

# RAINFOREST THE SIZE OF WALES

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**The 'size of Wales' is often used to describe an area or the scale of something. Here, Janie explores the work of the charity 'Size of Wales' and the difference it aims to make through rainforest protection.**

'Size of Wales' is a unique organisation; it is a non-governmental organisation that successfully campaigns to help protect an area of rainforest twice the size of Wales and prevent deforestation, which is seen as a major cause of climate change. The charity's education programme works with pupils of all ages across Wales, offering free workshops and assemblies, resources and special projects about climate change, rainforests and deforestation.

As part of Size of Wales' education outreach programme Ysgol Brynconin in West Wales was offered the chance to take part in a project with nine other

schools in the area. Assemblies and workshops in each school demonstrated how deforestation contributes to climate change and pupils were encouraged to think about what actions they could take to help mitigate climate change. Schools were invited to use Size of Wales resources, which include critical thinking activities (such as role play and issue trees), science, numeracy and games to enhance understanding of the issues.

The project culminated in a day of workshops and shared learning at the National Botanic Garden of Wales. Here, pupils gained a real idea of the size and scale of the areas of trees being felled in the rainforest by exploring the 'Ghost Forest'. Created by Angela Palmer, the Ghost Forest comprises ten primary rainforest tree stumps from Ghana and helps remind us of the extent of deforestation across the world (Figure 1). The 'Tropical House' offered an opportunity to feel the humidity of rainforests, and find out about plants that grow there.

After learning more about climate change and the threats to rainforests through games, one pupil was moved to observe, 'We need rainforests'. Other pupils agreed, citing the fruits available and the forests' contribution to mitigating climate change, as well as the destruction of rainforests in order to release land for the growing of palm oil.

Inspired by the project and what they had learned, members of Ysgol Brynconin's Eco-club wanted to investigate palm oil further. They went through wrappers from lunch boxes to find items containing palm oil, and made a display in the hall, placing the wrappers in trucks to act as a visual reminder of the assembly they had presented to the school. Deciding that an assembly was not enough, pupils also presented their findings to the school governors. This contributed in a positive way to their oracy, particularly as for some of the pupils, Welsh is not their first language.

Meanwhile, at Ysgol Esgob Morgan in North Wales, Size of Wales ran workshops on deforestation as well as how different communities adapt to climate change. The pupils went on to find out where rainforests are located and looked at percentages of areas lost and areas saved, before writing to both their Assembly Member and MP to ask them to support rainforests.

All schools involved with Size of Wales are invited to raise money to help protect rainforests. Many take part in 'Go Green Day' each October. In 2016, the theme was Go Green Games, with games developed to help pupils learn about climate change and the threats to rainforests.

When pupils are encouraged to become involved and take action for climate change, they often come up with really good ideas. Perhaps the most perceptive quote came from a pupil; it shows just how we are connected with other parts of the world: 'I learned that rainforests are getting cut down because we just want more and more'. We can all learn something from that!



Figure 1: One of Angela Palmer's 'Ghost Trees' at the National Botanic Garden of Wales. Photo © Size of Wales.



## WEB RESOURCES

Size of Wales: [www.sizeofwales.org.uk](http://www.sizeofwales.org.uk)

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