The Co-Design Project

Project Summary

Background: **What is Co-Design?**

"Co-design is a design-led process that uses creative participatory methods. There is no one-size-fits-all approach nor a set of check-lists to follow. Instead, there are a series of patterns and principles that can be applied in different ways with different people. Co-designers make decisions, not just suggestions."

Co-design sees the design decisions forming part of any given service or project made *with*, not *for*, the people those decisions will ultimately impact upon. It is part of a broader family of 'co-production approaches', where power and responsibility are shared between those delivering, and those receiving services, in equal, reciprocal and caring relationships, characterised by five core values:

1. Building on everyone's strengths.
2. Developing networks across silos.
3. Focusing on people's lives, not systems.
4. Working on the basis of great relationships.
5. Enabling people to be change makers.

In the Welsh legislative context, co-production (and co-design by proxy) can be thought of as broadly synonymous with the 'involvement principle' of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

QUOTE – www.beyondstickynotes.com

Background: The Co-Design Project

The Co-Design Project was an extended co-design exercise, bringing the values of co-production to bear, and involving:

1. The team responsible for delivering the Renew Wales programme over the past decade.
2. The Community Groups who know Renew Wales, and who have benefited from Renew Wales' support in the past.
3. The groups and organisations who do not know Renew Wales, but who have the potential to benefit from the continuation of Renew Wales' mission in the future.

In total, over 40 organisations and 150 individuals contributed to the Co-Design Project in some way.

The project commenced in September 2020, completing in November 2021. A total of 48 days of support were provided across three broad project phases: 'Taking Stock', 'Reaching Out' and 'Planning Ahead'. The project was led by Co-production Network for Wales consultants Suze Dempsey-Sawin, Jenny Mushiringani Monjero and Mike Corcoran.

Suze Dempsey-Sawin

Jenny Mushiringani Monjero

Mike Corcoran

Background: The Co-Design Project Outputs

DATE	PHASE	KEY ACTIVITY	OUTPUT
SEP 20	PHASE 1: Taking Stock	Literature Review	1x Virtual Project Space
OCT 20		121 Interviews	9x Interview Summaries
NOV 20		Story Selection Workshop	2x Event Recordings
DEC 20		Community of Enquiry	
JAN 21		Analysis and Reflection	1x Progress Report
FEB 21			
MAR 21	PHASE 2: Reaching Out	Event Planning Sessions	5x Event Briefs
APR 21		Event Preparation	
MAY 21		Podcast Creation	5x Podcasts
JUN 21		Event Delivery	5x Events
JUL 21			6x Blogs
AUG 21	PHASE 3: Looking Ahead	Sense Making Sessions	6x Session Summaries
SEP 21		Team Gathering	1x Slide Deck
OCT 21		Report Preparation	1x Final Report
NOV 21			

Background: The Co-Design Project Events

Central to the Co-Design Project, was the co-design and co-delivery of five events (and a short podcast series), enabling the programme to have new conversations, with new people, in new ways, and learn from the experience.

EVENT 1: THE TAKEOVER

Event 1 took the form of a takeover, with Renew Wales Mentors and Coordinators joining the meetings of an established network who do not traditionally attend environmentally themed training and events.

EVENT 2: THE SPEED DATE

Delivered virtually and open to anyone, event 2 took the form of a ‘speed date’ with attendees randomly allocated into groups for 3-rounds of informal discussion.

EVENT 3: THE BRING-AND-BUY SALE

Event 3 took the form of a ‘reciprocity ring’, with a structured discussion amongst an invited group of participants allowing each to share the things they were looking for the support of the group with, and the support they could offer to the group in return

EVENT 4: THE HACK

Delivered in partnership with People First, event 4 took the form of a ‘hack’ where a group of people came together to make a set of resources from scratch over the course of a day.

EVENT 5: THE CELEBRATION

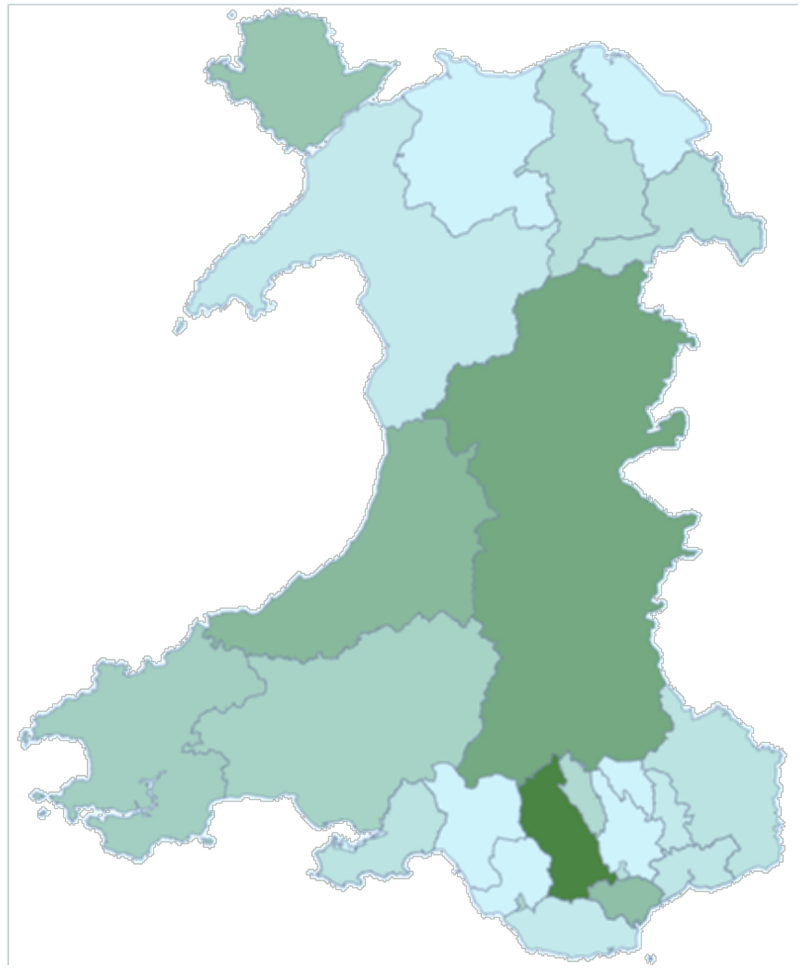
For event 5, Renew Wales joined forces GwE, Wrexham Glyndwr University and Natural Resources Wales, to support the delivery of ‘TEDxGwE: Countdown to COP26’.

Findings: **Key Programme Outputs**

Renew Wales is supporting Community Groups in all parts of Wales, but the distribution of this support is not uniform. In the period April 2018 – October 2021 Renew Wales has:

- Met with over **382** Community Groups
- Provided formal peer Mentoring support to over **237** Community Groups
- Had over **1,550** individuals participate in its events
- Delivered **9** large-scale projects.
- Delivered **79** national and regional networking and skill sharing events.
- Published over **90** blogs, papers, newsletters and think pieces.
- Participated in **29** workshops, events and other external forums.
- Grown its social media following by over **163%.**

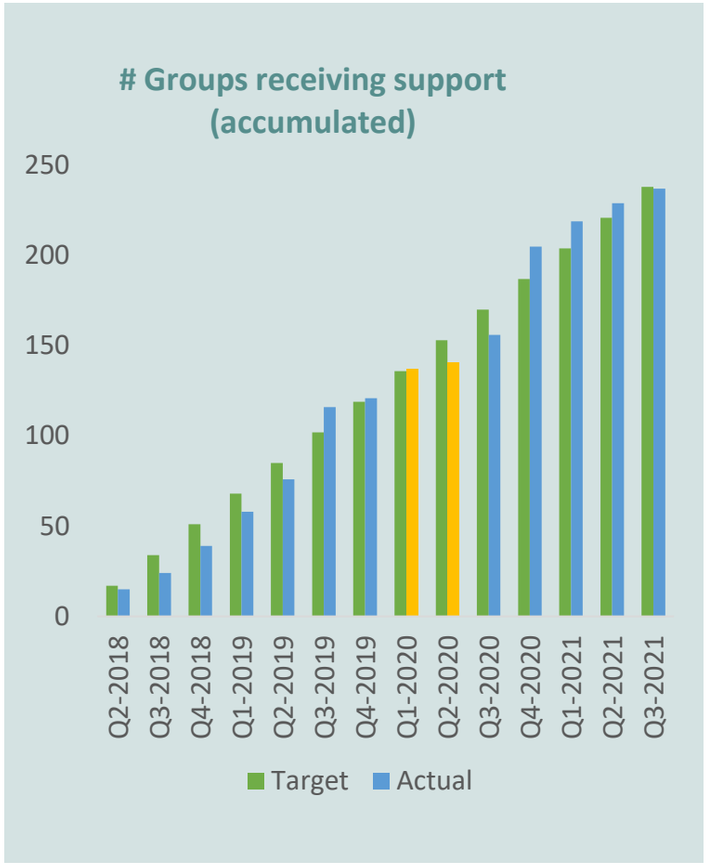
The programme is on course (based on current projections) to meet or exceed targets for 92% of its stated key performance indicators for the time period Q2-2018 to Q2–2022.

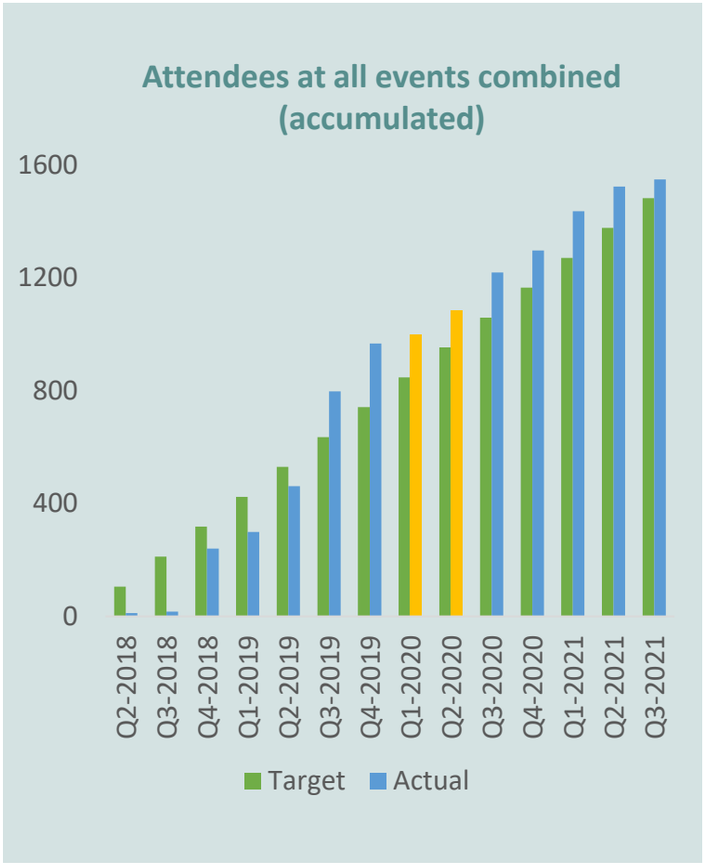


Distribution of Renew Wales support
(# groups supported per county borough)

Findings: **Key Programme Outputs**

Renew Wales is consistently meeting its delivery targets.

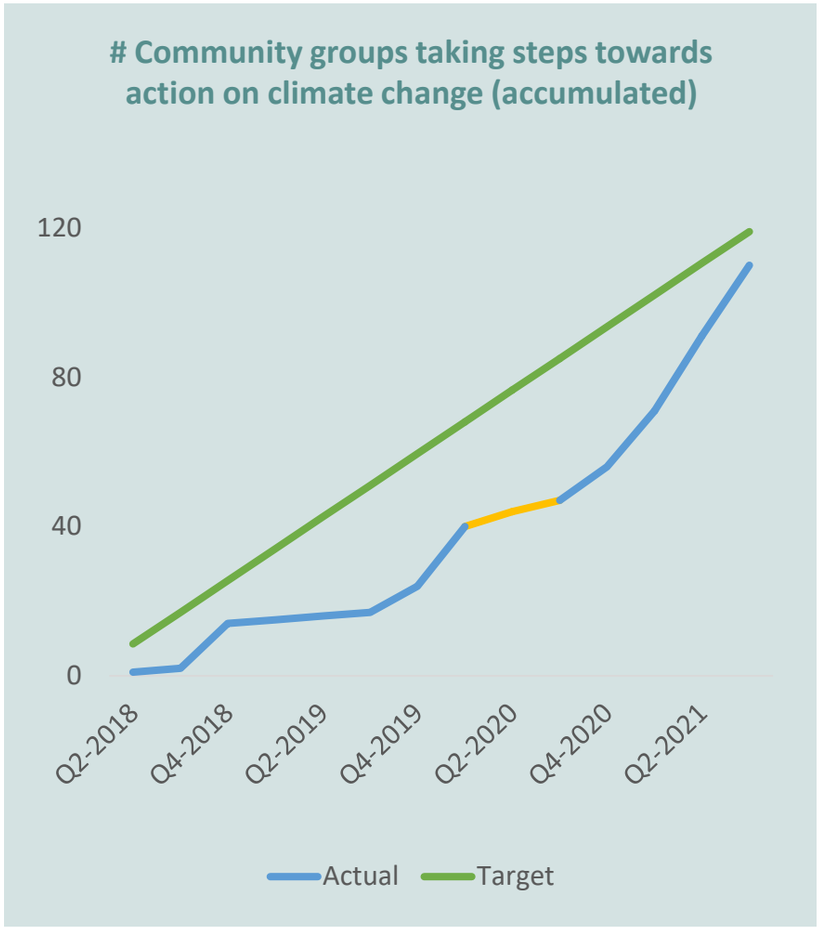


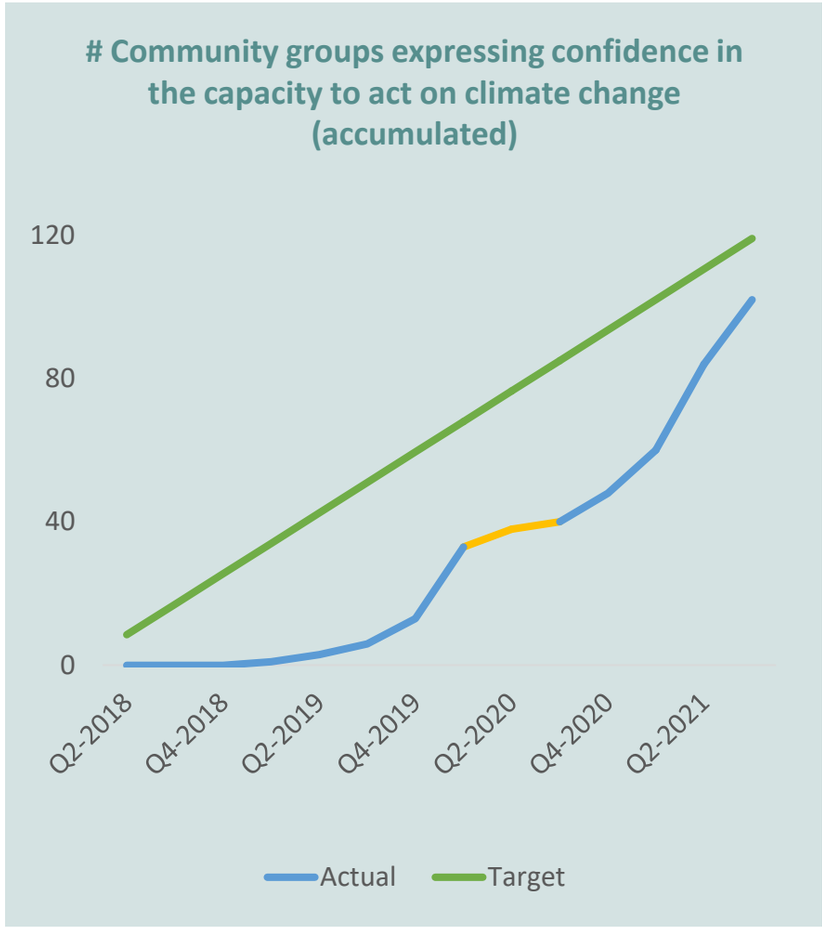


In the figures above, the green bars represent Renew Wales' targets, the blue bars represent performance against those targets, and the gold bars represent performance during the months surrounding the initial outbreak of Covid-19 in the UK. The programme proved resilient to Covid-19, quickly recovering after the outbreak of Covid-19, and continuing to meet or exceed its performance targets.

Findings: **Key Programme Outcomes**

Renew Wales is helping Community Groups across Wales to build their confidence, and to take steps towards action on climate change.





The figures above demonstrate the building confidence, and enabling action, takes time. Over time, the Renew Wales programme has become increasingly equipped to do both of these things.

(The gold bars in the figure above indicate the months surrounding the outbreak of Covid-19 in the UK).

Findings: **Changes for Community Groups**

1:1 interviews with Renew Wales Mentors and Coordinators revealed that they had experienced the following changes amongst the community groups they had worked with:

- **Changes to culture, behaviour and action:** Interviewees experienced Community Groups taking action, and increasingly so, but only where a positive culture enabled that to happen. Action and culture they felt, can't be separated whilst working to enable change.

- **Changes to skills, knowledge and understanding:** Interviewees have seen the skills, knowledge and understanding groups seek diversify, with local environmental objectives increasingly seen as interconnected with wider economic and social challenges, and the global climate agenda As such, signposting and partnership working are of increasing importance to the programme.

- **Changes to community connections, cohesion and resilience:** Interviewees have seen groups grow closer, supporting each other, and becoming more resilient as result. However, this appears contingent on the culture, infrastructure and relationships between third, private and voluntary sectors in a given locality which enable such collaboration to sustain. Interviewees also cited the importance of bringing more diverse and representative voices into the conversation, something which they felt was not happening quickly enough.

- **Changes to satisfaction, purpose and wellbeing:** Interviewees have seen those they support experience positive wellbeing as well as environmental impacts. They see the two as intrinsically connected, and as much about the process of working with Renew Wales as the outputs of this work.

Findings: **Changes for the Team**

1:1 interviews with Renew Wales Mentors and Coordinators revealed that they had experienced the following changes for themselves, throughout their time with the programme:

- **Community connections, cohesion and resilience:** Through their roles with Renew Wales, interviewees felt more connected to one another. They have grown their networks, become embedded in their local community development 'ecosystems' and they feel increasingly empowered and equipped to help others.

- **Satisfaction, purpose and wellbeing:** Working with Renew Wales has provided interviewees with a sense of purpose and fulfilment. They have found the role both challenging and rewarding. Key to fulfilment, some commented, was the trust bestowed upon them, being permitting to 'get on with it' – building of their strengths and providing support as best they see fit.

- **Skills, knowledge and understanding:** Through their roles, interviewees reported gaining skills, knowledge and understanding which has fed back into their host organisations, their own work and their personal lives. They 'learn from talking to people' and see their behaviours and abilities improving as a result.

Interviewees also felt that national global shifts are impacting upon the ways in which Renew Wales can carry out its work, creating both challenges and opportunities. interviewees commented on the increased profile of the climate debate, and increased awareness of the issues. We are seen to be 'at a transition point', moving from 'the awareness to the action stage'.

Findings: **Key Learning from Events**

The delivery of events provided rich insight and learning. Detailed blogs and evaluations accompanied each event. Below a small selection of learning points are provided.

EVENT 1: THE TAKEOVER

For those who had not joined a conversation about the environment before. the opportunity to meet on 'safe ground', amongst peers, and where they were familiar, was key to breaking the habit.

EVENT 2: THE SPEED DATE

Whether speaking with their local neighbours, or individuals from the other side of the world, people had much in common, much to learn from one another, and a desire to stay connected.

EVENT 3: THE BRING-AND-BUY SALE

For those working in Town and Community Councils, overcoming environmental challenges requires much more than environmental expertise. The specific challenges individuals sought help in overcoming fell into 3 categories: paperwork, communication and coordination.

EVENT 4: THE HACK

The hack led to a whole new strand of environmental activity being adopted by People First. It highlighted the ‘snowball effect’ that can arise from simple, but meaningful, interventions.

EVENT 5: THE CELEBRATION

Key to the event’s success was not being wedding to any one process or way of working. Freedom to focus exclusively on doing what was needed to contribute to shared goals, enabled all that followed.

Findings: **Broad Conclusions**

When reflecting on all the changes delivered by the Renew Wales programme, and the significant lessons these changes can offer us for the future, Renew Wales Coordinators, Mentors and Steering Group members came together, and drew the following broad conclusions:

1. That change must happen faster, at all levels, and at all scales.

2. That lasting and sustainable change can only happen through collaboration, partnership and involvement in all directions – with citizens, businesses, Community Groups, local and national government all playing their part.

3. That asset-based approaches and positive narratives are essential – celebrating success and building on what works.

4. That there is a huge amount of knowledge and experience across Wales which must be captured, consolidated and shared.

5. That we must take advantage of existing power and opportunity we have.

Building on these conclusions, five ‘action-focused statements’, for any programme carrying forward Renew Wales’ mission in the future, were defined.

Next Steps: **Agenda for Action**

Marketing and Engagement

Any programme carrying Renew Wales' mission forward into the future, must clearly communicate its value, celebrate and promote its success, and engage with communities and organisations at all levels, representative of the country's rich diversity.

Mission and Values

Any programme carrying Renew Wales' mission forward into the future, must have a clearly defined vision, mission and value proposition, commensurate to the changing needs of the planet, and responsive to the evolving wants and needs of communities and organisations.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Any programme carrying Renew Wales' mission forward into the future, must set goals, and measure progress towards them, in a way which reflects the nuance of enabling sustainable change. It must capture the 'unknown unknowns' and encourage a culture of learning and innovation.

Process and Governance

Any programme carrying Renew Wales' mission forward into the future, must have governance structures suited to working in complexity, processes which are flexible and responsive to emergent challenges and opportunities, and ultimately be citizen-led if it is to remain an authentic voice of communities.

Products and Services

Any programme carrying Renew Wales' mission forward into the future must innovate with its products, services and support, remaining relevant and responsive, growing its prospective audience and utilising the assets which have been accumulated over the past decade.

Next Steps: **Key Questions**

With the current Renew Wales programme coming to an end in the Summer of 2022, immediate attention must now turn to concluding the programme as constructively as possible, and ensuring that the transition to any new programme carrying Renew Wales' mission forward is seamless, and focused on emerging needs and opportunities.

Building on everything learned and explored throughout the Co-Design Project, this must include consideration of Renew Wales':

- **Status:** How will any future programme be managed and resourced? How will its governance ensure the correct balance of sustainability, resilience and agility?

- **Products, services and activities:** What must any future programme deliver, and to whom, to remain a relevant and desired solution to the challenges facing Wales (and the world) today?

- **Vision, mission and purpose:** How will any future programme ensure it remains purpose-driven, as a prominent force for good in Wales and beyond, with an urgency commensurate to the criticality of the climate crisis?

In keeping with the values and approach of the Co-Design Project, we would recommend that such questions are explored through continued, open and exploratory dialogue, where decisions are reached with, and owned by, all those whom they will impact upon.

Prepared for Renew Wales by
The Co-production Network for Wales

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