

Creating an enviro-vlog – would your learners like to be nature influencers?

Time needed for activity

Your learners will need time to plan, research, film and edit their enviro-vlog over a length of time. Allow a couple of hours for each section.

Location

Indoors or outdoors

Context

This activity gives learners the opportunity to become ‘nature influencers’, making an enviro-vlog to share their thoughts on a given environmental topic, call others to action or to document changes in nature.

Not got the ‘vloggiest’ what we are on about?

An enviro-vlog is a personal video that is filmed by one or more people talking about the natural environment. An enviro-vlog can be filmed with a video camera or the camera on a smartphone or tablet.

The noting of thoughts via pen or laptop is a proven way of keeping a diary but keeping an enviro-vlog gives learners an opportunity to express themselves, connect and share their thoughts with others virtually. Keeping a record allows the user/s to document what they have seen, take notes on seasonal changes and connect their observations with their inner thoughts and ideas. Creating an enviro-vlog is an opportunity to capture personal views and feelings and can be completed on an individual basis or as a group effort. Your learners don’t have to go far, an enviro-vlog can be completed in their own gardens or local green/blue space as homework, in your setting’s grounds, local park, beach or woodland. An enviro-vlog is an active and immediate medium with image, motion and sound, and offers learners the opportunity to engage their senses, connect with nature and become nature influencers.

Subjects can be as diverse as the transition into autumn or a weeklong record of pond life. Whatever the subject, the best enviro-vlog takes viewers on a personal journey with the film maker(s), as they capture their on-the-spot reactions, thoughts and film making highs and lows. Authenticity and creativity are more important than creating a vlog worthy of an Oscar Nomination for best video editing.

Natural Resources Wales’ purpose is to pursue sustainable management of natural resources in all of its work. This means looking after air, land, water, wildlife, plants and soil to improve Wales’ well-being and provide a better future for everyone.

Curriculum for Wales

Science and Technology

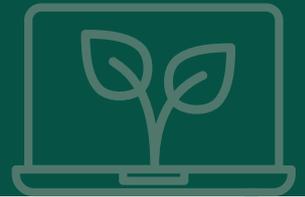
- **What matters** – Computation is the foundation of our digital world.

Expressive Arts

- **What matters** – Exploring the expressive arts is essential to developing artistic skills and knowledge and it enables learners to become curious and creative individuals.

Languages, literacy and communication

- **What matters** – Expressing ourselves through languages is key to communication.
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Curriculum for Wales

Science and Technology

- **What matters** - The world around us is full of living things which depend on each other for survival.

Expressive Arts

- **What matters** - Responding and reflecting, both as artist and audience, is a fundamental part of learning in the expressive arts.
- **What matters** - Creating combines skills and knowledge, drawing on the senses, inspiration and imagination.

Languages, literacy and communication

Digital Competency Framework

Completing this activity provides opportunities to meet the following strands of the Digital Competency Framework.

Citizenship

- Identity, image and reputation.
- Online behaviour and online bullying.

Interacting and collaborating

- Communication.
- Collaboration.
- Storing and sharing.

Producing

- Sourcing, searching and planning digital content.
- Creating digital content.
- Evaluating and improving digital content.

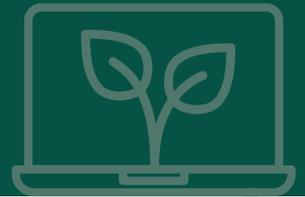
Objectives

- Learners collaborate to create an enviro-vlog expressing their thoughts and ideas whilst developing their technology skills.
- Learners visualise and gain an understanding of natural processes and/or life cycle concepts.
- Learners take ownership of their enviro-vlog, learners work autonomously, within a small group, to solve problems and think creatively as they work through the filming and editing processes.
- Learners gain a basic understanding of potential careers and the skills required in this field.

Resources and equipment

Each group producing an enviro-vlog will require:

- A recording device - a dedicated video camera, camera on a smartphone or tablet, webcam or wildlife camera.
- A dedicated microphone (desirable) although an inbuilt video camera microphone will do. When recording, microphones will pick up audio as if they're double the distance away. Make sure your recording equipment is as close as it can be to the sound you want to record.
- Video editing software so your learners can edit their video. Free apps include Video Editor (Microsoft) and iMovie (Apple) but there are plenty of others available.
- A small tripod or stand to hold the device steady (desirable).



What to do

Before your groups start filming:

- **Set the task and check understanding**

Explain to your learners that they are going to work together to create an enviro-vlog to share their thoughts about, and experiences of, the natural environment with others.

Ask your learners to explain what the term enviro-vlog means? Discuss their answers.

Can your learners give examples of any vloggers? If possible, show your learners some examples of vlogs and ask your learners to reflect on what they have seen and discuss their observations.

- What do your learners think were the aims of the vlog?
 - Was it to advertise a certain product? Can they identify marketing elements designed to draw their attention?
 - Was it to educate the audience about a given topic and encourage people to change their behaviour?
 - Were the vloggers just looking to entertain and grow their following?
- Do your learners think the vlog achieved its objectives?
- What worked well? What didn't?
- Did the vloggers have a positive digital presence? Could they be good role models for your learners' enviro-vlog to try and emulate?

- **Timeframes**

Give your learners an idea of how much time they will have to create their enviro-vlog, it will help them plan and allocate their time.

- **What to film?**

Ask your learners to consider what they want to document. What interests them? Is there a natural phenomenon or event they would like to learn more about, e.g. what wildlife visits their setting? Are they going to be exploring a new habitat? Can they record their explorations? Will a certain species be in the spotlight, e.g. a local family of house sparrows or red squirrels? If they are raising and feeding butterflies, they might want to film their caterpillar to butterfly release journey. Is the enviro-vlog about a certain place, e.g. observations and thoughts on how a local meadow changes from spring to summer? Changes in trees as they bud, flower and fruit? Do your learners have an underlying message, e.g. look after nature, that they want to convey?

- **Ask your learners to set SMART objectives for their enviro-vlog**

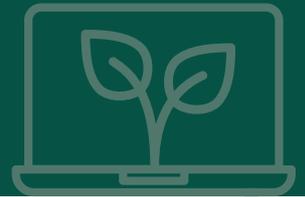
Setting objectives for their enviro-vlog will ensure your learners have a vision of what they want to achieve, and they will also provide a benchmark for them to evaluate their enviro-vlog against once complete. Did they achieve their objectives? If yes, great. If no – why not?

Using the SMART acronym may help your learners to set their objectives.

S – Specific - We want to make an enviro-vlog about the arrival of spring at Coed xyz.

M – Measurable - We want to increase traffic to our platform by 5%.

A – Achievable - There's no point in planning to film oak trees producing and dropping acorns if the task is being set in January. They might like to produce an enviro-vlog on a pair of breeding dolphins, but it might not be feasible or practical. It may be better to concentrate their efforts on a specific place or species. It would be amazing to film an entire woodland bursting into spring flowers but would probably be more manageable to observe and film a small corner.



R - Relevant – The whole purpose of recording an enviro-vlog is to share their thoughts about, and experiences of, the natural environment with others. If their plans don't fit this, then it's not relevant.

T - Time bound – Is what they have planned achievable in the time they have available? Encourage your learners to put deadlines into complete tasks by – it will help them prioritise their tasks and reduce the risk of them becoming overwhelmed.

- **Where to film?**

Encourage your learners to find a location that doesn't have too much background noise and somewhere they won't get disturbed.

Windy days aren't great for audio. Wind noise can come across like rumbling on the recording. If possible, your learners should use a plug-in microphone/radio mic and should find a corner where there is minimal wind.

Having a bright light source behind you makes you look very dark and in front makes you look very bright. Encourage your learners to try and film somewhere that is evenly lit.

Discuss with your learners why poor sound and vision may make viewers switch off.

- **Research their subject**

If they are planning on filming a tree transition into autumn, it would help if they could share some information about what's going on to make it an informative watch for their viewers. Everyone knows that autumn brings about an amazing change in many trees with vibrant green leaves changing to bright yellows, oranges and reds before falling off and leaving bare trunks and skeletal branches. But what's really going on? Why do trees lose their leaves in autumn?

Once your learners have agreed on a topic, they should research it using books and websites. Are they aware of any key events that will happen? When will they need to start filming to capture all the action? If filming wildlife, how far away will they need to be to film without disturbing? Give your learners time to complete their research and discuss.

- **Who's going to do what?**

Working in small groups, it's important that every member has a role to play. This can include setting up the filming equipment, taking on the role of presenters in front of camera or interviewing other group members on their thoughts. Ask your learners to consider everyone's strengths and allocate roles accordingly.

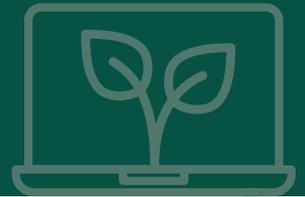
- **Getting permission**

Where will filming take place? Will your setting/the learners need to ask for permission to visit and film?

As your learners may potentially be sharing images of others online, they should be aware of the rules of sharing images and data. To comply with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), they may need to seek participants' permission to film and share their enviro-vlog online.

- **Who's the audience?**

Encourage your learners to bear their audience in mind when they begin to film. Will it be age appropriate? Will any keywords or natural processes need to be explained in simple terms to ensure the viewers understand what's going on? Avoid acronyms, say terms in full – not everyone will know what they mean.



- **What platform will they share their enviro-vlog on?**

There are lots of online video hosting websites as well as social media platforms to help your learners distribute their enviro-vlog. Which platform they use will determine, to an extent, the style of their enviro-vlog and their prospective audience.

For example, Facebook's purpose is to connect people with their friends and family networks. Twitter, on the other hand, is used to share ideas, topics, real-time information, and trending news. Instagram is used to share photos and videos. Ask your learners to consider which platform will be best suited to share their enviro-vlog?

During filming

- **Telling the story**

- It's important that viewers understand what's happening, why it's happening and what's significant about it.
- Encourage your learners to take their viewers on a journey with them and describe what they are seeing and feeling. To give their film a sense of intimacy and immediacy, they should react naturally to what's happening and what they are finding.
- Explain that they don't always need to be in front of the camera. It's ok for them to narrate over footage.
- If your learners mention something that isn't in the clip, they can always film a separate shot of it and edit it in later.
- If appropriate, learners should insert text to give brief description, introduce the speaker or location. It will save your learners time and helps the narrative.
- Will their enviro-vlog be filmed in English or Welsh? Will they need to produce bi-lingual subtitles to adhere to their setting's Welsh Language Policy or to make the enviro-vlog more accessible? YouTube has an auto captioning service for uploaded videos that makes sorting English subtitles quick and easy.

- **Timings - keep it short and concise**

Learners should treat each clip like an actual diary entry. If their film is telling a story over a period of time, encourage your learners to keep each clip short - a maximum of 20 seconds. Too long and viewers will lose interest. The final edited enviro-vlog shouldn't last any longer than 3 minutes.

- **Be honest**

In the words of Forrest Gump "Life is like a box of chocolates. You just don't know what you are going to get." If the wildlife your learners are trying to film is elusive or unfortunately dies, your learners shouldn't shy away from sharing their thoughts and disappointment. It's their experiences and what they have learnt on their enviro-vlog making journey that counts. They might not be happy about everything, but sometimes these stories are the best ones.

- **Digital reputation**

Not only are your learners representing themselves but also their education setting. Remind your learners that they should present an appropriate and positive online image of both. It's easy to forget about all the people who could potentially see their enviro-vlog. Once something is posted or shared online, it can be there forever. They should consider both the words they use and their tone of language.



- **Remind your learners to relax, look into the camera and enjoy!**

Your learners may feel a little self-conscious and awkward at first. Being filmed can be an unnerving experience. Remind them to breathe, relax and let their personality shine through. If possible, pair learners up, they may feel more comfortable with company and will hopefully build a good rapport and bounce off each other.

Encourage your learners to look straight into the lens and treat it like it's a person looking right at them. They might feel self-conscious at first, but it'll look much more natural when they watch the footage back.

After filming

- **Editing**

Your learners will need to edit their raw footage before publishing or sharing it with the world. The device your learners are using may already have editing software installed such as Windows Live Movie Maker or iMovie if they are using a Mac. Most are very easy to use, include drag-and-drop features and will allow your learners to clip, trim or piece together videos. Learners will be able to adjust audio levels and most programs can upload directly to YouTube.

Our editing top tips:

- Your learners should have a rough idea of what they want their finished enviro-vlog to look like before they begin editing. Jotting down a quick plan or a 'storyboard' might help them keep their end goal in sight.
- Encourage your learners not to get carried away with special features such as transitions. Their enviro-vlog will look a lot more professional if just crossfades or fade-to-black/white are used as opposed to fancy effects.
- Remind your learners to keep it short and concise. The final edited enviro-vlog shouldn't last any longer than 3 minutes.

- **Sharing their content**

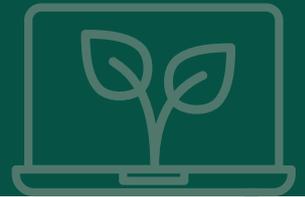
Once your learners have recorded their enviro-vlog encourage them to think how they are going to make sure as many people as possible watch it. Each group could share their enviro-vlog with other groups. There are lots of online video hosting websites to help your learners distribute their enviro-vlog. Does your setting have an account the enviro-vlogs could be hosted on?

Can your learners raise awareness of their enviro-vlog and chosen topic by promoting its release on social media? Our **Activity plan - Campaigning for nature - Running a social media campaign** explains what to do step by step.

- **Engaging with the audience**

If appropriate, once they've uploaded their enviro-vlog, encourage your learners to engage with their audience by encouraging them to comment. Can they spark a debate or discussion about their chosen topic?

Engaging with, and getting feedback, from their audience will give your learners an insight into how people are responding to their enviro-vlog however, viewer's comments are not always positive. If posting publicly, your learners should be mentally prepared for potential negative feedback. Negative comments can be viewed as constructive feedback sometimes, so if valid, they should learn to focus on them and use them to improve their vlogs. Handling negative comments is difficult but your learners will need to learn how to do this. Replying negatively to a harsh comment could damage your learners' online reputation. They should learn to ignore it and resist the urge to reply.



• Evaluation

Ask your learners to review and evaluate their finished enviro-vlog. Did they meet their objectives? Can they think of ways to make their enviro-vlog better? Is there anything they would do differently next time? What key learning points can they take away from the experience?

Ask the other groups to peer assess their enviro-vlog based on content and production. What constructive feedback can they provide to another group?

Suggested key questions

- What is your enviro-vlog about?
- How will you know if your enviro-vlog has been successful?
- Did you meet your original objective?
- Have you presented a positive online image of yourselves?
- How have you ensured this?

Adapting for different needs/abilities

More support

- Give learners some suggested topics to cover in their enviro-vlog and provide them with some background information so they can focus on the task of pulling their enviro-vlog together.
- Educators to direct or scaffold the activity.

Less support

- Learners could prepare a follow up enviro-vlog. Have their thoughts on the topic changed over time? What does the area they originally observed look like now?
- Acting as nature influencers, ask your learners to convey a specific message in their enviro-vlog. Can they work to change people's opinions on a given topic and encourage them to change their behaviour?

Follow up activity/extension

- What did your learners observe, where and when? Can they contribute their findings to their local biological records centre or a relevant citizen science project to help scientists monitor wildlife changes?

Looking for more learning resources, information and data?

Please contact: education@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk or go to <https://naturalresources.wales/learning>

Alternative format; large print or another language, please contact: enquiries@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk
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