

Introduction

Why develop classroom activities for Gelligaer and Merthyr Common?

Gelligaer and Merthyr Common is 30km² of land split between Merthyr and Caerphilly counties. It is a living and working landscape, steeped in history. The Common is Open Access Land, which means all have the right to walk freely across it. However, please follow the Countryside Code.

The Common is a fragile environment and needs to be respected. It is inhabited by much wildlife and many grazing animals all relying on the Common for their food, shelter and habitat. Over the past few years, the Common has been abused many times through, for example fly-tipping and illegal off-roading. These disturb the habitat causing harm to wildlife and grazing animals and also cause land erosion.



The 'Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015' states the goals for a more sustainable, equitable and prosperous Wales. Respecting and protecting our landscapes is an integral part of this so that we can improve the well-being of all people in Wales. <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/>

By educating our children, and their families, we hope to help protect the habitat by developing a mutual respect for our local landscape so that it can be preserved for future generations. These classroom activities aim to inform learners of the importance of respecting the Common and introduce them to the habitat and its history.

How do the activities fit with Curriculum 2022?

The four purposes of the curriculum are that all children and young people will be:

- Ambitious, capable learners who are ready to learn throughout their lives.
- Enterprising, creative contributors who are ready to play a full part in life and work.
- Ethical, informed citizens who are ready to be citizens of Wales and the world.
- Healthy, confident individuals who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

Fulfilling the four purposes requires learners to be metacognitive, take responsibility for their own learning and work well with others. The activities focus on these three areas through aiming to improve learners' skills of problem solving, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creative thinking and research.

The curriculum stresses the need for cross-curricular thematic contexts which have the embedded cross-curricular skills of the Literacy and Numeracy, and Digital Competency frameworks. All the activities fulfil these requirements and are referenced as such.

How do these activities support the implementation of Curriculum 2022?

The activities aim to stimulate learners' curiosity, so that they will be more engaged and therefore better motivated to succeed. They are based around questioning because this is the driving force behind improving learners' higher-order thinking, with high quality questions leading to high quality talk. Whether it is the teacher or the learner who poses the questions, they should be open-ended wherever possible, and lead to discussion.

Therefore, all the activities are designed around a series of tasks with suggested focus questions for learners to lead them through the task. It should be noted that these questions are suggested rather than essential. As effective collaboration is key to developing higher-order thinkers, all the activities require pairs or small groups of learners to work together to discuss and answer the posed questions. Therefore, each activity has (as its final Resource) the suggested questions which can be cut out to give to learners to work on in their groups. It is wise to consider mixed ability groups to aid peer learning and ensure higher quality outcomes for all.

Encourage learners to use 'Think-pair-share' when they are considering questions posed to them. They think individually about a question, discuss their ideas with a partner and then share their combined ideas with the rest of the group or class. Try to steer clear of learners putting their hands up to answer by randomly selecting different pairs to feedback. This will keep learners more engaged as they know they might be chosen to share their ideas at any moment and it will stop the same children answering all the time.

Curriculum 2022 outlines 12 pedagogical principles. The developed activities fulfil these requirements of good learning and teaching, giving opportunities to utilise all of the pedagogical principles. All the activities start by activating prior knowledge and understanding so that learning is built on secure foundations which will aid longer term memory.

How else can we explore the Common?

There are many other ways you can explore the Common. The pamphlet *Common knowledge, Gwybodaeth am y Comin*, gives further background about the Common including a map (also at <https://gmcommon.org/>), its history and wildlife. It also suggests ways to explore the Common and mentions ideas such as:

- Following trails, e.g. the Red Kite trails and the Heritage trail.
- Using the Common for organised expeditions, such as those for The Duke of Edinburgh's awards or for scouting/guiding.
- Searching for the Geocaches that have been placed on one of the Red Kite trails and solving the anagram puzzle found within the geocache boxes. Send your answered puzzle to the Warden –enquiries@gmcommon.org – to receive a certificate.

Keep in touch

You are welcome to enjoy the Common on your own. However, please make contact with the Ranger team who may be able to help you plan and possibly attend during your trip.

enquiries@gmcommon.org

Share your Common Adventure! Post a Photo



Gelligaer & Merthyr Common



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