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| **Title: Wales’ Youth Climate Ambassadors** | |
| **Synopsis/Overview:**  Wales’ Youth Climate Ambassadors (YCAs) are an incredible group of concerned young people, facilitated by [Size of Wales](https://sizeofwales.org.uk/) and the [Welsh Centre of International Affairs](https://www.wcia.org.uk/), who are working to raise awareness of the climate emergency and to ensure that the voice of young people and more vulnerable groups are involved in making policies and taking action to mitigate climate change. This is their story to date, as told by Poppy Stowell-Evans, one of the Youth Climate Ambassadors. | |
| **When: Contemporary – 2020 until today** | **Where: The whole of Wales** |
| **Background:**  The climate crisis is perhaps the wake-up call of our time – one which we ignore at our peril. The climate is the long-term pattern of day to day weather. We rely on stable seasonal patterns of temperature, rain, and wind to have food and water in Wales and across the world. In the last century, the earth’s average temperature has increased faster than previously seen – this is known as global warming.  Evidence demonstrates that the main cause of global warming is very likely to be because of human activity and our use of fuels like coal, diesel, petrol, and gas. When these fuels are burned they release greenhouse gases which trap heat in the earth’s atmosphere, causing the air and seas to heat up which changes the climate. The greenhouse gases produced when we burn these fuels contain a lot of carbon and so the term ‘carbon emissions’ is often used.  Levels of greenhouse gases are rising fast and are currently higher than they have been over the last 800,000 years. An increase of global warming at current rates will significantly increase the risk extreme weather events such as floods, forest fires, extreme heat and drought pose for millions of people across the world.  These alarming prospects have led many governments, local authorities, activists and scientists around the world to declare that we are in a state of climate emergency. The Welsh government declared a climate emergency in 2019 and was the first of the UK nations to do so.  Young people have been particularly vocal about the dangers of climate change, partly led by the example of the teenager [Greta Thunberg.](https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/kids-club/cool-kids/general-kids-club/greta-thunberg-facts/)  The Youth Climate Ambassadors (YCAs) for Wales are a group of fifteen 13-25-year-old climate activists from around the country. The group aims to amplify youth voices and empower young and underrepresented voices while aiming to enable accessible and unified climate action at all levels. | |
| **The Story:**  Since YCA started in 2020, the group has aimed to ensure that their work reached as many people as possible. The aim of their activism was to be inclusive and remove the hierarchy within climate activism to show that everyone has power in this movement. To make this possible, social media campaigns have been very influential in YCA’s strategies. The organisation has conducted social media campaigns on topics ranging from COP26 to everyday climate conscious actions that people can take. Generally, these campaigns have been successful in raising awareness of YCA and key issues as well as reaching a larger audience of people.  Initially, the Youth Climate Ambassadors wanted to increase awareness of climate change. The group hoped that with an increase in awareness about the threat that climate change poses, along with empowering information about the range of actions people can take, that individuals, businesses, schools and governments would be encouraged to act. YCA aimed to support them throughout their entire climate journey. In order to make this plan reality, the group created tailored one-on-one support for schools and businesses to help provide the youth perspective and guide them on their climate journey. These consultation-like sessions were very successful and impacted communities at a grassroots level. However, the group soon realised that while they were successful, they were only impacting a small number of people.  With this realisation, the group changed tactics. While continuing to work at a grassroots level, YCA began to reach out by hosting events, working with other organisations and charities (NGOs) and reaching out to politicians aiming to influence the actions of key businesses and governments. This strategy was based around creating a space where the essential conversations could happen between decision makers and young people. The events and NGO work has been particularly successful with YCA representing the youth voice of Wales at COP26 where they focused on amplifying the voices of those underrepresented including indigenous people.  It was at COP where YCA gained stronger bonds with the Welsh Government and local politicians. This strategy has allowed YCA to work with other youth organisations, the US Embassy and the Welsh Government. This has enabled YCA to develop stronger relationships on the national and international stage. In the future, YCA hopes to utilise the passion of young people further to directly influence legislative changes in the intersection where climate and social justice meet.  Moving forward, YCA will continue to work to not only empower the youth voice through an inclusive and uplifting community but also ensure that this voice is welcomed among all decision makers and able to influence change. | |
| **What changes did they want to make?**  Ultimately the reason this movement was necessary was because, while young people have pushed climate action to the top of world leader’s agendas, they were still not given a seat at the table. YCAs wanted to not only give young people a seat at the table but to rebuild and redesign the ‘table’ that traditionally excludes them. For those involved, this movement was necessary to provide a space that empowered its members to take action on issues that affect them and the world around them at a multitude of levels.  For the world around us, YCA and its movement is necessary to bring the youth perspective and provide an incentive and support for effective climate action.  Ultimately, YCA is a group built to create climate action for future generations run by the young leaders of our generation. | |
| **Who did they try to influence?**  An overall aim was to raise awareness amongst society in general – individuals, community groups, schools, businesses and politicians – about the climate emergency, and to empower people to do something about it.  They wanted to connect with and involve young people and marginalise groups, whose voices who are not usually heard.  Ultimately, they have aimed to influence politicians and get a ‘voice at the table’ by working with other organisations and contacting politicians directly. | |
| **What failed, and why?**  Not so much a failure, more a change of tactics – after initially organising one-to-one activities with grassroots organisations, the YCAs realised they would have more influence if they formed partnerships with other organisations and charities, and made direct links with politicians. This enabled them to play a central role at COP26 and to be included in Welsh Government discussions about policies to combat climate change, representing the voice of young people in Wales. | |
| **What succeeded, and why?**  Social media campaigns have been particularly successful in bringing the climate emergency to people’s awareness and letting them know what actions they can take to mitigate it.  Organising one to one sessions with schools and businesses was successful in raising awareness at the grass-roots level.  On a more strategic level, YCAs have formed partnerships with other organisations and reached out to politicians in Wales and beyond so that the voice of young people and marginalised groups are included in discussions and policy-making around how to combat the climate emergency.  The organisation has been successful in providing a platform for the youth voice by ensuring that our manifesto and aims are shaped by young people across Wales. To do this, we held a Youth Summit with over 20 schools from across Wales where their input shaped our manifesto points directly before being endorsed by Eco Schools and the World Wildlife Fund. | |
| **Follow-up Activities:**   1. **Find out more about the YCAs here:** [**https://climate.cymru/**](https://climate.cymru/) **and here:** [**https://sizeofwales.org.uk/education/youth-climate-ambassadors-for-wales/**](https://sizeofwales.org.uk/education/youth-climate-ambassadors-for-wales/)   What inspires you about what they are doing?  How do you think you may be able to get involved with their work – or organise your own campaign?   1. **Methods for change:**   The YCAs have made wide use of social media and also formed partnerships with organisations, charities and politicians to raise awareness of climate issues, support people in making changes, and push for change at the policy level.   * What do you think has been most successful in their campaign to date? * What methods do you think you could adopt as a group / school to raise awareness and influence people in your area?  1. **Invite a YCA into your school to run an assembly or workshop (maybe with other schools in your area) and support you in thinking how you can make a difference.** (You can do this by contacting [YCA@sizeofwales.org.uk](mailto:YCA@sizeofwales.org.uk)) | |
| **Further Info/Links:**  Useful links:  -<https://sizeofwales.org.uk/education/youth-climate-ambassadors-at-cop26/>  -<https://sizeofwales.org.uk/education/youth-climate-ambassadors-at-cop26/#video>  -<https://sizeofwales.org.uk/education/youth-climate-ambassadors-at-cop26/#podcasts>  -<https://climate.cymru/partners-directory/youth-climate-ambassadors-for-wales/>  -<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0HzfDgU2xIk>  <https://ne-np.facebook.com/sizeofwales/videos/the-youth-climate-ambassadors-for-wales-share-their-thoughts-on-the-ipcc-climate/447650636215444/>  -<https://www.wwf.org.uk/updates/welsh-youth-call-action> - manifesto  -<https://sizeofwales.org.uk/blog-climate-activism-against-eco-anxiety/>  -<https://twitter.com/ycawales>  **Climate Cymru**, including more information about the individual YCAs: <https://climate.cymru/>  See how **Glyncollen Primary School** in Swansea put pressure on their local council to get rid of plastic waste in their school: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-guwv5YnbfE>  How to register to receive the **Urdd’s Climate Emergency pack** and take part in activities: <https://www.urdd.cymru/en/peace-and-goodwill/>  Information on the WCIA’s **Young Peacemakers Awards**: <https://www.wcia.org.uk/global-learning/individuals/young-peacemakers-award/>  Accessible information about **Greta Thunberg** and her campaign:  <https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/kids-club/cool-kids/general-kids-club/greta-thunberg-facts/> | |
| **What can you do?**  **1. Register for the Urdd’s pack on the Climate Emergency (**<https://www.urdd.cymru/en/peace-and-goodwill/>) and organise an action in your school  **2. Take part in this year’s Young Peacemakers Awards (**<https://www.wcia.org.uk/global-learning/individuals/young-peacemakers-award/>) which includes a Climate Champion category.   1. **Watch the video of Glyncollen’s campaign to ban plastic from their school (**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-guwv5YnbfE>).  * What techniques did they use? * What was successful in achieving change? * Now plan your own campaign / action! Remember to share your plan with teachers / parents and get their support! Who do you think are our allies in the school / community? Who do you want to get involved? What is your overall aim and how will you get there? How will you raise awareness and involve the local community and politicians / celebrities? * Remember to share your actions with [centre@wcia.org.uk](mailto:centre@wcia.org.uk) | |