

Dynamic DunesCAPES Dune Engagement Case Study

Borrow boxes – a free resource to help people explore and learn about dunes independently

Sand dune system	Wales – multiple sites (Tywyn Llyn, Pembrey, Broughton, Oxwich, Baglan)
Case Study Subject	Borrow boxes – free resources to help people go on self-guided walks
The Engagement Intervention	

Site background information

As part of interpretation work of the Dynamic DunesCAPES project in Wales, which encompasses *‘the provision of inspirational opportunities, on and off-site, which engage local communities with sand dunes, supporting the delivery of dune heritage learning for all’* (Dynamic DunesCAPES Action Plan), five locations were provided with ‘borrow boxes’.

What was the issue/change you hoped to make?

The aim of the borrow boxes was to enable more people to get out and explore sand dunes independently.

Five locations were selected from the 12 initial Dynamic DunesCAPES Wales project sites. These locations were identified as places where, if present, a borrow box could be managed by a local project partner for use with an identified audience (i.e. the sites weren’t remote). Throughout the Dynamic DunesCAPES Project as a whole, each region had the scope to design and create borrow boxes, tailored to local needs.

What was the suggested intervention?

In Wales the priority was to provide visitors with resources that could:

- support them in independently exploring the local dune ecosystem
- highlight the diversity of life that can be discovered on sand dunes
- be added to over time by the host partner
- easily managed and displayed by the host partner

What did you do and how?

As such, all five partners were provided with a small picnic basket containing simple field guides, bug pots, mini magnifying glasses and a pair of children's binoculars.



Two partners were also provided with a leaflet stand in order to display colouring sheets that could be taken and used by visitors.



Who did you work with? / How did you engage with different groups?

Below is an outline of the sites that received the resource and the audience that was identified at the time of provision (set out as: Site name, Partner, further info). The location where the box was to be stored was decided in collaboration with the local partners:

- Tywyn Llyn, The Oyster Catcher Restaurant
 - o Set in the dunes just outside Rhosneigr The Oyster Catcher are one of our key project partners in the area. As a popular destination for both tourists and locals, the aim was that the provision of a borrow box would enable visitors to the venue to explore the dunes further during their visit. The Oyster Catcher

host the box (and a leaflet holder) in their 'Dune Bar' which is open throughout the summer.

- Pembrey, Pembrey Country Park Visitors Centre
 - o With a footfall of 500,000+ visitors each year the Visitors Centre reception was selected as the most appropriate location to host the box with the hope visitors would explore the dunes and woodland with the resources.
- Broughton, Broughton Farm Caravan Park
 - o A family-owned site surrounded by the Broughton dune system. The Park owners are also the landowners of the surrounding dunes. The box (and a leaflet holder) are hosted in the main sales office where residents check-in/visit site staff.
- Oxwich, NRW Oxwich NNR team
 - o NRW managed NNR Oxwich NNR was selected as the site receives high volumes of visitors each year. Initially the box has been stored in the NRW hut where equipment is stored on site. The hope was this would be used by staff, volunteers, visiting school or volunteers and that in time a more public location might be identified
- Baglan, Awel Y Mor Primary School
 - o A Port Talbot based primary school, with strong community links, which have been working with Dynamic DunesCAPES since 2021. Through the partnership with the school a box was provided for student activities and their work with the community, the school planned to take it out for events and activities

Upon provision of the borrow boxes recipients agreed to advertise the presence of the box through local newsletters, social media etc.

How was the site / intervention monitored?

Initially, we requested updates on the number of users of the boxes however we had limited success in collating this information. Instead a more formal follow up a year after provision has taken place (detailed in 'did the intervention work').

How much did the intervention cost?

Each box, including all resources, cost approximately £80 per site

Did the intervention work?

Please describe how. What has changed?

The reception to the boxes has varied by site but has been widely positive, some sites have had more uptake than others.

Oxwich	<i>It is estimated that around 100 people have used the borrow box [at Oxwich NNR]. It was used for educational purposes for school groups visiting the Dunes on field trips, [as well as by] Oxwich NNR volunteers. It was a great field resource for volunteers and education groups using the dunes. [The] main challenge [we've faced] would be that we don't have a visitor centre open to the public, it would have received a lot more use if it was accessible to people on a daily basis. I would definitely like to see it [resources such as borrow boxes] included [in future projects]. [There was nothing we would remove] it was all pretty good to be fair, the field guides were great so maybe a few more [variety] of them.</i>
Broughton	<i>We've had 4 families, 1 couple and an individual borrow items from the box so far (19 people). The borrow box is located just inside the office and customers that call to the office often browse, pick up leaflets and comment that it is such a good idea. We have the borrow box poster [advertising the box] in the office window. Those that are more active on the Park have come to borrow items on more than one occasion in some cases, though none have taken the box itself. They've all preferred to use a bag/backpack to carry the borrowed items and we've continued to use the box as the display/advert. We'd like to think that as a result of having the equipment and information, people are generally more aware and interested in the local environment. We hope that it would encourage people to be more mindful of their actions and appreciate their surroundings further. As we are only a small team & I'm the only person working from the Sales Office, in such changing and very busy times, it has been difficult to find time to...be more pro-active with advertising the borrow box ... E-mailing to arrange a pickup (or I've popped things into the caravan for people wanting to borrow items over the weekend) has worked well. I would expect a higher uptake if reminders were sent about the borrow box so we will be including it in our next newsletter. Usage could also have been limited due to the office being closed on weekends when most people are staying as well as the Park being open from March to November. ... We hope to have the detail added to the website on the next update which will also help raise awareness so would expect an increase in use thereafter. We are very grateful for the resources provided in the borrow box, for people to use and enjoy. The only thing [that we feel is lacking and has been requested] is possibly a 'can you spot' type activity sheets that are beach / dune targeted & whether that information could be easily restocked/photocopied for use.</i>
Pembrey	<i>20 [people have used the borrow box. It has been] used at events to encourage exploration which seemed the better approach. [Benefits of the box include it being] useful to have ready as staff could help identify finds, and encourage</i>

	exploration. <i>[Barriers to using the box included] remembering we have the box, the idea works well in a setting where the environment and nature are move obvious, our reception is very business-focused. [Reflecting in relation to the provisions of such resources for the future] ..., it's better used in conjunction with an event</i>
Baglan	<i>[In the year we've had the box] The basket was taken out by every class and used by some local community groups such as the nursing home, walk & talk group, it was also used by our forest school and parent groups. The groups from the community usually give us a ring or email to get collect the basket and the classes just dropped in. It was great to be able to give resources out to lend, on some occasions we took team community out with community groups & both the adults and children had a fantastic time together. I can't think of anything negative about the basket.</i> <i>[In terms of numbers] roughly - the nursing home bring 4 over residents at a time, the Forest School has roughly 40 children and about 30 parents, walk & talk have between 12-15 people, each class has 30 students & we have 12 classes.</i>

What could be done differently next time?

- More regular formal monitoring
- More evaluation of location – following the 1-year follow up, sites which have identified limited use related to the location of the box have been encouraged to move the box