

Experience dementia with ground-breaking VR

New software aims to transform our understanding of living with dementia



Caernarfon, Jan 31, 2019 (www.issuewire.com) - A virtual reality (VR) experience which allows users to understand how it feels to be living with dementia – **in English and Welsh** - Dementia First Hand (Yn Fy Nwylo I) is available now for **free** in the Oculus Rift Store.

Scenarios available in the app include simple tasks around the home, such as making a cup of tea in the kitchen and looking for your car keys; a voice through the headset speaks to you in the same way a person with dementia may think e.g. telling you to put an electric kettle on the hob, in order to demonstrate the confusion dementia patients feel.

Derick Murdoch, Creative Director at creative agency Galactig explains “*This is a groundbreaking use of VR technology to teach soft skills in Welsh and English. We have created an experience which allows you to interact with everyday objects using virtual hands which aid users in fully immersing themselves in the narrative.*”

The experience aims to be as realistic as possible, so users can have an increased level of awareness and understanding about those who are living with the disease. Galactig has also blended photorealistic 3D environments with a real actor filmed using a custom stereoscopic camera rig.

As part of a Gwynedd Council funded Dementia Friends initiative, the VR experience has been used at dementia workshops since July 2018. It is already having a positive impact on the local community, with users having emotional responses to the content.

Project leader Meilys Heulfryn Smith explains why it's particularly important for this programme to be in the Welsh language: "When a person develops dementia, they may often lose the ability to communicate in their second language. This technology paints a poignant picture of this experience, immersing the user in a situation where they recognize the need for actions to manage the task, and the words associated with those actions, but are simply not able to retrieve them.

"This very real frustration is felt by thousands of people in Wales each day, and we hope that the VR experience will increase awareness and understanding of the challenges this disease brings.

"Dementia is a difficult and sensitive subject for many families across Wales, and this project gives family members the chance to handle this as an issue in Welsh as being able to use your first language during a difficult time is often comforting."

Funded by Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig and the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 Grant, the project was led by Gwynedd Council and created with bespoke creative agency Galactig. It's also partly funded by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) and Gwynedd Council.

The Cymraeg 2050 Grant is a key element of the Welsh language strategy, Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers. It has provided funds to innovative, short-term projects which aim to increase people's daily use of the language and to promote technology which supports the use of Welsh.

Minister for the Welsh Language and Lifelong learning Eluned Morgan commented, "This project is imperative for those in the local community of Gwynedd to understand, in their first language, what their loved ones and members of their community who have dementia are experiencing.

"It's important that such a sensitive issue can be explored in their first language and this important project helps this cause hugely."

For further information please contact :

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Store link : www.oculus.com/experiences/rift/2496339380383114

Images available : adobe.ly/2TjJUSr

Video available : vimeo.com/313177370/37b89be4d4

Company link : galactig.com



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