

TEDxGwE: Countdown to COP26

This is an exploration of the TEDxGwE Countdown to COP26 event held at Theatr Clwyd, 1st November 2021.



My Experience of the Event

Background Info:

As part of my GTA role at Glyndwr University, I work with the Civic Mission department under Nina Ruddle, Head of Public Policy Engagement. This is the first project I have been involved with and I came into the group halfway through the organising due to when I started my role.

The university's Civic Mission is to "help end social inequality across North Wales by 2030". To do this the university works with partners in exciting and innovative ways with the aim to understand key challenges and co-create an

approach across North Wales. This project is just one of many that the university organises with partners. This event will be one of the last events like this to be held in the Anthony Hopkins Theatre before the renovations start in the building.

What was it? Who organised it and why?

COP26 (Conference of Parties) is a U.N. organised event/conference to unite the world to tackle climate change. The event was held in Glasgow <https://ukcop26.org/>.

The TEDxGwE: Countdown to COP26 was organised through a partnership between North Wales regional school improvement service GwE (<https://www.gwegogledd.cymru/?lang=en>), Wrexham Glyndwr University (<https://glyndwr.ac.uk/>), Natural Resources Wales (<https://naturalresources.wales/splash?orig=%2f&lang=cy>), Renew Wales (<https://renewwales.org.uk/>) and leadership practice Do-Well (UK) Ltd (<https://www.do-well.co.uk/>). It aimed to bring partners and community leaders from across the region together to listen to children and young people present their own TED Talks about climate change. The hope was that the audience would make pledges which could then be collated and forwarded to the Welsh Government. There was no mission statement from the starting point, it evolved from an idea of wanting to increase pupil's voices - getting out messages that matter.

It is my understanding that the partners worked with the schools across the region in preparation for the event, using Flipgrid - a form of educational social media, to engage young

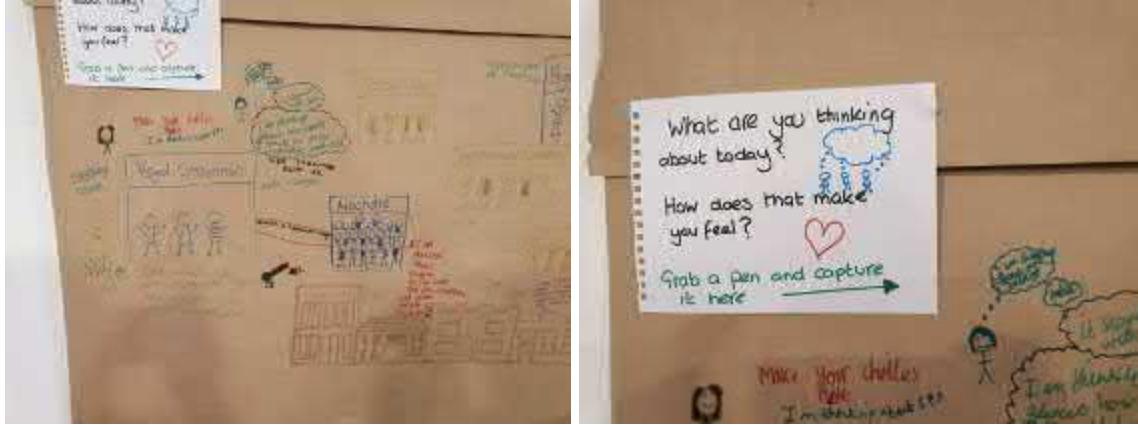
people to work in their classrooms on presentations about climate change, how it affects them and what we can do about it. They received public narrative training/mentoring from Do-Well UK Ltd which was supported by Krish Patel a coach, author and founder of storytelling platform “Tales to Inspire”. They helped them frame their presentations to engage, inspire, influence and create a call for action. Videos were produced and selected groups of young people representing every local authority across North Wales presented their TED Talk at Theatr Clwyd.

Nearly 100 young people and children from primary and secondary schools were involved on the day, joining together in a ground-breaking TEDx event. The event was carbon neutral and was registered with the U.N. The whole event was organised as sustainably as possible: the food for the event was sourced locally and responsibly, the agenda/programme was provided on the day through scanning a QR code to lead to <http://www.eyeo.co.uk/> reducing the need for paper copies.

There was also an artist (Paula Whyllie) producing a storyboard map of the day and a graffiti wall for the young people to interact with.



Capture of the day in storyboard form



The graffiti wall adorned with messages from the young people who spoke at the event.

What was the theatre's involvement?

The theatre was the venue for the event but its involvement didn't end there. The staff behind the scenes sorted out all the technicalities; microphones, sound, projecting the presentations and working with the film crew to facilitate their needs. The staff also aided in the smooth running of the event by providing the spaces to accommodate the schools and the audience.

The Creative Engagement team organised a song writing challenge during the transition points in the day to aid the smooth running of the event. The audience helped create the song; creating something eco-friendly to take away from the event.

What happened?

As the audience and participants entered the theatre a fantastic video showing some of the schools involved and the projects they researched was being shown on a large screen.

The event began with an introduction by Arwyn Thomas, managing director of GwE. Everything was completely inclusive so headsets were provided for translations when Welsh was being spoken-Arwyn delivered his intro in a mix of Welsh and English. He ended by introducing the compere for the event Iolo Williams, ecologists, author and BBC/S4C presenter.

Iolo introduced the keynote speaker Seren Dovey Evans from Mold Alun, who described the importance of the impact through stories and how we needed to take on board what all the young people were going to discuss to change the world together for a better future.

Gwennan Mair, Director of Creative Engagement at Theatr Clwyd, then gave a brief explanation of what will be happening in between some of the speakers throughout the day. Firstly, she did quick exercises with everyone to wake everyone up. All of the audience were on their feet participating in a mini dance off. Then came the explanation that a song will be written with the help of the audience every time herself and Sam Copp, an Associate in the Creative Engagement team, went on the stage.

The TED Talks:

- Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern discussed a wide range of subjects; hydroecology, vertical farming, the importance of food miles and buying local and the opening of empty shops to aid in selling local produce.
- Ysgol Maesglas students called for action in helping secure solar energy for schools. Currently, only 2% of the world's electricity is sourced using the renewable source of solar power.
- Ysgol Pentrecelyn questioned the need for the produce to make their school lunches having to travel as far as it does. They want to source their food locally; helping local shops and having fresher produce being more nutritious.
- Ysgol Cystennin started by asking everyone to help improve the planet by planting trees to offset paper use. They were really concerned with deforestation, one cause being the production of palm oil. They asked everyone to only buy produce that contained RSPO-certified sustainable palm oil.
- Alun High School has introduced Meat-free Mondays in their school. They weren't preaching that everyone should become vegetarian just that if we reduce our meat intake that it will have a beneficial impact on the planet. Animal agriculture causes deforestation. Meat-free Mondays could be rolled out to every school across North Wales and further afield. Companies and organisations could do the same.
- Castell Alun gave us two different talks. One speaker described her morning routine and the impact of that routine - the plastic in the toothpaste tube, having clean sheets on her bed, water for a shower etc. She talked about Dr Jane Goodall and the importance of the small victories as mass change is a collective effort. We can change our routine to contribute to change. The next two speakers from Castell Alun spoke about oceanacidification which is killing a long list of ecologically important species such as plankton, coral reefs, starfish etc.
- Ysgol Cerrigydrudion discussed food miles and the importance of shopping fair, sharing and shopping responsibly. They listed some horrifying facts about food miles e.g. there are 9,700 planes in the air creating 90kg of CO2 every hour.
- Ysgol Y Foel shared their decarbonisation project. They have re-fit their heating system to net zero carbon footprint. They use 100% renewable energies; 84 solar panels, air source pumps and store their energy in a Tesla Power Wall.
- Ysgol San Sior is the only school in Wales to sell the eggs they produce in shops. They have beehives and an apple tree orchard; they also sell the honey and apple chutney locally. They are very concerned about plastics - pollution and microplastics. They have

sent off their honey to be tested to see if it contains microplastics. The school has a project where they are making eco-bricks: plastic bottles filled with single-use plastics that they hope to use to build a building on the school grounds.

- Ysgol Clweddog used an interesting metaphor of bees and how we should all be like the bees. They want to take back control of our future by coming together like a swarm of bees to make a difference. They described the bees as economically invisible but globally important. They would encourage everyone to plant pollinators and help wildlife anywhere we can.
- Ysgol Abererch reported on the importance of gardening for the planet and well-being. Believing it is a great stress reliever, they have created their own allotment at the school; growing all sorts of plants including potatoes. They described how gardening makes you appreciate nature and encourages a healthy lifestyle.

Iolo Williams ended the day with his concluding remarks. He commended the young people on their presentations and how much sense they spoke in the changes we can make. There was a quick “round the room” where people shared their thoughts on the day; everyone was enthusiastic towards what can be done by following the young people’s lead.

The Song

As stated previously, the Creative Engagement team from the theatre were writing a song with the audience. The first intermission saw more crowd warm ups and a call out for important words we had heard from the first few presentations. These were: sustainable, solar, fossil fuels, energy, solar panels, choices, planet, family, generations, climate change, agriculture, we care, decisions and supercalifragilisticexpialidocious (thrown in there as a challenge by Iolo Williams to be included in the song somehow).

The next intermission saw the Creative Engagement team ask for emotions, how have the presentations so far made us feel. The audience responded: disappointed, not happy, gobeithio, hopeful, plant based, worried, well-informed, informative, shocked, optimistic, surprised, annoyed, passionate, empowered, embarrassed and confuzzled.

The team then continued to write the song during lunch; visiting each school for input. By the afternoon the audience had learnt the refrain and then as a group, everyone sang the song created on the day.





TEDxGWE: Countdown to COP26 Song:

*There's been some decisions made in the past,
The planet won't last,
Choices were made
Let's talk climate change*

*Ni yw'r dyfodol,
Rhaid bod yn obeithiol
Achub yr amgylchedd*

*Orangutans are confuzzled now
They are our family
Future generations will be embarrassed by us.*

*We should feel empowered working as one
2021
Eleventh hour
It has begun*

*Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious
We have (solar) power in all of us*



Why Theatr Clwyd?

I spoke to Nina Ruddle from Wrexham Glyndwr University, after the event, and she describes her reasoning to use the theatre for the event:

“Theatr Clwyd is a significant and important community asset and we have worked in partnership on a number of successful events and projects, ranging from launching the social prescribing community of practice for North Wales and hosting the impact through stories project with the Children’s Commissioner for Wales. The theatre was selected for the TedxGwE event as we knew we could work together to maximise the impact of the event in the large theatre space being fitting for such an important event but also bringing some ‘magic’ to the proceedings. Another key reason was working with the expertise from the team at Theatr Clwyd to widen the event with creative engagement and input from the community engagement team. The creative input was really important to help make the event engaging, memorable and impactful.”

Gavin Cass from GwE explains why they wanted the event at Theatr Clwyd:

“We wanted to make the day as special as possible for the speakers. By investing in a venue like Theatr Clwyd we were showing how much we valued what they were saying and hopefully giving them an experience that will stay with them for a very long time. I think it was extra special as it was the first time a lot of the schools had visited anywhere post pandemic.”

Conclusion

Securing the Tedx event is a massive achievement for North Wales and provides the young people of the region a global platform for their narrative to be told. The hope is for the partners to continue to support all schools involved and create possible collaborations between the schools. Schools across the region and further afield will be able to recreate some of the projects described. Organisations and community leaders in the audience can use their influence to make changes for the better. Gavin explained that each of the schools will be getting access to a NPEP programme to carry out some action research and measure the impact of the TED talk. GwE are also looking at how the TED model can be used again for the Curriculum for Wales development. The hope for the song is that Sam Copp will go into all the schools involved and record them singing the song to produce a proper record of it. There may even be a documentary produced of the event.

There will be a debriefing meeting to further explore the impact of this event and where we can go from here. There may even be future conferences.

Links to the talks:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oejmbfiG6qM>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mf28_GihDL8&t=66s

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iVhL8ni2wDI&t=42s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NngDifptSiw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ei8HleLVUWo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QLYcqdkYpo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wyXGGeG-xCY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HlerOMMNI4g>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZ3Rxq1JyUE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xXfPrFHeCCo&t=110s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c0Jkg5Sh8K0>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_miuPdrN5M

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WyyhamV_nf8

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7Ls2bXKZH0>