

Research ideas from the Climate Cymru network

1. **Does having local participation in the decision making process on a climate action policy (some form of participatory democracy) increase the efficacy of the action?**

Extinction Rebellion is asking for a Climate Citizens Assembly and the use of People's (Community) Assemblies. There are many advocates of both forms of participatory democracy but do they work? Are decisions on climate action made with local participation more effective?

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2. **Nature Connection would give all children and young people agency to manage their own mental wellbeing so that limited medical support could focus on those who require specialist help.**

[English Government research shows](#) **87% of children** have stated that being in nature makes them '**very happy**'. Connecting with nature improves mental and physical health and educational, emotional and personal development. In a recent [Natural England report](#), the forecast Social Return on Investment (SROI) for schools that have embedded learning outside the classroom in natural environments as a whole school approach is **£4.32 for every £1 invested**. In addition, research shows that a close relationship with nature is four [times more important](#) than your purchasing power for generating **feelings that your life is worthwhile**.

This is important because children's access to nature is inconsistent. We know that Wales is further along than England but there is still a need for ALL children to benefit.

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3. **Effectiveness of global citizenship education: Which global citizenship interventions are most likely to unlock action in an individual (at all ages – lifelong learning)?**

We know from our experience that global citizenship experiences (from debating to Model UNs, to MockCOPs to international exchange experiences) can be transformational for individuals, but also make them much more likely to engage in democratic processes, improve intercultural competencies, change their behaviours so they have a more positive impact on the world (e.g. consumer behaviour) and work collectively towards a better world. However, there is limited systematic

evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of global citizenship interventions as opposed to other kinds of pupil enrichment activity, and also little evidence as to the most effective global citizenship interventions. Finally, most research that has been conducted is in the school environment. What about global citizenship for adults? We truly believe that the experiences we offer make a positive difference, but with limited resources, we need to make sure our approaches are evidence based so we create an army of changemakers in Wales.

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4. Researching people new to nature connection and how/if it changes behaviour and perspective on how to protect our natural environment.

When we see what we value being destroyed and not sustainably developed it might galvanise action, e.g., voting for a political candidate with green credentials, consuming less, influencing others.

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5. Research to inform and promote holistic education for Sustainable Development (SDG 4.7): A targeted piece of research to clearly show evidence of the links between peace, human rights, gender equality and sustainable development, supported by case studies.

Work around climate change within the education sector tends to focus on environmental issues in isolation – issues such as plastic pollution and recycling. Whilst this is important, it would be beneficial to promote a more holistic approach, including climate justice and also making links between local and global issues such as peace, human rights and equality.

This would support the realisation of Sustainable Development Goal 4.7:

“By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.”

Having some clear research and case studies could be the basis for writing some more comprehensive resources and developing a pilot project in Wales that would support children and young people in developing the above skills and taking on local and global projects that would make a difference.

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6. Research to show links between militarism in Wales (and beyond) and climate change.

Published statistics on climate emissions don't take into account the impact of activities by the military. For 2019, the carbon footprint of the UK military was estimated at 11 million tonnes of CO2 for 2018 ([Conflict and Environment Observatory](#)). This was before the war in Ukraine.

Calculations of military emissions in Wales should include the impact of implementing low-fly zones, the testing of drones in West Wales, energy used by military bases and the production of components of arms which take place in Wales.

This research would be a first step to being open and honest about the contribution of the military to climate emissions. It should lead to public debate about how much the armed forces cost, both today and for future generations.

Contact: awel.heddwch@gmail.com (Cymdeithas y Cymod / Fellowship of Reconciliation in Wales).

7. How to present what a zero-carbon future might look like in an inspiring way.

To help the transition feel like we will be gaining a better quality of life not just having to give things up. Helping people to want to push for things to go in that direction faster.

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8. How can Wales make a just transition to sustainable land use and agriculture?

According to the latest IPCC report on Wales's progress towards net zero, one of the areas where progress has been poor is in the agricultural sector. Sheep farming is one of the most destructive forms of agriculture in terms of GHG emissions and natural habitat destruction but 86% of agricultural land in Wales is used for livestock grazing.

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9. Action research on how to engage intergenerational audiences in grappling with the complexities of effective design, particularly for care home gardens and other settings and particularly, how this could be supported by a Gamifying approach, such as that being taken by Swansea University.

It would help my work if more people could understand how Nature Based Solutions can simultaneously address multiple issues, eg well-designed gardens and parks can help with:

- Reducing emissions by cutting vegetation less often, binding carbon into live biomass in the plants, soil etc.
- Mitigating impacts of climate change by utilising the cooling effect of shady plants and trees (instead of air con) to protect buildings and their occupants / residents.
- Supporting biodiversity and human wellbeing by managing our environments for wildlife benefit.

I am currently working with Local Places for Nature funding to create gardens for care homes and other similar settings serving the needs of deprived communities such as elderly and disabled people. But this is capital only funding, with limited revenue for community engagement aspects of the work. I'm eager to engage care home residents, staff, managers and families/friends/ visitors/ in co-designing these spaces along with neighbouring community groups and potential volunteers, including pupils and staff of nearby schools.

We're working with UNISON and Wales Union Learning Fund to develop and deliver staff training on aspects of this agenda, including coping with extreme weather events. But I'd like to take this work to the next level, and include an Action Research dimension, to capture something from the process and make it available to benefit others working in this field.

Ultimately my goal would be to see this approach integrated into the wider Nature Recovery Action Plan process, whereby publicly owned land such as care home gardens would be protected for nature (as required by COP15 [COP15: what's been agreed, and what it means for Wales \(senedd.wales\)](#)) and managed accordingly; and public bodies and trade unions would support their staff and members to engage fully in this process for the wellbeing of future generations - although this is admittedly an ambitious goal, given current circumstances, but one I see as vitally necessary to a sustainable and Just Transition.

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10. How do we address the tight timescales of climate emergency whilst ensuring developments of national significance retain sufficient benefit in our coalfield areas?

We're currently seeing a high number of [DNS](#) being validated with varying degrees of community benefit/social value, some having no community fund/local ownership despite policy/guidance and industry minimum recommendations.

Our coalfield communities remain areas of high deprivation and low resilience. Large scale renewable energy projects have the opportunity to address climate change and retain community wealth within our coalfield communities.

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11. What funding would be required to restore a number of poorly/under restored coal mining sites around South Wales?

This would provide a point around which delivering on the restoration standards originally promised to surrounding communities could be campaigned for by CAN and other groups.

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12. How much CO2 does transporting coal from the USA add to coal compared to coal mined and consumed within the UK?

Currently the added CO2 of importing coal is being used increasingly by companies and politicians to justify new or extended coal mining in the UK. Decisive figures on this would help campaigners push back against this justification.

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13. Nature connection through tourism and the question of the 'ideal' tourist.

Access to nature and nature connection more generally is a key matter when it comes to moving the needle. In my work with national parks there is a distinction between the 'right' type of visitor – monied, educated, well-equipped, and invariably middle class, and the wrong kind – the bucket and spade brigade, generally working class, new to experiencing the outdoors, sorely lacking in nature connection as they are typically from urban areas. The latter deliver income to local communities, cause less trouble. The latter cause fires, leave rubbish, bring their sandwiches with them etc. etc. etc. All of our communities in the UK have been shown to be far removed from nature – we are among the least nature connected nations on the planet.

The national parks strategize openly for capturing the 'good' kind of tourist but I feel that there are clear questions here that good research could be called to answer. There is a point at which the 'bad' becomes the good, through education, through exposure, through experience. All these people are setting out to meet the same need for wide open spaces, green and a sense of belonging in our natural landscapes. My question would be how can we as land managers, legislators, tourism operators and administrators meet these needs better and what levers do we have towards pushing visitors towards genuine connection? Is promoting nature based tourism one way? Outdoor recreation is another? A right to roam allowing a less prescriptive experience off the beaten path?

The research is clear that nature connection aside from all other benefits moves people towards taking action on climate change. So this seems a key challenge – how do we better utilise the millions who flow into the countryside every year and move their experience away from nature being a backdrop to their pictures, to a

genuine part of their lives. Should we see people as ‘the wrong kind of tourist’, or are we merely offering the wrong kinds of experiences?

14. **Mapping exercise looking at (1) area in Wales that are deprived in nature (2) areas in Wales that are dependant on an industry / employer (3) where that industry / employer will be phased out as part of a just transition with (4) optional research into areas in Wales with an education deficit. After mapping the above, to overlay the individual maps and create a ‘heat map’ of areas in Wales where an investment in nature-based green jobs would have the maximum impact on nature, communities, and people as part of a just transition.**

Previous research has found that the right investment in nature restoration could deliver up to 7,000 nature-based green jobs in Wales over the next decade. However, there is a real need to understand what jobs and skills need to be created where, in order to truly deliver for nature and for communities. A ‘heat map’ could help develop a spatial approach to delivering the right job in the right place. In order to ensure its relevance, the research could:

1. Link into the ongoing work of the Nature Service Wales Partnership to help shape future policy
2. Help shape the delivery of pilot projects that provide nature based green skills and jobs across Wales
3. Provide a comms piece for all work on green jobs and a just transition in the lead up to the next Senedd elections

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15. **We would like to establish the likely demand for communities to access land in and around the Pontypridd area. To explore what issues communities currently have with accessing land for the purposes of sustainable development; and how might these issues be overcome.**

Why it is important & how it might unlock some kind of action: We know that people already access land for a variety of purposes in our local area and when it comes to land that is held for the purposes of recreation or other public benefit then issues of access are less of an issue. But we are also aware that when communities would like to access land in order to tackle social or environmental issues then access can be more of an issue. We would like to explore how these access issues (perceived or real) can get in the way of communities taking action in the local area, and how Ty Pontypridd might play a role in addressing these issues. Are there specific communities struggling to identify or access specific sites, or are there areas of land that are considered to be important local assets that might be at risk of being lost?

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