

# National Lottery Rural Futures

End of Year Report  
Year 2 – March 2025



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

Company Number: 13230394

E: [tyfu@yrardd.org](mailto:tyfu@yrardd.org)

National Lottery End of Year 2 Report  
March 2025  
Version 1.1  
Contributors:  
Elizabeth Riches, Andrea Sanders, James Laurie

## Table of Contents

<b>1 - The story of your project this year</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2 - How you've involved people from your community in the work you do</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>3 - The differences you're making (both big and small)</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>4 - How are you progressing towards your project outcomes</b>	<b>20</b>
Volunteering: to provide fresh opportunities for all ages to socialise, exercise, gain skills and create a more cohesive community.	20
Training and skill development courses: to generate opportunities for beneficiaries for employment and enterprise.	21
Active use of Welsh: to encourage learners and first language speakers to preserve, by use, land-based and horticultural vocabulary that is at risk.	22
Fresh produce provision: to enable beneficiaries throughout the community to access local fresh produce, alleviating local food poverty issues.	23
<b>5 - What you've learned</b>	<b>24</b>
What has gone well?	24
What's not gone well or been challenging?	24
What have you learned that would be useful to others?	26
What did you think of trying but didn't?	26
<b>6 - How you're changing what you do</b>	<b>28</b>
Have you made any changes based on your experiences and what you've learned?	28
What are your plans for the coming year - and beyond?	29
How will your plans help your community to thrive?	30
And is there any support you need to do this?	31
<b>7 - What you've spent this year</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>8 - Once you've worked out what you've spent the funding on</b>	<b>32</b>

## 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 grow; to focus time, energy, and resources on making Yr Ardd a reality for our community. The funding has continued to support the employment of our Project Manager, Elizabeth Riches, along with further infrastructure improvements, engaging more volunteers and organisations, and providing a range of courses and activities.



*Volunteer Day – February 2025*

Yr Ardd has a prominent position on the outskirts of our community and can easily be seen with our Hollywood inspired “Yr Ardd” sign. We continue to build awareness of the project through the development of our marketing materials, such as our bilingual leaflet and photo montage which we take with us to promotional events. Uptake of our monthly bilingual newsletter has increased to 230 recipients, and we are now finding that courses are attracting attendees who have not previously engaged with the project and found out about us on social media.



*Volunteers*

During the year we have continued working on improving the site. Following the completion of the raised beds in the polytunnel we were able to grow food over the summer and the winter. We have built further outdoor raised beds, created an outdoor kitchen attached to the outdoor shelter,

fenced off the pond and are developing the area around the pond, a utility area and finishing off the woodfired pizza oven.



*Volunteers filling the new raised beds. Tysul Youth enjoying time in the outdoor shelter*

Despite the challenging weather conditions of 2024, the volunteers and Tysul Youth members were able to grow a wide range of vegetables in the polytunnel and outside. This enabled us to bring vegetables into a central location in the village. The vegetables are free or people can leave a small donation. We have had amazing feedback on what we have grown, with a young mother with children commenting how it helps her to provide vegetables grown organically for her family, when there is little availability locally, and the local Spar shop running a tomato taste test against their own products. Our tomatoes won of course! Bringing food into Llandysul means that there is improved access to free fruit and vegetables for those that need it.



*Produce picked and taken into Llandysul*

The number of volunteers regularly attending the site has continued to increase on a Thursday morning. We now have 12 regular attendees excluding the local school. This feels like the maximum we can accommodate to ensure that everyone has a great volunteering experience, so the decision has been taken to open up a second volunteer session on a Tuesday from 4<sup>th</sup> March. The Thursday volunteers have formed close bonds and friendships, which have moved beyond the site. We had our first Volunteer Christmas Party hosted by Kate and Ellen, which was a joyous occasion. We continue to work towards our Investing in Volunteers Quality Mark and have a Volunteer Policy and Handbook in place. We hope to be assessed in May 2025.

During the summer, due to local demand, we started a Men's Shed on site, meeting twice a month. Again, from March 2025, this has been increased to a weekly session.



We have continued to work with existing partners such as Tysul Youth Centre, the Family Centre, Menter Gorllewin Sir Gar, Cered, Clinig Bach y Wlad, CAVO, CAVs and West Wales Action for Mental Health. In addition, we have developed new partnerships and undertaken projects with Literature Wales, Capel Dewi Energy Local, Ein Cegin and the Community Mental Health Team. Through the Project Manager training as a Gardeniser (garden organiser), we have developed our links with a number of community gardens across Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion, notably the John Burns Centre in Kidwelly and BlueGreenCymru in Newcastle Emyln. Elizabeth is supporting new gardens developing in the area, including in Llanybydder and Llanllawddog. The Project Manager sits on the Section 16 Forum for Ceredigion, Ty Tysul (supporting children, young people and families in Llandysul) and the Ceredigion Local Nature Partnership.

Possibly one of the biggest developments has been our partnership with Ysgol Bro Teifi. The school caters to children from 3 to 19 and there are 877 pupils on its roll. In the autumn of 2024, we began a programme with the Additional Learning Needs department. This involves the Project Manager and a Lead Volunteer attending the school on the Wednesday and working with the pupils and teaching staff on their garden. Then on a Thursday, 4 boys have spent time at Yr Ardd working with the Lead Volunteer and Project Manager on infrastructure projects. Seedlings grown by Yr Ardd were provided to the school for them to plant in their polytunnel over the winter, resulting in winter salads and kales. The pupils have then harvested and sold bags of salad at the school. The project has been gaining interest and awareness in the school. Recently the teaching assistant running the project was asked to present to the School Governors on the work we have been doing together. The school is also due to plant an orchard, with the headmaster wanting to create further growing areas and flower beds throughout the site.



*Students of Ysgol Bro Teifi in their polytunnel and at Yr Ardd*

The funding has helped us to secure additional grants for new capital investment. This includes a grant of £44,282 from Brechfa West Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund to build accessible paths throughout the site and extend the mains water. The paths were completed in May 2024, and the positive impact has been significant. The site is now usable year-round, with no risk of trips, slips or falls. Furthermore, we have disabled people visiting and benefiting from Yr Ardd. We believe the increased number of volunteers joining Yr Ardd is partly due to this infrastructure development which we had not made allowances for in the original lottery application.



## 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?*

As an organisation we recognise the need to be dynamic. There are three significant changes we've made to the way we work during 2024-25. Firstly, our relationship with Ysgol Bro Teifi. In year one, our activities were limited to sessions in the summer term on site. The Project Manager has developed a strong working relationship with teaching staff of the Additional Learning Needs department, which has meant we are now working with them two days a week. It had been the expectation that all activities with the school would only take place at Yr Ardd. However, we have realised that to engage the school we need to support them in developing a growing space for all their students on site. This may be the development of a hub and spoke model, where Yr Ardd goes into the community rather than the community only coming to Yr Ardd.



*Ysgol Bro Teifi polytunnel November 24, and the growth achieved by early February 25.*

Secondly, we've realised that we were struggling to fill course places when there was a fee attached. Our community is struggling financially, and we were keen to ensure that all our courses are inclusive. Courses are now free, with a suggested donation amount for those who are able to pay. This has led to much higher attendance rates, thereby involving more members of our community.

Finally, we have recognised that we need additional paid support or contractors to help us with some of the ongoing landscape maintenance. Whilst the number of volunteers has significantly grown over the last 12 months, we still have limited numbers who are able to do the more physically demanding activities such as clearing and digging out brambles, clearing areas for new projects to begin or keeping up with the strimming and mowing needed on site. It is also a bit of a negative spiral; if the site looks unkept, less people are likely to volunteer. We have had ad hoc contractor support over 2024-25, with the view to formalise this arrangement in 2025-26 with regular hours.



*Before and after photograph of bramble clearance by young landscape contractor (providing employment opportunities in the community)*

We have increasingly worked together with other organisations and community gardens. Ein Cegin CIC offers cooking, growing and craft skills to families with young children. They ran a series of sessions on site through 2024-25 in collaboration with the Family Centre and Flying Start.

We are making the most of the strengths in our community and the expertise. We are using the funding to bring in amazing trainers on site to provide training, guidance and instil passion in attendees. These include Peni Ediker (compost making and apple tree grafting), Steve Parkin (Woodfired pizza oven), Maggie Carr (seed saving) and Selena Walker (herbalist and forager). We have been fortunate through our collaborations and partnerships to also provide courses with Elinor Wyn Reynolds (poet – supported by Literature Wales) and Laura Moss, Carys May and Yusef Samari (West Wales Biodiversity Centre – supported by Capel Dewi Energy Local).

### 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 understand the jobs down in the garden"

*Kai, Ysgol Bro Teifi, Volunteer*

"I like being outside"

*Shane, Ysgol Bro Teifi, Volunteer*

"I like to learn new skills"

*Dion, Ysgol Bro Teifi, Volunteer*

"I like to eat strawberries"

*Rhys, Ysgol Bro Teifi, Volunteer*

"I like to go down to the polytunnel and I like to plant and learn skills in the garden"

*Jack, Ysgol Bro Teifi, Volunteer*

"I just love this place. Even in poor weather the sky lights up, the trees, the landscape, really most of all the friendship of everyone. You can just sit and contemplate with a cup of tea doing as much or as little as you can. Everyone has a different experience, and they are willing to share. If you want to plant seeds, grow veg or just have a chat and a catch up this is for you, the community, it works!"

*Kate, Volunteer*

"A safe space where no one bothers you if you don't want to be bothered. People are so kind and friendly and being outside is good for us all. So glad I was introduced to this project. There are great free courses, wildflowers, composting, poetry, food. Everyone welcomed, makes my week."

*Ellen, Volunteer*

"Having been involved in the initial development and consequently, as a director of Yr Ardd CIC I feel there have been multiple benefits to the community as a whole and to myself, personally. The community have benefited from the many new opportunities for volunteering and learning new skills from the courses on offer alongside huge social benefits from making new friends and socialising on the site. The space continues to enhance the area aesthetically as it has replaced an overgrown and unattractive area with a pleasant area to enjoy. As a director I have appreciated the openings this has given me to network with individuals and organisations and make new friends as well as gaining a greater insight into the workings of the third sector and public sector in the area. It has also crystallised my perception of how much good a community garden can do for an extended community given the right people and resources particularly how much would be lost without it."

*Andrea, Director*

"Yr Ardd is creating opportunities for local people to meet newcomers to the area to share skills and learn Welsh."

Yr Ardd has created a safe place for people of all ages in the community, for networking, and learning new skills"

*Suzanne, Director*

"The project is continuing to develop and feels like it is now creating its own momentum. The Volunteer Thursday is especially well attended, and I really appreciate how the group is now self-supporting with networks beyond the sessions. Two volunteers said last week that the project has literally saved their lives. If this is our one achievement, then the project has been a success."

*Elizabeth, Project Manager*

### **Volunteering Mornings – every Thursday 10-1:30**

We meet every Thursday and undertake a gardening related activity. The session is open to all ages. Engagement has increased from 2023-24, and we can typically expect 9-14 volunteers attending a session over the winter period. We agree a range of activities at the start of each session, giving choice and flexibility. The volunteers have developed their own support network and meet up outside of Yr Ardd. We enjoyed our first Volunteer Christmas Lunch hosted by volunteers Kate and Ellen.



*Volunteer Thursdays 2024*

### **Ysgol Bro Teifi – Autumn and Spring Term**

Yr Ardd is now working with the school two days a week. We typically spend a Wednesday at the school, supporting their work in the polytunnel and wider plans for the site. Then students from the Additional Learning Needs department join us down at Yr Ardd on a Thursday morning. They

have typically got involved in infrastructure improvements on site. Two students are using their time on site for their Welsh Bac project. We know the students enjoy their time with Yr Ardd as they are always very keen to get down on site as soon as possible. They also say that they appreciate being able to make things rather than watching things being made.



*Ysgol Bro Teifi students on site at Yr Ardd*

### **Tysul Youth Centre – bimonthly between April – October**

The local Youth Centre typically visit at least twice a month during the growing season. They have grown tomatoes, chillis and peppers and helped with the watering of other plants. They really enjoyed growing and eating the vegetables. The young people have held parties on site, such as for their Bretton exchange group and for Halloween. They especially liked the pizzas they were able to make in the outdoor kitchen. We also ran a session with them as part of the project with Literature Wales.



*Tysul Youth Centre enjoying activities on site*

### **Llandysul Family Centre with Ein Cegin – regular sessions April - October**

Ein Cegin and the Family Centre have run a series of events on site, with Yr Ardd acting as hosts. Activities included making and cooking food, artwork, green woodworking and use of plant dyes. These sessions have been popular often attracting 40 participants (20 adults and 20 children) on site. Further activities are planned for 2025-26, demonstrating their success.

### **Celebration Meal – 25 April 2024**

With the support of the Rural Futures project, we held a project celebration meal. Volunteers and community members enjoyed a tasty meal reflecting on all that has been achieved so far.



**Nature Days with West Wales Biodiversity Centre, supported by Capel Dewi Energy Local, 20 July, 2 August and 17 August**

We ran a session on wildflower identification, a family nature day and on-site surveying. All the sessions were oversubscribed, and the feedback was excellent.



**Poems in Gardens (supported by Literature Wales)**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Cerddi Mewn Gerddi</b> <b>Poems in Gardens</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ymunwch ag Elinor Wyn Reynolds ac Yr Ardd er mwyn... Creu cerddi newydd Tyfu yr ardd gymunedol Dathlu drwy rannu geiriau a bwyd</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>GWEITHDAI AM DDIM YN YR ARDD</b> Teuluoedd a Phlant: Dydd Iau 29 Awst, 12.30-2:30pm</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pobl Ifanc: Dydd Iau 12 Medi, 5.30 - 7.30 pm</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cymru Cymraeg a Dysgwyr: Dydd Sadwrn 14 Medi, 10.00am-12.00pm</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pizza a barddoniaeth Sadwrn 14 Medi, 12.00pm-2.00pm</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Manylion pellach: elizabeth@yrardd.org 07579 849805</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Cerddi Mewn Gerddi</b> <b>Poems in Gardens</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Join Elinor Wyn Reynolds and Yr Ardd to... Create new poems Grow the community garden Celebrate by sharing words and food</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>FREE WORKSHOPS AT YR ARDD</b> Families and Children: Thursday 29 August, 12.30-2:30pm</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Young People: Thursday 12 September, 5.30 - 7.30 pm</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Welsh Speakers and Learners: Saturday 14 September, 10.00am-12.00pm</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pizza and poetry Saturday 14 September, 12.00pm-2.00pm</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Further details: elizabeth@yrardd.org 07579 849805</p>
--	---

The three sessions were very well attended with amazing levels of creativity. Here are the three poems created by the budding poets.

## **A day in Yr Ardd**

It doesn't matter what the weather's like outside  
sometimes it's raining or sunny,  
the sky full of clouds like feathers  
or snow making everything magic,  
the garden is pretty, full of lovely things.

We saw fruit and vegetables growing,  
growing quickly and slowly,  
growing all the time,  
changing,  
growing like us.

Tomatoes taste like summer if you like them  
or like 'bleugh' if you don't.  
Courgettes grow as big as your arm and heavier,  
they're speckled green, camouflaged.  
Birds like coming here to eat seeds and Mr Snail,  
they come to meet Dewi the deer and Haf the hare,  
and have a good chat when we're not looking.

We are happy here,  
we love cooking in the mud kitchen  
exploring through the willow tunnel  
out to the pond with the cup and saucer leaves  
and the waterboatmen skating lazily.

This is Yr Ardd – it is green, it is growing.

## **The Family Centre Group**

### **Something out of nothing**

Even when there's nothing, there is always something,  
even though the day may be stormy it is always clear at midnight,  
it can be sunny inside because this day was full of excitement and joy,  
and sometimes, weithiau, the hardest plants to reach  
are the ones that are more beautiful than any of the others.

And in Yr Ardd with its Hollywodd sign,  
the dandelion family of flowers collected in a bunch  
look like a river with streams breaking off in different directions  
dant y llew yn felyn fel yr haul.

A feather passing fluttery in the wind, pluen bert yn dawnsio,  
probably dropped by a passing flamingo or a dragon.  
All around us are round stupid leaves, these leaves you see – y dail – are not smart.  
and bits of wood, darnau pren, hanging about waiting to be used as mallets or sticks.

The barbecue is the best,  
we gather round the fire and the atmosphere warms us,  
mae'r tân a'r cwmni'n gynnes.

Sometimes there is music, always there is laughter and chwerthin.  
And it's peaceful here – tawel  
it's a good place to think, to meddwl,  
this is a small piece of land, of tir  
quiet like the eye of the storm,  
a sanctuary, ein hafan ni.

## **Tysul Youth**

### **A garden chorus of plants**

Today, I am ivy, iorwg.  
I am tenacious, a parasite,  
I grow because, I grow despite.  
But I make things beautiful with curled leaves like gems  
turning gardens into shining green treasure,  
tŷ gwyrdd yn yr ardd.

Heddiw, coeden olewydden ydw i, I am an olive tree,  
wedi bodoli ers canrifoedd, ancient,  
mae gen i wreiddiau sy'n tyfu'n ddwfn, with deep roots,  
rwy'n addasu ble bynnag ydw i, I adapt,  
rwy'n vulnerable, yn fregus, ond yn gryf, I grow.

Today, I am brambles, mieri,  
I stay out on the edges, growing on the sides,  
I am protective and yet I bear dark fruit,  
I am spiky but sweet.

Heddiw, draenen ydw i, thorns,  
yn boen i lawer,  
draenen mewn ystlys hyd yn oed, a thorn in the side maybe,  
ond rwy'n gwarchod, yn cadw,  
yn gysgod, yn dwyn ffrwyth,  
I support and sustain.

Heddiw, capan cornicyll ydw i, a lapwing's hat or nasturtium,  
trailing along the ground,  
flashes of colour, lliw tân, here and there, enough to make folk smile  
and a peppery taste to warm the tongue.  
Today I make the garden feel good  
and I feel good in the garden.

Today, I am willow, helygen,  
I'm quick-growing, scrubby, a survivor  
and weed-like I turn up everywhere – dyma fi  
I am rooted in this place – fan hyn  
a hybrid, a mixture of many things,  
and in the wind, my leaves sing.

### **Yr Ardd volunteers**

**Grow, Forage and Create Medicine with Salena Walker, 16 September**

The course was oversubscribed, with some participants saying that having free session meant that they could attend. Feedback from the group was very positive and having a bilingual course was especially welcomed. We were asked to do follow-up sessions in 2025-26.



**Seed Saving with Maggie Carr, 28 September**

Attendees were very engaged in the course and learnt a lot about the practice and politics of seed saving. They were inspired to get involved in the Incredible Seed Library founded by Maggie based down at Sero in Carmarthen.



**Composting Course with Peni Ediker, 11 October**

The practical compost course was fully booked as Peni has an excellent reputation as a trainer locally. Attendees were engaged throughout and keen to learn more about Biochar, which was one of the ingredients used by Peni in her process.



**Apple Grafting Course with Peni Ediker, 28 February 2025**

Due to the popularity, we ran two sessions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. We also tested setting a suggested donation for the course. Evaluation feedback was excellent, with participants writing “very interesting and informative” and “this opened up a whole new exciting world and I am bursting to get home and try it all out. Thanks so much.” We also collected £140 of donations.



## 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
Woodfired Pizza Oven	N	10	4	Course provided for free due to lack of interest

### **Volunteering:**

Activity	Achieved	Planned Participants	Actual Participants	Comments
Gardening Club with Cered and Menter	N	100	48	Session cancelled in April due to paths installation. Sessions not held over winter months: December, January & February
Volunteer Training	y	14	15	
Stalls for selling produce and preserves	Y	10	30	Free produce with requests for donations. Very popular
Regular Volunteer Workdays	N	104	87	Stretch target. Low number of sessions in April and May due to paths installation.
Volunteering	Y	102	382	

**Annual Courses/Events:**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Achieved</b>	<b>Planned Participants</b>	<b>Actual Participants</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Recruitment events for Volunteers	Y	8 (events)	9 (events)	
Community consultation events	N	50	28	Delayed main consultation activities to form part of the planned Evaluation and Consultation project
Seed Saving workshop	N	15	6	Less interest than planned
Annual Seed Swap	N	25		Did not take place. Signpost people to Seed Saturday and the Incredible Seed Library in Carmarthen

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

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Achieved</b>	<b>Planned Participants</b>	<b>Actual Participants</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Making preserves	Y	20	27	
Fermenting (Pilot)	Y	10	27	Run alongside Ein Cegin activities
Willow weaving	N	10		Difficulty in recruiting a trainer
Green woodworking	Y	10	10	
Horticulture	Y	14	25	Exceeded plan
Nature Connection	Y	14	52	Rebranded as Biodiversity and Nature days

Herb growing	Y	12	10	Reduced numbers to keep course manageable. Course oversubscribed.
--------------	---	----	----	---

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

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Achieved</b>	<b>Planned Participants</b>	<b>Actual Participants</b>	<b>Comments</b>
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. Poems in Garden x 3 Herb Growing Course
Observations of Welsh language conversations	Y			Not actively recorded across the board.  Conversations observed by Project Manager at: Gardening Club Thursday Volunteer workdays Horticulture courses Nature Connection activities Herb growing course

Welsh Language events	Y			Poems in Garden event x 3 Herb Growing Course
Register of number of Welsh speakers/learners present at an event.	Y			Now collecting this information as part of our course feedback.

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

We have continued 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. We do ask for donations. At the peak of our growing season, we were receiving donations in excess of £12 per week.

We supplied Ysgol Bro Teifi with plants for them to grow in their polytunnel over the winter period. These plants (salads and brassicas) have done really well, and the students have been selling small bags of salads and kale at the school.

## 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. We have made significant improvements on site, such as the accessible paths, mains water throughout the site, a functioning indoor growing space, more outdoor raised beds, an outdoor kitchen and a fenced off wildlife pond. Our community are noticing and commenting on the changes.

The CIC has managed to attract additional capital funding through successful grant applications. We received the grant from Brechfa West Wind Farm Community Fund, £5,000 from Carmarthenshire County Council for food preparation and cooking equipment, top-up funding from Keep Wales Tidy, CAVO paying our application costs (approx. £1,400) for our Investing in Volunteers Quality Mark Application and a £500 grant for the Men's Shed.

We are especially pleased to have developed our partnership with Ysgol Bro Teifi. There are benefits to Yr Ardd with engaged young volunteers and enabling inter-generational interactions. We bring knowledge and experience to the school, supporting them as they are inspired to develop growing areas on site.

We have continued to exceed our expectations with regards to the number of volunteers involved in the project, volunteer recruitment events and the numbers attending our courses. Our Thursday Volunteer session has now reached capacity with 10-14 regular volunteers. The courses are bringing in different people from our community, many of them hearing about us either through friends/family or our social media postings. We now have a Men's Shed, which is providing invaluable support and connection for its members. Sometimes it is easy to lose sight of how the project has grown when dealing with the day-to-day challenges.

We have worked hard to develop existing and new relationships and partnerships with other organisations. We have continued to work with organisations such as Tysul Youth, the Family Centre, CAVO, Menter Gorllewin Sir Gar, West Wales Action for Mental Health, CARE Cwm Arian and Tir Coed. We have developed new relationships with Capel Dewi Energy Local, Literature Wales, Ein Cegin and the Community Mental Health Team, The John Burns Centre and BlueGreenCmyru. These relationships put us in a strong position for the year ahead.

### What's not gone well or been challenging?

As a CIC we are continuing to learn about working together and how the role of the Project Manager complements the activities of the Directors. The role and qualities needed to be a Director are being reviewed, especially as we look to how the project develops beyond 2026. There is always a balance with how engaged Directors can be, especially if they have full time work commitments and/or families. This means that sometimes, some Directors must take on increased responsibilities and this is not always easy. We are exploring how we can best support each other moving forward.

We would still like to attract more Volunteers onsite. Our outcomes show that we have, once again, 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 are very conscious that our resilience needs to be addressed as we enter year 3 and plan for 2026 and beyond.

We are disappointed not have engaged more Welsh first language volunteers and participants. There are many Welsh as well as English volunteers, however the majority of our volunteers have moved into the area. We have spoken to Welsh first language volunteers and other third sector organisations in our community. We are wondering if many Welsh families have intergenerational support or are gardening at home. Also, if they are involved in land-based jobs, they may not have the time to be involved in the project. Finally, it might be the perception that Yr Ardd is an organisation made up of English people, even though 3 of the 5 Directors are Welsh. This is a challenge we continue to work with, and it is hoped that our closer ties with the school might mitigate or improve perceptions.

As detailed in our first End of Year report, we did offer specific raised beds to regular users of the site: Tysul Youth and the Family Centre. Whilst there was some success, this idea didn't really work because the organisations are not able to commit regular times to the project to keep up with watering, tending and harvesting. For 2025-26 we have brought all the growing areas back under the control of Yr Ardd.

Over the last year we have continued to engage 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 do not always come to fruition, and the partner organisation does not follow-up. This might remain a perennial problem until we become more established and have the capacity to follow-up interest.

### [What's been unexpected or interesting?](#)

It was unexpected how the laying of the paths has impacted how the site is used. Before the size of the site could feel quite overwhelming, with a sense of not really knowing where to begin. Now the paths have created areas, which we can then cultivate or leave wild. Being broken up in this way makes the site feel more manageable. In addition, we saw a correlation with the number of volunteers increasing following the path implementation. We knew accessibility on site was an issue, but we hadn't really comprehended how problematic and excluding the lack of paths was proving to be.

It was interesting how popular the Wildflower Identification, Family Nature Day and Habitat Surveying sessions were. Each of the sessions was oversubscribed and well attended, even with poor weather. These days were, in some cases, more popular than our horticulture sessions (e.g. seed saving course), which was surprising given the aims of Yr Ardd. The planned Nature Connection sessions did not attract any attendees, which was interesting, and it appears that the community like the idea of practical sessions outside in the natural world, learning new skills they can apply outside of Yr Ardd.

As part of the Wildflower Identification session, Laura from the West Wales Biodiversity Centre undertook a site survey for the Big Meadow Search. In less than 2 hours the group managed to spot 47 wildflowers on site. It was unexpected that there would be this level of biodiversity, and we will work to increase the numbers in 2025-26 and beyond.

During 2023-24 the courses we did run had low uptake and we did have feedback that the prices could be prohibiting people within the community. Despite advertising widely our Woodfired Pizza Oven course, we had no interest, and, in the end, we completed the task as a volunteer training session. The decision was made during the summer to make all the courses free. It was surprising how popular the courses then became, with many of the courses being fully booked. For our Apple Tree grafting course in February, we tried a different approach, whereby we asked for donations with a suggestion of £15 to partly cover costs. Unexpectedly, we received £140 in donations, so with 10 participants, the average donation was £14. We have decided to implement this practice moving forward, so that all courses are free, but those that can afford it, can contribute to the overall running of the session.

### 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 had hoped to run a Consultation and Evaluation programme from September 2024 and had a plan in place. However, as the months went on it became clear it was too much for the Project Manager to run the programme inhouse alongside the Investing in Volunteers Quality mark, infrastructure and partnership developments. In the end we decided we would need to bring in external support and project is now being delivered by a third sector provider, Parc y Esgob.

The introduction of bees on site had been part of the workplan. We purchased the hives, but just did not have the capacity to make the plan happen. The area set aside for the bees was not cleared of weeds, levelled and covered with weed suppressant membrane and wood chip in time. As we are planning to practice natural beekeeping, we would be looking to catch a swarm. Swarming typically takes place in May and June, and we were just not ready in time. This year, we plan to have the site ready and make it happen.

We had in our plan to start a Second Volunteer session. Again, we were over ambitious in what we could achieve with one fulltime employee. So, for the year we continued with one weekly session, which towards the end of the year has reached capacity. We have already identified a lead for the second session, and they will also take over running the Men's Shed. These changes will be in place in Year 3 of the project.

The intention was to supply Banc Bywd Llandysul Food Bank from the summer of 2024. We found that due to several factors we were unable to put this plan into action. The factors included: poor harvests due to the weather, not having a range of foods suitable for inclusion in the food parcels and finally not having the infrastructure in place at Yr Ardd to pick and deliver to the Food Bank. With a planned second volunteering day, it is hoped this project will happen this year.

## 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:

#### **Offer adult only volunteer sessions**

At present our Thursday volunteer session is open to all, which means we have students from Ysgol Bro Teifi on site along with home schooled children. Unfortunately, one of our volunteers has chosen to stop coming as they did not like having the young people on site at the same time. To make access as inclusive as possible we have decided to make the new Tuesday volunteer sessions for people aged 18 and above. Hopefully this means that everyone can feel welcome.

#### **Continue with sessions at Ysgol Bro Teifi**

In addition to the students joining us on site, we have been spending two hours a week with the students at the school. When the aims and vision of Yr Ardd were conceived, it was assumed that all activities would take place on site. We believe we need to think differently about Yr Ardd; rather we are an organisation supporting growing, learning new skills, and advocating for the use of the Welsh language and this does not always mean we are tied to our site. We need to bring Yr Ardd out into the community. This is quite a fundamental shift in our thinking.

#### **Using external trainers for courses and freelance experts to deliver volunteer sessions**

There had been an expectation that we would use the expertise of Directors and the time of the Project Manager to deliver the entire programme of our activities. However, we have come to realise that this plan was unrealistic and put further pressure on already busy people. During 2024-25 we used external trainers, which worked well, and during 2025-26 we will build on this using freelance experts to deliver some of our volunteer sessions.

#### **External advice on creating a planting plan**

In Year 1, it was agreed that a volunteer group would put together a planting plan. This did not happen, and we were fortunate that the Tir Coed Sustainable Horticulture course filled the gap. In Year 2, the planting plan fell to the Project Manager. We did have a level of success, but this only placed further pressure on the Project Manager and did not make full use of our growing space. For Year 3 we have included developing and implementing a planting plan as one of the tasks of the person delivering the Tuesday volunteer sessions. This person is a professional horticulturalist by background, so has the right credentials to support us to have a productive growing season.

#### **Continue with free courses with a recommended donation**

Following our recent Apple Grafting Course yielding £140 in donations, £10 short of the suggested £15 per person, we have decided to continue with the process. Whilst the amounts are still short of the costs of putting on the courses, it does help to bring in additional resource and enables those on low incomes to access our courses.

#### **Open a community bank account to sit alongside the Credit Union**

Every year of the project our payments and funding flows are becoming more complex. Recent changes within the Credit Union have made the payment process more difficult and the service charges more costly. The Directors have decided to open a community bank account, to enable internet banking and have all Directors as signatories.

### **Create role descriptions for Directors**

Engaging in the Investing in Volunteers Quality Mark has highlighted the need for role descriptions for Directors and create accountable officers for core roles such as Volunteering and Safeguarding. Introducing clear roles will improve accountability and transparency and allow us to have clear processes should something go wrong.

### **Create a programme of activities for Cwtsh Natur**

We are still struggling to attract regular attendees to our monthly session for Welsh speakers and learners. We have tried to rationalise why this might be the case. It is proposed to set a series of activities though the year to see if this increases numbers.

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

We have planned the following for 2024-25:

### **Further improvements to the site infrastructure, utility area, seating around the pond, wildflower bed, bog garden, flower borders, dead hedge, herb garden, bee area and soft fruit cage**

There is still work to be done to further enhance the site. The Thursday Volunteers have set a plan for the first 6 months which is displayed within the Main Shed.

### **Open up a further Volunteer day**

Due to the increased number of volunteers and a desire to concentrate on growing and learning new skills areas and the need to manage the site, it is proposed to open up for second Volunteer Day with Chris Lambert, an RHS trainer. This would take place every week from 10-1:00pm.

### **Weekly Men's Shed**

Chris would also be facilitating the Men's Shed which will take place weekly on a Tuesday from 2:00-4:00pm.

### **Forrest School Activities for Ysgol Bro Teifi**

We are looking to further develop our partnership with the school and keen to offer a facilitator who is Welsh first language.

### **Investing in Volunteers (IiV) Quality Mark accreditation**

The CIC wants to offer excellent Volunteering opportunities. To achieve this, we are finalising our Investing in Volunteers Quality Mark submission.

### **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. These events will be listed on our social media pages 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.

### **Complete our Public Engagement and Consultation project**

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? The project plan is in place, and we are being supported through the process by Parc y Esgob.

### **Bring bees on site and practice natural beekeeping**

It is planned to bring two beehives on site in April. 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 would like Volunteers to undertake monthly Wildlife surveys on site.

### **Grant Applications for 2026 and beyond**

The management team is conscious that we are entering the third and final year of Lottery funding. We will be working hard to attract new grant funding so the project can continue in 2026 and beyond.

### **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 and sense of aesthetic, we hope more people will be able and interesting to use the site.

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.

Further work with Ysgol Bro Teifi will introduce more young people to growing at an earlier age. There are also further benefits such as remembering our cultural roots of being self-supporting as a community, making things such as woodwork and metal work and encouraging entrepreneurial business ideas. Empowering and enlivening the students could also bring their families into Yr Ardd and engage in our activities.

Our commitment to offering high quality volunteer experiences through liV and further Volunteer days means there are increased opportunities for people to get outside and spend time in the natural world. 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, 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.

The Directors are currently applying for a People and Place Grant, with the hope that we can invest in freelance trainers to support our extra Volunteer session, the Men's Shed and Forest School with Ysgol Bro Teifi.

## 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*

## 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.*