

Minister discovers why there's more to Green Man Festival than meets the eye

During a visit to the Welsh Government supported event last month, the Minister met with event organisers and saw first hand how the festival is supporting science and skills development through the various creative projects it runs.

While there, in addition to exploring Einstein's Garden – an interactive learning environment that aims to promote science and innovation in an engaging way to event-goers – Julie James met with individuals involved with the festival's Merthyr Project.

Established by Green Man seven years ago, the Merthyr Project is a personal growth and development programme supported by the College Merthyr Tydfil to help people from the area develop their skills and enhance their employability opportunities.

Part intervention, part training and part social development, the project is part of a wider range of work experience and training opportunities Green Man supports throughout the year.

The project culminates with those involved having an opportunity to put their new found skills and experience to good use at the annual festival.

During her visit and joined by Green Man's Director and Owner, Fiona Stewart, and Nicola Ebdon who is a Film lecturer from the College Merthyr Tydfil, the Minister met with Ben Willshee (19), Ryan Speck (21), and Rebecca Hopkins (22); three apprentices who took part in this year's project and helped to support the successful delivery of the sell out and award winning festival.

Both Ben and Ryan are currently studying for their foundation degrees in Film at College Merthyr Tydfil and have recently started their second years.

Rebecca studied the same course and has just completed her third year at the Cardiff campus topping-up to a full Bachelor's degree. Her experience over the last three years on the Merthyr Project helped her to secure a place at University of South Wales, where she has just started a post graduate Public Relations Master's degree.

All three have credited the project with helping to build their confidence, understanding of the industry and gain valuable skills and training.

Explaining how the programme works, Fiona said:

“The Merthyr Project consists of two parts, with the first phase focussing on job application skills. It gives those involved a taster of the sort of production roles and responsibilities available across the creative industries before getting them to

complete a CV and go through an application process where mentoring and feedback is provided.

“The second phase focusses on immersive and sometimes challenging experiences, including skills training and equipment handling. Those involved get to experience first hand film production and editing, stage set-up and what it takes to successfully deliver a festival.

“The project’s aims are wide ranging but skills training and personal growth sits at the heart of it. Building core and transferable skills such as confidence, resilience and interpersonal skills are as important as the wider industry specific training individuals receive. It is an intense experience, requiring dedication and commitment from everyone involved but the benefits offered can be incredibly rewarding.

“Green Man is a genuine community and we all work together to help each other. Ultimately, this project aims to provide an opportunity to those in greatest need of support to access the industry and develop their social skills so they can adapt and be more resilient and successful. We are forward looking about the skills we want to develop with our apprentices to make sure that they will still be relevant in a few years time. There is no point teaching people things that won’t help them or be relevant in the real world.”

Explaining how the project has helped him, Ben said:

“It is an amazing opportunity on a different scale. We all work together like a team, helping and supporting each other to learn and develop because we want to bring the talent out in each other. Sometimes all it takes is a simple comment like ‘you’ve done a good job’, that can be very validating. The project has helped to build my confidence.”

Commenting on her visit, Julie James said:

“From its interactive areas to encourage more people to explore science, to its skills and training projects which provide young people with an opportunity to develop their core skills, Green Man is not your average festival and this visit certainly showed why there is more to it than meets the eye.

“It was great to hear more about the Merthyr Project, especially from those who have benefitted from it directly. Listening to Ben, Ryan and Rebecca speak so passionately and confidently about their time on the project and then demonstrating to me some of the practical skills they have learnt was really inspiring.

“As the largest contemporary music and arts festival in Wales, I am pleased the Welsh Government has been able to support Green Man’s growth and I look forward to seeing what 2018’s event has to offer, both on and off the stage.”