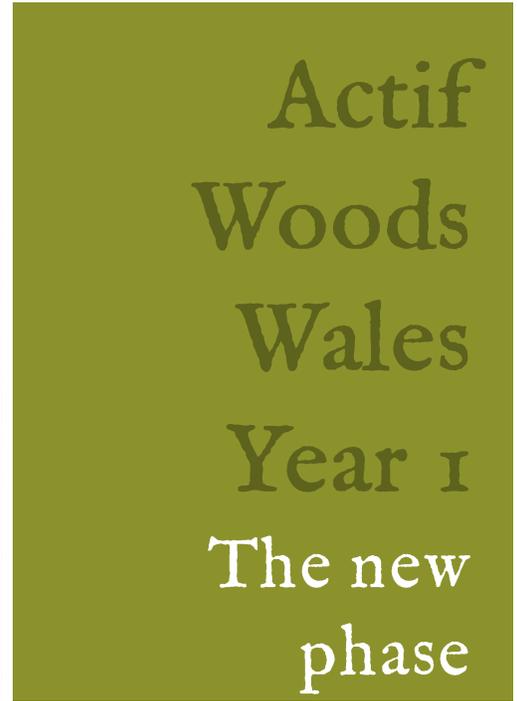




ABOVE: LAUNCH DAY IN WREXHAM – MAYOR ATTENDS AND MAKES A WOODEN SWORD!



Funding

Following the success of the pilot phase in Treherbert and Aberystwyth, the 3 Year 'Actif Woods Wales' National project started in April 2013. It is funded by the Big Lottery and Natural Resources Wales with others backing the project locally. These include; the Pfizer Foundation, Sports Wales (Wrexham and Anglesey), Sustainable Development Fund Anglesey, Communities First (Tackling Poverty Grant), Environment Job, Neath Port Talbot County Council (through ROWIP and Myndd Y Betws Wind Farm Funds). Thank you to all the funders of the project, without this support it would not be possible to progress. So with Year 1 now complete, what has been achieved?

Recruitment

Coed Lleol recruited 6 part time members of staff; 2 in Machynlleth, and 1 in each project location to deliver the Actif Woods Wales project. More recently 8 volunteers (3 in Neath Port Talbot, 2 in Aberystwyth and 3 in Wrexham),

have joined the team – leading woodland walks or acting as First Aid.

Training

Coed Lleol delivered or organised training in all project areas for the following number of people – Aberystwyth (42) Neath Port Talbot (21) Treherbert (8) Anglesey (11) and Wrexham (16). The training included - Walk Leader / Drug and Alcohol Awareness / Woodland Permissions / Fire Lighting / Assist (suicide prevention training) / Outdoor First Aid / Mental Health First Aid / Mountain Walk Leader / Risk Assessments / Monitoring & Evaluation / Involving Volunteers. This exceeds the target of 3 training days per area. Treherbert, Neath Port Talbot and Wrexham also held Skill Share Days.

Coed Lleol is working in partnership with Coetiroedd Dyfi Woodlands to provide 1 day training programs for leaders in 'Using Kelly Kettles with Group's', 'Conservation skills', 'Tool Use', 'Campfire Cooking' and more....

Coed Lleol and Small Woods are working together to revise the Open College Network (OCN) qualification in Social Forestry with guidance from a working group of professionals from the health and woodland sector. The aim is for the first training program to run in September 2014. This is funded specifically by the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Sustainable Development Fund on Anglesey.

Participant Attendance

319 participants have attended woodland activity sessions since the start of April 2013 (Target 396). It took almost 3 months longer to establish groups in new the areas, hence the lower than predicted number.

15 groups have been established in 5 areas - 4 of these have been active since before this project phase.

At least 252 activity sessions (Target 336) took place during this period with between 1 and 16 participants. Now the groups are established Actif

Woods Wales aims to exceed the combined Year 1 & 2 target number of sessions by the end of Year 2.

The most common level of attendance per session is 5, with over half of all sessions having between 4 and 7 participants attending. The mean is about 5.8 participants per session. 25% of all sessions had attendance of between 8 and 16 participants.

Patterns of attendance vary significantly across the project. Already over 60% of those attending one session return to further sessions, usually on a regular basis for several months. One-off attendance is most common when groups are just starting up.

Improved Health and Well-Being

New baseline measures (quantitative and qualitative) have recently been implemented: data on health improvement will be available once follow-ups are administered in the next quarter. Meanwhile over 80% of the participants who gave narrative comments say the project improves their wellbeing, particularly around their mental and social health.

Monitoring and Evaluation

A major achievement in Year 1 of this project has been the development of a new robust and systematic monitoring system which will allow us to evaluate progress against our indicators in real time, as well as supporting effective project management. This has involved identifying and selecting appropriate measures for monitoring our project outcomes, building a range of tools and an online database to compile this data, and training new staff and activity leaders in how to use them. The system has been implemented in stages through the year, becoming fully operational in the last quarter (Jan-March 2014). This means that we are now building a rigorous data set about the project which will allow us to report in greater depth in years two and three. Meanwhile for Year 1 we are drawing on a mixture of old and new systems to assess our progress.

The tools in use are:

- PAR-Q
- Physical activity question - frequency of 30+ mins exercise
- Short WEMWBS - mental wellbeing scale
- MY MOPS adapted version with participant -defined health issue

- Personal stories to demonstrate personal accounts of change

Improvements to Woodlands

A range of improvements happened across the project in Year 1 including; path clearance, tree planting, removal of invasive species, arboretum restoration and installing benches. In Aberystwyth 13 improvements took place over 5 woodlands, in Treherbert 3 improvements over 2 woodlands and in Neath Port Talbot, 1 improvement happened in 1 woodland.

Woodlands for Health Promotion

Seminar events ran in Treherbert (25 attendees), Neath Port Talbot (26 attendees) and Wrexham (32 attendees).

External presentations were given by Coed Lleol at;

- The Ecotherapy Conference
- The Physical Activity and Nutrition Network of Public Health Wales
- Conference on National Parks and Nature's Health Service (including the opportunity to publish a book chapter on Actif Woods Wales)
- The Public Health Weight Management Network.



Spreading roots in Neath Port Talbot

Maggie Elsey (Project Officer) gets off to a flying start working with the Mind group. Record attendance numbers with over 17 people turning up one week!



Kelly Kettle Training on Anglesey in partnership with Coetiroedd Dyfi Woodlands

John Pritchard (Project Officer) seized the enthusiasm on Anglesey with 11 people joining the Kelly Kettle training day in March.