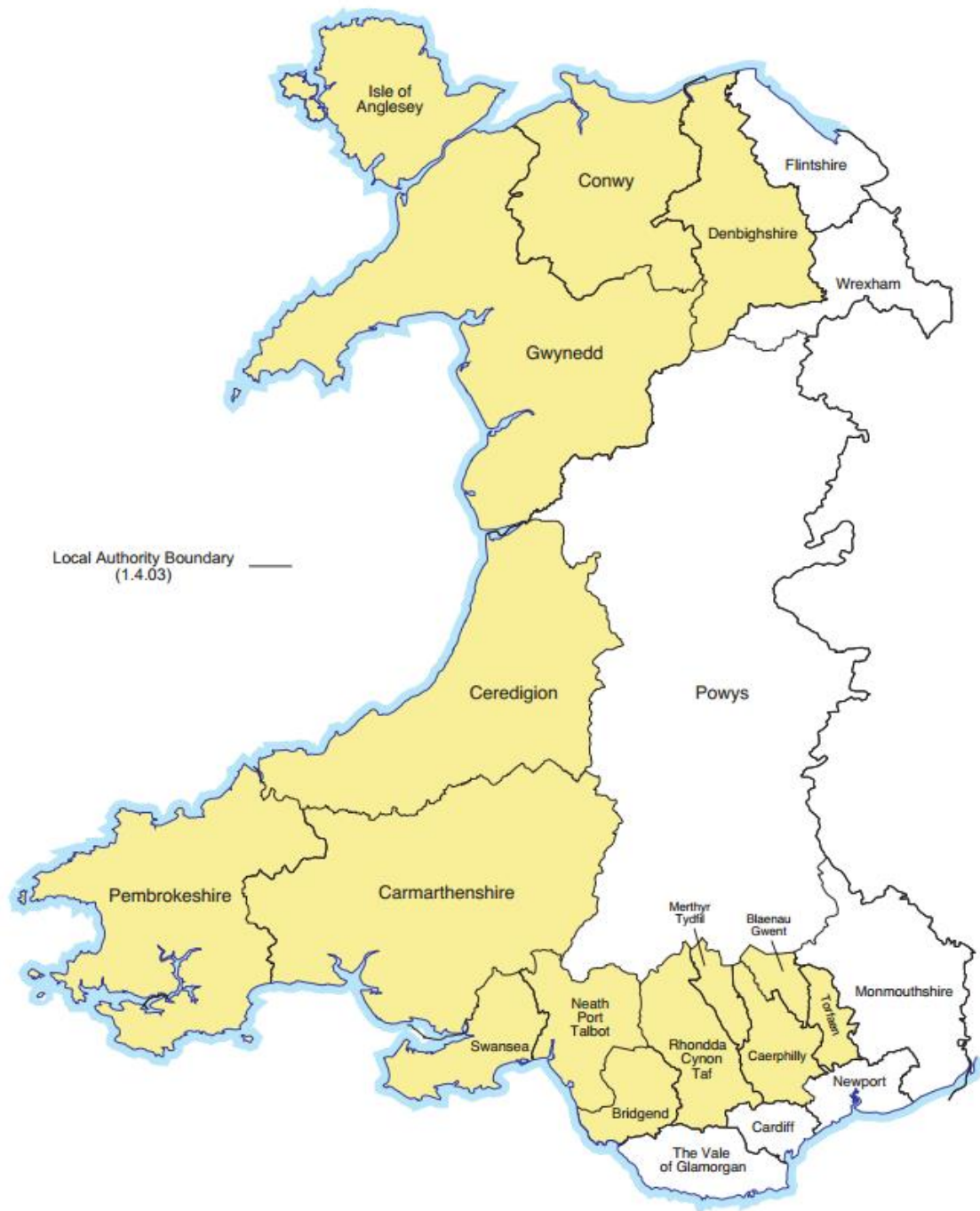
Source: WEFO

2.2.   Ambition, aims & objectives

The underlying ambition of the CAN project was:

To generate increased economic growth and sustainable jobs by capitalising on Wales' environmental qualities, particularly its landscape and wildlife.

The aims and objectives of the project were as follows:

Aim A - To maximise the environmentally-sustainable economic value of natural capital through increasing the volume, length and value of visits to the countryside.

- Objective 1a: To increase the volume, length and value of leisure visits by enhancing and improving current and new natural sites and reserves.
- Objective 1b: The creation of permanent jobs through the development of infrastructure to or in these nature reserves and green sites.
- Objective 1c: The creation of enterprises through the development of infrastructure to or in these nature reserves and green sites.
- Objective 2: To develop and launch a methodology to assess, and operational strategies to reduce, the negative environmental impact per unit of visitor economic value added.

Aim B - To ensure that the benefits of initiative activities are shared with disadvantaged groups through employment, unaccredited on-the-job training and volunteering opportunities.

- Objective 3: To use activities involved with improving the natural environment to provide employment, unaccredited on-the-job training, work experience or volunteering opportunities for those economically inactive due to health problems.
- Objective 4: To use activities involved with improving the natural environment to provide employment, unaccredited on-the-job training, work experience or volunteering opportunities for those who need to improve their skills.
- Objective 5: To use activities involved with improving the natural environment to provide employment, unaccredited on-the-job training, work experience or volunteering opportunities for those who are unemployed.

Aim C - To enhance sustainable development in Wales by providing high quality local leisure opportunities and improving the attractiveness of each spatial plan area.

- Objective 6: To better connect natural heritage sites and reserves to local communities and tourist or visitor 'honey-pots' by physical or intellectual linkages and/or the removal of cultural, psychological or other barriers.
- Objective 7: To develop a methodology to assess, and operational strategies to reduce, the level of CO_2 emissions associated with the leisure activity of Welsh residents.

As noted in the introduction, the aim of the evaluation was to measure the impact of CAN interventions on the following stakeholders, covering Objectives 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the project:

- Volunteers - someone who contributes to the initiative by, for example, providing their time or skills;
- Participants - someone who benefits from the initiative by, for example, gaining new skills;
- Delivery agents; and
- The host community of a CAN initiative.

Aim B was included within the project because sustainable development was seen as requiring not just a flow of economic benefits but also a channelling of (at least some of) that flow to disadvantaged groups and local communities. Aim B effectively challenged the initiatives to state, not only what their contribution to GDP (or GVA) would be, but also where the benefits of that economic benefit would go.

The CAN Business Plan states that:

A critical element of true sustainability relates to the capacity of individuals, organisations and, crucially, communities to take a strategic approach to planning and managing their environments. Whether it is in terms of enabling individuals to gain new practical skills and attitudes, engaging communities, or helping individual CAN delivery agents develop their proposals, there will be a clear focus on improving the analytical and strategic capacities of all involved. Only in this way can the legacy aspirations of CAN be achieved sustainably (p. 6).

The Business Plan also emphasises that:

…CAN is a relatively unusual bid. It simultaneously seeks to improve the demand and supply side of the visitor economy in Wales, all centred around a strong single countryside theme. Thus, CAN will increase site-visitor expenditure in the Convergence area of Wales and localise (as far as is practicable) the welfare benefits of the resulting income by enabling currently economically excluded communities and people to interact with the visitor economy.

2.3. Implementation

CAN was implemented via three main strands:

a) Initiatives that CCW (now NRW) delivered itself (with a total value of approximately £1.3m);
b) The Wild Fishing Wales initiative delivered by Environment Agency Wales (now within NRW) (with a total value of approx. £1.6m); and
c) A programme of procured initiatives implemented by delivery agents[8].

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[8] A delivery agent is an organisation that has conceived, planned and executed a CAN funded initiative.

The 'procured initiatives' involved tenders and business plans to deliver CAN initiatives in response to notices placed on Sell2Wales[9]. These initiatives were procured via four 'rounds': Round 1: small scale activities; Round 2: connections and footpaths; and Rounds 3 and 4: visitor facilities and wildlife attractions.

The CAN Selection Panel, when evaluating these external initiatives, also scored them for the manner in which they proposed to address Aim B. The table below gives the specific criteria on which the business plans were judged:

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[9] An information source and procurement portal set up by the Welsh Government for public sector contracts. http://www.sell2wales.gov.uk/Default.aspx

		Individual Weighting	Does not meet criteria Score 0-1	Meets criteria Score 2-3	More than meets criteria Score 4-5
**AIM B – To ensure that the benefits of project activities are shared with disadvantaged groups through employment, training and volunteering opportunities (10%)**
1	There is a clear plan for engaging target disadvantaged groups	20%	There is no clear plan for engaging with disadvantaged groups, just the assumption that some will be involved in the project	There is a clear plan for engaging with particular disadvantaged groups; more than one type of opportunity for disadvantaged groups identified (volunteering, coaching employment)	As well as a plan, there is evidence and experience of engaging with identified disadvantaged groups and offering a range of opportunities; range of different disadvantaged groups targeted.
2	The quality of provision in terms of meeting client needs.	30%	There is little or no assessment of client needs or the provision is not balanced to those needs	There is realistic evidence to assess the client needs and the provision includes significant opportunities to match those needs	There is substantial evidence of provision of opportunities clearly targeted at client needs. There may be separate sources to validate e.g. testimony from former clients, other organisations or consultancy reports/evaluations that cite the good practice in use by this organisation.
3	The quality of the provision being made	30%	The provision is introductory to awareness level only with no basis for assessing the likely proportion of participants that would go on to undertake further participation/skills development	The provision provides basic knowledge and safety guidance so that participants can participate in simple practical environmental work with close supervision. Or , the provision provides detailed knowledge necessary to undertake, following clear instructions, practical environmental work with only part-time supervision	The provision will enable participants to make skill-based decisions and undertake practical environment work without supervision. Or, the provision will enable participants to make skill-based decisions and produce instructions and plans to supervise others on environmental projects
4	The duration of the coaching, work experience, volunteering opportunity	20%	The average duration of the opportunities is 0-7hrs	The average duration is 1 to 4 weeks	The average duration is greater than 4 weeks

By incorporating Aim B into the selection criteria for the external initiatives, CAN signalled the importance it placed upon any economic benefits of the CAN being shared with disadvantaged groups.

Basic information about all the initiatives eventually selected, including a brief description of the work or activities undertaken, is included in Appendix 1 of this report. Map 2 also shows the location of the initiatives that have been funded.

A wide range of activities have been funded. In financial terms, they range from the investment of:

- £900,000 on improvements to the recreational infrastructure at Newborough Forest on Anglesey including access to the beach, a fully accessible car-park, improved pathways through the forest and interpretation; to
- £80,000 on enhancing the infrastructure, interpretation and information available to visitors to the North Swansea areas of Gorseinon, Loughor and Mawr.

In terms of variety, the activities funded have included:

- Building and improving facilities at sites including exhibition centres, car-parks, toilets, shops and tea-rooms, fishing platforms;
- Development and installation of interpretation materials;
- Building and improvement of paths;
- Provision of way markings on paths;
- Improving cycle routes and multi-use routes;
- Transforming brownfield land into a 'village square';
- Marketing of sites and activities; and
- Offering work experience opportunities for volunteers and disadvantaged groups.

2.3.1. Community Engagement Award

To further strengthen Aim B a Community Engagement Award (with a maximum value of £10,000 per initiative) was created part way through the project to assist initiatives to develop their community engagement around their new / upgraded sites. The aim of the award was to:

a) provide the opportunity for local people to contribute to decisions on how their local CAN initiative would be delivered;
b) increase the use of the proposed facility / attraction, by involving local people in planning and delivering activities to raise awareness, interest and enthusiasm for their local initiative; and
c) develop local volunteer opportunities associated with the initiative – to provide opportunities for local people to be involved in delivering aspects of their local initiative, for example practical (physical) work and/or for promotion/ marketing work.

2.3.2. Natural Resources Wales direct engagement with volunteers

Besides the inclusion of Aim B in the selection criteria and the creation of the Community Engagement Award, the CAN project also engaged with volunteers directly. This was not anticipated at Business Plan stage, but evolved as a response to a specific need to collect visitor questionnaires. However, rather than simply employ a temporary member of staff, or engage an agency to conduct these questionnaires, a conscious decision was made to use this as an opportunity to set up a volunteer team who would benefit from the experience. It was also felt that this would demonstrate 'leading by example' rather than merely exhorting others to engage with disadvantaged groups.

Map 2.2: location of CAN initiatives in Wales

Source: Natural Resources Wales

3. Creating better connections to sites and reducing CO₂ emissions

Key points

- When delivery agents / initiatives were asked to describe how their initiative had addressed the objective of better connecting natural heritage sites and reserves to local communities and tourist or visitor 'honey-pots', the most common response was that that initiatives had created or improved links between sites and local communities via the physical works that had been undertaken (enabling access and so on).
- The interviews did not identify a substantial number of suggestions in terms of operational strategies to promote pro-environmental behaviour and reduce the level of CO_2 emission associated with the leisure activity. A common theme in the discussion was however that reducing CO_2 was effectively built into the initiatives being delivered. For example, many of the projects were to develop or improve walking facilities or cycling paths. One of the by-products of this could be that visitors use their cars less. The 'strategy' was therefore to fund CAN type initiatives.

3.1. Introduction

This chapter draws upon the interviews with the delivery agents to review how the CAN initiatives have addressed Objective 6 of the CAN project which, as previously noted was to better connect natural heritage sites and reserves to local communities and tourist or visitor 'honey-pots' by physical or intellectual linkages and/or the removal of cultural, psychological or other barriers. There is also a brief discussion of the comments made by the initiates in relation to Objective 7: to develop a methodology to assess, and operational strategies to reduce, the level of CO_2 emissions associated with the leisure activity of Welsh residents.

3.2. Creating better connections

As part of the 2014 round of interviews, delivery agents were asked to describe how their initiative had addressed the objective of better connecting natural heritage sites and reserves to local communities and tourist or visitor 'honey-pots'. The most common response was that initiatives had created or improved links between sites and local communities via the physical works that had been undertaken. For example:

- *"I think it's the whole access thing that we've concentrated on the most. Snowdon is a huge visitor honey pot, but it's really not accessible to all. The multi user link is, or at least at most points, and because of this we've been able to remove some of those barriers for people to still enjoy that outdoor environment."*
- *"We have improved access to help people 'get out there' to explore their own surroundings and enable visitors to explore surroundings. Also the interpretation leaflets will give information about bio diversity, local heritage, etc."*
- *"Improved physical access to the woodland through improved footpaths and bridleways and the idea being that if the country park opposite can attract 360,000 visitors a year then hopefully this will also increase footfall and recreational activities in the woodland."*

Other things highlighted included better marketing and improvements to signage. There was also regular reference to the benefit of having "staff on the ground" speaking to local people and tourists alike. This is one of a number of references throughout this report to the benefits of the 'human resource' made available by CAN working alongside the physical works that has been funded. In other words, there was a general acknowledgement that work beyond the physical works is needed in order to ensure that initiatives were successful in achieving the CAN objectives. Despite this, as discussed further as this report progresses, there have been limitations to what some initiatives have been able to do in this respect.

Again, as discussed later in this report, some initiatives have a specific focus on engaging with disadvantaged groups and the delivery agents for those projects highlight what they perceive to be the 'additional' benefit of working with those groups. In particular, those projects who worked with individuals and groups who are difficult to attract to natural heritage or environmental projects. For example:

- *"I think that getting young people to work in somewhere like Upton castle has meant that it has opened their eyes to different things and has removed a barrier which was that they never would have visited anywhere like that before let alone work there. So giving them the opportunity has been really important."*

One delivery agent made a similar point in regard to the focus they had on delivering their initiative as a 'community project':

- *"I think more than anything that the Dyfi Osprey project has better connected people with nature because we have created such a community orientated venture. Our volunteers are an example of how people come together and work together regardless of their backgrounds and some have come here to make friends and socialise, things that were certainly barriers for them in the past."*

3.3. Reducing CO_2 emissions

Delivery agents were also asked to review whether, based on their experience of delivering the CAN initiatives, they could suggest operational strategies to promote pro-environmental behaviour and reduce the level of CO_2 emission associated with the leisure activity of residents in Wales.

The interviews did not identify a substantial number of suggestions. Actions undertaken by the initiatives which were proposed as examples of good practice included:

- Local sourcing of products and services during the construction phase;
- Car-sharing / transport pooling for staff, participants and volunteers; and
- Using / introducing public transport to transport visitors to the site, ideally an eco-friendly vehicle.

A common theme in the discussion about this matter was that reducing CO_2 was effectively built into the initiative being delivered. For example, many of the projects were to develop or improve walking facilities or cycling paths. One of the by-products of this could be that visitors use their cars less. The following are examples of the comments made in this respect:

- *"I am not sure we learnt anything specifically from this initiative. In terms of CO_2 - the fact that this was all to do with a cycle track is promoting that as a way of travel rather than cars, so it promotes it in that way because there is an easier linkage between these tracks. I suppose this kind of initiative could be taken as a generic idea to other areas."*
- *"To be honest I had never even thought about this….. We are trying to get people to walk, cycle and horse ride rather than drive so that must reduce CO_2."*
- *"People hiring bikes may have hired a car instead and anyone on a bike is not in a car and so reducing CO2 emissions. Initially the project wanted a green bus, electro powered bus on green tariff but it was not viable because it was basically too expensive to buy the bus. I think if initiatives like this are looked at again in the future then the funders need to look at removing barriers like this and get a higher intervention rate for eco vehicles."*

There was also a reference to the fact that developing and enabling people to access local resources also reduced the need for people to travel to undertake leisure activities. For example:

- *"The main thing has been the development of practical activities. We've used local resources for local activities. We've promoted nature reserves as perfect family days out and hopefully this will spur people on to use them in the future. It's about engaging local people in their local areas and environments."*

Initiatives also made reference to the fact that visitors to the sites will, by being immersed in the local countryside and wildlife, become more pro-environmental in their general behaviour. This is something that some of the case studies of individual participants and volunteers later in the report will explore further.

Essentially, the interviewees were highlighting the fact that the types of initiatives funded by CAN have a positive impact on CO_2 emissions due to their nature. The 'strategy' was therefore to fund CAN type initiatives.

4. Engaging with disadvantaged groups

Key points

- There was no common understanding of the term 'disadvantaged groups' and conceptualisation varied between delivery agents.
- A wide range of groups have been 'targeted' by the initiatives with the unemployed being the most common. In some instances however there had been no specific targeting and a few initiatives had 'abandoned' an initial ambition to engage with disadvantaged groups.
- Alongside those who identified specific groups, a common approach was to focus on targeting places (generally areas of multiple disadvantage) rather than groups.
- The evaluation found that, broadly, four approaches to engagement have been employed by initiatives: (1) engagement via other projects / provision; (2) engagement directly by the delivery agent utilising existing structures; (3) engagement directly by the delivery agent utilising new structures; and (4) re-active approach whereby the initiative 'waits' for disadvantaged groups to engage with them. Each of these approaches has both strengths and weaknesses.
- The activities and interventions offered to disadvantaged groups by CAN initiatives cover a range of needs and are perceived to have generated a range of different benefits for the participants.

4.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses how CAN initiatives have engaged with disadvantaged groups and the perceived benefit to those that have been engaged. It begins by trying to understand why this aspect of the initiatives is important and what the term 'disadvantaged groups' means in the context of CAN. The approaches to disadvantaged groups are then explored in terms of; whom initiatives *targeted*, how they *engaged with* them, what was *provided*, and how the provision *benefited* these groups. A number of case studies are also included in order to illustrate and provide examples of the issues being discussed. The discussion draws upon the interviews with initiative staff (in 2012 and in 2014), participants and volunteers (in 2013 and 2014).

4.2. The rationale for sharing the benefits of initiatives with disadvantaged groups

Environmental concerns have for long been considered middle class issues and the environmental movement has been characterised as 'middle-class' (Worpole 2000[10]). Members and employees of environmental organisations are predominately middle class and white (Burningham and Thrush 2001, p.1[11]), and the presumption that the environment is a 'middle class' issue has led in turn to "...a lack of regard for the environmental concerns of disadvantaged communities" (SDC 2002)[12].

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[10] Worpole, K. (2000) In our backyard: the social promise of environmentalism
[11] Burningham, K. and Thrush, D. (2001) "Rainforests are a long way from here": The environmental concerns of disadvantaged groups, JRF.
[12] Sustainable Development Commission (2002) Vision for sustainable regeneration, environment & poverty - the missing link

However, recent years have seen an increasing recognition of the links between environment and disadvantage:

> *"Disadvantaged communities [groups and individuals] often get penalised twice. Not only do they have to live with fewer economic resources, they often - indeed almost always - live in environments which exact an additional toll on their well-being, through being unhealthier, less accessible, and literally more expensive places in which to survive"* (Worpole 2000).

In addition to this, research is beginning to show how social and environmental concerns can be reconciled positively to produce additional benefits (SDC 2002, p10). Small-scale environmental improvements and investment in infrastructure can have far reaching economic, social and environmental benefits, particularly if the improvements are community led. Indeed, environmental improvements can result in substantial improvements for quality of life for members of disadvantaged groups (Burningham and Thrush 2001, p.2).

The CAN project has been specifically designed to ensure that disadvantaged groups and disadvantaged communities benefit from the environmental interventions of the individual initiatives.

4.3. Understanding approaches to disadvantaged groups

Rather than simply listing or summarising initiatives' approach to disadvantaged groups, it is useful to break down the engagement 'process' into four key, interrelated steps as illustrated by the graphic below.

Figure 4.1: Steps in engaging with disadvantaged groups
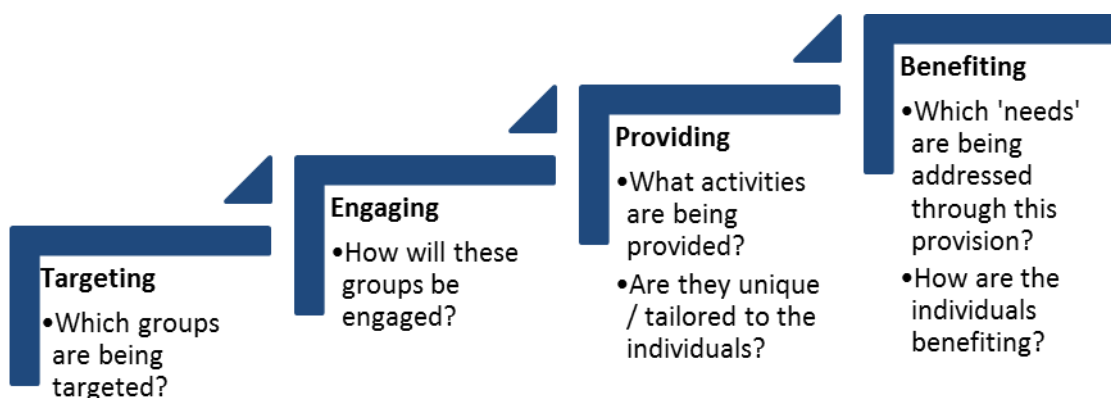
Source: Wavehill

The first 'step' refers to which disadvantaged groups the initiative is seeking to work with. Step 2: Engaging refers to the process by which the target group is being engaged and encouraged to partake in whichever activities the initiative is offering. So, if the initiative is targeting young unemployed people, they may seek to engage them through local youth clubs or a youth offending scheme. Once the disadvantaged groups are targeted and engaged, the next step is provision. This refers to what the initiatives are providing for these groups – is it (will it be) office based activities; volunteering days, long term support, or so on. The extent to which this provision is tailored to each individual is also important at this stage. This will be explored/ further explained in the relevant section that follows. Closely tied to the provision are the benefits - how are individuals or groups benefiting from the activities provided? This can also be thought of as which needs are being addressed through the provision?

This breaking down of the overall approaches into 'steps' underpinned both the research tools (questions that were asked to initiatives in order to help understand their approach) and the analysis/ findings that are presented in the following sections.

4.4. Targeting

4.4.1. The 'groups' targeted

The term 'disadvantaged groups' can be thought of as an umbrella term referring to a range of groups composed of individuals who share broadly common challenges and issues. These groups are themselves heterogeneous and individuals will often face a package of disadvantage rather than fitting into one group or another. The specific groups/individuals targeted by the CAN project are:

* Those economically inactive due to health problems;
* Those who need to improve their skills; and
* Those who are unemployed.

A key overarching finding of the evaluation relating to approaches to disadvantaged groups is that there was a variety of understandings and applications of the term 'disadvantaged groups' itself; there was no common understanding of the term and conceptualisation varied between interviewees.

This is not in itself a negative point; the use of the general term 'disadvantaged' rather than a more specific categorisation such as 'homeless' or 'unemployed for 12 months' allows the initiatives to apply their understanding of who may be 'disadvantaged' and how they might benefit from involvement in the initiative. With a variety of initiatives, this flexibility in the application of the term can actually be positive in that it accommodates the different initiatives and the unique contexts, the local needs which vary for different geographical areas and are typified by different facets of disadvantage (for example, legacy of unemployment and need for re-skilling in ex-industrial towns versus the need to reduce isolation and exclusion in remote rural areas).

The evaluation has found that some initiatives focused on one specific disadvantaged group and others on a range of groups. The groups reported as having been targeted by the initiatives were:

- **The unemployed / long-term unemployed (n=5)**
- NEETs or those at risk of becoming NEET (n=3)
- Young offenders or those at risk of offending (n=2)
- Young mothers
- Carers
- Young people generally

- Those with learning disabilities
- Those with physical disabilities
- Those with health problems
- Substance miss-users
- Minority ethnic groups
- 18-25 years olds living in supported housing

As shown by the list above a wide range of groups have been 'targeted' by the initiatives with the unemployed being the most common[13].

The relative advantage of focusing on one group is that a range of engagement methods can be used to access this group, and the provision can be tailored to suit this group. In contrast, the relative advantage of focusing on a range of target groups is that difficulties in engaging one group can be made up for with another.

In a number of instances however (14 of the 24 initiatives interviewed) the 2014 interviews found that the initiative had not 'targeted' any groups although, as discussed as this chapter progresses, it is important to note that this did not mean that those groups were not participating in the initiative. In a couple of instances, it was however reported that it was something that was considered as not being possible.

- *"We looked into it but is just wasn't possible or practical" (2014 interview)*
- *"Contractors did all the work so it was difficult to factor [disadvantaged groups] in" (2014 interview)*

The fact that these initiatives did not, upon finding that engaging with disadvantaged groups was not possible in the way that had been foreseen, pursue the matter any further is an indication of that fact that, in some instances, achieving Aim B objectives was perhaps not a priority for initiatives. The fact that they were able to continue on that basis is also perhaps an indication that it was not a priority in some instances for those overseeing the CAN initiatives.

4.4.2. Targeting areas rather than groups

Alongside those who identified / targeted specific groups, a common approach was focus on targeting places (generally areas of multiple disadvantage). This is a valid approach as disadvantaged groups are not evenly spread spatially. Communities and neighbourhoods defined as (multiple) deprived include (by definition) a disproportionate amount of disadvantaged groups compared to non-deprived areas (e.g. long term economically inactive or NEETs). As such, working in the most deprived communities can provide a method for targeting and addressing the needs of a range of disadvantaged groups.

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[13] 'n' here refers to the number of initiatives that identified the group in question as having been targeted by the initiative during the 2014 interview.

A number of CAN initiatives have been based in, or near, one or more multiply deprived areas - as defined by the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) [14] which is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in Wales[15]. CAN initiatives working in and with these multiple deprived communities have therefore a 'built in' mechanism for engaging and targeting disadvantaged groups through the medium of space (or place). A further 'gain' of these projects is that the environmental resources themselves will also benefit disadvantaged groups as they will provide a community accessible resource within these deprived areas.

The choice of which disadvantaged group to target would seem to be closely tied to the method the project was going to use to engage these groups. What this means is that an initiative would choose to work with, say, young people as the organisations they are sourcing them from deal mainly with this group. Further to this, a number of initiatives were building on previous work they have done and so were already committed to targeting a specific group, or groups, pre-CAN. Finally, the nature of the work/ provision influenced the choice of group to target. Some initiatives offered activities that could not be undertaken by certain groups for safety reasons, and as such were constrained in who they could target.

4.5.   Engaging

Engaging disadvantaged groups can be a challenge as those groups are often among the most difficult to engage and 'get on board'. The evaluation found that, broadly four approaches to engagement have been employed by initiatives, as summarised by the graphic below.

Figure 4.2: the approaches to engaging with disadvantaged groups undertaken by CAN initiatives
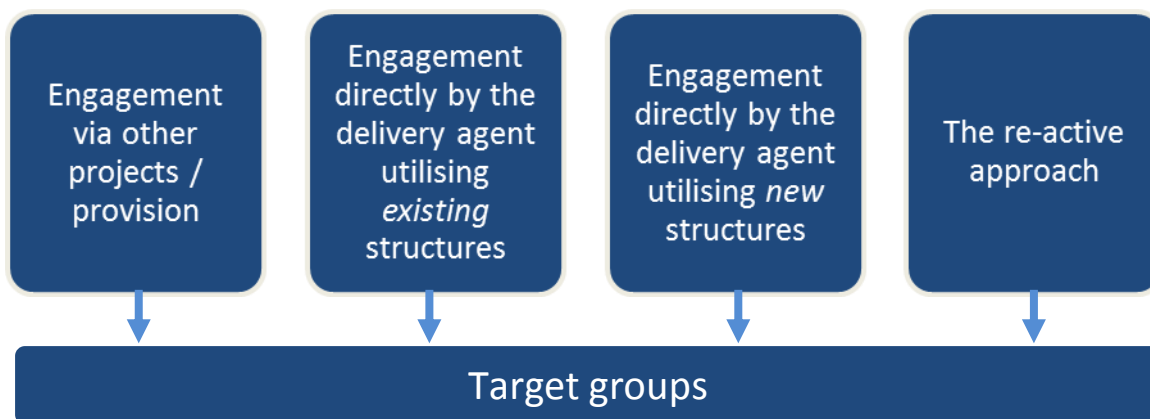
Source: Wavehill

Each of these approaches has associated advantages and disadvantages as discussed below.

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[14] For more information, see http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/welsh-index-multiple-deprivation/?lang=en

[15] The Index was developed by the Welsh Government as a tool to identify and understand deprivation in Wales, so that funding, policy, and programmes can be effectively focussed on the most disadvantaged communities. Eight types of deprivation, or domains, are included in the Index (these are weighted). These are: employment, income, education, health, community safety, geographical access to services, housing, and physical environment.

4.5.1. Engagement via other projects / providers

A common approach to engagement involved the delivery agent working with and utilising one or more local organisations or schemes with experience of disadvantaged groups. In this arrangement, the CAN initiative effectively provided an outlet or resource for users from other organisations and projects to access and benefit from.

An example of this type of approach is that undertaken by Upton Castle (Greenlinks CIC). This initiative worked with COASTAL and Engage[16] project participants by effectively providing those projects with a resource which they could utilise in their work with the participants[17]. Both of these are European funded projects looking to return people to the job market and are in need of placements for many of their participants.

The perception was that working with these projects is an effective approach as it benefits both parties and pre-existing connections with individuals are made by those projects:

- *"[It has been a] very effective method - Engage and Coastal need something to engage their clients [which is] not just classroom activities but something to give them more freedom and wider benefits like that which we offer. It is a lot harder to recruit if you do not have connections."*
- *"We have a very good working relationship with most of the referral agencies in the area so this worked well for us."*

In terms of effectiveness more generally, this approach involves an additional step to the more direct engagement approach described below and as such may involve the commitment of more resources (e.g. project staff meeting organisations to identify participants / beneficiaries). However, it is apparent that there are also significant advantages of this approach:

- The delivery organisation and initiative can tap into the experience and expertise of the other project / organisation (the one 'supplying' participants). This works generally, but also specifically in terms of identifying suitable participants and assessing their needs (which is easier if they have already been assessed and are known to the supply organisation/ project).

- Those initiatives working with more than one other organisation 'supplying' disadvantaged individuals to them are able to access a range of disadvantaged groups rather than one specific group. Further to this, these CAN projects are able to support the supplier organisations by providing an outlet for their clients.

- Finally, this approach encourages links between organisations working in target areas and fosters sharing of information and resources.

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[16] For more information about COASTAL see COASTAL, for more information about ENGAGE see ENGAGE

[17] It is important to stress that there is no suggestion of 'double-counting' of participants or cross-over between ESF and ERDF funding streams here. The COASTAL and Engage participants were not being supported by the CAN initiative not being claimed as participants / beneficiaries of the CAN initiative. The resource being made available via CAN was simply being utilised by the ESF funded projects.

In one instance, the delivery agent highlighted the potential to require, as part of a procurement process, suppliers to engage with disadvantaged groups:

- *"There is a standard clause in our tender process that the contractors on framework have to sign up to unemployment utilisation clause. However depending on the nature of the contract that they are doing it may or may not be possible because of the skills required."*

In some respects, this is similar to the approach previously outlined in that it 'delegates' the engagement process to a third party. It is however less of a pro-active version of the approach and therefore akin to the 'wait and see' approach discussed later.

4.5.2. Engagement by the delivery agent utilising *existing* structures

A number of CAN initiatives were implemented by organisations whose primary function was to work with one or more disadvantaged group. These organisations not only bring expertise and experience, they also have the advantage of having already engaged with the target group(s) and are able therefore to bypass the difficult (time consuming and costly) process of engaging individuals.

With individuals already engaged and assessed, in effect, these projects have a head start and will be required to put fewer resources into this part of the process of working with disadvantaged groups. However, the only caveat to this approach is that there is generally no new connections being made- individuals are largely already being engaged and there are no new relationships developing cross organisations.

Examples of this type of organisation/ initiatives include:

- Groundwork Neath Port Talbot (Lloughor Estuary Green Ways improvement): *"At the time we were running a contract in Bridgend for the Future Jobs Fund and we had trainees and we also had a contract for Communities Task Force".*

- Pembrokeshire Mencap (Stackpole Visitor Centre): *"We take people with LD [learning disabilities] for social development and training and the centre is a place where members of the public can come face to face with people with LD and visa-versa. We have also included in the centre a kitchen and cafe which is designated as community space so it is multi-use. We opened it last June and in the winter, when it is not fit for gardening, we have run day courses on recreational art for people with LD which has brought in some new faces."*

4.5.3. Engagement by the delivery agent utilising *new* structures

Interviews in 2012 and 2014 found that some initiatives used more direct methods of engagement such as local networking, advertising and marketing. The following quotes provide examples of how such an approach has been used:

- *"What we've done is advertise opportunities to volunteer through the local Job Centre and I guess in a way what we are offering suits young people who are in danger of becoming NEET."*
- *"Advertising through [the County Voluntary Council] on their website, articles in newspapers and special open days on how people can come and take part."*
- *"Our events have been publicised and we've had visible face to face contact with the Job Centre which has been so much better for us."*

Interviews in both 2012 and 2014 recognised that it is not generally effective at engaging target groups, largely due to the nature of these groups:

- *"... It seems general marketing and leafleting doesn't work. We are working with disengaged youth so they aren't likely to follow things up themselves."*
- *"Things like emails/ direct marketing don't work. You need organisations [with experience of the groups] to help do the engagement."*
- *"…face-to-face interaction, instead of advertising through the local paper, has been really important."*

Interviewees did however also suggest that the direct approach can be effective. But, as shown by the quote below, being able to build on existing contacts and relationships is seen as being very beneficial:

- *"[A member of staff] went out and got people! She is the biggest hit, she has worked in a lot of the areas before on different types of project with BTCV, communities' first, local schools and other partnership organisations so she knows the places very well and knows a lot of the people and she is very good at building up a rapport with people. Also, once you get a couple of 'hard core' people involved the other ones tend to join in because word and mouth gets out."*

The method of direct engagement which was reported to have experienced success was one which involved personnel working 'on the ground' in the local (deprived) community. The Nature Network, run by the City and County of Swansea, has a multi-faceted approach based around working in a Communities First[18] area, and includes engagement methods such as a poster campaign, articles in Communities First newsletters, Green-mapping (community mapping), web advertising, and working with Community Development Officers. However, the initiative reported much success had come from simply "*being on the ground- on the site*". By spending time on site, participants were engaged who already used the sites for one reason or another:

- *"Being on site people will talk to you – that is what gets people interested. Not everyone goes to community groups, reads papers or newsletters, or has a computer. By connecting with people who use the site anyway we are able to make more of an impact."*

However, due to the high time and cost commitment of this approach, it is not a realistic one for many of the projects, but it does have the potential to engage participants directly and effectively. Unless organisations are able to utilise their existing structures, targeting and engaging with disadvantaged groups will have resource implications.

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[18] Communities First is the WG's flagship social inclusion programme. See here for further details.

4.5.4. The re-active approach

Six of the initiative managers interviewed in 2014 reported that they had not undertaken any kind of 'targeted' approach to engaging with disadvantaged groups. Rather, as shown by the example quoted, note below, they had worked in what could be described as a more reactive rather than pro-active way:

- *"We haven't really targeted any disadvantaged groups. We've had a few who have come to us like people who are unemployed or who are trying to get more skills and to get experience in university, but we haven't targeted anyone really."*
- *"There have been opportunities for disadvantaged groups to come and volunteer, for example the local youth service has come to volunteer and their contribution has been of great help, but specifically they weren't targeted."*
- *"They came to us. I do a few talks a year to different organisations and we get people volunteering through them, but like I said we didn't really target anyone as we haven't had to."*

The assumption with this approach is that the provision of opportunities and benefits associated with the project will provide a sufficient tool to attract and engage disadvantaged groups.

Whilst the quality of provision may be sufficient to attract individuals, and there is no cost involved, this approach could be considered to hold the greatest risk of not achieving the overall aim of sharing CAN benefits with disadvantaged groups. Again, it also suggests that Aim B objectives were a secondary priority for some of the initiatives funded.

4.6. Provision / activities

After targeting and then engaging disadvantaged groups, the next point of interest comes in the types of activities undertaken by the individuals who participated in the CAN initiative. This leads on to, and is closely linked to, the needs that CAN is addressing and the benefit to participants.

4.6.1. Types of activities

Broadly, the types of activities being offered to the target groups have been, perhaps unsurprisingly, environmental in nature. Initiatives either engage individuals in work related to changes driven by the CAN project (e.g. involving groups in path making funded by CAN) or (and in some cases) are involving people in on-going site activities (e.g. maintenance such as gardening). The types of activity included: improving access to environmental resources (e.g. footpaths), providing environmental information (e.g. interpretation boards), events and guiding (e.g. guided walks), managing and maintaining natural resources (e.g. habitats), and creating environmental resources (e.g. creating nature trails).

4.6.2. Tailored approaches - recognising individual needs

One of the most significant aspects of the provision of activities is the degree to which they are tailored – whether they are adaptable based on the individual in question. Addressing the needs of disadvantaged groups does not suit a 'one-size fits all' approach. Individuals might share common characteristics and types of need, but all come with their own history, needs and opportunities (to make a difference).

Evidence from both the document analysis and interviews suggests that the practice of tailoring the provision on offer is widespread amongst CAN initiatives. This can be considered a key strength of the provision of activities across the programme as a whole. In some cases, the process of tailoring activities to individuals was greatly helped by working with referral from existing projects/ organisations. This demonstrates one of the advantages of working with other organisations who have built an existing relationship with participants:

- *"We are able to mix and match; there is a specific focus on individuals. They have individual learning plans; often they arrive with these plans from referring organisations. So we rely on the knowledge of these organisations and think, what can we do for this individual?"*

In some instances however, a tailored approach had not been possible, usually where a re-active approach to engagement was employed.

- *"We don't really cater on an individual basis if I'm honest. People are learning new skills when they come here but we don't cater for the individual basis."*

4.7. Benefit to the participants / needs being addressed

The final step of analysing the approaches to disadvantaged groups involves considering what benefits are being passed on to these groups or, put differently, which needs are being addressed through the provisions on offer. Interviews with initiatives in both 2012 and 2014 explored this as did the in-depth case studies in 2013. The research identified a range of benefits. Rather than listing these, there are two main ways of thinking more analytically about them. The first is in terms of capabilities, the basic needs which are being addressed and the second through the differential between hard and soft benefits, one which was made continually by respondents whilst discussing benefits.

4.7.1. Capabilities and needs

The activities and interventions offered to disadvantaged groups by CAN initiatives cover a range of needs. At the most fundamental level, these provisions relate to 'capabilities' – the central and valuable things in life that people actually achieve - such as enjoying an adequate standard of living, being healthy, having good opportunities for education and learning, enjoying legal security, and being free from crime and the fear of crime[19].

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[19] For Capabilities, see Equality Measurement Framework EHRC. http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/key-projects/equality-measurement-framework/

Capability domains, developed by the Equality and Human Rights Council (EHRC), Government Equalities Office (GEO), the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and a range of other stakeholders and subject experts, focus directly on those things in life that people say are important for them to actually do and be. They provide a useful method of thinking about the needs that are being addressed by CAN initiatives.

The majority of benefits identified during interviews with CAN initiatives focused on four capabilities as illustrated below.

Figure 4.3: Capability domains
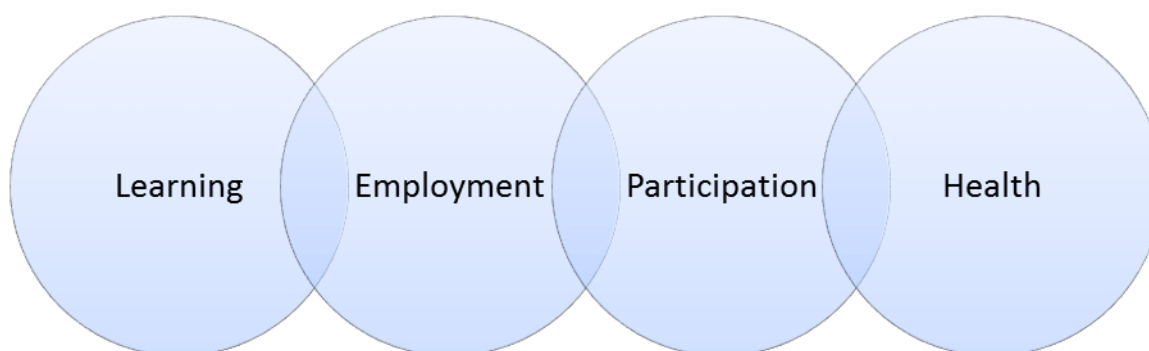
Source of graphic: Wavehill. Based on the capability domains developed EHRC et al.

The different facets of these capabilities as well as how they relate to the provision by the CAN initiatives are introduced below.

<u>Learning</u>

Learning is the capability to be knowledgeable, to understand and reason, and to have the skills to participate in society including, for example, being able to:

- Attain the highest possible standard of knowledge, understanding and reasoning
- Be fulfilled and stimulated intellectually, including being creative if you so wish
- Develop the skills for participation in productive and valued activities
- Access education, training and lifelong learning that meets individual needs
- Access information and technology necessary to participate in society.

This capability is central to the majority of provisions made by CAN initiatives and benefits highlighted by initiatives. The majority of initiatives identified indirectly improving skills and learning amongst the key benefits. In addition to this, in providing an outlet for projects such as work schemes, CAN initiatives are effectively enabling participants to 'access education, training and lifelong learning' (one of the examples of the learning capability given above).

Arguably, the clearest contribution in relation to learning comes in relation to providing learning *'that meets individual needs'*. In addition to this, part of the learning capability 'to have the skills to participate in society' relates to a series of benefits identified relating to *social interaction* and *confidence*.

Employment

Employment is the capability to engage in productive and valued activities including, for example, being able to:

- Have a decent paid job, with support where necessary
- Do something useful and have the value of your work recognised even if unpaid
- Choose a balance between paid and unpaid work, care and leisure on an equal basis with others
- Work in just and favourable conditions, including health and safety, fair treatment during pregnancy, maternity and paternity, fair pay, reasonable hours, and freedom from harassment or discrimination
- Not be forced to work in a particular occupation or without pay.

Many of the provisions and benefits of CAN initiatives work towards or around this capability, depending on the groups being engaged as illustrated by the following comments made by initiative staff:

- *"They were very, very hard working and very enthusiastic to do all parts of the job... they could work with strimmer's and so forth and they, while working, learnt new skills and were able to get experience with a well know organisation. This may not have been possible for them in different circumstances."*
- *"They have benefitted a lot, [a member of staff] has some really good case studies of people who have really built their confidence through the work and then go out and become full time site wardens and I know a couple of them went on to get placements and/or jobs so it has been successful. They have learnt new skills and also a lot of the training benefits and they have improved their soft skills like confidence and self-esteem."*

Much of the support on offer helps to move people toward the labour market and prepare them better for work:

- *"These people are not ready for employment; it is about helping them get nearer this point."*
- *"...confidence but also communication, teamwork - the kind of skills needed to work."*

Further to this, in relation to people being able to 'do something useful and have the value of your work recognised even if unpaid', CAN initiatives reported the importance of a sense of achievement in the result of the activities undertaken:

- *"It gives them a sense of achievement; they have built something that is really important."*
- *"It is about being involved and doing something valued and useful."*

Participation

Participation is the capability to participate in decision-making, have a voice and influence including, for example, being able to:

- Participate in decision-making and make decisions affecting your own life independently
- Participate in non-governmental organisations concerned with public and political life
- Get together with others, peacefully
- Participate in the local community; and
- Form and join civil organisations and solidarity groups, including trade unions.

This capability relates to CAN initiatives in two key ways. Firstly, a number of initiatives addressed needs relating to being able to 'get together with others, peacefully'. Participants were seen to benefit from working and socialising around others and being exposed to 'social norms':

- *"I think that we've been able to provide the opportunities and the experience of working on a project like this. They've been able to plant trees and see what their work is achieving; they've been able to see new life in a way. It's been an experience worth having in my opinion. They get the pleasure of seeing what their work is achieving."*
- *"I think it's because "disadvantaged groups," have worked side by side with other volunteers and so they feel a part of the greater effort so to speak. They've learnt basic skills including social skills and confidence also."*

Secondly, with a number of the initiatives being community based and the types of activities undertaken by participants being based around local sites, one of the needs being addressed can be considered to be peoples' right to 'participate in the local community', one of the examples of participation given above. .

Health

Finally, the capability to be healthy includes, for example, being able to:

- Attain the highest possible standard of physical and mental health, including sexual and reproductive health
- Be assured of confidentiality and be free from the stigmatisation associated with some health conditions
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle including exercise, sleep and nutrition

This capability relates to the practical, physical nature of the provision offered by CAN initiatives. Some initiatives identified health benefits resulting from the 'outdoor' nature of activities as a key area of intervention. This was not just as simple as 'being outdoors', also including health issues such as stress relating to personal living circumstances:

- *"We take them away from their peers and negative influences- out of this setting they can relax and express themselves."*

4.8. Case studies

4.8.1. Project case study: Tir Coed, Branching Out

Tir Coed seeks to improve the quality of life for rural communities in Wales through trees and woodlands. Since 2006, as a charitable company, Tir Coed has been engaging disadvantaged young people in environmental voluntary activities. They were awarded CAN funding in order to part fund *Branching Out*, which aims to enhance and improve nature reserves in Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire that are owned and managed by the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales (WTSWW). The key aims of the initiative were to increase the volume of visitors by creating new infrastructure (such as footpaths, a new exercise trail path, and bridges), increase the length of visits by constructing new facilities from wood, increase the economic value of visits through attracting more visitors, and enable disadvantaged young people to improve their confidence and self–esteem while also developing their practical and team working skills.

Branching Out focuses on engaging young people, aged 16 to 28 years, who are offending, are at risk of offending, or are not in education, employment or training (are NEET). Participants are identified and engaged in a range of ways. The key approach involves working closely with youth organisations (such as youth offending teams) working with socially excluded and marginalised young people. In addition to this main focus, participants are also recruited via word of mouth, social media (Facebook etc.) and fliers.

Tir Coed had worked in partnership with youth organisations, local authority education departments, Youth Offending Services, Careers Wales and the Prince's Trust prior to CAN and was able to build on these existing relationships.

> *"It helped that we were working with these organisations pre-CAN, it still takes time to develop relationships and to get things running smoothly."*

The more general marketing and leafleting was felt to be a relatively ineffective mechanism compared to working with other organisations as potential participants are disadvantaged/ disengaged young people unlikely to pro-actively seek out or follow up opportunities.

Due to the nature of those targeted, participants engaged with Tir Coed tended to face multiple challenges. These include a disengagement from education and employment, a lack of basic skills such as literacy, difficult home lives, drug and alcohol issues, housing issues and/or lack of social skills (including those needed to work with other people and hold down a job). As participants face such a range of challenges, the work with Branching Out could never address them all; however, there was emergent evidence about a range of impacts on the participants.

Firstly, both participants and project staff identified changes in the participants relating to confidence and self-esteem. This seemed to be closely related to achievement and success. Many of the young people have not achieved highly in school (or elsewhere) and so the sense of achievement they feel when they have been part of building something tangible is important. This sense of achievement combined with experience gained by participants in relation to interacting with people created a change in the confidence of participants:

"I gained a lot in my confidence through talking to people and learning new things."

"It seems in many cases, it is rare for participants to be seen in a positive light - there is often a negativity surrounding them and they are able to break that cycle."

Moving on from confidence, all of the participants said that they had learnt new skills during their time with the CAN project. These skills were practical in nature and all said that they would use them again in future work:

"I learnt new skills that mean I am going to be able to do an apprenticeship."

"I never made stuff before and am now always making stuff now, at home and at work."

All three of the participants interviewed said that they were more likely to go on similar courses/ engage with similar activities as a result of their time with Branching Out and all said it would help them in the future in relation to employment and education. With many Branching Out participants disengaged from school, this represents a significant addition to the skills they can offer potential employers.

Finally, a further impact was noted in terms of social skills and interaction with others. Participants said that they had met new friends through the work and had become better at interacting with others in the workplace:

"I've met new friends… and am more used to working with others."

One of the key factors underpinning these impacts was the fact the young people are taken away from their normal environment (and associated pressures). This includes removing them from their local areas whereby there are strong peer influences and from other places such as school with which the young people have very negative associations.

"We take them away from their peers and negative influences, out of this setting they can relax and express themselves."

Other significant factors underpinning success include the "*relaxed*" and encouraging environment created by project workers and the types of activity undertaken, which are seen as more relevant to the young people than the type of work they would do at school:

"Many of the participants have been disengaged from school, they didn't achieve well or enjoy traditional classroom based learning and the practical, outdoor nature of Branching Out is much more suited to them."

4.8.2. Participant case study: Swansea Nature Network

Swansea's Nature Network initiative was devised to capitalise on the areas' natural environment by promoting and improving access to and enjoyment of a network of 12 wildlife sites and natural open spaces. Activities included:

- Establish the Nature Network Brand
- Market Swansea Nature Network as a destination
- Provide welcoming gateways to sites
- Provide bilingual interpretive materials
- Develop routes between sites with service providers
- Remove physical barriers to access, and provide a coherent network of in site footpaths.

This participant was interviewed on the 6th March 2014. He was aged between 51 and 65 and introduced himself as follows:

"I'm unemployed at the moment and I have been unemployed for just over five years. My mother had sustained a bad head injury so I have been caring for her. I am a member of a local carers group. I had always been an indoor sort of person."

When asked how he had been involved in the initiative, he said:

"We started off with making bird boxes and stuff like that then it evolved because [initiative staff] saw that I was enthusiastic about doing things. I was never an outdoor sort of person before; I was an indoor person, but since doing things with [initiative staff] I have done green wood working, hedge laying, bike riding and she has told me about the history of Swansea Bay. [Initiative staff] made me a volunteer warden for Kilbey Hill in Swansea and I have been involved in various activities there with the local community group. Then at Christmas time we went up to the forestry where we have leased part of the hill and it is full of Christmas trees, so we went up and thinned it out, we then took the trees down to the bottom of the hill and gave them all away for free but donations could be given towards the local community group. I have also had days out with [initiative staff] at The Old West Glamorgan Tree Nursery where we looked at things that I wouldn't usually have noticed as we were looking closely at the trees with a magnifying glass, I was also told things about pollution and things like that.

I've been making furniture and installed furniture, I have been looking after various areas, litter picking, I have been made responsible to look after the local group and I liaise with them, I have been looking after little nature reserves and I have done map reading. I became the walk leader risk assessing walks and leading walks which was something completely outside my experience but I just enjoyed it. I was never an outdoor sort of person before but now I'm a lot more interested. As well as opening up all these avenues it introduced me to lots of new people and groups that I didn't know existed, which are to do with carers. It has given me the chance to learn lots of different things like the potential sources of help and information that are out there."

His response when asked why he wanted to get involved was:

"Originally with the carers group I just made a call and spoke to the people who were running it and then went along to explore what the idea behind the group was. The idea was to give carers and young carers the opportunity so that they would be able to do things outside such as walking or cycling and so on, this was to try to help them so that they were physically and mentally able to do the caring job that they do. So I started on that route and I was just exploring, then I just got interested in the outdoors. So when I spoke to [initiative staff] about the project she was setting up I was really interested in getting involved."

He described the benefit of being involved as follows:

"I think the main thing apart from learning new skills is gaining more confidence. That was a major one for me as I was never confident. After being long term unemployed and a part time carer your confidence gets even worse, so the fact that this project has pushed me to go out and do things that I have never experienced before and the fact that things I didn't think I was capable of, I have found that I actually am capable of doing makes a huge difference to me as a personality, it develops you in a way that you never thought. I have lived all my life in Swansea but really didn't know much about Gower at all.

So with my involvement in the carers group and the work I have done with [initiative staff], I've seen more of Gower in the last three years than I had the rest of my life. I am now the secretary of the carers group so I have lots more responsibility. Several of us wanted to continue the carers group when the funding ran out, so in the last six months of that project XXXXXX stepped back and he handed responsibility over to us so now we arrange various courses with Swansea SCVS and we have taken over the group and we maintain it. I'm also doing voluntary work with a bicycle group which is under the Coastal project. So I now work a few days a week volunteering with them. I'm learning how to repair bikes back up into full working condition and I am often outside. I've just had a Bronze level Velotech award which is an officially recognised qualification and I'm moving towards the Silver and Gold award. The project has given me the chance to be involved in things that I have never experienced before."

4.8.3. Participant case study: Beddgelert to Rhyd Ddu multiuser link

The Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA) was successful in securing CAN funding in order to create a multi user link path between the villages of Rhyd Ddu and Beddgelert in North Wales - a new 6.5km two meter wide multipurpose route that could be used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

From the beginning of the initiative, the SNPA has worked to engage the community as well as disadvantaged groups in order to succeed in their aims and objectives. The initiative has offered young people, between 16 and 25 years, at risk of becoming NEET, the opportunity to volunteer and expand their skills set. SNPA had previously established links with the probation service which was significant in that it was part of the long term maintenance of the path as well as for wider work within the park. As expressed by the Project Officer for the path:

"The initial contact with the probation service was made before I even started in my job. If you think about what the work meant for some of those young people, it was using young people without experience, without qualifications and without the opportunities to work. What I felt was good about the project is that we gave them the opportunity not just for them to come and work with us but also it's opened the door for them for the future so that they can come and help us maintain the path".

Interviews were undertaken with two participants in the initiative in March 2014. Both had become involved via the Probation Service and described their activities as follows:

"I've been working on the path doing different things like path clearing and strimming and things like that."

"I've been cutting down plants and building paths and things like that."

When asked whether and how they had benefited from their involvement in the project, they said:

"I've learnt new skills and I've got work experience that I wouldn't have had before, and I probably wouldn't have had the opportunity to do either."

"I've got new skills and learnt new things… things to do with countryside management like putting up fences and tidying places up and making them look good. How to look after paths and things like that."

Both believed that they had become more aware of the countryside and the local environment as a result of their involvement with the initiative:

"I know more about what plants grow and what are meant to grow here and what are not. I know more about birds and things too like their names and where they nest and things."

"I didn't know much about the environment before but I know names of trees and plants and things now."

5. Engaging with volunteers and local communities

Key points

- CAN initiative had a clear commitment to engagement with volunteers and the local community.
- The degree of community engagement and approach taken however seemed to depend on three factors: (1) the progress made by the initiative (don't engage too soon!); (2) the location of the initiative; and (3) the extent of the delivery agent's existing ties with the community / volunteers.
- A range of different methods have been used to engage with the local community / volunteers each of which had both strengths and weaknesses. The methods used were not however mutually exclusive with most initiatives using a range of different methods.
- Methods used included gaining access to the community via community councils or other local interest groups, events & open days, through local schools, advertising & marketing, the use of social media and structured consultation processes.
- As part of the 2014 round of interviews, the staff of a number of initiative delivery agents highlighted the fact that the community engagement process had proved to be more difficult or challenging than they had anticipated.
- The extent of the benefit of community engagement being identified by the delivery agent seemed to depend on the extent to which community engagement was integrated into the delivery of the initiative. In many instances, the initiatives would not have been able to operate effectively had they not been able to engage with the local community. In others, it was not essential to the work that would be undertaken.
- In most instances, initiatives described the benefit to the community as being the access they now had to the resource in question and the benefit to the volunteers who had been involved during the delivery of the initiative / undertaking the works.
- The interviews with volunteers suggest a wide range of benefits as a result of being involved with an initiative including the development of new skills and social benefits such as meeting with new people and improved personal social skills (e.g. confidence). Interviewees also reported that they had become more aware of the local environment and countryside due to their involvement with the initiative. The relatively small number of interviews undertaken does however need to be taken into account.

5.1. Introduction

This chapter discussed the findings of the evaluation in relation to engaging with volunteers and local communities more generally. It begins by discussing the factors that have been identified as influencing the engagement process before discussing the methods that have been used by the initiatives. Finally, there is a discussion about the benefits of community engagement to the initiative, to the community in general and to individual volunteers.

5.2.   Factors influencing the level of engagement

A review of the CAN initiative business plans / tenders shows a clear commitment to engagement with volunteers and the local community, in line with Aim B of the project. This was affirmed by the interviews undertaken with initiatives at each phase of the evaluation. The degree of community engagement and approach taken however seemed to largely depend on three factors as illustrated by the graphic below.

Figure 5.1: key factors that influenced community engagement by CAN initiatives
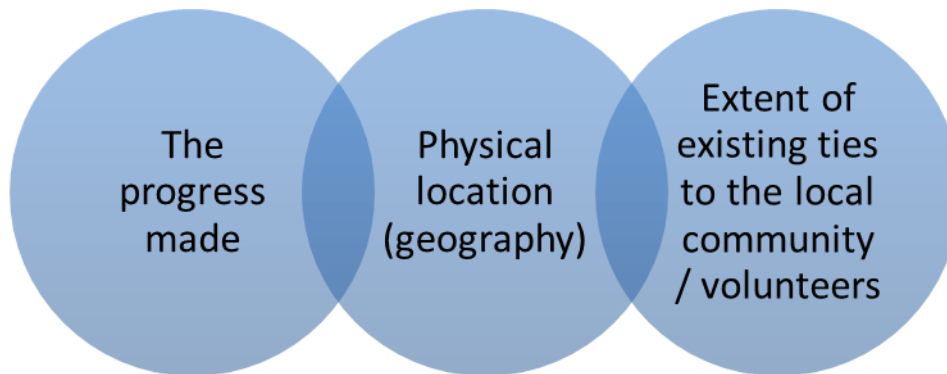
Source: Wavehill

The first key influence, which was very apparent during the 2012 phase of the evaluation, was the stage of delivery the initiative was at. There is a danger with funded projects that communities and organisations are engaged and enthused early on in the delivery process, but then the time taken to produce obvious change in an area means communities become disengaged whilst 'waiting'. As such, a number of initiatives said that it had not made sense to fully undertake community engagement at this stage of delivery. In some of these cases, the community engagement approach was not fully developed or was in the early stages of development.

Secondly, the location (geography) of initiatives was a key influence. Whilst some initiatives were based within communities (whether urban or rural) and operated over a relatively small geographical area, others were relatively isolated and did not closely relate to any one community. In some instances, the activities of initiatives were also spread over a number of different sites which meant that there were a number of different 'host' communities.

- *"…we are a relatively isolated site. This is probably one of the reasons we do not see that many people from the village on site, we are probably the best part of two miles away. The next village the other way is about the same."*

Lastly, approaches were influenced by whether the initiative had existing ties to the local community 'pre-CAN'. Those who were already embedded in their local community and were well known had a 'head start' on those who were 'new' to areas. This meant that early 'presence building' type engagement was not needed and these initiatives could focus their efforts elsewhere.

Another key divergence to draw out before introducing the different approaches is the differential between those initiatives for whom community engagement was closely integrated to, and related to, their approach to engaging disadvantaged groups, and those largely separating the strategies. The former is typified by initiatives which took a geographical (area based) approach to targeting disadvantaged groups discussed in the previous chapter, integrating it with their community engagement approach, with the latter typified by initiatives working with other referral organisations and not focusing on engaging disadvantaged groups through their local community.

It is worth noting here that, as with approaches to disadvantaged groups; it was not the case that initiatives would necessarily focus on one or other of these approaches. Rather, initiatives have commonly adopted a suite of these approaches, enabling them to reach a range of audiences. The following section explores the different approaches undertaken to community engagement. As noted, initiatives may have undertaken one or more of these approaches; they are not mutually exclusive.

5.3. Methods of community engagement

5.3.1. Community councils / local representative or interest organisations

One of the most widespread approaches to community engagement was the use of community councils as a 'way in' to communities and as representatives of the communities.

- *"The community council has worked well – it is essentially a big local focus group."*
- *"The first point was always to go through the community councils and then through smaller groups that had community associations."*
- *"We went and spoke to the communities in various meetings. We showed them what we were hoping to achieve and we wanted their input. We also arranged meetings with the community councils for the areas."*

The main advantage of this approach is that it enables a 'snowballing' approach, reaching a number of people through contact with a few. It is also the most 'official' way of reaching a community, engaging with a group who has been set up for exactly this type of purpose.

For some initiatives, local interest groups already existed and had an on-going interest in sites. These groups are typified by 'friends of...' and volunteer groups who predominantly live locally to the sites and have a strong interest in the site and/ or project.

- *"There was already a community group set up related to the site."*
- *"We had presentations to the local community councils who were very supportive and some field trips organised for local organisations and through the environmental partnership, RSPB and various other people like Local Authority and there are some sustainable outcomes in that the Local Authority are now looking towards integrating some of the work that we do into some of the peripheral areas around the forest."*

Whilst such groups include motivated individuals, many of which are volunteers at the initiatives, this engagement method was perceived to be limited in the range of people it is able to engage.

5.3.2. Engagement through events / open days

Putting on events and open days, whether specifically targeted at local people or not, was also highlighted as a common approach to community engagement. The range of events was varied and included:

- 'Specialist' events, for example, Welsh Language Events at Natur i Bawb
- Launch events, for example, Westfield Pill
- Open days, for example, Ty Hyll.
- 'Taster sessions' for local people and businesses, Green Links on Holy Island
- Guided walks, the Trawsfynydd CAN initiative.

Getting people *to the site* of the project is considered to be a critical element of the engagement process, as one respondent put it: "*so that they can see what the area has to offer and what the surrounding area can offer them as far as leisure activities go.*"

The main drawbacks of an event focused approach are the potential for large costs and the vulnerability to the weather.

5.3.3. Engagement through schools

School engagement was common across a number of initiatives. Interaction varied and included educational talks, site visits and events:

- "*We work with schools, invite to sites and get involved in local history/ understand area they are from.*"
- "*The children from the school were engaged into the artwork, they did a lot of workshops with an artist and so they fed into the design and then local groups were also consulted.*"
- "*We've arranged certain visits like school story days in the round houses, getting the children interested is really important. They are the next generation of people who will really appreciate what we do here… Children then tell their parent's where they've been and what they've done, it's important.*"

Engaging with schools has a number of potential benefits. Firstly, it has a strong sustainability element, with initiatives able to engage with the 'next generation' and create a connection which could last a number of years. Secondly, it also represents an opportunity to engage the family and friends of the children, widening awareness of the project. Lastly, schools are predominately reflective of their local communities, meaning initiatives are able to access those groups in the community who may not already be involved.

5.3.4. Local advertising and marketing

Locally targeted advertising and marketing was widespread, with initiatives aiming to attract people from the local area through methods such as leafleting, attending local events and presence in the local media.

- *"There was consultation pre-project, we were going to have a launch but it never happened due to delays… We did two press releases, one to say that the work was going to start and one when the work had been completed. A lot of people in the local area were very aware of the work; the communities that use it were already aware and were using it as soon as it was complete."*
- *"Community councils put out leaflets in the community to see what people wanted on the interpretation panels, what they wanted to see in the promoted walks leaflet etc. - not a great response to this. We did a publication in something called 'around town' which is a Bridgend publication, free to deliver and we put something in that and we had a lot of people call from that to see when the leaflet was coming out so that worked well."*
- *"We have a specific volunteer programme and we've been able to get them here through advertising locally and engaging them through practical conservation work."*

Attending local events, as the Dee Valley River & Railway Paths initiative did at a local fete, was seen to be the most effective of these types of local advertising, able to increase the local presence of the work without people having to visit the site itself:

- *"Things that bring exposure [are the most effective] - so sessions in the market square have been the most important."*

Leafleting and poster advertising on the other hand was perceived to be effective in cost terms and increasing general awareness but relatively weak in terms of stimulating engagement.

5.3.5. On-line engagement and social media

An increasingly important medium, on-line engagement primarily through social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) can provide a cost effective way to communicate regularly with large numbers of people. A number of initiatives mentioned web-based engagement and viewed the approach as effective in terms of the numbers reached and the ease by which this was done:

- *"We have over 2000 followers on Twitter - we get lots of interest through this and post pictures of site and events."* https://twitter.com/Snowdonia_Soc [20]

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[20] The number of followers had increased to 3,600 by March 2014.

The potential reach of social media can be shown through the example of Montgomery Wildlife Trust, who run the Dyfi Osprey Initiative. The Trust has employed a number of social media outlets in order to engage with a range of audiences:

- Twitter - https://twitter.com/dyfiospreys (5,400+ followers)
- Facebook - http://www.facebook.com/dyfiospreyproject (14,600+ 'likes')
- YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/user/DyfiOspreyProject   (300+ subscribers and 195,000+ views)

The Trust also streams a video live from the site (http://dyfiospreyproject.com/stream), maintains a blog on their website and information is also available on how to volunteer. Taken together, these social media engagement tools (backed up by a well maintained/ updated website) has reached thousands of people.

5.3.6. Structured consultation processes

For some of the larger initiatives, a formal approach to community consultation (rather than engagement) was undertaken. For example, one initiative undertook public consultation events:

- *"We distributed questionnaires about the best way to go about establishing the path and the communities came back to us with what they wanted.… There were two public consultations and we also went to the press."*

One of the most structured approaches was undertaken by the Darganfod Dyfi / Explore Dyfi Initiative which included 'drop-in' events, open to anyone wishing to attend, held during May 2010 in a community building in each of the fourteen Community Council wards included within the delineation of the UNESCO Dyfi Biosphere where the project was active. The general scope of the drop-in events focused on providing people with:

- Background information about Dyfi Biosphere, and about the initiative
- A chance to look at a map of the whole Biosphere Area, and locate themselves relative to the main features of the Biosphere Area
- Opportunities to recommend for improvement / enhancement to walking, riding and cycling routes within the Dyfi Biosphere, particularly those within the particular wards in which each of the events took place, and in adjoining areas
- Prompt questions to help participants explain to the Initiative Team what elements and features they particularly appreciate within the Biosphere Area, and what if any issues they would like to highlight are relevant to the existing network of access routes in the area

In total 144 people attended the events (with attendance ranging from just one in one case to 25 in another). The results were used by the initiative team to help them come to conclusions about which access routes to include within the Explore Dyfi Initiative.

The main benefit of this approach is that it provides a very clear structure and process to the community engagement process. It is however also a very resource intensive (and therefore expensive) approach.

5.4.   A difficult process

As part of the 2014 round of interviews, the staff of a number of initiative delivery agents highlighted the fact that the community engagement process had proved to be more difficult or challenging than they had anticipated. The following are examples of the comments made by interviewees:

- *"I think actually getting people here to volunteer, especially local people, has been less successful than we anticipated. We thought that people would be more eager, but that hasn't been the case."*

- *"We haven't had a great response from local people if I'm being really honest. Once we get them here and through the doors then they really see, but people are busy. I think once the visitor centre is up we should be able to get a lot more."*

- *"To be honest getting local people to volunteer in general has been really hard. Getting them on board hasn't been easy. We've had lots of volunteers from abroad but it's only now really that local people are seeing the benefits of wanting to get involved. It's classic really."*

- *"We've been on the charm offensive, but it didn't work. They don't really understand our background. There's been local politics I guess."*

In some instances, it is apparent that the organisations identifying community engagement as being challenging had little previous experience of such a process which may explain why they would have underestimated the challenges that they were facing. However, in other cases, the organisations in question did have relevant experience which is an indication that community engagement is not something which is easily achieved.

5.5.   Benefits

5.5.1. Benefit to the initiative

There was a general view amongst the delivery agents interviewed that their initiatives had benefited from the community engagement process as illustrated by the comments below.

- *"I think if we had done the work without the community councils then it would not have turned out the way it is now; there would have been no interpretation, no leaflet - it would have purely been the capital works. Under the equalities act we have a duty to think about wheelchairs, pushchairs etc. but this allowed us to get people involved and it is still evolving now, people have really engaged."*
- *"I think they've benefitted from knowing more about their community and about their local nature. Also knowing more about their natural heritage and what facilities are open to them on their doorstep."*
- *"We depend on them as our visitors and to network locally is also really important. Engaging the community essentially means more visitors for us."*

The extent of the benefit of community engagement being identified by the delivery agent seemed however to depend on the extent to which community engagement was integrated into the delivery of the initiative. In many instances, the initiatives would not have been able to operate effectively had they not been able to engage with the local community. In others, it was not essential to the work that would be undertaken. For example, a number of initiatives had to engage with the community in order to be able to draw in the volunteers that they required to implement the initiative (e.g. the Dyfi Ospreys project).

- *"It's always important to get the community on board. It's important that they see what's on their own doorstep. I think both us and the community will see the benefits a lot more after the visitor centre has been completed."*

The comment above is interesting as it is an indication of what was an awareness across the board that community engagement was important as a 'marketing' tool for the initiatives; in other words as a means of ensuring that the facility or resource that was being developed was used. As discussed in the previous chapter, when discussing the process of engaging with disadvantaged groups, some initiatives were working on a reactive basis – waiting to be approached / engaged by those groups rather than pro-actively seeking to engage with them. Such an approach was less common from a community engagement process possibly suggesting the need to be pro-active in this respect was clearer to those responsible for the initiatives or, possibly, considered to be a higher priority.

5.5.2. Benefit to the local community

When asked to explain how they believed the local community had benefited as a result of being engaged in the initiative, staff often made reference to the access to the resource or facility that was being provided. For example:

- *"We [now] have an attraction here, people get to come here and enjoy and they can take part in guided walks and learn more about the history of their local area and the house itself. Also the coastal path now runs through their local area which in turn brings more visitors and so there are economic benefits too."*

A number also made reference to the benefits to the disadvantaged groups discussed in the previous chapter.

- *"We had an email from someone to say they had pushed their wife [in her wheel chair] down to the beach for the first time in 35 years."*
- *"We have had very positive feedback from the communities. They have improved, good access virtually all the year round whereas the Forestry Commission just didn't do anything. As soon as the complaints piled up they would send someone down with a machine and do something but that was it and there was no community engagement and involvement in what was on their doorstop."*
- *"Getting them involved has meant that they're connecting with nature in a way that they may not have done before. They can also come to appreciate how we do things here, which is using local resources and materials to build something which is truly of this area."*

5.5.3. Benefits to volunteers

As part of the 2014 round of fieldwork, interviews were undertaken with 17 volunteers (including two interviews with those working with groups of volunteers) who had participated in eight of the initiatives funded:

- Menter Felin Uchaf (n=6)
- Wild Fishing Wales (n=5)
- Cynllun Cymunedau a Natur Trawsfynydd (n=1)
- Green Links on Holy Island (n=1)

- Natur i Bawb (n=1)
- Nature Network (n=1)
- Tŷ Hyll (n=1)
- Y Winllan (n=1)

This was in addition to interviews with volunteers undertaken in 2013 as part of the research for the case studies included in Report 3 although those interviews were informal during visits to the sites of projects with no numbers being recorded.

The number of interviews undertaken is far less than had been hoped at the onset of the evaluation but initiatives were not able to provide enough contact details to make a larger survey of volunteers possible. The data collected is obviously useful and has been used as the basis for the case studies that follow. However, the small number does unfortunately limit the analysis that can be undertaken to explore how volunteers have benefited as a result of being involved with initiatives.

Taking into account the limited nature of the sample, we would note the following (based on the 2014 interviews):

- The most common way in which volunteers had become aware of the initiative was via previous contact with the organisation / officer concerned (n=9);
- Interviewees identified a range of different reasons for wanting to become involved including a general interest in the development taking place (n=5), in order to meet new people (n=4) and to improve a specific site they used (n=4) (all Wild Fishing Wales volunteers);
- The benefits identified by volunteers included (a) meeting new people (n=3), boosting their confidence (n=3) and the availability of a new or enhanced service (n=4); and
- The majority said that they perceived that they had gained new skills (13/17), their health had improved (14/17) and they had met different people who they would not otherwise have met (13/17) due to their involvement in the initiative.

In terms of increasing awareness of the local environment, 14 of the 17 said that they had become more aware of those issues due to their involvement with the project. In the other cases, the respondents said that they were already very aware of those issues before becoming involved. Whilst the limitations of the sample obviously need to be taken into account, this is interesting as one of the issues that had been identified in the early stages of the evaluation was that there was a risk that projects may not achieve a positive impact in this respect because they were likely to attract volunteers who were already very aware of the environment and the countryside.

5.6.   Case studies

5.6.1.   Natural Resources Wales Volunteers

This case study introduces work undertaken by Natural Resources Wales to engage volunteers in relation to monitoring and the lead body role is explored. It was felt that it is important to capture this work as it represents an impact of the CAN project that is additional to its aims and original business plan and one which is not a widespread practice across other ERDF/ESF projects. It also represents an example of how the lead body for a project of this nature and a public sector organisation can engage with volunteers. As part of this case study, the volunteer co-ordinator was consulted, as were five of the volunteers.

Natural Resources Wales' work with volunteers was not planned during the project development stage (i.e. was not in the business plan), rather it evolved as a response to a specific need in relation to the monitoring and evaluation being undertaken by Cardiff University for the Environment for Growth European Projects (of which CAN is one). This monitoring relies on large numbers of surveys of visitors to initiatives in order to collect information which can then be used to estimate the financial impact of the CAN project.

At the project development stage the methodology of this monitoring was not in place and the CAN team were therefore not aware of the level of resources that would be needed in order to fulfil extensive requirements, particularly in relation to surveys. Some CAN initiatives were also chosen by Cardiff University to undertake additional surveys in order to widen and improve the evidence base and so this further increased the requirements to provide information. As such, it was quickly apparent that this represented a resource requirement that was not planned for and could not be covered by core staff. Building on previous experience working with volunteers, a member of CAN staff identified the opportunity to engage volunteers who could assist with this work and who would benefit themselves from the experience.

The key and most commonly highlighted impact was in terms of the experience gained by volunteers and the potential that this would help them to secure employment in the future. In an increasingly competitive graduate job market, it was widely recognised that "*You need more than a degree these days*" and that securing volunteering or work experience was an important facet of competing for jobs. Two aspects of the experience were highlighted: the general 'workplace' experience side and the subject specific nature of the experience gained.

Taking 'workplace' experience, here volunteers focused on the fact that their time on the CAN project gave them experience of being in a workplace, and undertaking activities related to that:

> "*I needed more experience in the workplace, not just university related stuff.*"

More specifically than 'workplace' experience, respondents highlighted the importance of subject focused experience. What is meant here is that this was not just experience of a working environment, but an environment that is directly related to the volunteers' area of interest, both in terms of the degree they were undertaking/had undertaken and in getting experience in a field in which they were hoping to find work.

> "*My course is applied ecology, I am very interested in communities and the environment and hope to work in this area so the experience was vital as it is directly about these sorts of things.*"

"Employers are looking for work experience in what you are doing, not just a café or bar work. It is very hard to get that sort of experience."

A further benefit was highlighted in relation to networking and making connections with people working at Natural Resources Wales and other organisations that volunteers interacted with. The value of networking is clear and explicitly recognised by volunteers - there is always the possibility that connections made will benefit people in the future:

"I was networking with people who work in my field, it's the sorts of interactions that could impact my career one day, you never know who you are going to be coming across in the future."

Beyond these key impacts/benefits across all or most of the volunteers, other impacts were identified by one or more respondents. Firstly, two referred to an increase in their confidence or self-esteem as a result of the work, for example:

"I'm not outgoing and it has held me back, it was really valuable to be having to talk to people I didn't know, it built up my confidence."

"It felt like we were doing something useful and valued, the interactions I have had with others has helped boost my confidence as well."

In addition to this, one of the volunteers also highlighted that they had been able to improve their Welsh language skills as a result of the opportunity. This volunteer grew up in North Wales and has a basic level of Welsh language ability. At university, this skill was not needed/utilised and the CAN project represented an opportunity to revisit and practice their conversational Welsh:

"Talking to the number of people I did with CAN helped my Welsh, it really pushed me as I had to use it in some circumstances and has re-ignited my interest in it."

Volunteers also brought up (unprompted) the role the CAN staff have had in underpinning these benefits. The key to the success of the volunteering was seen to be the *"positive and supportive"* environment created by the key staff member who had undertaken the role of mentoring and managing the volunteers in a way which was "*enthusiastic*" and *"inspiring."*

Overall then, all of those consulted felt the opportunity had led them to be more likely to gain employment by *"filling in gaps"* in their experience and skills. This is an added impact of the CAN project which has produced benefits on both sides - a valued opportunity and experience for volunteers, and a resource for the CAN team which has improved the quality of their data collection and ultimately will improve the validity of impact assessments made by Cardiff University.

5.6.2. Project case study: Menter Felin Uchaf initiative

Menter Felin Uchaf was established as a charity in 2004 focused on encouraging and helping people to live healthier and more sustainable lifestyles. The main focus of the organisation is on a 23 acre community farm, nature reserve and facilities that were designed to reflect its ethos of sustainability. It offers a wide range of environmental education opportunities including conservation work, organic agriculture, woodland craftwork, nature study and research. CAN funding has been used to fund the building of a new eco designed visitor centre which it is hoped will enhance Menter Felin Uchaf as an eco-tourism site. The visitor centre will provide visitors with an exhibition of local and rural crafts, making the most of the centre's natural resources in order to showcase local produce, food and sustainable enterprise.

Engaging volunteers was essential because a significant part of the build relied on their hours and general manpower. Attracting a wide range of volunteers, the initiative has managed to recruit individuals with a background in the building trade, who are unemployed, or who want to gain new skills, who have the relevant experience and also those without any relevant skills at all but who have the motivation to learn. The project officer said:

> *"The project is based around giving people opportunities and up skilling their work. It's blossomed more than we expected actually, because in the initial bid we thought we would get a handful of volunteers but we've had about fourfold the number of people volunteering and we get more enquiries than we can handle. We've had to grow and adapt in order to make the most of the volunteer input and we've had to design it differently too."*

Six volunteers were interviewed by a researcher during a visit to the initiative on the 5th March 2014. They had been involved with Menter Felin Uchaf in various capacities as shown by the quotes below:

- *"I've been involved for about eight years now and I've worked on all kinds of things here. I've worked in the gardens and on the old barn, the round houses doing thatching and willow weaving and things like that. More recently of course I've been involved in the build of the visitors centre doing the stuff that I'm capable of, like helping with some of the build, the thatching and so on. I just get stuck into anything."*
- *"Me and my wife got involved after we moved up here some years ago, just after we retired probably. We've been helping out on all the different projects when they came up, but we've been working in the gardens and a bit on the visitors centre too, helping out with some of the carrying and thatching."*
- *"I've been gardening and helping out on general projects here, like the building of the visitor's centre for many years now."*

In the majority of cases the volunteers had an on-going and long-term relationship with the initiative having been involved for a number of years.

All six of the volunteers said that they believed that they had developed new skills as a result of their involvement with the initiative highlighting a range of what could be described as both 'hard' and 'soft' skills including:

- Gardening
- Coppicing
- Plastering
- How to be creative

- Traditional building methods
- Welsh
- Social / people skills

- Become more confident / sociable

When asked to describe how they were using the skills they had developed, they said:

- *"I'll be in my garden this afternoon thinking about what veg I'm going to plant next or how I could use thatching, it has given me some ideas about outbuildings that I'd like to build too, in a sustainable way."*
- *"I'd like to try and build houses at some point using traditional building methods, so I see this as the start of my training, so I'd like to learn as much as possible from here and also do some more gardening."*
- *"I haven't really used them in a job or anything, but I talk to people a lot more now, and I think I'm probably a lot more confident now too than before I started volunteering. You have to talk to people a lot here you see."*
- *"Every day I'm using my confidence and new social skills and on a practical level, I'm gardening a lot more."*
- *"Mostly on a personal level I guess. Like I said, I'm more confident and more open with people so it makes me happier."*
- *"Gardening mostly and at home. I'm growing my own food and eating it!"*

Five of the six respondents said that their health had benefited from their involvement with the project the following being examples of the comments made:

- *"As you get older it becomes harder and harder to exercise in a way that feels comfortable. The work we do here is physically and mentally stimulating so you exercise but it doesn't feel like a chore because you're talking to other people and socialising. I would say that it's keeping me generally more fit and healthy."*
- *"I just think I'm much happier. I feel less low. It's probably because I'm working outside and using my hands and working with other people too."*
- *"I'm much fitter. It's an incentive to come here and work and mix with other people and that generally makes you happier."*

Five of the six respondents also identified a benefit in terms of becoming more aware of the countryside and environment:

- *"Just what you can do with all the natural stuff that's around you. Building doesn't have to be all about diggers and cranes and stuff. You can create really amazing stuff using what's around you and everything that's natural."*
- *"The changes to the seasons, what you can plant and when and also how traditional building methods can benefit the local economy and the environment. It all makes a lot of sense."*
- *"Well this is an environmental project so I'm learning more about my own environment and what I can do to help save it. I would definitely think twice about the kind of building materials and stuff if used if I was building my own house."*

All six said that they had met different people by being involved in the initiative. Again, the following are examples of the comments made:

- *"All kinds of people really. I've met people who live locally, who like me have moved to the area and are looking to make new friends. I've met many, many young people from abroad who have come here to work on the visitors centre and that's been such an eye opener for me."*
- *"Locally I've made new friends and as you know they get a lot of volunteers from abroad. We share information and knowledge and that's really nice. They're also much younger and it's nice to have young blood about."*
- *"I'm much more involved locally than I was at the beginning of volunteering. I've also made friends with some of the volunteers who come from abroad and do seasons of work here. I've also met (Project Manager) and (wife of Project Manager) of course and they are just inspirational."*

5.6.3. Individual volunteer case study: Natur i Bawb

The Natur i Bawb initiative was delivered by the North Wales Wildlife Trust who built on recent experience, and through a comprehensive programme of activities, designed work to encourage engagement with a diverse audience to improve physical accessibility to around 24 sites rich in wildlife across the region. It also developed joined up marketing of visitor opportunities with other related local facilities and activities.

The volunteer interviewed described himself as follows:

> *"I'm retired…I took early retirement, 1 year and 11 months ago. I had an Interest in environmental matters, was heavily involved in environmental issues and matters. My hobbies include gardening, being outdoors, walking, scuba diving and I guess volunteering with the Wildlife Trust."*

He had been involved with the Wildlife Trust for around three years and volunteered for local reserves. When asked to describe how he benefited from being involved he said:

> *"It keeps me interested. I very rarely sit on my bottom doing things. I guess it's the physical side of things and keeping in touch with people. It's intellectually stimulating and social and it relieves stress and tension."*

His response when asked how he was using skills that he had developed as a result of his involvement with the project was:

> *"Not very much, knowledge helps but I'm not using it for any gain, its personal satisfaction, to know how things are done. I'm using it to increase my social circle and maintain it with people with similar interests."*

When asked whether he had become more aware of the local environment and countryside as a result of being involved he said:

> *"Yes very much. I didn't know these places existed, I have to think more and stop to look."*

5.6.4.   Individual volunteer case study: Menter y Winllan, Plas Glyn y Weddw

This initiative provides interactive interpretation facilities to give visitors a better understanding and appreciation of the area's natural heritage and allow them to enjoy the views and the other sensory qualities at the site. An amphitheatre offers space for outdoor workshops and a stage for live performances.   There is a multi-purpose room/work space underneath the stage where environmental art and wildlife interpretation workshops and activities can be held. There are now 5km of footpaths created by volunteers through the forest that link to the Wales Coast Path so the site is accessible on foot from Llanbedrog village.

One of the volunteers at the initiative was interviewed in February 2014. He was aged over 65, retired and had been volunteering at Plas Glyn y Weddw for around 15 years.

> *"I've been planting trees and plants for the Winllan project, I think I've planted around 600 plants all in all!"*

> *"We've had a house in Nefyn for many years and both my wife and I are very interested in museums and galleries and that sort of thing and I don't know whether you know the history of this place but it was built as a gallery about 150 years ago and it was resurrected by an artist and her husband and then taken over by a Trust. My wife and I decided that we'd get involved because we were interested."*

> *"I've got loads of personal enjoyment from volunteering and from meeting people of course.   It's a very pleasurable way of spending 2-3 hours twice a week weather permitting. There is also the satisfaction of knowing that all volunteer hours are recorded and there is a financial inducement from the government in the form of tax, an offset of costs or something."*

> *"I couldn't really [develop new skills] because I was 60 when it started and I'm 75 now and I think I'm beyond the new skills range."*

When the interviewee was asked whether he had become more aware of the local environment and countryside as a result of being involved with the initiative, he said:

> *"We have woodpeckers and Robins and all these amazing birds and you just can't help but notice when you're outside working. [The initiative manager] in his spare time goes fishing so I've learnt a lot about lobster pots and things from him. He gives talks around the Peninsula too. He's a real source of local knowledge and I'm learning a lot from him."*

He also said he had met new people as a result of his volunteering:

> *"Well I wouldn't have met anybody in the gallery if we hadn't have come along to start with. There were hardly any volunteers at that time and it's just been great meeting them all. It's been great to see the whole thing develop as it has."*

5.6.5. Project case study: The Dyfi Osprey Project

The Dyfi Osprey project, located within the Cors Dyfi Nature Reserve, began as a pilot study in 2009 and as a result of its success, the Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust applied for funding from CAN that it was hoped would make it a sustainable venture by 2013. Funding was sought from CAN in order to develop and enhance the initiative, improving the visitors' centre and upgrading the technology in order to intensify the experience for visitors and to encourage a greater community and volunteer involvement.

One of the initiative's main aims and objectives was to increase their engagement with the local community. As expressed by the Project Officer:

> *"People always ask me what my job is and what I say is that I run a community project. They expect me to say I run a bird project or a wildlife project but in actual fact I think it's a community project. It just so happens that a pair of birds are central to that project. I don't have much to do with those birds, I have no effect on them and they don't know me and can't see me. If there was no community involvement or no volunteers, this project would not exist."*

Engaging with the local community as well as attracting volunteers is a significant part of the initiative, with the sustainability of the initiative very much dependant on the hours offered by individuals. As the initiative is relatively small scale compared with other nature ventures such as ones run by the RSPB, the project officer conceded that *"volunteers choose you, it's not you who chooses the volunteers,"* and that they have succeeded in appealing to both the online community as well as the local community and have a high number of regular volunteers as a result.

In order to sustain community and volunteer engagement, the project officer is responsible for conducting presentations and talks on the initiative and the birds themselves, which invites local interest as well as attracting an alternative cohort of individuals who are members or attend different clubs or groups. For example, as explained by the project officer:

> *"As part of my work in the winter, I will go around doing talks, about 20 community talks, and I talk to between 700 and a 1,000, from people that sit in WI's with seven ladies perhaps, up to university talks and everything in the middle; bowling clubs, cricket clubs, gardening clubs, all kinds of things. Word of mouth is very important. It the most important tool, one of the most powerful tools and one of the important parts of engaging".*

The initiative's cohort of volunteers includes a wide range of people with a wide range of needs. But many do not volunteer because they are unemployed and need to up skill. A large percentage of the volunteers are local, retired individuals who have volunteered in order to stay active, meet new people and socialise as well as having a genuine interest in the birds themselves. Other volunteers include younger people from the area who are volunteering in order to update their CV as well as gain valuable experience for a university or college course. The project officer suggested that:

"There are two types of volunteers, ones who want to talk and be sociable, and others who don't. We are telling a story here and the first type of volunteers love to engage and interact and tell that story and the others who really get stuck in with the birds and work the anti-social hours. It takes different facets of people's behaviour so that people can work as one big engine. Synergy; Everyone on the same bus, travelling on the same road."

When speaking to the volunteers themselves, they expressed that volunteering for the Osprey initiative *"Got them involved in the local community,"* as well as teaching them a wide range of social skills and integrating them locally. Skills included social skills, speaking to the public, and technological skills, because of the equipment and team work. Some had previously volunteered for organisations such as the RSPB, but had decided that the Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust was *"More about the people and the volunteers than about the membership's fund."* In addition, volunteers believed that they were making a difference as their support was contributing towards the sustainability of the initiative as well as committing to the local economy and the local community in particular:

"It's a community in itself here but when you think about the wider community and the work that we do here, we are a part of the local economy, being such a popular tourist trap, we work to make this place sustainable and we get a lot out of it too."

The skills that the volunteers had learnt were personal to their individual needs, as expressed by one, *"You can pick and choose the experience that you want from this, and that's why there are so many of us willing to do it."*

6. Engaging with local businesses

Key points

- Engaging with local business should be an important mechanism for maximising the economic benefit of the investment that has been made in CAN initiatives. The process of engaging with local businesses is however generally underdeveloped when compared to the approached being taken to engage with disadvantaged groups, local communities and volunteers.
- Although limited, approaches used to engage with local businesses included local sourcing of supplies and services, engagement with on-site businesses and shared advertising & marketing.
- The most effective method for engaging with businesses identified most frequently was to "get out there and speak to them."
- The initiative where engagement with local businesses was most apparent was Green Links on Holy Island. Interviews with a small number of businesses engaged in that initiative found that there were mixed views about the extent of the benefit to the businesses of being involved.

6.1. Introduction

There are many reasons for trying to engage local businesses in CAN type initiatives. Businesses are, of course, part of any community; the process of engaging with the local community should therefore include local businesses. They are also likely to be an effective 'route to market' for initiatives that are seeking to attract visitors to their initiatives, especially in the tourism sector. From a policy perspective, given that CAN is funded by the ERDF programme, the strongest argument in favour of engaging businesses is probably the need to maximise the economic benefit of the investment being made in the local area.

Although business engagement is not a specified aim or objective of CAN, businesses are part of a local community and offer the potential for additional impact. The review of initiative business plans / tenders showed that the majority identified the potential of CAN to benefit local businesses but are largely vague on how they will help to realise that potential. This was also found to be the case during interviews with the initiatives in both 2012 and 2014 when the topic of business engagement was raised with interviewees, few felt it was relevant to the initiative and in the majority of cases it had not formed part of the thinking or impacted on the overall approach to delivery. This relative paucity of activity was in complete contrast to findings relating to the other topics covered by this report, principally engagement of disadvantaged groups and community engagement, where extensive plans and efforts were in place. As such it represents the most underdeveloped of the approaches.

6.2. Approaches used by CAN initiatives

The table below summarises the approaches to businesses engagement employed by the initiatives.

Approach	Example comments (all 2014)
None / very limited	• *"At the bid stage the community councils spoke to businesses to get them to support the work but not sure beyond that."* • *"We haven't engaged with local businesses but we are hoping to set up a local business on the lakeside."* • *"We have a couple of grants or sponsorships from businesses and we invited them to the Open Day we had."* • *"We've spoken to accommodation providers and eateries in the area who have already benefitted from the path in their opinion, but we haven't really worked with them specifically."*
Local sourcing: the most common approach to business engagement highlighted	• *"We buy as many resources locally as possible, that's within a 10 mile radius."*
Engagement with on-site businesses: a few initiatives had businesses on site. In these cases these businesses formed the focus of the business engagement approach	• *"We have our own merchandise and we have a tearoom which we take 10% commission."*
Shared advertising / marketing: shared advertising/ marketing with local business. This encompassed signposting from one to the other i.e. Local businesses showing posters/ flyers for the initiative and vice versa	• *"We regularly help each other out through advertising opportunities sharing information and things like that, but we haven't done it on a massive scale."* • *We've worked with local accommodation providers and do kind of joint advertising ventures. So they have a good supply of our local walk leaflets and in them the local pubs, campsites accommodation. We help each other out."*

In only one instance was an initiative engaging local businesses in any significant way - the Green Links on Holy Island initiative, delivered by Keep Wales Tidy. The objective of this initiative was to improve the visitor attractions at key tourist spots and create opportunities for Bike Hire and "Blue Green Gym" enterprises, along with establishing a way-marked walking and cycling route. This would increase opportunities for visitors and residents to access the areas countryside and coastline and generate economic benefits for local businesses.

It also created volunteering and job opportunities, and provided health benefits for local residents. A new bike hire social enterprise (Cybi Bikes) was established to operate in six 'hubs' in the local area and seminars were undertaken in each of these hubs in order to engage with the local community, including local businesses. Further, initiative staff visited local businesses to discuss the project with them. Views of local businesses on the success of the initiative are discussed in one of the case studies within the following section.

The most effective method for engaging with businesses identified most frequently was to 'get out there' and speak to them.

- *"Visiting businesses and talking to them, I think you get a better response when you are in front of someone."*
- *"Just going to talk to them, explain what we're doing/been doing and going through the community councils has played a big part in this."*

The challenges of engaging with businesses identified by the initiatives were similar to those identified when discussing engagement with the local community and disadvantaged groups as illustrated by the comment below which are typical of those made:

- *"The community and business came to us - we can't go out and…. The difficulty we have is that we only operate two days a week and we don't have the capacity to absorb too much interest and too many volunteers. So as much as you like to publicise what you are doing you don't want to create more demand because we are working to capacity at the moment with the volunteers we have."*

6.3. Benefit

Unsurprisingly given the limited extent of the engagement with businesses, limited comments were made when initiatives were asked to comment on how they had benefited from engaging with businesses. Joint advertising was the benefit to the initiative most frequently identified, but only by three of the interviewees.

- *"Joint advertising has been a big one [benefit]. We've been able to promote each other and now the caravan park next door are letting us have water so that we can build better on site toilets. The work really has been worth it."*
- *"Probably bouncing ideas off each other about how we can do things, especially when planning the new visitor's centre. Attracting tourists is going to be important so seeing how other people are doing it is also pretty important."*

Even fewer comments were made when initiatives were asked to comment on how they perceived the businesses that they had engaged with had benefited:

- *"We purposefully took the walk past the coffee shop and the pottery etc., so would hope that they have benefitted and I am sure they have but cannot prove it."*
- *"Two of our principal suppliers for the café are local firms; they have supplied significant amounts of stuff. We have also bought from Wise Buys, local greengrocer, so they have had some business from us. Our vending machine and maintenance of it is done locally. We have set up deals with 21C in Pembroke, a charity that do logging and firewood and charcoal production and we have been selling their produce and that has gone well so I think there is some cross fertilisation there."*
- *"They've had more visitors who then spend money when they're here. Visitors need places to stay and places to eat so we can suggest places to stay and things like that."*

6.3.1. Case study: Green Links on Holy Island

As previously noted, the initiative where engagement with local businesses was most apparent was Green Links on Holy Island. Interviews were undertaken with four of the businesses that participated in the initiative during February and March 2014.

When asked how, in their opinion, aware they thought local businesses generally were of the initiative the response was mixed, as illustrated by the quotes below:

- *"Certainly from my view point, I think that they did an awful lot to raise awareness and getting it up and going."*
- *"I wouldn't say it was high profile because I don't think there was enough marketing done to promote it. I think they need to make more people aware that it was available through having more poster ads or leaflets that could be available in more places. I also think they could have an ad in the Visit Anglesey magazine as well because people do take that and read it."*
- *"To be honest, I think the key thing has been that they have had a logoed mini bus that has been driving around, also a number of businesses like ours have had signs up to advertise the bike hire service and there has been the bike depot at the hubs that are the bike containers which have signs on them. It is a small geographical area so yes, I think people probably have seen the name but they might not know what it is."*
- *"I think more could have been done. There are lots of caravan parks in the area; roughly 70-80 in a couple of miles radius and more advertising for the project could be done with them. People with caravans are the biggest clientele because instead of bringing their own bikes down each time they stay in their caravan they can hire them. I think it is high profile because I think the turnover would increase 70%-80% as there are lots of people coming down looking for something to do and the management in most of these places in the area are more than willing to have extra services to offer to their customers."*

Each of the businesses had been involved with the initiative explaining that they had become involved because they identified an opportunity to provide an additional service to their customers. For example:

- *"It made sense because there were clear linkages with our desire to grow the business, resource share brings efficiency, but more importantly it provided a platform for future planning and development for the business and also for collaborative working."*
- *"I thought that it was something that would benefit our guests, it's an extra service to offer and a lot of people come here camping so to hire a bike here is a great thing because it means they don't have to worry about bringing a bike with them as well as all their camping gear."*

There were mixed views when those interviewed were asked whether their business had benefited from being involved in the project as shown by the comments below:

- *"The benefits are increasing as time goes on. Obviously it adds to the service offer that we can give, it adds to the offer available to visitors and to locals as well, which has consequently given us a greater footfall."*
- *"We probably benefit a bit from people seeing the name of our business on the cycle hire map but I wouldn't say that it has improved our business as such. For the admin and hassle involved in it the bikes are not really worth it but we still have to do it as a service."*
- *"Not a great deal to be honest, there has not been a big take up on the bike hire service, but those who have used it have been appreciative that the bike hire service is available. It's not just our customers that have been using the bikes as we have had other tourists who have been staying in nearby holiday homes coming to us to use them. My own view is that you need more of a catch for the bike hire, there needs to be a venue where people can do off road cycling, especially for families. The problem is, where we are there is no off road options, there is just minor lanes where visibility isn't great and so families don't necessarily feel safe riding down them. Some of the school groups I have spoken to about the bikes have been put off as the cycle route is on a road."*

7. The impact of CAN initiatives on the 'delivery agents'

Key points

- A clear divergence has emerged between respondents from larger delivery agents (i.e. organisations) such as local authorities and respondents from smaller organisations such as local third sector organisations. Broadly, there was a greater impact (positive and negative) on smaller organisations than there was on larger delivery bodies.
- Positive impacts identified included: (1) the opportunity to build on and enhance the work of delivery agents and their previous activities; and (2) developing organisational experience, confidence and capacity.
- Negative impacts were identified much less often during interviews and were primarily seen as outweighed by positive impacts by the respondents. The main negative impact identified was however the administrative burden of managing and delivering a CAN initiative.

7.1. Introduction & overview

This chapter discusses the comments made by initiative staff during discussions about the impact of delivering a CAN funded project on their organisation, both positive and negative. This issue was discussed during the interviews in 2012, when the initiatives were generally in the very early stages of their delivery and then again in early 2014 when the initiatives were drawing to a close.

As discussed below, a clear divergence has emerged between respondents from larger delivery agents (i.e. organisations), typically local authorities, and respondents from smaller organisations such as local third sector organisations. The types of impacts seen varied across these two groups, largely due to the types of organisations in each category and their associated capacities. Broadly, there was a greater impact on smaller organisations than there was on larger delivery bodies. As such, this chapter will deal these two categories individually.

The one impact common across both of these groups was the recognition amongst interviewees that without the CAN funding, the initiatives would have been unable (or unlikely) to be financed from other sources and therefore would not have been able to be run. This demonstrates, to a degree, that CAN funding had been able to effectively identify need and avoid substituting other funding sources (i.e. the CAN funding is not being used to replace, for example, local authority funding in order to re-direct resources elsewhere). Beyond this, the impacts varied according to the relative size of the organisation. These impacts will now be explored, beginning with larger organisations.

7.2. Impact on larger delivery organisations

For larger delivery organisations, typically local authorities or other public organisations such as NRW, the overarching finding identified by respondents was that delivery of the CAN initiatives had little to no impact on their organisation. The main reasons for this were that the CAN initiatives represented relatively straightforward and small projects in comparison to the organisations' wider portfolio, and in addition to this, the in-house support within these organisations (for example support from Specialist European Teams and finance departments within local authorities) meant that initiative leaders had access to expertise to aid them in delivery.

- *"From a local authority perspective it is a fairly simple project on a small scale."*
- *"As a local authority I don't think we have benefitted as an organisation - we have an officer at the authority who's remit is to look at cycle paths, footpaths etc. and this is now another bit that he looks after now."*

Whilst the majority of interviewees from these organisations argued there was little or no impact on their organisation, a few did highlight positive or negative impacts. In terms of positive impacts, the first of these is mentioned in the introduction to this chapter that the initiative would not have been possible without CAN funding although this obviously is not a benefit to the organisation itself. The other main benefit highlighted also related to this. A number of larger funding bodies said that the funding had driven a project which had been awaiting funding for a time; that the initiative itself had meant that the local authority had been able to respond to a need which had been identified but not operationalized pre-CAN.

- *"It meant [our local authority] managed to get something done which needed doing for a while; we had never found the funding before."*
- *"We have got more people involved in the sites and we have got active involvement from communities which can only be a good thing. We have also managed to get some access improvements via the CAN whether that be rubbish removal or whatever and we have put signs up etc. which are all things that we would have had to find money from elsewhere if we didn't have CAN. The local people can actually see that things have been done and I think that may have improved relationships between local community and the council."*

One Local Authority initiative also identified the fact that they (as a department) had little experience of European funding prior to their experience with CAN. This highlights the fact that, whilst Local Authorities as organisations may have such experience, it does not necessarily filter throughout the organisation.

- *"It enabled us to get to grips with understanding European Funding and understand it better, CAN allowed us to understand the process with reporting etc. and to understand what we were getting ourselves into."*

A few interviewees from this group identified that the administrative burden had been a difficult aspect of delivering the project as illustrated by the quotes below:

- *"The bureaucracy involved - it is never ending and completely over the top and self-repeating. The amount of time that I am still trying to prove if we spent things and how we spent things in an organisation of 1,200 people - it has been horrendous. If it has been like what I call a normal grant then I would have been out and about so much more and got more stuff done but my timesheets just show admin etc. I think the fact that there is so much paperwork, unnecessary paperwork, involved in CAN needs to be pointed out in big letters. I know it is EU funded but it is not 100% and there really must be a way to simplify admin involved."*

7.3.   Impact on smaller delivery organisations

The impacts of CAN on smaller delivery bodies such as third sector organisations were much more pronounced. Further to this, they were weighted in favour of positive impacts in the majority of cases.

7.3.1. Positive impacts on smaller organisations

Four key positive impacts were identified by respondents from these organisations, each of which are summarised below. In many cases these are an inter-related set of impacts, often with one driving another, for example, the increased capacity and quality of provision resulting from CAN helping to increase organisational confidence.

Continuity and scale: building on the successes of previous work

The first of the positive impacts relates to the opportunity delivering a CAN initiative has provided to build on the success of work undertaken by delivery organisations. In these cases, CAN was seen to have been important in providing a catalyst to build on previous successes, which otherwise could have been lost or reversed if the initiative had been unable to progress or evolve:

- *"[The key positive impact has been] building on our success – we had greatly increased site use [previously] but it had flat-lined up until [CAN] - we needed [the funding] to build on success and to keep moving forward."*

In these cases, the key word which emerged was *continuity*. Initiatives highlighted that CAN provided the opportunity for continuity in their work - with short-termism linked to shifting politics common in the public sector and associated arenas, CAN was seen to have helped these delivery organisations.

- *"It has supported existing work and has given continuity to what we are doing, which is vital."*

A few organisations also identified an increase in the amount of work they could undertake, or the quality of the provision they offer:

- *"CAN means we can increase the quantity and quality of activities - the scale, range and quality. The benefit is in the outcomes; number of people we are benefiting and by how much."*

The 2014 interviews also identified that, as well as continuing previous developments, CAN support has in some instances acted as a catalyst for further development. For example:

- *"We have just won another grant for about £25,000, to put new gates and gate posts at the entry to the new centre [funded by CAN] and it has been easier to get this grant as a result of the new centre."*

This is an interesting extension of the 'continuity' benefit and is one of a number of suggestions within this report that further work is being undertaken or is required in order to maximise the benefit and impact of the CAN investment.

Organisational experience, confidence and capacity

A number of interviewees said that delivering the CAN initiative had provided their organisation with valuable experience and increased their confidence in both the product/ service they provide and in being able to deliver something such as CAN. This was seen to have put these organisations in a better position for the future as they would be more able and confident to respond to similar opportunities in the future:

- *"Has given us the confidence to take on more sites."*
- *"It has given us experience of European funding and we would be better prepared if we wanted to do it again."*

Experience and the associated confidence should not be underestimated, it is a key impact. The reason for this is that it impacts upon the long term sustainability of the organisation, opening new opportunities and providing a legacy beyond the delivery period. Where this has not been possible however, it can lead to a negative impact as discussed below.

Smaller delivery organisations, particularly those who are not in a position to offer what limited staff they have long term positions, are often constrained by staff turnover and the loss of key skills to larger organisations/ businesses. The ability to buck this trend, even slightly, and retain key staff and their associated skills was highlighted as one of the positive impacts of CAN.

7.3.2.   Negative impacts on smaller organisations

A limited range of 'negative' impacts of delivering CAN were identified alongside the positive impacts by interviewees. Before introducing these, it is worth noting two caveats to these negative impacts. Firstly, the negative impacts were identified much less often during interviews and were primarily seen as outweighed by positive impacts by the respondents. Secondly, in the vast majority of cases where potentially significant negative impacts were raised (see for example, cash flow, below), the respondent noted that the CAN team at CCW / NRW had worked hard to minimise the impact and had supported the initiatives when problems had been encountered. Whilst this was not seen as always being able to eliminate the problem entirely, the role of CCW / NRW had helped to reduce the impact of these factors. The two key negative impacts reported were the administrative burden of delivering the initiative and the difficulty of cash flow.

Difficulties with administration were by far the most commonly cited negative impact identified by respondents from smaller organisations. Interviewees identified that there was a significantly larger time and expertise commitment needed to deliver the project in terms of administration (monitoring and evaluation, reporting, and so on) than they had expected.

- *"I am the only full time employee and I think we were a little naive when making the application about how much time and effort it really takes to do the admin."*
- *"The process of it has been hard work - it is quite demanding. I have not added up the hours spent but it has taken a lot of time. The paperwork has been a lot harder than other grants we have had."*
- *"General paper work and admin. It's been a lot of extra work, but it's been worth it."*

As with the other negative impact identified (cash flow - see below), this problem was seen to have emerged as a consequence of the inexperience of some of the smaller delivery organisations in delivering (particularly European) funded projects. In the case of the administrative burden, this manifested itself firstly in being unable to predict and prepare for the required level of administration and secondly not having the expertise (borne of experience) to quickly get to grips with the reporting methods and recordkeeping. The impact of underestimating the administrative burden was that it had put a strain on the organisation in question and led to a diversion of (limited) resources from elsewhere in the organisation.

- *"It has been very difficult for an organisation our size. It seems very complex for the amount of money it brings in."*

In terms of cash flow, the nature of European funding means that organisations must pay out from their own reserves before being remunerated. For larger organisations with access to cash reserves and/ or credit, this does not pose a problem, however, for smaller organisations; slow payment can cause serious cash flow issues and restrain the organisation (by hogging outgoings). Whilst this was not a widespread problem amongst CAN initiatives, a few did highlight the strain this set up had caused:

- *"[The cash flow problem] relates to our organisational capacity, we are a small organisation taking on a large scale capital project... we don't have huge cash reserves and live hand to mouth, we are very vulnerable to small changes when we get money. Any delays in payment are awful for us."*

Organisations delivering projects frequently face problems when the funding is drawing to a close and CAN is no exception.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

This final chapter concludes the report by setting out the conclusions of the evaluation together with a number of recommendations that are being made.

8.1. Conclusion

The purpose of this evaluation was to explore how the initiatives funded by the CAN project were achieving the social and community objectives of the project; aims 'Aim B' and 'Aim C' of the project. The first thing to note is that, for the majority of initiatives, it is apparent that these objectives have been lower on their list of priorities than the principle aim of the CAN project – Aim A – which was to maximise the environmentally-sustainable economic value of natural capital through increasing the volume, length and value of visits to the countryside. The priority of most initiatives has been to complete the works required in order to allow visitors to access the resource in question. We could not be critical of the initiatives in this respect as that was indeed the primary purpose of the project. Taking the above into account, the success of the initiatives in terms of achieving the social and community objectives had largely been dictated by how much priority they have given to them.

A range of approaches to achieving the social and community objectives have been employed some of which can be accounted for in the differing nature and scope of the projects. A number of initiatives are specifically built around providing benefits for disadvantaged groups and are run by, or in conjunction with, organisations with vast experience and knowledge of working with target individuals. This is in contrast to other initiatives where engaging disadvantaged groups is less ingrained and provides less of a focus in the overall strategy.

The strongest approaches, those which it can be reasonably considered have the best chance of achieving the social and community benefits, include the following elements:

- A clear targeting of one or more disadvantaged group; and
- A coherent mechanism for engaging target individuals.

Whilst some evidence of the benefit to participants who have been engaged by CAN initiatives is set out within this report, that evidence can only be considered as examples of what has been achieved; the case study approach means that the evidence is not substantial enough to be able to clearly demonstrate what has been achieved by the CAN project as a whole in respects of engaging with disadvantaged groups.

As with approaches to disadvantaged groups, the approaches to community engagement were generally well developed. Most commonly, initiatives incorporated a range of approaches to community engagement in their overall strategy. This is an important point as different approaches reach different sections of the community and have different 'strengths and weaknesses'. Whilst the degree of engagement depended largely on the nature of the projects themselves, some initiatives saw community engagement as linked to, or an extension of, their work with disadvantaged groups. This approach allows these initiatives to extend the benefits of their community engagement beyond those groups and individuals who are most likely to become involved with the initiatives anyway, simply through being already active/ involved in their community.

Business engagement was not as high a priority for initiatives and commonly seen as not directly relevant and there is clearly more scope for integrating local businesses into the community engagement strategy, an approach which would help drive community engagement itself (i.e. achieving community engagement through local businesses) and also increase the economic benefit generated within the local economy.

In terms of impact on delivery organisations, the split between larger and smaller organisations is to be expected, with the reported impacts (whether positive or negative) being greater on smaller organisations. What is important is the support which has been provided by CCW / NRW to mitigate these as much as possible, and the notion that smaller delivery organisations should be targeted for support to ensure as little negative impact as possible. Having noted these caveats, it is also important to stress that the positive impacts on smaller organisations have been key ones. Areas such as continuity of provision and the retention of staff are key for smaller organisations like these.

In conclusion, the ambition to encourage initiatives of this nature to generate additional socio-economic benefits in their area, alongside the more direct economic benefit of attracting additional tourists, is a very valid one. Indeed with the on-set of continuing cuts in public sector budgets, the case for projects and initiatives that generate multiple benefits becomes even greater.   It is important to stress that some of the findings of this evaluation should not be interpreted as a suggestion that the socio-economic aspect of the CAN project has been a failure. There are some outstanding examples where initiatives have been particularly successful in this respect, though better evidence is required in order to assess how successful CAN *as a whole* has achieved those multiple benefits.

8.2. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the evaluation. A number are directly relevant to the CAN projects itself whilst others apply to the programme funding CAN.

1. The rationale for encouraging projects to generate multiple benefits – in the case of CAN attracting visitors but also generating a local socio-community benefit via Aim B - is clear, especially at a time when the public resource available to implement projects is scarce. In light of the success of CAN projects in this respect, it is recommended that future economic development projects (a) explore the potential to become 'multi-benefit investments', and (b) have a focus on creating opportunities for local disadvantaged groups. However, finding a balance between the need to generate those socio-community benefits and the more traditional economic benefits is important. The potential to allow, at a programme level, for an increase in the priority given to achieving social and community objectives should be explored, for example, including within the project a specific round of funding / procurement for initiatives that would have social and community objectives as their primary, rather than secondary, purpose. We recognise that this may be complex because of the constraints of overlapping ERDF and ESF activities but would argue that it should, nevertheless, be explored due to the benefit it is likely to lead to.

2. There should be greater emphasis on monitoring and recording the implementation of social and community activities within any future projects of a similar nature to CAN. This should include the introduction of a small number of indicators that can be recorded to demonstrate the activities being undertaken and which provides greater evidence to any evaluation of those activities (see appendix 4) and exploring the potential to use SROI as a method (see appendix 3). There should also be a better method for ensuring that the contact details of participants and volunteers are recorded and provided to evaluators so that they can be invited to participate in research to assess the impact of the interventions (see appendix 5).

3. The potential to provide funded initiatives with greater guidance and training on how to engage with participants, volunteers, host communities and businesses should be explored. The potential to employ or designate a member of the CAN / central project team (or alternatively to contract with a third party to provide the service) to support and advise projects on issues relating to engaging with participants, volunteers, host communities and businesses should also be considered.

4. Building on the previous recommendation, in response to the finding that some initiatives have not been able to engage with disadvantaged groups and the local community due to the limited resource available within their organisation, the potential to allow initiatives to jointly employ or commission staff / contractors to provide that service should be explored as should the potential to support such activities from the 'centre' (i.e. by NRW) (i.e. recommendation 3)

5. Opportunities for developing more effective working relationships between CAN type projects / initiatives in the future and other projects and schemes working / engaging with disadvantaged groups should be explored. If such a relationship existed, relationships between those projects/schemes and CAN initiatives could then be 'facilitated' from the centre rather than each individual initiative having to develop their own relationships. Again, we recognise that this may be complex because of the constraints of overlapping ERDF and ESF activities but would argue that it should, nevertheless, be explored due to the benefit it is likely to lead to.

6. With a view to maximising the benefit of the investment being made within the local economy, any future projects of a similar nature to CAN should have a clearer requirement to engage with local businesses and explore opportunities for those businesses / local people generally to 'exploit' the business opportunities being created.

7. Further support should be provided to help initiatives / delivery agents to increase their engagement with local businesses. Possible options include the introduction of an award for business engagement similar to the community engagement award available within the current project. In line with recommendation 8, the potential for a specific round of funding for initiatives that engage with local businesses / help them to 'exploit' the economic potential of the local environment and countryside should also be explored.

8. The potential for future projects of a similar nature to CAN to be more spatially targeted towards the most deprived areas in Wales should be explored. For example, tenders or applications for CAN funding located in areas of high deprivation could be encouraged within the procurement / application process.

9. Additional support should be targeted to smaller 'delivery agent' organisations to reflect the fact that the impact of delivering a CAN initiative is greater at that level. The potential to introduce an 'introductory' version of CAN ("CAN light") specifically targeted at small scale projects and organisations / delivery agents should also be explored. This version / element of the project would, due to the smaller amounts of funding involved, be subject to a simpler application and monitoring process designed to minimise the administrative burden on smaller organisations and encourage them to become involved.

10. Consideration should be given to providing *on-going* support to initiatives funded by CAN (i.e. beyond the end of the current project) in order to help them to maintain and further develop their engagement with the local community and disadvantaged groups especially where the works (e.g. creating a path) has only recently been completed. This will be important with a view to maximising the social and community benefit / impact of the investment that has been made via the CAN project.

11. The potential to include, as part of any future projects of a similar nature to CAN, the provision of funding to support *existing* sites / initiatives to undertake volunteers / community / disadvantaged group engagement at sites (i.e. *not just new sites or those that need to be developed*) should be considered.

12. Due to the nature of the initiatives and the work undertaken, the true impact of the CAN initiatives on the local community is unlikely to become apparent for a number of years. A sample of projects should therefore be selected and supported to monitor their impact on the local community on an on-going basis with a view to providing evidence that could explore in detail the true impact of this type of CAN funded initiatives.

Appendix 1: Summary of the initiatives funded by CAN

As noted within the main body of the report, CAN was implemented via three main strands:

1. Initiatives that CCW (now Natural Resources Wales) delivered itself (with a total value of approximately £1.3m);
2. The Wild Fishing Wales initiative delivered by Environment Agency Wales (now within Natural Resources Wales) (with a total value of approx. £1.6m); and
3. A programme of 25 procured initiatives implemented by delivery agents / joint sponsors[21].

The activities and initiatives delivered via each of the above are outlined on the following pages.

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[21] A delivery agent is an organisation that has conceived, planned and executed a CAN funded initiative.

CCW / Natural Resource Wales initiatives

Initiative	Brief description	LA Area	Project value
Ystradlyn, Cader Idris	The initiative created a small tearoom, a new bilingual exhibition about Cadair Idris and improved the outdoor facilities. It also includes work with nearby communities to help individuals and groups to benefit from the new facilities at Ystradlyn.	Gwynedd	£420,127
Explore Dyfi	The purpose of this project is to encourage local economic benefits from sustainable recreation and tourism within the internationally recognised area of Biosffer Dyfi Biosphere by: increasing and improving sustainable "green" tourism; developing environmental, cultural and historical interpretation throughout the Dyfi Biosphere; and improving recreational infrastructure by creating a sustainable path network that is accessible to a diverse range of users.	Ceredigion, Gwynedd & Powys	£279,998
Cwm Idwal	The Cwm Idwal initiative redeveloped the visitor facilities at Ogwen in order to improve the visitor experience at this gateway to Snowdonia. This was a joint project between NRW and the Snowdonia National Park Authority, with collaboration and funding from the National Trust, and the work included a new visitor centre, associated interpretation, and improving access to and on the path from the centre to the cwm.	Gwynedd	£724,880
Newborough Forest Recreational Infrastructure	This initiative has improved the visitor facilities including access to the beach, a fully accessible car-park, improved pathways through the forest and interpretation. In addition it has provided opportunities for three enterprises to establish on the site. The aim of this work was to develop the site as a key resource in the community's development and a major asset to the local economy. Newborough now provides all weather, outdoor family based recreation opportunities across the forest, beach, warren and the iconic Ynys Llanddwyn, supported by high quality services, facilities and interpretation. Combining these areas together as a package will help to spread visitor numbers over the year and the local area. This will reduce pressure on sensitive wildlife sites and provide a more regulated income stream as a sound basis for business enterprise investment.	Anglesey	£904,870

Initiatives delivered by external organisations

These initiatives were procured by the project via a process which involved tenders to deliver CAN initiatives in response to notices placed on Sell2Wales[22]. These initiatives were procured via four 'rounds': Round 1: small scale activities; Round 2: connections and footpaths; and Round 3 and 4: visitor facilities and wildlife attractions.

Initiative	Brief description	LA Area	Round	Project value
Pembrey Forest (TCV)	TCV worked in partnership with the Forestry Commission to develop a range of new access provision, interpretation, way marking, marketing and new habitat creation. This work increases the forest's profile, enhances the visitor experience and enables the Forest to become a desirable destination for local and staying visitors.	Carmarthenshire	1	£186,697
Llys Nini (TCV)	TCV worked in partnership with RSPCA Llys Nini to deliver a volunteering programme consisting of conservation, renovation and construction activities which improved and increased access at Llys Nini, provided interpretation and created recreational areas.	Carmarthenshire	1	£203,571
Dyfi Osprey Project (MWT)	The Dyfi Osprey Initiative is a single species visitor attraction on an established MWT reserve, Cors Dyfi. The initiative has provided a high-quality wildlife experience through the medium of both Welsh and English for up to 50,000 visitors per year. It has been supported by up to 70 local volunteers.	Ceredigion, Gwynedd & Powys	1	£248,500

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[22] An information source and procurement portal set up by the Welsh Government for public sector contracts. http://www.sell2wales.gov.uk/Default.aspx

Initiative	Brief description	LA Area	Round	Project value
Lloughor Green Ways Groundwork BNPT	The initiative focussed on enhancing the infrastructure, interpretation and information available to visitors to the North Swansea areas of Gorseinon, Loughor and Mawr. This area has a number of visitor attractions and the local development Trust 'Gorseinon Development Trust' is working to upgrade these attractions and enhance links to the Gower to the West. The initiaitive made improvements to existing cycle routes and footpath infrastructure and increased the accessibility of these sites by foot or bike. It also created and installed signage to points of historic and natural interest in Gorseinon and Lloughor to and from access routes. And finally, it installed signage and interpretation and improved facilities at a number of sites of historic and natural interest. Local communities worked with artists to research and create interpretation appropriate to each site.	Swansea	1	£80,909
Swansea's Nature Network City & County of Swansea	Swansea's Nature Network capitalised on Swansea's natural environment by promoting and improving access to and enjoyment of a network of 12 wildlife sites and natural open spaces. The sites include: Cadle Heath, Munydd, Cadle Common, Hillside Wildlife Corridor, Garth Farm, Kilay Marsh, and Kilvey Community Woodland. Activities included: • Establishing the Nature Network Brand • Providing welcoming gateways to sites • Creating bilingual interpretive materials • Developing routes between sites with service providers • Removing physical barriers to access, and provide a coherent network of in site footpaths.	Swansea	1	£249,658

Initiative	Brief description	LA Area	Round	Project value
Upton Woodland Scheme Green Links CIC	The Upton Woodland Scheme was a joint project between Green Links Community Interest Company and Upton Castle Gardens. Disadvantaged young people were supported through the development of work experience programmes at Upton Castle that included creating pathways, play areas, a picnic site and a wetland area. The improvements will increase the volume, length and value of leisure visits to Upton Castle by providing improved facilities for families and those wishing to visit a nature based attraction.	Pembrokeshire	1	£126,613
Branching Out / Egin Tir Coed	Egin has enhanced and improved nature reserves and country parks throughout Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire, which are owned and managed by the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales, County Councils, and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park (PCNP). Tir Coed delivered this work in partnership on sites identified as being: in need of maintenance and improvement; likely to attract tourists and accessible for community involvement. The work was delivered by groups of disadvantaged young people from the local community, led by Tir Coed approved tutors. The groups learnt countryside management and greenwood construction skills.	Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire & Pembrokeshire	1	£249,934
Westfield Pill Access Route Pembrokeshire County Council	This initiative upgraded a section of the National Cycle Network, providing a link between the route from South Pembrokeshire to Milford Haven and the Brunel Trail which runs through Westfield Pill Nature Reserve. The route now facilitates access to the nature reserve for walkers, disabled people and cyclists, providing a coherent route for both local residents and tourists.	Pembrokeshire	1	£247,012

Initiative	Brief description	LA Area	Round	Project value
Natur i Bawb NWWT	North Wales Wildlife Trust built on recent experience, and through a comprehensive programme of activities, designed work to encourage engagement with a diverse audience to improve physical accessibility to around 24 sites rich in wildlife. It also developed joined up marketing of visitor opportunities with other related local facilities and activities.	Gwynedd	1	£137,575
Lon Las Ogwen Cyngor Gwynedd	Gwynedd Council created a new 1.5km section of off road multi user path between Tregarth and Bethesda. This new asset offers opportunities for community and volunteer involvement and participation as well as a safe walking and cycling route between the two villages.	Gwynedd	2	£521,369
Access Improvements - Ewenny Moors and Herston Lane Bridgend County Borough Council	This initiative restored the stepping stone path and created a new, raised, accessible route across Ewenny Moors. This has ensured that the landscape retains its character and that the route is usable year-round by the adjoining communities as well as visitors. There is now wheelchair and pushchair access on to the path which was not in place previously.	Bridgend	2	£86,898
Dee Valley Rivers and Railways Project Denbighshire County Council	The initiative created a series of short community routes for residents and visitors from each community along the Dee Valley in Denbighshire to the World Heritage Site at Llangollen. It also developed a 60km promoted route between Cynwyd and Bala and promoted public transport and walking links in and to the Dee Valley from mainline railway stations at Chirk and Ruabon. The community routes were identified by local residents and link together to the World Heritage site at Llangollen. They have also been the site of community activities to promote environmental awareness and to promote health and wellbeing.	Denbighshire	2	£358,250

Initiative	Brief description	LA Area	Round	Project value
Conwy Connections RSPB	The infrastructure improvements at the RSPB Conwy reserve include transforming brownfield land into a 'village square' offering a place for families and friends to meet, relax and explore. The newly landscaped area provides elevated views of the reserve and the Conwy valley and includes a play area, graffiti tunnel, picnic area, and events area. Volunteers have also constructed a new straw bale build 'LookOut' offering a fantastic indoor space from which to watch wildlife and hold events throughout the year.	Conwy	3	£397,123
Stackpole Walled Gardens Pembrokeshire Mencap	A straw bale building now accommodates a shop and café and access and parking has been improved. This has improved visitors' experience and understanding of the Walled Garden's importance to the Stackpole Estate. The new facilities also provide further opportunities for volunteers, and provision of additional opportunities for work experience, largely for people with learning difficulties.	Pembrokeshire	3	£350,120
Menter y Winllan Plas Glyn y Weddw	This initiative provides interactive interpretation facilities to give visitors a better understanding and appreciation of the area's natural heritage and allow them to enjoy the views and the other sensory qualities at the site. An amphitheatre offers space for outdoor workshops and a stage for live performances. There is a multi-purpose room/work space underneath the stage where environmental art and wildlife interpretation workshops and activities can be held. There are now 5km of footpaths created by volunteers through the forest that link to the Wales Coastal Path so the site is accessible on foot from Llanbedrog village.	Gwynedd	3	£724,095

Initiative	Brief description	LA Area	Round	Project value
Parks and People Conwy Council and Denbighshire Council	This initiative has based work around Loggerheads and Great Orme country parks. The visitor centre at the Orme has updated and improved its interpretation, access to the Orme and installed a 24hr disabled toilet. Volunteers have contributed to the site by restoring the Tom and Jerry pumping system relating to the mining heritage on this site. At Loggerheads the leets, tail race and mill pond around the historic mill have been restored, and a new interpretation room and space for volunteers to gather and train have been created.	Conwy & Denbighshire	3	£462,500
Cors Dyfi 360 Observatory MWT	This initiative has delivered an iconic 360 wildlife observatory on the Dyfi estuary together with bilingual interpretation of the natural and cultural heritage of the area. The build has offered new opportunities for volunteers to develop practical skills.	Powys	3	£686,000
Green Links on Holy Island KWT	This initiative will improve the visitor attractions at key tourist spots and create opportunities for a Bike Hire enterprise, along with establishing way-marked walking and cycling routes on Holy Island on Anglesey. This will increase opportunities for visitors and residents to access the area's outstanding countryside and coastline and generate economic benefits for local businesses; it has also created volunteering and job opportunities.	Anglesey	4	£340,000

Initiative	Brief description	LA Area	Round	Project value
Ty Hyll Honeybee Initiative Cymdeithas Eryri / Snowdonia Society	To help attract visitors to the centre, improvements have been made to the building and grounds of Tŷ Hyll, including the introduction of tea room, bee interpretation room, improved car park facilities including disabled parking and composting toilet. The gardens are now planted and managed by volunteers for bees and other pollinators and queen mating and drone rearing hives have been erected.	Gwynedd	4	£145,200
Wildlife, Whicker and Walks SWWWT	The objective of the project was to improve 1.1kms of the only designated traffic-free shared pedestrian/cycle route within 13kms of Cardigan, whilst encouraging visits and engaging with non-traditional sectors of visitors to a nature reserve. The improvements have provided an opportunity for the creation of a small, mobile ice-cream bike to operate , and a bike hire enterprise.	Ceredigion	4	£116,125
Beddgelert - Rhyd Ddu multiuser link Snowdonia National Park Authority	This multi-user path is a new traffic-free 6.5km route for use by walkers, cyclists and horse riders linking Rhyd Ddu to Beddgelert village using both new sections of track way and existing Public Rights of Way and forestry tracks. The route also provides additional linkages to other important existing routes from/to Cwm Pennant, or onwards to Snowdon Ranger and the Nantlle Valley. The project delivered on the job training in countryside works for the Probation Service.	Gwynedd	4	£637,505

Initiative	Brief description	LA Area	Round	Project value
Llyn Trawsfynydd Cyngor Gwynedd	This initiative developed infrastructure around Trawsfynydd Lake to facilitate resident and visitor links with the natural environment and the distinct habitats which surround them. The work includes significant access improvements, new paths, traditional and digital interpretation, marketing and promotion. The new infrastructure has generated two new enterprises: a cafe and a cycle hire business.	Gwynedd	4	£405,000
Felin Uchaf Visitor Centre Menter Felin Uchaf	The initiative involved the building of a new eco-designed Visitor Centre. The facility will significantly enhance the site's appeal as an eco-tourism attraction, enhance visitor's experience of the centre's natural resources and showcase sustainable enterprise and local produce in terms of rural crafts and organic food. The visitor centre has been entirely constructed by volunteers who have learnt and honed traditional building skills.	Gwynedd	4	£289,745

Wild Fishing Wales initiative

Initiative	Brief description	Project value
Wild Fishing Wales	**Enhanced facilities to increase numbers of fishing visits. Angling guide training courses and action to stimulate creation of new enterprises.**	**£2,453,931.00**
Green Valley Fishing	Habitat and Access Improvement	£33,287
Camarthen Amateur Angling Improvement	Habitat and Access Improvement	£8,649
Afon Llwchwr Access Improvement	Habitat and Access Improvement	£14,553
Afon Llwyd Improvement Project	Habitat and Access Improvement - Removal of weir allowing migratory fish passage. Installation of less-able fishing platform. Restoration of river bank due to erosion. Remediation of sand martin nesting due to bank repairs. Sympathetic coppicing and weed removal along river edge.	£130,000
Afonydd Aeron and Arth Improvement Project	Habitat and Access Improvement – Removal of weir allowing migratory fish passage. Removal of debris and habitat restoration. Sympathetic coppicing and weed removal along river edge.	£50,000
Camarthen Amateur Angling Association Phase II Project	Access at Penrhinwmeredith. Access at Henalt	£46,000
Gwernan lake Fishery Improvement & all ability access	Jetties, casting platform, all ability pegs, slipway	£52,000
River Towi & Teifi - Llangadog & Typicca Beats	Bridges, styles, walkway, willow planting, weed management	£11,443
Afon Dwyfor AA Habitat & Access Improvement Scheme R2	Replace bridge, footpath access, kissing gates. New footpath, tarmac parking area, stock proof fencing, watering area for livestock, invasive weed control	£29,085
Tal-y-Llyn Habitat and Access improvement project	Weed cutting in lake, parking access to lake, tree planting, jetty access to lake	£44,500
Fishpond, Gnoll Estate Country Park	Improve habitat and access to the fishery	£86,000
Afon Prysor & Eden Access and Habitat improvement	Improved access to Afon Prysor and Eden, fencing, bank clearance	£40,000
Brynhenllys Fishery	Disabled access & parking, fencing and gates, baffles and gravel introduction	£25,000
Llanfihangel-ar-Arth Angling and Habitat Improvement Project	Habitat Improvement, Car Parking, Fencing, Swing Gates for Access and habitat protection from grazing animals.	£40,853

Initiative	Brief description	Project value
Llanerchaeron WFW	Bridge construction, path creation, weed clearance	£122,000
Parc Taf Bargoed Lakes: Access & Habitat Improvements	Fishing platforms, paths, parking access, planting, reed rafts	£77,000
Camarthen Amateur Angling Association Phase III Project	Improving habitat and access. Reintroduction of a historic drover's road for access to river beats. Creation of a maintenance storage shed to safely and securely store tools for the maintenance of the schemes. Installation of stile access to prevent animals from entering the watercourse.	£102,000
Afon Dwyfor AA Habitat & Access Improvement Scheme R2	New footbridge, improved access tracks	£26,003
Llandeilo Access & Habitat Improvements (Round 3)	Improved parking at road side at the well-known Llyshendy pool. Better styles, and crossing points. A brand new disabled casting platform, and disabled car park as well as new disabled priority parking spaces. Habitat improvement notably Himalayan balsam control.	£52,900
Dwyfor Angling Association Habitat and Access Improvements (Round 4)	Creation of a less-abled anglers walkway/path. Installation of safe casting platforms for anglers. Remediation of river bank where revetment works required.	£25,300
Bryncynon Strategy (Round 4)	Extension of Boardwalk for Wheelchair and Less-able Access to bottom of site. Additional gabion style fishing platform. Additional site car parking.	£32,220
Trapp Fishery (Round 4)	Installation of new fishing pegs in order to allow safe access for all anglers to the fishery. Installation of an all ability fishing peg. Creation of 10 metre walk bridge that runs from lake edge to the island to allow access for two new fishing pegs. Installation of a shelter at site for visitors.	£11,580
Tyddyn Sargent (Round 4)	Creation of pathways suitable for disabled and less-abled angler's access to a greater area of the waters they can fish. Constructions of four disabled assist angling pegs. Habitat improvement in the form of shrub and tree planting along with coppicing of existing greenery.	£8,040
Prysor Angling Association (Round 4)	Creation of car parking adjacent to roadway for safer access. Remediate cattle feed area to make way for car parking. Installation of access gate and pathway along the lake shore. Renew wooden bridge over leat to enable access.	£17,400
Dragonfly Fishery (Round 4)	Wheelchair and Less-able access improvements around lake edge, installation of fishing pegs. Car park improvements for wheelchair and less-able users.	£25,000

Initiative	Brief description	Project value
Mawddach Habitat Improvement Strategy (River Wnion)	In River Habitat Creation and Restoration for fish. Installation of Groynes and Kickers. Planting of willow on river bank to provide protection from erosion.	£21,588
Crosshands Angling Habitat and Access Improvements (Round 4)	Habitat improvement involving the management of invasive weeds. Improvement of parking and access at Lower Towi beats allowing safer access for anglers.	£11,520
Carmarthen Habitat and Access Scheme (Round 4)	Improvement if habitat along river tributaries. Installation of shelters for anglers along beats. Creation of off-road parking created for safety purposes.	£50,000
Cambrian Angling (Round 5)	Creation of track to fishery roadway allowing better access during wet periods. Mark out the trail that leads to the lakes using quartz stone markers. Restoration of boat house. Replace gate with cattle grid to ease access by less able anglers.	£56,600
Bodelwyddan Game Anglers (Round 5)	Removal of debris from inlet and outlet and remove overhanging branches to include water flow and improve sunlight. Installation of fishing pegs and handrails for less able and younger anglers in the local community.	£16,000
Dwyfor Angling Association (Round 5)	Installation of Access Bridge across river along with improvements to river habitat. Habitat restoration and management of invasive weed.	£12,407
Pontarddulais Angling Association	Installation of Stiles and Gates along with debris clearance at Ynys House access. Install two new footbridges across feeder streams which open access. Install bank ladders to overcome steep bank areas for anglers. Creation of parking at Tal-y-Cynllwyn. Invasive weed management programme.	£18,000
Llanilar Angling Access and Habitat Improvement Scheme	Installation of styles, galvanised gates and handrails to allow safer access for anglers to the fishery.	£12,000
Keep Wales Tidy (Troedyrhiw)	Access improvements to fishing with installation of handrails and steps down to bankside from upper bank area. Seated area for less able anglers and levelled platform area. Installation of signs and interpretation panels at site.	£30,000
Tan-y-Mynydd	Installation of disabled toilet and wet room inside existing building. Creation of disabled parking area for anglers. Installation of three overwater platforms for anglers. Provision of new less able anglers footpath for easier access. Habitat improvement.	£28,585
Bryn y Gwin	Access Improvements to Fishery along with onsite shelter, pegs and habitat creation for fish and wildlife onsite.	£39,811

Appendix 2: Summary of how the evaluation was undertaken

Purpose of the evaluation

In September 2010, the then Countryside Council for Wales (now Natural Resources Wales) commissioned Wavehill to undertake an evaluation that would measure the impact of CAN interventions on the following stakeholders, covering Objectives 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the project (please refer to chapter 2):

- Volunteers - someone who contributes to the initiative by, for example, providing their time or skills;
- Participants - someone who benefits from the initiative by, for example, gaining new skills;
- Delivery agents; and
- The host community of a CAN initiative.

The following provides an outline of the phases of the evaluation process and the reports that have been produced.

Phase 1: Inception and Evaluation Framework

In July 2011, the evaluation team produced the framework that provided the structure for the evaluation. For this phase, informal interviews and discussion were undertaken with a wide range of stakeholders who will be involved in the implementation of the CAN project and the initiatives themselves.

The research tools for use in the later stages of the evaluation were also piloted during this phase via visits to three initiatives funded:

- The Moelyci Natural Heritage Initiative
- Upton Woodland Scheme
- Dyfi Ospreys Initiative

Phase 2: Interim Report

The aim of phase 2 was to gain an understanding of how initiatives were seeking to address CAN Aim B and the associated objectives. As such, Report 2 (finalised in September 2012) summarises the approaches initiatives are planning to undertake as well as those which are being undertaken, or have been undertaken. The report did not just list the planned activities and approaches; rather, it provided a thematic understanding and exploration of the approaches. In doing so, it specifically focused on how initiatives are seeking to work with disadvantaged groups, how they are approaching local community engagement, how they are engaging with local businesses, and the impact of delivering the CAN initiative on the delivery organisation.

Two key research methods were used to gather data during this phase. Firstly, a review of business plans was undertaken for all initiatives. Secondly, 23 in-depth telephone interviews were conducted with key delivery staff for the initiatives.

Phase 3: Initiative case studies

The primary aim of this report was to begin to explore how funded initiatives were seeking to address Aim B of the project. The initiatives for case study were chosen in order to ensure a range of different approaches and delivery organisations are covered. For each initiative, a series of stakeholders were interviewed. This varied according to the initiative but included:

- Initiative managers and staff
- Participants
- Volunteers
- Participant workers (those who work directly with participants)
- 'Outside' participant workers (where initiatives work with another provider (e.g. probation service, ESF project)

Interviews were completed during site visits to three of the initiatives covered: the Felin Uchaf Centre, Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust- the Dyfi Osprey Project and Snowdonia National Park Authority-Beddgelert Multi User Link Path. For the other two, in depth phone interviews were conducted. All fieldwork was conducted during July and August 2013.

Phase 4: Final Report

The final report concludes the evaluation by drawing together the findings of all previous reports as well as the findings of a final round of fieldwork which built on the findings of the interim report and focused on capturing what the achievements of projects in respects of the social and community objectives and lessons learnt. The following fieldwork was undertaken during the final phase of the evaluation:

- 24 interviews with those responsible for delivering initiatives;
- 30 interviews with volunteers, participants, local businesses and / or other representatives of the community where the initiatives is located; and
- Visits to the location of three initiatives to meet with and interview staff, participants and volunteers.

The fieldwork was undertaken during February and March 2014.

Evaluation team comments

Collecting data from participants and volunteers has proved to be challenging over the course of this evaluation; ensuring that such data was available was simply not a priority for the majority of the initiatives. As a result, the data that initiatives have generally been able to provide to the evaluation team in relation to their social and community activities has generally been less than was hoped. Initiatives have been able to provide very little, if any monitoring data in respects of achieving their community and social objectives. Whilst some initiatives have been very helpful, obtaining contacts details for participants and volunteers from initiatives has also generally been very challenging despite the fact that 'tools' to ensure that such data was available were provided. For example, for the final phase of the evaluation, in a number of instances, visits to initiatives were arranged only for very few participants or volunteers to be present for interview including:

- A visit to an initiative who had 'promised' that about 10 volunteers would be present for interview; in the event, only one person available; and
- A visit to another initiative organised with the delivery agent which, when the researcher arrived on the agreed date and time no one present was expecting them.

With regards to the telephone interviews, the evaluation team were provided with just 32 telephone contacts from the initiatives for the final phase, with 22 of those being interviewed (69%).

The result of the above is that the discussion in this report and some of the findings of the evaluation is based on less evidence that the evaluation team would have hoped.

Appendix 3: SROI and the CAN project

What is SROI?

SROI is Social Return on Investment (SROI). Every day our actions and activities create and destroy value; they change the world around us. Although the value we create goes far beyond what can be captured in financial terms, this is, for the most part, the only type of value that is measured and accounted for. However, organisations and initiatives that are not wholly focused on creating value and wealth often struggle to measure their whole value and the benefits and impacts are not easily measured using economic indicators/outcomes such as jobs, income and profits generated.

SROI is a method to help value the outputs and impacts of organisations and initiatives where their value is not immediately or easily measured using standard accounting principles. SROI values the social, economic and environmental outcomes created, and can be applied on a project by project or organisational basis. SROI measures change in ways that are relevant to the people or organisations that experience or contribute to it. It tells the story of how change is being created by measuring social, environmental and economic outcomes and uses monetary values to represent them.

SROI then uses this valuation to understand the whole value of the services and outcomes as a ratio. The ratio produced is the monetised (converted to money) ratio of costs and benefits. If (for example) costs for the delivery of a project activity are £1 million and SROI benefits are £2 million, then the organisation or initiative creates a 1:2 ratio, implying that for every £1 invested, £2 of social value is created.

The benefits of using SROI

- SROI helps an organisation or project activity to understand, manage and communicate the social value that its work creates in a clear and consistent way with customers, beneficiaries and funders.
- It can help you manage risks and identify opportunities and raise finance.
- It will throw up potential improvements to services, information systems and the way you govern your businesses/project.
- SROI will help account for the wider impact of your work and allow you to make more informed decisions.
- Because SROI is built on principles, it is very flexible. Different organisations and different projects (or initiatives within projects) create value in many different ways. A consistent approach to understanding and accounting for social value means that you can communicate clearly where and how you create value in a credible way.

SROI is a principles based methodology. The principles, a Cabinet Office sponsored 'Guide to SROI' is available at: www.theSROInetwork.org

Summary of key steps in the SROI process

There are two types of SROI:

- Evaluative, which is conducted retrospectively and based on actual outcomes that have already taken place
- Forecast, which predicts how much social value will be created if the activities meet their intended outcome

Forecast SROIs are especially useful in the planning stages of an activity. They can help show how investment can maximise impact and are also useful for identifying what should be measured once the project is up and running

The following lists summarise the SROI Principles and the SROI Process. More details can be accessed from the SROI Network web site and especially from the publication A Guide to Social Return on Investment (Matter & Co. 2012).

SROI principles

1. Involve stakeholders
2. Understand what changes (is anticipated to change)
3. Value what matters (or is perceived to matter)
4. Include only what is material
5. Avoid over-claiming
6. Be transparent
7. Verify the result

SROI process

1. Establishing the scope of the project/initiative & identifying all key stakeholders (in this respect the term "stakeholders" refers to anyone materially involved or affected by the project/initiative)
2. Mapping outcomes (through engagement with stakeholders to establish the "theory of change")
3. Evidencing outcomes and giving them a value
4. Establishing impact (exploring what aspects of change would have happened anyway or that are a result of other factors)
5. Calculating the SROI (adding up all the benefits, subtracting any negatives and comparing the result to the investment – with the sensitivity of the findings also tested)
6. Reporting, using and embedding (sharing findings with stakeholders and responding to them)

What role could/should SROI play in the CAN project?

The CAN project has three overarching aims and SROI is perhaps most useful in relation to valuing the extent to which Aim B "*To ensure that the benefits of initiative activities are shared with disadvantaged groups through employment, unaccredited on-the-job training and volunteering opportunities***"** has been achieved**.**

The diversity of activities delivered and/or procured through the three main strands of CAN and therefore the diversity of benefits of these activities would make an SROI assessment at the project-wide level extremely complicated (due to the vast range of stakeholders that would need to be engaged) and resource intensive with limited scope for comparability between the activities procured/delivered.

SROI could however be applied to any number of specific activities delivered through the CAN project to tease out the social value arising from those activities. The SROI could also be undertaken at the planning stage for a project activity, particularly where some experience of delivering that activity previously could help inform which stakeholders to engage as part of the planning process.
By commencing (rather than completing) the SROI at an early stage of an activity, evaluators could apply elements of the SROI principles outlined above (particularly points 1-4). The capturing of information in relation to these aspects will assist in the design of monitoring and data capture systems that will assist in the undertaken of an SROI assessment at a later stage within the project.

Resource required for undertaking an SROI

SROI is a complex process that demands investment of time from both evaluators and all stakeholders engaged in an activity. Stakeholder buy-in to applying an SROI to an activity is therefore crucial to boosting the efficiency and effectiveness of its application.

It is also very difficult to provide an estimate of the amount of resource required due to a number of factors:

- Whether the analysis is for internal management purposes or intended for public distribution (with the latter demanding additional robustness in the approach applied)
- The size and complexity of the activity under consideration (including the nature and number of different stakeholder groups and the nature and number of different elements of change identified)
- The timescale over which material outcomes occur
- The existence of information on relevant outcomes and research that provides evidence of outcomes
- The level of existing staff skills and resource (and therefore the extent to which external consultancy support is required to support the SROI).

By way of example, research[23] has identified that SROIs can cost anything from £4,000 to several hundreds of thousands of pounds although it is clearly likely that SROIs from activities delivered through CAN would lie close to the lower end of the scale.

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[23] Lyon, F., Arvidson, M., Etherington, D. and Vickers, I. (2010) 'Social impact measurement (SIM) experiences and future directions for third sector organisations in the East of England', Norwich: East of England Development Agency, www.the-guild.co.uk, in The ambitions and challenges of SROI, Third Sector Research Centre (2010)

In light of these findings, SROI could be applied in one or two instances on activities funded through CAN, particularly where there is enthusiasm, willingness and a capacity amongst the participant organisation to engage in the approach. It would be most usefully applied following the procurement of activities as part of a formative evaluation (if external consultants were to be procured) to ensure that the monitoring and data capture mechanisms are in place to assist in undertaking the evaluative SROI assessment following delivery of the activity.

Appendix 4: Suggested possible CAN project and initiative performance indicators

The following indicators were proposed as part of the framework developed during the first phase of the evaluation.

Outputs

1. Number of participants and volunteers engaged by projects
2. Number of participants / volunteers that are currently economically inactive due to health problems
3. Number of participants / volunteers who are currently unemployed
4. Number of work experience / volunteering opportunities created
5. Number of participants / volunteers on work experience
6. The number of activities and actions undertaken by initiatives to better connect natural heritage sites and reserves to local communities and tourist honey-pots
7. Number and range of activities undertaken by initiatives to engage local businesses
8. Number and range of activities undertaken by initiatives to encourage business activity associated with the initiative
9. Number of volunteers engaged by initiatives
10. Range of volunteers engaged by initiative
11. The number of activities and actions undertaken by initiatives to improve or enhance the environment

Results

1. Number of participants / volunteers engaging or re-engaging in training or education
2. Distance travelled by participants / volunteers towards the labour market (soft outcomes)
3. Number of participants / volunteers perceiving that their health has improved
4. Number of local users (to be captured by asking: how far away do you live?)
5. Range of local users (profile)
6. Frequency of visits by locals
7. Number of visitors / tourists
8. Number of local businesses engaged
9. Type of local businesses engaged
10. Activities undertaken by those businesses that have been engaged
11. Additional volunteering activities of volunteers and participants
12. Perceived awareness of local environment amongst volunteers and participants
13. Perceived awareness of local wildlife amongst volunteers and participants

Appendix 5: Suggested evaluation consent form and participants / volunteer feedback form

Evaluation consent form

The following form was developed during Phase 1 and provided to the initiative with a view to ensuring that the evaluation team had access to participant and volunteer contacts for use later in the evaluation process.

Consent form

A company called Wavehill (www.wavehill.com) have been appointed to undertake an independent evaluation of the project in which you are taking part. The purpose of this evaluation is to review the effectiveness of the project and to measure what impact it has had. As somebody who has been involved in the project, we would value your input into the evaluation.

By signing below, you agree that you are happy for your contact details to be passed to Wavehill and for them to contact you as part of the evaluation.

If you are asked to take part it will probably either be as part of a survey (postal, email or telephone) or by taking part in a focus group.

Remember that you can always refuse to take part in the evaluation at a later time. You will not be forced to take part if you sign this form. Anything that you say as part of the evaluation will also be completely confidential.

Your information is also protected by the Data Protection Act (1998) and will not be passed to any organisation other than Wavehill or used for any purposes other than this evaluation. If you have any questions or queries, please feel free to contact Wavehill: wavehill@wavehill.com or 01545 571711.

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

Feedback form

The form below was developed during phase 3 of the evaluation with a view to trying to increase the amount of data that was available to the evaluation team.

Dear Participant/ volunteer:

The _____ initiative you have been working with is part funded by the Communities and Nature Project run by Natural Resources Wales. This project is being externally evaluated. What this means is that an independent company, Wavehill, are exploring issues relating to the project, including what it has been like for people like yourself to be involved.

We would like you to answer a few short questions below and if possible leave your contact details for us to call you to have a further chat about this in the future. Taking part in this research will help the initiative you have been working with to evidence the work they have been doing and so is very valuable. Anything that you say will be completely confidential. If you have any questions about the evaluation, please ask a project worker or contact Endaf Griffiths at Wavehill on 01545 571 711 or email endaf.griffiths@wavehill.com.

1. First, please tick your age group:

Under 16	
16- 24	
25 – 39	
40 – 55	
56-65	
65+	

2. At the time you first became involved with the initiative, were you:

Not working due to health problems?	
Unemployed?	
Felt you needed to improve your skills?	

3. What activities have you undertaken?

4. Has your involvement in the project had any impact on yourself? (i.e. how have you benefited?)

5. Do you feel you have improved any skills as part of your involvement? How, if at all, might this help you in the future?

If you are happy to be contacted, can you provide your:

Name: _____

Phone No._____

Email (if you have one):_____

Thank you

wavehill

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