

National Lottery Rural Futures

End of Year Report
Year 1 – March 2024



Yr Ardd CIC
c/o Tysul Youth Centre
Lon Wesley
Llandysul
Ceredigion
Cymru
SA44 4QJ

Company Number: 13230394

E: tyfu@yrardd.org

National Lottery End of Year 1 Report
March 2024
Version 1.1
Contributors:
Elizabeth Riches, Andrea Sanders, James Laurie

Table of Contents

1 - The story of your project this year	4
2 - How you've involved people from your community in the work you do	8
3 - The differences you're making (both big and small)	10
4 - How are you progressing towards your project outcomes	15
Volunteering: to provide fresh opportunities for all ages to socialise, exercise, gain skills and create a more cohesive community.	15
Training and skill development courses: to generate opportunities for beneficiaries for employment and enterprise.	16
Active use of Welsh: to encourage learners and first language speakers to preserve, by use, land-based and horticultural vocabulary that is at risk.	17
Fresh produce provision: to enable beneficiaries throughout the community to access local fresh produce, alleviating local food poverty issues.	18
5 - What you've learned	19
What has gone well?	19
What's not gone well or been challenging?	19
What have you learned that would be useful to others?	21
What did you think of trying but didn't?	21
6 - How you're changing what you do	22
Have you made any changes based on your experiences and what you've learned?	22
What are your plans for the coming year - and beyond?	24
How will your plans help your community to thrive?	25
And is there any support you need to do this?	25
7 - What you've spent this year	27
8 - Once you've worked out what you've spent the funding on	27

1 - The story of your project this year

What has the funding helped you to do? Tell us in your own words, or the words of the people you support.

Our funding has helped us to begin; to focus time, energy, and resources on making Yr Ardd a reality for our community. In March 2023, the organisation successfully recruited its Project Manager, Elizabeth Riches. Having Elizabeth in post has meant we've been able to address the day to day administering of the project, alongside starting to realise some of our ambitions.



Volunteer Day – April 2023

Yr Ardd has a prominent position on the outskirts of our community and can easily be seen with our Hollywood inspired “Yr Ardd” sign. However, not everyone knows who we are, what we stand for, and how even to get onto the site. One of the first things we did was to get the word out about the community garden and how to get involved. The funding helped us invest in marketing materials such as weatherproof banners, signs and pull-up displays. We now have a sign to guide visitors up the road, a banner on our farmgate, and the pull-up displays have improved our visibility at local community and regional events. In addition to purchasing materials, we have a monthly bilingual newsletter sent to 180 recipients along with regular postings on Facebook and Instagram.



New sign and pull-up displays

This year, the funding has meant we've been able to invest in new equipment and improve the infrastructure on site. Thanks to the support of Five Star Polytunnels, our polytunnel is now covered, and the raised beds inside are being constructed by our volunteers ready for

the growing season, along with an irrigation system. We have invested in staging, seed trays and other items to help us prepare our seed sowings from early March onwards.

Volunteers have constructed raised beds outside, finished off the outdoor shelter, created a pond, planted fruit trees, hedging, and built pallet compost bays. Water is now available at the entrance of site and a beautiful fence and gate have been created by course participants to section off the planned apiary. We have purchased a large tool shed and our existing large shed has been repurposed as an indoor meeting and teaching space with a second-hand kitchen (again installed by volunteers). We have been able to purchase a battery powered strimmer and mower to help in the maintenance of the site.



New gate, polytunnel and kitchen in Large Shed, 2023

During 2023-24 we were able to use the existing and new outdoor raised beds to undertake our first growing season. It was inspiring seeing members of the community (of all ages), coming and spending time on site, tending and eating what was being grown. Much of the growing was undertaken by participants on the Sustainable Horticulture course delivered by Tir Coed. They grew and tended to a wide range of vegetables, so there was an abundance of produce throughout the season. Some of the participants remain engaged with our project.



Tir Coed at Yr Ardd, Spring 2023

Over the last year the project has attracted new volunteers, both from the local community and further afield. Some people have made contact on an individual basis, whereas we are increasingly receiving referrals from other community organisations, notably CAVO and Coleg Sir Gar. We have a small group of regular volunteers and others who engage as and when they are able. We run a weekly Volunteer session on a Thursday morning and in collaboration with Menter Gorllewin Sir Gar, Cered and Clinig Bach y Wlad we run a monthly session, Cwtsh Natur (formally Clwb Garddio) on the second Saturday morning of the month. To strengthen our volunteer offering, with the financial support of CAVO, we are embarking on the Investing in Volunteers (iV) Quality Mark.

We have worked hard over the last year connecting with other community and support organisations. We are working with the South Ceredigion GP Cluster on a Social Prescribing service, Ysgol Bro Teifi on projects for students who would benefit from activities outside of the mainstream curriculum and Tir Coed. Andrea Sanders is collaborating with Cered on a Welsh language e-book for children (through a successful grant via the Ceredigion Food Partnership). The Family Centre visit on a weekly basis through the warmer months. Members of Tysul Youth are regularly on site, helping with tree planting, seed sowing and watering. Through the year we have attended sessions hosted by West Wales Action for Mental Health, and the Community Connectors in Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire. These meetings have enabled new collaborations such as providing a nature inspired growing session at MIND's Mental Health and Wellbeing course. We have had stalls at the Teifi Valley Trail event, the Coronation, and the Carnival, which resulted in new volunteers and sign-ups.



Family Centre on site and Tysul Youth BBQ, Summer 2023

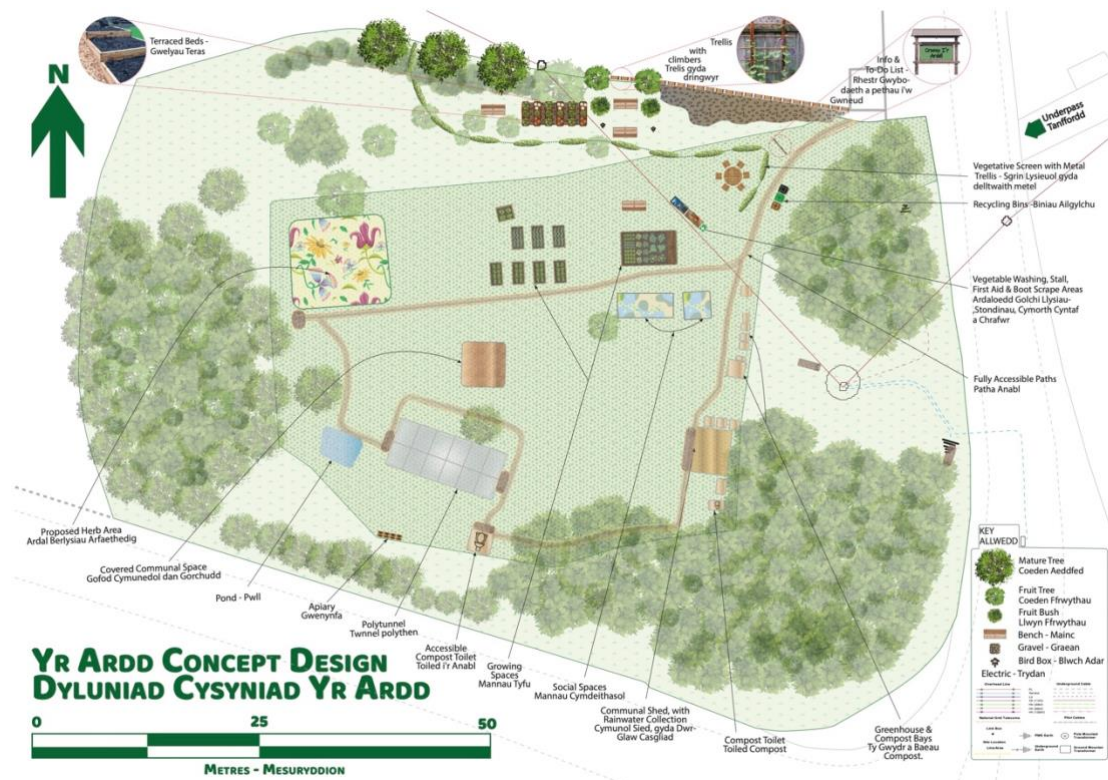
The funding has helped us to secure additional grants for new capital investment. We are seeking to improve accessibility on site and have secured funding from Brechfa West Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund. The panel has also invested a further £5.5k in improving the experience of the pedestrian underpass through engaging a local artist to work with the young people of Tysul Youth, Paddlers and the Scouts on a mural. The credibility of the Lottery Grant has given other funding organisations the confidence to invest in the community garden.

2 - How you've involved people from your community in the work you do

How have they changed the way you work? How have you joined up with what others are doing locally? How are you making the most of the strengths of your community?

Being an organisation reliant on volunteers and our wider community we are conscious of the need to adapt and change the way we work. When we started, we had clear outcomes of growing vegetables, offering volunteering opportunities, skills development and integrating the Welsh language. These objectives still hold true, however how we deliver them has broadened, for example increased collaboration with other community organisations.

At the start of the year, much of our decision making was made at CIC Director meetings. We had an Open meeting, but this was on an ad-hoc basis. Five months into the project we received constructive feedback from one of our active volunteers on how we were engaging our wider community. This led us to have a rethink, resulting in bi-monthly Open meetings and series of meetings on site to gain consensus on what was wanted, for example the layout of the polytunnel. A further example is the support we received from CARE Cwm Arian's Feeding our Community Project. Working with CARE, they helped us to create a community plan for Yr Ardd's site layout. We hosted a series of planning events including two meals, which were well attended by our wider community. This work is ongoing with a series of planned workdays commencing in early March to deliver the community site plan.



Yr Ardd draft site plan developed by CARE Cwm Arian

We have sought throughout the year to get involved in what other community organisations are doing locally. We were especially keen to engage and work with other community gardens. We are part of an informal network of gardens in south Ceredigion and have met and visited gardens in Cardigan, Newcastle Emlyn and Cenarth. We have also gone further

afield and have been inspired by Foothold Cymru in Llanelli and Bishop's Palace Walled Garden outside Carmarthen.

As we are keen to promote local food resilience, we have worked with Coleg Sir Gar on their Cook24 project, offering a short course in home cookery in Pont Tyweli. We met with Banc Bwyd Llandysul Food Bank to discuss how we can provide fresh food as part of their weekly food parcels. This initiative is due to begin in the summer of 2024.

We are continually seeking to make the most of the strengths of our community. In October we hosted Gwyl Natur Pawb, a one day event celebrating local food producers, crafts and the natural world. We supported presentations and demonstrations by local nature friendly and organic farmers and gardeners, beekeepers and wood turners. A highlight was the performance by the Llandysul Community Gospel Choir, an active group with over 60 members.

We have many talented, practical and creative people within our community. They have supported us in delivering training, volunteering sessions, plant knowledge and expertise, representation at local/regional events, site maintenance and improvement and even filing a video for a funding body. It is amazing how much goodwill, work and commitment has been shown to the project.

3 - The differences you're making (both big and small)

How has your project helped people and your community? And how do you know it's helped?

Here are some community voices:

"I would like to say in just a few words of why I come here and volunteer. I have suffered with my mental health due to a tragedy that happened to myself, and coming to Yr Ardd has made me come out, has made me socialise and make new friends. I get a sense of purpose and self-worth. The wellbeing benefit has been huge for me. There is nothing else here in the community that appealed to me in the same way. I had to force myself to come, but I now absolutely love coming here and it gives me so much pleasure, to be here on this site with all the lovely people that are here."

Rhian, Volunteer

"I like to be involved in the community, supporting family and friends. Being retired means I have the time and I do like helping people. I like being outside and using my hands, and the self-satisfaction of achieving something. I enjoy feeling I have achieved a task at the end of the morning."

Paul, Volunteer

"Following the pandemic so many [young people] have found spending time on the site highly beneficial to their personal health and well-being, learning new skills and helping to rebuild and connect with their community."

Steve, Tysul Youth, People we support

In November, we started bringing excess produce into the town of Llandysul and leaving it for members of the community to help themselves. Although our range was limited, we were aware that the produce would be taken within two hours of us putting it out in a central location. We had been curious who was benefiting from the produce. Last month, we received feedback from Sophie, a mother of two young children of how appreciative she is of this initiative. She said that she really struggles to find fresh wholesome food in the town. Having access to produce grown locally without the use of chemicals made such a difference to her family.

Sophie, People we support.

I have been working for Yr Ardd now for almost one year. I feel very fortunate to have a job in my community and be part of something that I feel passionate about. The role has benefited me by getting out and about, meeting new people and building relationships with other organisations. I am continuing to learn a lot and develop new skills such as writing grant applications and the Gardeniser Pro course. Working for Yr Ardd enables me to contribute to a wider movement of engendering local food resilience. I especially enjoy our volunteer mornings. One morning in early November, it was wet and windy, and we were tidying up the old tomato plants in the Polytunnel. I was outside barrowing a pile of dead plants to the compost heap. When I returned, I could hear talking and real belly laughter. I was so struck at the time about how this is what Yr Ardd, and a community garden is about for me. People being outside, enjoying company, supporting each other, and having fun.

Elizabeth, Employee

I am passionate about local food and food security and ensuring every person has access to quality fruit and vegetables as a human right. I also feel equally passionately about the benefits of access to outdoor green environments for peoples mental and physical

wellbeing. Having been involved in the planning and development of Yr Ardd from the early days seeing it start to develop and the benefits it is already providing fills me full of hope for its future. A garden is a long term project and we have a way to go but we have already been seen by other groups wishing to go down the same route as a guiding light and have been asked to talk to these groups about how we developed and what our plans are - hopefully we are starting a movement! I was asked only two days ago by a local horticultural nursery owner if we could help with the development of a further small piece of land in the town to make another little garden for the community. As they say "build it and they will come". When you start a project like this you don't think of the wider role it may provide but if we can be an inspiration for others to develop similar projects I see that as a huge gain.

Andrea, Director

Volunteering Mornings – every Thursday 10-12:30

We meet every Thursday and undertake a gardening related activity. Engagement has been steadily growing and even over the winter months, we have had 5 regular volunteers attending a session. Feedback from the volunteers on what being at Yr Ardd means to them in terms of their wellbeing continues to be positive, and this is demonstrated through their weekly participation.



Volunteer Thursdays 2023

Gwyl Natur Pawb – 7 October 2023

We ran a one-day festival celebrating nature and local producers. There were informative talks given by Tom Cowcher (local organic farmer) on nature friendly farming, Kim Stoddart (organic gardener and writer) on gardening in a climate emergency, Adam yn Yr Ardd (gardener and local celebrity) on garden planning and Llinos Hallgarth (Cered) on food pickling. We ran a lunchtime Question & Answer session on meeting your local producers and there were demonstrations throughout the day by local crafters. We estimate that around 120 people from the local community enjoyed the event.

Llandysul Family Centre – weekly throughout the summer

The family centre would spend time every Tuesday afternoon at Yr Ardd, running a series of activities for their parents and young children. Activities included using the mud kitchen, building bug hotels, watering and drawing/painting. On average 5 families would attend per week. Despite the poor weather over the summer, feedback continued to be positive, and the enjoyment of the children can be seen through the photographs.



Family Centre, June 2023

Tysul Youth Centre – bimonthly between April – October

The local Youth Centre would visit at least twice a month during the growing season. They have planted trees, sown seeds and planted out, built a firepit and watered. On average, 8-10 young people plus support staff and volunteers would be on site. Feedback to the support adults continues to be positive, with repeat visits. The young people have big ideas for the site, and we plan to build a pizza oven and they will be creating a mural for the access tunnel with local artist, Mark Folds.

Ysgol Bro Teifi – Summer Term 2023

Students and staff from the secondary school attended weekly undertaking various tasks such as weeding, watering, and moving compost. Participants generally had problems with the mainstream curriculum but thrived in the outdoor environment of Yr Ardd. 7-8 students attended along with 3 teachers. The offering has evolved, with some of the Sixth Form Welsh Bac students now volunteering on site over the spring/summer. We will continue to work with the school to extend our offering.

Compost Toilet Building weekend- 3-4 June 2023

We ran a course teaching how to build an accessible compost toilet, which also involved building one on site. We had 4 participants plus the course tutor, Steve Parkin. Evaluation feedback from all participants on the course content and instruction scored as excellent.



Compost Toilet Building course run by Steve Parkin, June 2023

Community Meal – 16 August 2023

With the facilitation of CARE Cwm Arian, we hosted a community meal at Yr Ardd, to ask our community about their vision for how they might like to see the site plan develop. We had 39 people from our local community join us, and it was a very special evening with lots of enthusiasm and ideas which we have incorporated into our design. Please see photographs of the event below. We ran a further three sessions to develop the plan, which was presented to a further 18 members of the community on the 30 January. Our first workday to realise our plan is on the 9 March.



Community Meal hosted by CARE Cwm Arian, August 2023

Tir Coed Sustainable Horticulture Course – weekly from March – October

The twenty-week free course run by the Carmarthenshire Tir Coed team aimed to skill adults to grow their own food and achieve a qualification. We had 11 attendees. Feedback was excellent, and we continue to work with Tir Coed to provide further courses in 2024, such as the Apple Tree Grafting Course, in early March, which is oversubscribed. Photographs of their involvement are set out below.



Sustainable Horticulture Course 2023

Clwb Garddio (now Cwtsh Natur) and events with Menter Gorllewin Sir Gâr and Cered

Yr Ardd has hosted Clwb Garddio/Cwtsh Natur, a monthly gardening group, delivered through the medium of Welsh, for our Welsh speaking community and Welsh learners. This group draws participants from the local area, and attendance ranged from 3-12 depending on the weather and other events happening at the same time.

During the summer we planned two sessions for the local community, a film night and music night (Jamio). Unfortunately, due to the weather we had to cancel the film night, but we enjoyed the Jamio evening with participants from the local community.



Jamio, July 2023

4 - How are you progressing towards your project outcomes

Provide some information for each outcome and the progress you have made towards each outcome, at this point in the project.

Volunteering: to provide fresh opportunities for all ages to socialise, exercise, gain skills and create a more cohesive community.

Infrastructure build (one off):

Activity	Achieved	Planned Participants	Actual Participants	Comments
Accessible Compost Loo	Y	10	4	Excellent feedback from participants and loo built on site. Not as much interest as had anticipated.
Pizza Oven	N	10		Delayed as Lean-to structure not built. Planned summer 2024

Volunteering:

Activity	Achieved	Planned Participants	Actual Participants	Comments
Gardening Club with Cered and Menter	N	75	51	Sessions cancelled in November – January (3 months due to weather)
Volunteer Training	N	10		Training lower priority than anticipated.
Stalls for selling produce and preserves	Y	10	12	Reverted to offering free produce at an unmanned stall in the village during Nov-Dec.
Regular Volunteer Workdays	Y	90	57	Excluding Sustainable Horticulture course and Family Centre
Volunteering	Y	100	261	1 March – 31 December

Annual Courses/Events:

Activity	Achieved	Planned Participants	Actual Participants	Comments
Recruitment events for Volunteers	Y	8 (events)	12 (events)	
Community consultation events	Y	50	82	More events took place than originally planned.
Seed Saving workshop	N	15		Workshop postponed due to lack of numbers
Annual Seed Swap	Y	25	12	

Training and skill development courses: to generate opportunities for beneficiaries for employment and enterprise.

Activity	Achieved	Planned Participants	Actual Participants	Comments
Making preserves	Y	20	21	3 events
Fermenting (Pilot)	N	10		Not run due to other priorities. Planned for 2024
Willow weaving	Y	10	5	Numbers were limited to those involved in the Horticulture course
Green woodworking	Y	10	11	3 events
Horticulture	Y	5	11	Exceeded plan
Nature Connection	N	7	1	Project in place with South Ceredigion GP Cluster but only 1 participant registered. This person joined as a volunteer.
Herb growing	N	20		Herb garden not constructed and polytunnel cover not in place until June.

Active use of Welsh: to encourage learners and first language speakers to preserve, by use, land-based and horticultural vocabulary that is at risk.

Activity	Achieved	Planned Participants	Actual Participants	Comments
Gardening Club with Cered and Menter	N	75	51	Sessions cancelled in November – January (3 months due to weather)
Use of bilingual signage and correspondence on social media increasing	Y			All newsletter and social media posts are bilingual. If an email is received in Welsh, the reply and subsequent correspondence is conducted in Welsh.
Bilingual events	Y			No quantitative target specified. Tyfu Ceredigion – event delivered in Welsh, supporting Welsh language in community growing spaces across Ceredigion. Gywl Natur Pawb – 50% of presentations in Welsh. Accessible Compost Loo course run bilingually.
Observations of Welsh language conversations	Y			Not actively recorded across the board. Conversations observed by Project Manager at: Gardening Club Thursday Volunteer workdays Community consultation events Making preserves, Willow weaving, Green woodworking, Horticulture courses.
Welsh Language events	Y			Two events planned with Cered and Menter. Only

				one took place due to the weather. Jamio – 5 participants
Register of number of Welsh speakers/learners present at an event.	N			This has not been included on our register.

Fresh produce provision: to enable beneficiaries throughout the community to access local fresh produce, alleviating local food poverty issues.

In November we started providing fresh produce for people to take in the centre of Llandysul. Visual observations suggest a range of ages benefiting, and the produce being taken within a couple of hours of being available. As this was a trial initiative using excess vegetables, we did not actively record the amount we provided. We will extend this project in 2024 and record.

In the summer of 2023, we met with representatives of Banc Bwyd Llandysul Food Bank. We discussed the practicalities of including fresh produce in food parcels, especially as these parcels are made up as requested by Food Bank users. We have agreed a process of harvesting to order and have increased our provision of growing in 2024 to meet this demand.

5 - What you've learned

What's gone well? What's not gone well or been challenging? What's been unexpected or interesting? What have you learned that would be useful to others? What did you think of trying but didn't?

What has gone well?

We have a group of Directors and Volunteers who care deeply about Yr Ardd being a success and have worked extremely hard throughout the year to make the project a success. The group have been supportive of one another and when it has really mattered, have come together to solve problems, and find a way forward.

We have exceeded our expectations with regards to the number of volunteers involved in the project, volunteer recruitment events and the numbers attending community consultation event. On reflection, the numbers attending our consultation events, especially around the garden site plan, demonstrates the level of care and commitment that people have for Yr Ardd. Sometimes it is easy to lose sight of this when dealing with the day-to-day challenges.

We have worked hard to develop relationships and partnerships with other organisations. Our partnership with Tir Coed, with their delivery of the Sustainable Horticulture course, was strengthened and has led to new opportunities, such as the forthcoming two-day Apple Tree grafting course in March. The project has worked on a range of initiatives with Cered and Menter Gorllewin Sir Gar. We are especially proud of the children's ebook being developed in collaboration with Cered, which will be a useful resource locally and beyond. Similarly, we have excellent connections with Tysul Youth and the Family Centre.

Yr Ardd has linked with new local partners such as Banc Bywd Llandysul and Ysgol Bro Teifi, and we have plans to develop initiatives and projects in the months ahead. The project is now collaborating with CARE Cwm Arian and Energy Local. The Energy Local project involves biodiversity surveying, and this will be a new strand of work in 2024. We have also developed excellent partnerships with the South Ceredigion GP Cluster and West Wales Action for Mental Health. Again, there is scope for new projects in the months ahead.

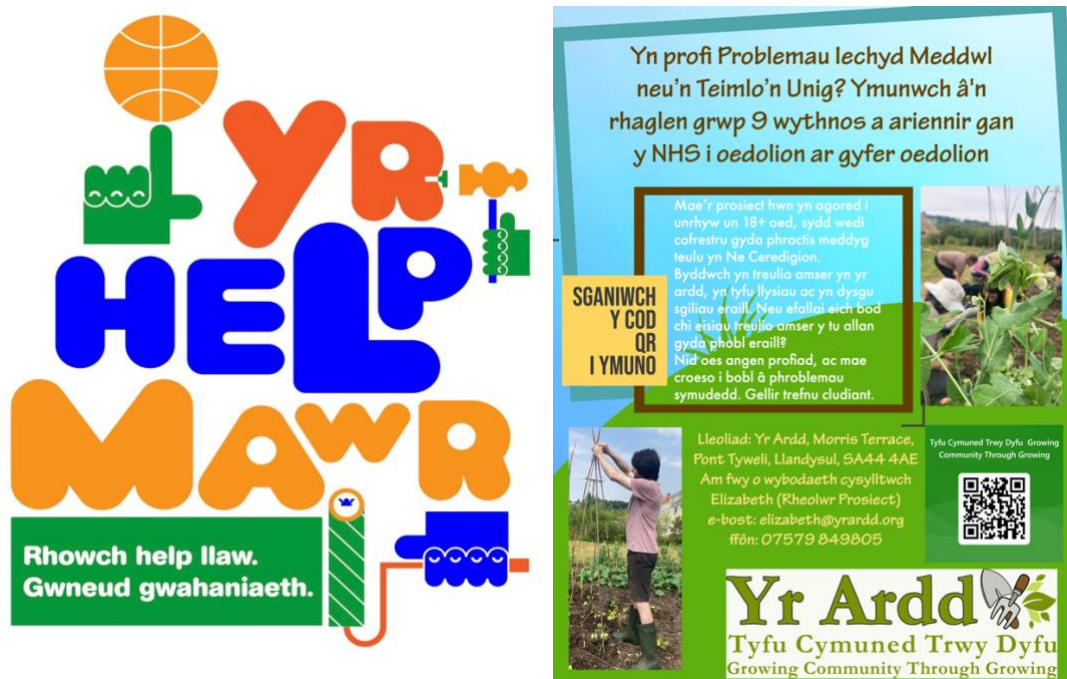
What's not gone well or been challenging?

As a CIC we are learning about working together and how the role of the Project Manager complements the activities of the Directors. Being custodians of public funding means that spending funding on capital investments can be a challenge as we want to get it right, but we have prioritised and now have the right equipment in place to start Year 2 of the project. Throughout the year, new opportunities have presented themselves, such as potential Grant funding or new collaborations. Staying focussed can be a challenge and seeking to deliver on our Lottery outcomes.

We have found it challenging to attract Volunteers onsite. Our outcomes show that we have exceeded volunteer participation, but this is largely due to a great commitment by a few dedicated volunteers. This reliance does not build resilience into the project. We have had events where no one aside from the Directors and Project Manager have attended, such as the Big Helpout, which was part of the Coronation weekend. This can be disheartening when people don't turn up.

It is difficult to ascertain why people don't show up, or don't come when they say they will. We wonder if we're not getting the information out, and not using the full range of channels, such as social media, which are available to us. This can feel frustrating as there is so much we want to achieve right now. For example, the Social Prescribing project was ready to go live, and we promoted through posters in Llandysul, in the GP practices, chemists and social media. We ran information raising sessions with the GPs and Pharmacists. Yet, we only had one person who signed onto the programme. This was incredibly disappointing as so much work had gone into making the project a success.

Over the last year we have engaged with a lot of other community organisations and are keen to develop initiatives which means they will use the site. Many of these organisations are working in the Green Care arena. There is a lot of enthusiasm to partner, but time and other pressures mean these ideas not always come to fruition, and the partner organisation does not follow-up. This might, in part be because of accessibility problems, and there may be opportunities to follow-up with these organisations to understand why a project did not get off the ground.



Promotion for The Big Help Our and the Social Prescribing Project, 2023

Finally, there have been challenges with the site. The ground has proved to be more compacted and waterlogged than anticipated. It had always been assumed that we would need to put in raised beds, but the height of the beds and the number needed has increased. This has meant we've had to spend more on timber and compost to address these difficulties.

What's been unexpected or interesting?

It's been unexpected that in supporting people and our community we've needed to rethink elements of the site infrastructure. This is reference to improving accessibility and also having a space to meet.

It became clear that the lack of paths on site meant that people were unable to visit, or there were trip hazards, such as brambles, which made it difficult to navigate. Wet areas and mud also proved to be problematic. We hadn't included paths in our Lottery capital

investment, but decided this was a priority for the site. The CIC has subsequently been successful in securing grant funding from Brechfa West Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund to lay accessible paths, create a herb garden, a seating area and bring water onto the site. Works are due to begin March 2024.

On site we had a large shed which we were using for tools and storage. One of our volunteers suggested that we might install kitchen units (without fixed cooking facilities), and went about finding a second-hand kitchen. He installed it over the winter months, and with Lottery funding we purchased a second shed to store the tools. We have been surprised how popular the large shed now is as a meeting space. It has made a massive difference having a covered seating area where people can sit, chat and craft. It feels that we had underestimated the impact of having undercover areas like this to socialise.

What have you learned that would be useful to others?

We are sure this is a common theme, but the biggest learn is that projects take time, and nothing happens as fast as you would like. You need to take time on the background stuff, like developing and implementing policies which aim to keep everyone safe and able to enjoy the garden. Opportunities, seemingly present themselves, but then don't happen (such as collaborations), so don't invest too much time, as another partnership will emerge. Try to stay focussed on the outcomes agreed as it is easy to become distracted and then you don't know where to begin. Start with a plan at the beginning of the year on how you intend to spread your capital works and investments and stick to the plan. Be resilient and support one another. The community might not see the potential yet, but bit by bit people and volunteers come and their involvement brings the greatest joy. Take lots of photographs to remind you all how far you've come.

What did you think of trying but didn't?

We discussed formalising our structure, so that we would have Members, who would make the decisions, with the Project Manager being responsible for the delivery and the Directors being responsible for the company, such as financial accountability. This is still an aspiration, and we need to work on this during 2024-25 to find a structure which works and is empowering.

Another opportunity we thought about but didn't implement was offering accredited activities for young people attending Ysgol Bro Teifi. The teachers are keen to work with us on Yr Ardd becoming a centre for delivering land-based modules where their students would then be able to achieve a qualification. This would be similar to the Sustainable Horticulture accredited course that Tir Coed delivered on site during 2023-24. We were keen to progress this programme, but realised that, at present, there are other outcomes we need to focus our attention on as this would be a significant undertaking. We would like to see a project like this in place by the end of Year three (2025-26).

6 - How you're changing what you do

Have you made any changes based on your experiences and what you've learned?

Some of things we are changing due to what we've learnt includes:

Offering growing areas to specific groups

During our first year we didn't allocate any areas to specific groups. The Family Centre were keen to have their own raised bed, but we didn't have one available at the time. Not having their own areas did cause problems, such as the Gardening Course digging up some of the vegetables planted by the Youth Group. It also meant that people didn't know what was where or what they could take responsibility for. So, we've decided this year to allocate spaces for both Tysul Youth and The Family Centre. We are happy to share seed sowings, but ultimately both groups will be responsible for their growing spaces. It is intended for them to each have at least one raised bed outside and one raised bed in the Polytunnel.

Provide free vegetables within the community

It was our intention that those Volunteering or visiting Yr Ardd would be able to harvest vegetables and take them home with them. The reality during 2023-24 suggests that there were still vegetables going to waste in the ground. The pilot we ran in November and December by bringing the vegetables into Llandysul for people to help themselves was very successful and we plan to expand our offering during 2024-25.



Working in partnership with other community organisations to deliver specific projects

During 2023 we were approached by CARE Cwm Arian seeking to support us through their Feeding Our Community Project. Having a third party run this project made a massive

difference as it freed us up to do other things. Also, collaborating in this way brings a fresh perspective. CARE is now running a series of workdays for us to deliver the Plan. We have a new partnership with Energy Local, and they will be supporting our planned Wildlife Surveys and running courses on wildflower identification.

Using contractors and freelance experts rather than wholly relying on volunteers

In 2023 we started with high hopes of creating a herb garden. However, it quickly became apparent that even levelling the planned area was a massive job. Similarly, bringing water onto the site and even creating a base for the new tool shed would take a significant amount of time and Volunteer commitment. We decided instead to repurpose resources and also apply for additional funding in order to bring contractors on site to get the works done quickly rather than taking weeks or even months to complete. We've learnt that sometimes it makes more sense to bring experts and professionals in to move projects forward. Similarly, we have decided to use a bookkeeper to keep our finances in order and provide a monthly report for the Directors.

Relaunching Cwtsh Natur – moving away from a Gardening Club

Clwb Garddio was our monthly event run in collaboration with Cered and Menter Gorllewin Sir Gar, promoting the use of the Welsh language. Attendance has been sporadic, and it was felt this could be due to the connotations of a “gardening club” meaning you had to be a gardening expert and it also suggested we weren't offering other nature-based activities. We have decided to change the name to Cwtsh Natur and reformat the session to include a gardening job, a crafting activity, a nature-based activity, and the opportunity to socialise. We relaunched in February, with increased numbers attending in March.

Change the format of the Gwyl Natur Pawb event

In 2023 we ran the second Gwyl Natur Pawb event. Whilst we found the talks were relatively well attended, the overall numbers of 120 were down compared to 2022. This event took a significant amount of planning and did not actively promote the Yr Ardd site. We have decided to rethink this event and perhaps just focus on talks and demonstrations. There is also opportunity to change the date, as this local events calendar is very busy during September/October.

What are your plans for the coming year - and beyond?

We have planned the following for 2024-25:

Further improvements to the site infrastructure, paths, socialising areas, more raised beds, herb garden

There is still work to be done to further enhance the site. In April it is planned that the new accessible paths, disabled parking space, water lines and taps, outdoor meeting space, herb garden and soakaways will be completed. We will be building a further 8 raised beds in preparation for the growing season and filling with compost. The kitchen will be fully functioning with hot water and solar panels will be fitted along with battery storage. Through funding from Brechfa West Wind Farm, the pedestrian tunnel entrance will have a mural designed by local young people. Along with solar lighting, it is anticipated this will give a much more welcoming feel to the site.

First growing year

Last year we were helped by Tir Coed with our growing. This year we will be doing this ourselves. We have a Growing Plan in place and have started our seed sowing. This feels challenging so it is hoped that more Volunteers will join us to help.

Open up a further Volunteer day

Due to the increased growing areas and the need to manage the site, it is proposed to open up for second Volunteer Day. It is proposed that this will be either a Monday or Tuesday and will run for the whole day.

Investing in Volunteers (IiV) Quality Mark accreditation

The CIC wants to offer excellent Volunteering opportunities. To achieve this, we are embarking on the Investing in Volunteers Quality Mark. CAVO (Ceredigion Association of Voluntary Organisations) has financially supported our application to undergo this assessment. It is anticipated it will take us a year to become accredited.

Plan out a series of events and learning opportunities in line with our project outcomes

As committed within our Lottery application, we will deliver a series of events and learning opportunities throughout the year. We will aim to have these in the diary by the middle of April, and especially focus on delivering the events that we didn't achieve in Year 1. These events will be listed on our FB page and our monthly Newsletter.

Provide vegetables to Banc Bwyd Llandysul Food Bank and at a site within the town

Once we are in a position to harvest, we are planning to provide vegetables to the Food Bank and also at our location within Llandysul. Vegetables for the Food Bank will be harvested to order, and we will need to decide how many times a week we provide vegetables within Llandysul and whether other sites need to be identified.

Undertake a Public Engagement project on the how the community wishes to use the site

The last public engagement project was in 2019, and it was from this exercise that Yr Ardd was formed. Other community gardens/social farms generally consult every 4-5 years, so it feels like the right time to go back to our community and understand what they want from their community garden. Are we delivering what they would like, and have their needs changed? An outline plan has been developed, but this is a significant piece of work, so would be best delivered by a Partner organisation. We will seek grant funding to undertake this project with the expectation of running over the Winter-early Spring of 2024-25.

Run the Social Prescribing project

The project developed in collaboration with the South Ceredigion GP cluster had to be postponed due to the lack of participants. The GPs are still keen to run the project and a new proposal will need to be submitted for 2024-25.

Bring bees on site and practice natural beekeeping

Following the April groundworks, it is planned to bring two beehives on site. We will be using natural beekeeping techniques to reduce the amount of Volunteer input and it is hoped having the bees on site will be a beneficial learning opportunity.

Wildlife Surveys

Working in collaboration with Energy Local we have planned for Volunteers to undertake monthly Wildlife surveys on site. There is significant interest in this project, especially from organisations such as the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, and we are hopeful this will bring new wildlife projects on site over the next year.

How will your plans help your community to thrive?

Our plans have been developed to help as many people as possible in our community to thrive. By making further improvements to the site access, we hope more people will be able to use the site. At present we know that people with mobility problems have difficulties benefiting from the site. This also means that those currently using the site miss out from having multigenerational and diverse interactions.

Growing more vegetables means that more people in our community can access locally produced vegetables using organic techniques. Hopefully our vegetables can bring health benefits and support those on low incomes or have difficulties in getting out to large supermarkets to buy fresh vegetables.

Our commitment to offering high quality volunteer experiences through IiV and further Volunteer days means there are increased opportunities for people to get outside and spend time in the natural world. Along with the Social Prescribing project, we know that Volunteering can have a positive impact on peoples' mental health and wellbeing and addresses loneliness and social isolation.

Offering more course and events means that more people will become aware of Yr Ardd and learn new skills. We hope the project will inspire others to grow their own vegetables at whatever scale they are able, and cook fresh vegetables for themselves and their families. We also hope that the project will continue to enable all members of the community to meet together, ideally over a shared love of food.

Finally, empowering our community to decide how they want their community garden to be means that we all collectively thrive as we have a space which is owned and loved by us all.

And is there any support you need to do this?

Having a fulltime Project Manager and a dedicated small group of volunteers does mean that we can deliver our aims, but we need to be conscious of over reliance on a few individuals.

We recognise that we will need to secure grant funding to undertake a Public Engagement project as we do not have the capacity to deliver this. In addition, we will need to identify and pay facilitators and trainers to lead events and learning opportunities. Finally, we will

need to work with public sector organisations such as the managers from the South Ceredigion GP Cluster to deliver Green Care projects.

7 - What you've spent this year

We don't need to know everything you spent money on. We just need to know:

- *how much you budgeted for*
- *how much you ended up spending*
- *the difference between your budget and how much you spent.*

For both revenue and capital costs.

Please use the 'budget change' spread sheet attached to the email to report on your project spend

Our budget change sheet is attached and shows that we have spent the following:

- The revenue total spent is £30831 (initial budget £42,283)
- The overheads spend is £1178 (initial budget £2640)
- The capital spend is £21839 (initial budget £14,777)

We had a considerably larger capital spend than we anticipated due to a range of factors not least the general, sometimes very significant, increases in the cost of materials and products. The need to buy a second shed as we repurposed the first shed into a meeting area as previously discussed was a significant cost but money well invested in the light of the benefits having a meeting shed has provided. We also had to purchase significantly more wood than anticipated as we had to build deep raised beds to deal with the soil conditions and water logging on site and in the polytunnel. This was exacerbated by the dramatic increase in the retail price of wood and consequently we had to make a large investment in soil/compost mix to fill the beds. The general increase in the price of all materials and goods due to the rise in cost of living has definitely accounted for part of our larger capital spend. We balanced this out with savings in our revenue costs but will have to review this balance as we move into Year 2.

We have £5,852 which was an under spend on our pre project payment currently in our account which has been earmarked to cover increases in costs for capital and overhead items over the forthcoming year and to compensate for delays in generating anticipated income when originally planning the project.

8 - Once you've worked out what you've spent the funding on

Have a think about any changes you'd like to make to the budget you agreed with us at the start of your project. Speak to your funding officer about any changes.

After discussions with our Funding Officer, we have agreed a 5% pay rise for our Project Manager to compensate for the large increases in the cost of living and in recognition of the excellent work she has provided to date. The cost of this will be covered, principally by the money saved by no longer paying for office space due to a change to home working. As previously mentioned, we will be reviewing the balance between capital and revenue costs and are very conscious of the fact that in years 2 and 3 we have a significantly smaller capital grant available. The £5,852 mentioned above is obviously going to be of great help but we will be looking for additional funding from a range of sources for future events and training as well as generating revenue ourselves.