



CoedLleol
SmallWoods

Coed Lleol (Small Woods) Consultation Report 2023

Exploring Sustainability and Resilience



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Introduction

Coed Lleol (Small Woods) is part of the Charity, Small Woods (established 1988). Small Woods is a National Organisation for Small Wood Owners and has a significant track record in Social Forestry. Coed Lleol (Small Woods in Wales), established in 2002, develops and delivers community and social forestry activities throughout Wales that help to connect people to their local woodlands. Coed Lleol's (Small Woods) Woodland Well-being programme (formerly known as Actif Woods) began in 2010 to connect people with their local woodlands for their health and wellbeing, whilst also helping to maintain and promote healthy woodlands. Since then, Coed Lleol (Small Woods) has expanded to deliver woodland well-being sessions in fifteen Welsh counties (Anglesey, Conwy, Gwynedd, Wrexham, Flintshire & Denbighshire, Ceredigion, Powys, Swansea, Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot, Blaenau Gwent, Newport, Caerphilly, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil).

The Woodland Well-being programme engages adults and children who predominantly live in areas that have high health needs, low employment rates and often poor access to services. Additionally, it encourages and supports social prescribing by working in partnership with health services and GPs who refer people to programmes. Coed Lleol (Small Woods) has actively professionalized and promoted social prescribing to outdoor health activities through the development of outdoor health clusters in four areas in Wales. Coed Lleol (Small Woods) has also established a well-respected training programme for staff, leaders, providers and health professionals to upskill and embed well-being in nature into their everyday practice.

Coed Lleol (Small Woods Wales) aims to protect and develop woodlands for current and future generations by encouraging the use of woodland resources for the long-term health and well-being of people and the environment – creating healthy woodlands and healthy people.

The key objectives for participants are:

- Increase the mental well-being of participants.
- Increase the physical activity participants undertake.
- Increase the time spent outdoors and with others.
- Increase the knowledge and understanding of woodland skills and heritage crafts that utilise the natural resources of UK woodlands.
- Encourage progression to Agored accreditation, volunteering or drop-in woodland groups (supporting longer-term health and well-being) leading to community involvement in the maintenance of woodland sites.

The key organizational goals are:

- Increase active referral routes from health and support services and GPs to woodland well-being and outdoor health activities (social prescribing)
- Develop strong training pathways for woodland leaders for career professional development (developing a clear set of minimum standards for woodland health activities)

- Promote stronger networks between outdoor activity provision, health services and woodland management.
- Support and encourage targeted university research that explores and examines the impact of social forestry.

Since its inception, Coed Lleol (Small Woods) has relied on core grant funding to fund staffing and delivery costs to run its programmes. Coed Lleol (Small Woods) has successfully received and increased its funding for over 10 years enabling the growth and expansion of its programmes across Wales. This culminated in a two-year 1.5 million pound grant from Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing (EnRAW) in 2021 (match funded by The Healthy and Active Fund, HAF).

In 2023, following the Covid pandemic and Brexit, the **funding climate is more uncertain**, with large pan-Wales funding being scarce and smaller-scale county-level funding becoming the norm (via the Shared Prosperity Fund). The result of these funding challenges potentially threatens the longevity of the Coed Lleol (Small Woods) groups running in the 15 counties. The uncertain nature of funding for Charitable organisations has led Coed Lleol (Small Woods) to explore other avenues for sustainability and resilience and led the organisation to consider how its aims and objectives could be met via other avenues.

Core to Coed Lleols' (Small Woods') mission is to create **healthy woodlands and healthy people**. They aim to connect people to nature to support their health and well-being (and consequently for the long-term health and well-being of the Country and its natural environment) and to encourage people to value, invest and care for their local nature areas - to create more resilient people and green spaces.

This year's consultation focuses on the two themes of **resilience and sustainability**, exploring how to connect people to nature for their health and well-being, what communities might need to be able to use and look after their green spaces and how could Coed Lleol (Small Woods) achieve its mission without reliance on core grant funding.

Consultation

The 2023 consultation was undertaken at nine stakeholder events that were delivered by Coed Lleol (Small Woods) between March and May 2023. The stakeholder events bring together participants, partners, health professionals, community groups and support services to celebrate the year's achievements, highlight key national evaluative findings and promote the work Coed Lleol (Small Woods) undertakes in each project area. Additionally, each stakeholder event provides opportunities to take part in activities and socialise. Consultation is undertaken during these events with a designated 45–60-minute activity that encompasses an ice-breaker activity and the opportunity for everyone who attends to input into the consultation questions. The consultation was also offered as an online survey that was sent out to participants, partners and wider stakeholders through mailing lists and social media.

Sample group

A total of nine stakeholder events were held in 2023. These attracted 254 stakeholders – these represented participants (new and existing), partners (existing and potential), Health Professionals, Support Services, Community Services and others (including representatives from the council and an MP). 177 people completed the consultation (147 at the events and 30 via an online link sent out to mailing lists and via social media)¹

Stakeholder Event	Number attended	The number who completed the consultation
RCT/Merthyr, Lost Peatlands & RCT Cluster	15	10
Gwynedd & Gwynedd Cluster	21	21
Swansea	30	25
Conwy	21	17
Wrexham	20	15
Neath Port Talbot	24	23
Ceredigion & Trywydd Iach	63	25
SE Wales	Cancelled	n/a
Carmarthenshire	Cancelled	n/a
Pembrokeshire	12	7
Anglesey	48	4
Online	n/a	30
	254	177

¹ Many of the participants were unable to complete the consultation fully due to having learning difficulties or dropping into the events solely for the afternoon activities. Where a participant attended with support worker it was requested that their opinions were reflected in the support workers responses where possible.

Method

All the questions posed to the stakeholders were open-ended and free-text options. It was felt that a range of ideas and suggestions would be forthcoming without offering people options or suggestions that they either agree or disagree with. Moreover, Coed Lleol wanted to challenge stakeholders to ‘think outside of the box’ (and more importantly, ‘think outside of the organisation’) to gather a wide range of ideas and suggestions that reflect local opinions and needs.

All responses were transcribed onto a spreadsheet. Each question asked often prompted multiple responses from the stakeholders, each suggestion was presented on a separate row so that a true understanding of the range of suggestions was presented. Thematic analysis was applied to the responses for each question. The suggestions were coded and themed to create a clearer understanding of the consultation results.

Questions

The questions selected for the 2023 consultation were as follows,

Question	Reason	Theme
What would help current and future generations feel connected and connect to nature?	There is a growing body of evidence that suggests that people (and especially children) are spending less time in nature than their predecessors. There is also a strong body of evidence that suggests that spending time outside and in nature is good for health and well-being. Core to Coed Lleol’s mission is to connect people to nature for their health and well-being. The organisation must respond to how communities feel this should and could be done via consultation	Sustainability
What might help communities to use and look after their natural green spaces/woodlands?	Many green spaces within communities are unmanaged or neglected, leaving them open to housing developments, fly-tipping or antisocial behaviour. Managing woodlands or green spaces for wildlife and/or environmental reasons is a primary objective of Coed Lleol (Small Woods). Woodlands are home to a wide variety of flora and fauna, but many woodland specialist species are declining, and woodlands that are not managed are less biodiverse. It is the responsibility of anyone involved in woodland work to promote wildlife	Sustainability and resilience

	conservation and social forestry is no exception. Coed Lleol (Small Woods) has access to expert woodland managers who help the community maintain and manage local green spaces. The organisation were interested in finding out what key stakeholders might consider important for communities to continue to use and maintain their local greenspaces.	
How can Coed Lleol (Small Woods) keep supporting health and well-being and looking after woodlands in an uncertain funding climate? <i>How might they achieve this without funding?</i>	Coed Lleol (Small Woods) has run several staff workshops looking specifically at the question of sustainability outside of core grant funding. Many ideas and suggestions emerged through this process. The organisation wanted to garner the views of its key stakeholders to see how they thought that the organisation's charitable work could be achieved outside of core funding	Sustainability and resilience
Coed Lleol Strengths and Weaknesses	Coed Lleol must regularly collect information from its stakeholders about what they feel are the organisation's core strengths and weaknesses. This information can be used to rethink practice and ensure best practice going forwards	Sustainability and resilience

The results for each question and our ice-breaker activity (tree memories) are presented below.

Tree Memories

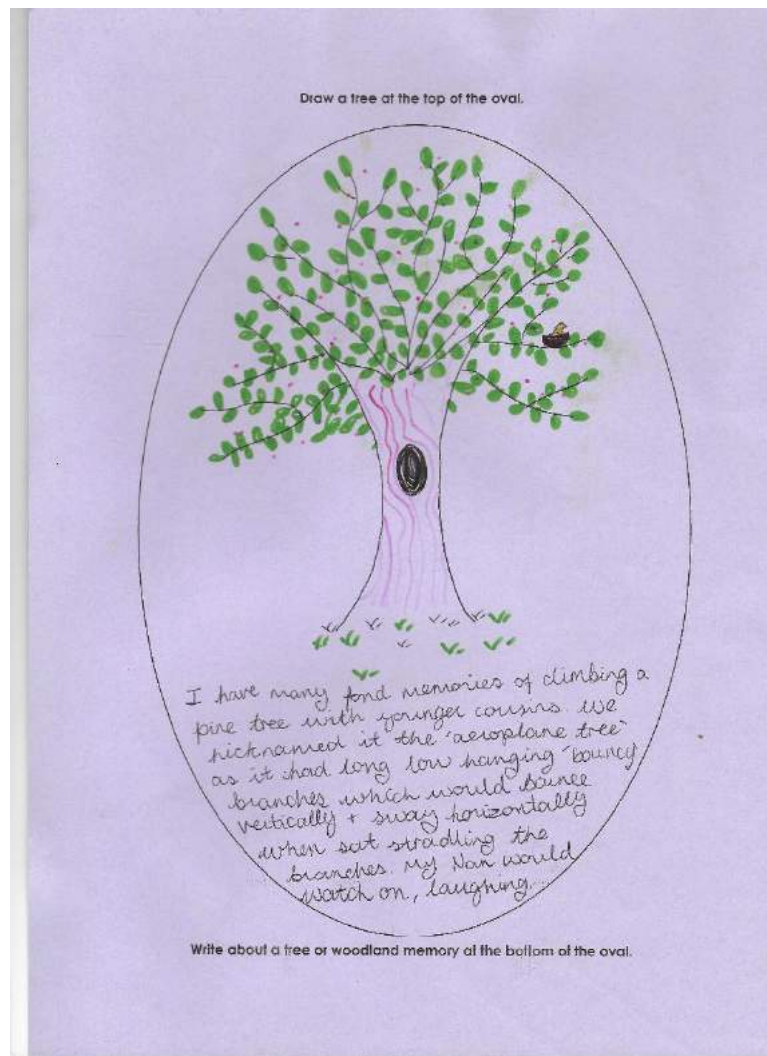
Coed Lleol (Small Woods) are currently partners on a collaborative, cross-disciplinary university research project called **Understanding Memory of UK Treescapes for Better Resilience and Adaptation (MEMBRA)**. MEMBRA is a UK Treescapes project that looks at the memory of trees using cutting-edge molecular biology techniques to understand how past stresses are maintained and transmitted through generations.

MEMBRA also explores how our understanding of tree memory impacts the language that describes treescapes and this influences human interactions. It is a unique project that brings together artists, classicists, geographers, molecular biologists and partners who work in forestry and has an overall aim of improving future Treescapes.

Using the MEMBRA project as a starting point, Coed Lleol (Small Woods) were keen to explore their stakeholder's own tree memories. Each stakeholder was invited to spend ten minutes discussing a tree memory with a person beside them, and then draw the tree and write the memories down. The resulting memories will be stored in the Coed Lleol Bark-ive (and archive of tree memories) that will be available online later in the year.



Tree memories are displayed and a sample below



Some examples of the tree memories that will go into the Bark-ive

"I had a weeping willow in the garden when I grew up. My dad used to sit under it with a pot of tea and a newspaper. He even cut a 'fringe' in when it grew to the ground! When our house subsided, the insurance company wanted to cut the tree down - but my dad refused, so we kept the tree, and the house came down!" Ceredigion stakeholder event

"A really tall and wide tree stood at the top of a grass slope next to a pond full of ducks and geese. There was a hollow in the tree overlooking the pond. My parents told me stories about the owl who lived there. They would lift me up to reach inside the hollow and I'd find a chocolate egg or a bag of sweets ... but only if the owl thought that I'd been a kind or a nice person. I then walked past this tree as a teenager on the way to school. I'd still say 'hello' to the owl and the tree. I felt seen and comforted that my family included this wise owl and his tree in my story" Swansea Stakeholder Event

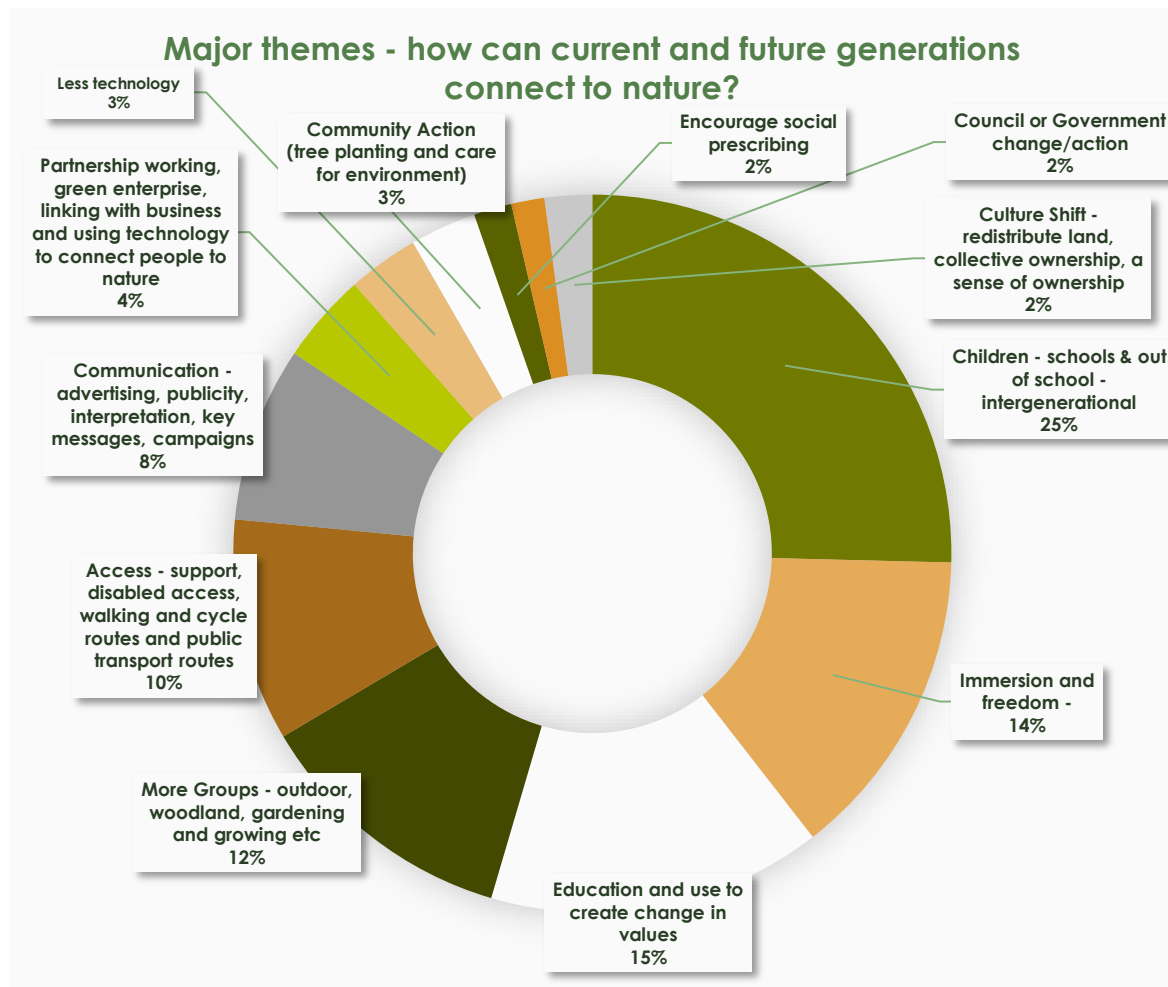
“During the COVID pandemic first lockdown I would go for daily walks or runs up a wooded hillside in the sunshine. The weather was so good that summer and the COVID restrictions meant that getting out of the house felt extra precious. One on walk I came across a glorious oak tree standing tall and strong. There was a real moment of mindfulness – using all of my senses as I touched the bark and looked at the light through the leaves. I felt connected to nature” Gwynedd Stakeholder Event

“When I was young, there was a wall-lined narrow lane down a steep hill which was adjacent to a local park. Overhanging the road were 2 huge horse chestnut trees. In autumn and on the way home from school we'd stop to throw sticks up the trees to try and knock down the biggest conkers before they fell naturally and into someone else's conker bag. The thrill of opening the shell was really exciting. The disappointment of a white underripe one to the elation when I found a massive brown potential champion. Whenever I see a conker tree now I feel happy at the memories and sad that there are often so many brown conkers lying unwanted on the ground. The temptation is still there to pick up a stick and throw it up the tree, especially if nobody is looking” Online submission.

“When we were growing up, my dad (who was divorced from my Mum) had a huge cherry tree in his garden. We'd go round there often to climb the tree, and every summer we'd have a cherry-picking barbecue around the time of Wimbledon. He'd tell us stories about the world, his past and all things joyous in nature (he'd studied botany and zoology). It was often a major family gathering, typically multi-generational and always inspiring. Sadly, my dad is no longer with us, and the house/garden is going to be sold soon. I don't know what will happen to that tree. It has been around much longer than I have - I can only hope that it will still be there, but I can't control the future. Like memories of my dad, though, I will hold onto the memories of our beloved cherry tree, the happy times we spent together as a family and the hope of things being better in the natural world” Online submission.

Results

What would help current and future generations feel connected and connected to nature?



482 suggestions were presented by the 177 stakeholders to help current and future generations connect to nature. By far the largest percentage of comments referred to starting children at a young age in connecting to nature. The stakeholders felt that this could be done via schools, parents, and community projects (including intergenerational ones). These suggestions linked to the next two major themes of educating people of all ages (to value and understand nature) and enabling people to immerse themselves in nature and be free to explore and discover it (using fun and engaging methods if necessary). The need for structured groups that approached nature connection in alternative ways (via woodland groups, gardening groups, animals, and food production) was also highlighted by stakeholders. It was felt that people have a view of being in nature that might be high-

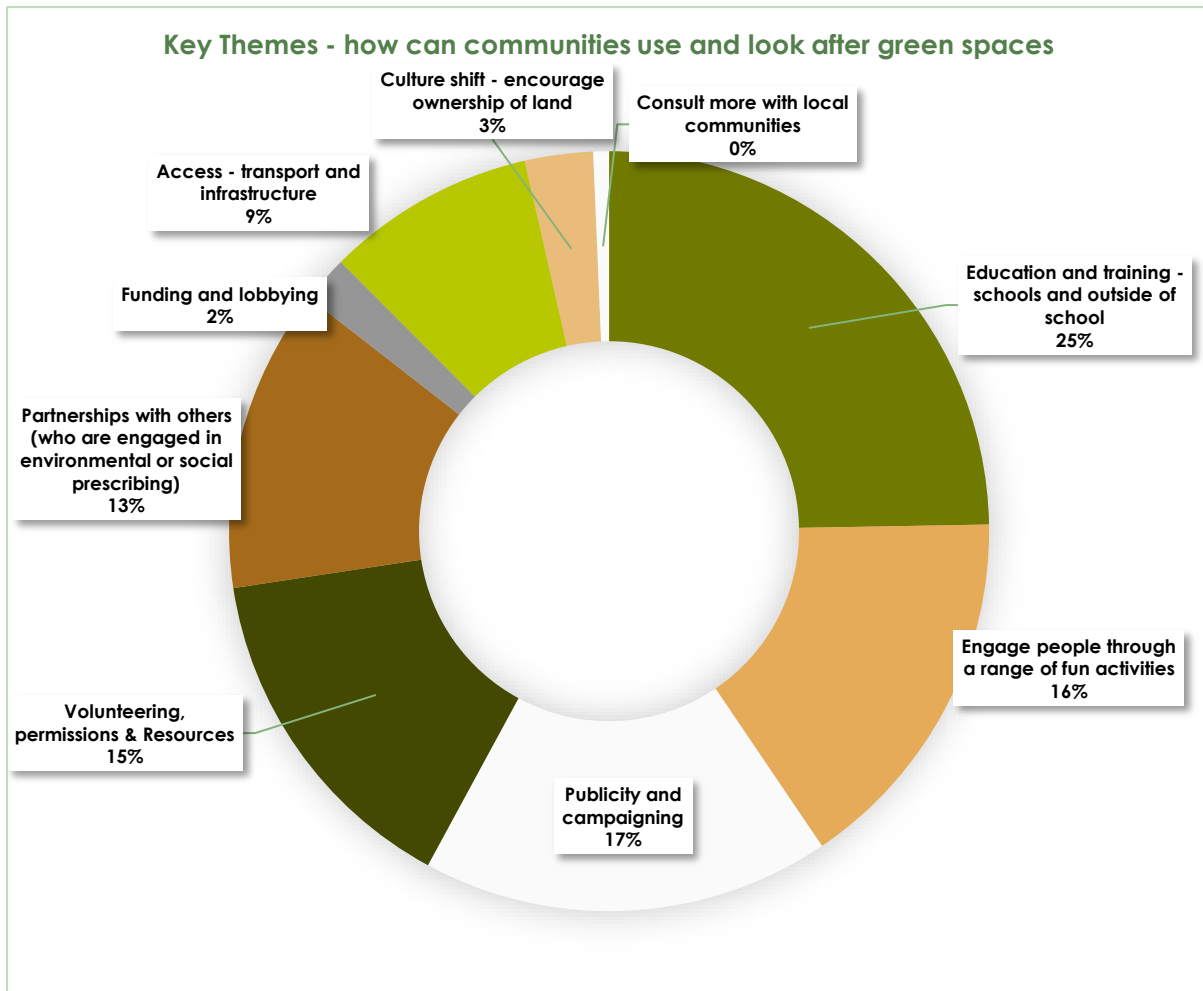
octane (i.e., mountain climbing, mountain biking, hiking etc.) and that it was important to present alternative low-octane activities to attract a wider range of people. Access was also a key theme, which covered both transport links to nature spots and accessible routes through nature spots to ensure people are not excluded from being connected to nature. The key to achieving this was felt to be in having effective publicity and advertising campaigns or a central campaign to get people into nature that is clear and understandable to the public and working in partnership with others (health services, support, and enterprise). Lesser suggestions included encouraging community action to plant trees and protect woodlands (see more on this later) and to lobby the government to value and protect nature or to create a culture shift whereby communities take ownership or stewardship of their green spaces.

The major and minor themes are presented in the table below,

Major theme	Minor theme	% of responses
Children – schools & outside of school (26%)	Connect with schools and curriculum	14%
	Connect with young people and youth (via parents and out-of-school programmes)	9%
	Intergenerational activities in nature (sharing experience and knowledge)	3%
Education - use to create change in values (15%)	Learning and educational opportunities (understanding the impact and importance of nature)	11%
	Use of nature encourages the value of nature - link to everyday being - build links between people and nature	4%
Immersion and Freedom to be in and explore nature (14%)	Immerse people in nature.	10%
	Freedom - to explore and understand nature - make it fun - natural.	4%
More Groups - outdoor, woodland, gardening and growing etc (12%)	Increased funding for green activities/more outdoor groups	9%
	Food growing & prep and gardening groups (and animal groups)	3%
Access - support, disabled access, walking and cycle routes and public transport routes (10%)	Inclusive access for all to nature (support/wheelchair access and better walking/cycling routes)	8%
	Better public transport to nature sites	2%
Communication - advertising, publicity, interpretation, key messages, campaigns (8%)	More advertising, publicity and information	5%
	Campaigns to get people involved.	2%
	Better interpretation within green sites (boards/labels) - songs and information about nature	1%
Partnership working, green enterprise, linking with business and using technology to connect people to nature (4%)	Partnership working & green enterprise.	2%
	Use technology to encourage a connection to nature.	1%
	Encouraging workplaces and businesses to support and immerse.	1%

Less technology (3%)	Switch off screens & technology (work less) – cultural shift.	3%
Community Action (tree planting and care for the environment) (3%)	Plant trees and protect woodlands (community groups and volunteers)	3%
Social prescribing (NHS routes) (2%)	Encourage social prescribing (NHS routes) - outdoor activities.	2%
Council or Government change/action (2%)	Lobby council and Government (less building on greenspaces)	2%
Culture Shift land ownership and stewardship (2%)	Culture Shift - redistribute land, collective ownership, a sense of ownership	2%

What might help communities to use and look after their natural green spaces/woodlands?



449 suggestions were presented by the 177 stakeholders about how communities could use and look after their green spaces and woodlands. Most of the stakeholders felt that educating people about nature, what it is, and how to look after it was key to helping people to use and look after their green spaces. It was thought that an educational pathway (or route) about nature was important at both the school and community level. There were a variety of suggestions provided around the form that the education could take; ranging from online resources, booklets and advice to in-person or online training/accreditation/qualifications.

Many of the stakeholders also suggested that a variety of fun, engaging and varied activities need to be happening in green spaces for people to use (first) and then look after (second) their green spaces. A range of ideas was presented from outdoor fitness classes, gardening, dawn chorus meets, nature walks, tree planting, and wildflower planting to forest bathing, geocaching, orienteering and outdoor kitchen/picnics. Overall, there was a running sentiment through the consultation that, *“If the community is encouraged and taught to appreciate their environment then they are more likely to look after it”*. Some of the

stakeholders felt that good communication, publicity, and campaigning were important to attract more people to help maintain green spaces and to spread the word about the value and importance of looking after local green spaces. The publicity suggested ranged from social media, videos and poster campaigns, posters in local libraries, GPs and hubs, and promoting the benefits to people and the environment in the wider community (using the evidence base). It was felt that good transport (or support with transport) and accessible pathways (for wheel-based aids) and seating were important considerations for people using and perhaps then maintaining green spaces. Others suggested infrastructure improvements like directional signage, BBQ/pizza ovens and Picnic areas, BMX ramps, dog poo bins and outdoor classrooms for outdoor areas.

15% of the stakeholders' comments referred to having a bank of local volunteers who could undertake the more practical work around maintaining local spaces to support other groups who use the space. Alternatively, it was suggested that all groups should have a volunteer arm that helps to maintain the sites used for other activities. It was noted that volunteer groups would need access to resources and tools to be available to undertake some of this work.

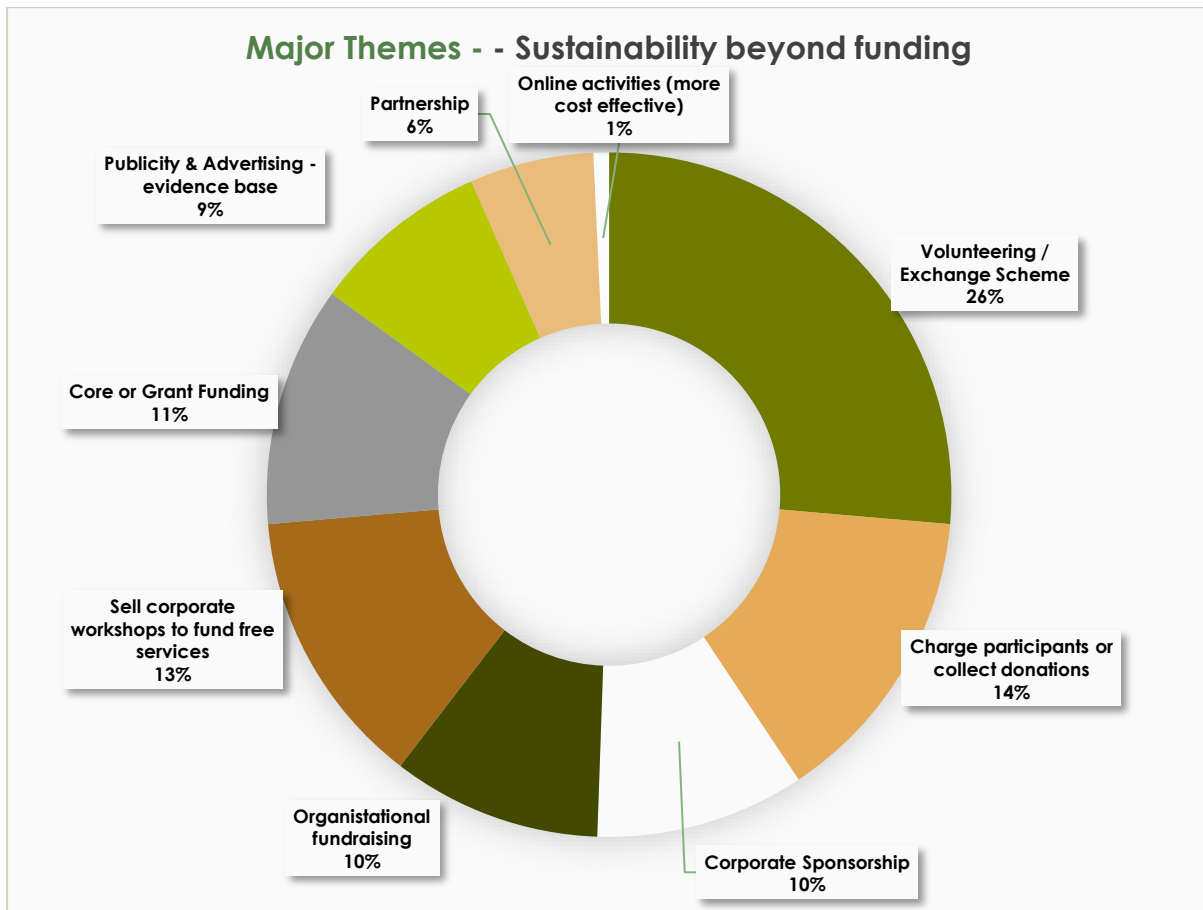
Some stakeholders suggested that lobbying councils about planning decisions on green spaces was important and others felt that a culture shift in communities feeling ownership over the land was needed.

The major and minor themes are presented in the table below,

Major theme	Minor theme	% of responses
Education and Training (25%)	Training and Education is needed.	18%
	Develop links with schools - education and conservation.	7%
Engage people through a range of activities (16%)	Engage all people through fun activities and Coed Lleol groups (try and see) offer a range of activities.	12%
	Food growing and planting and Gardening groups - community ovens, eating etc.	4%
Publicity and campaigning (17%)	Campaigns or Events to engage communities (clear pathways and messages relevant to their lives)	8%
	Better publicity, advertising & communications	9%
Volunteering, permissions & Resources (15%)	Volunteering & volunteering days/one-off days	11%
	Clarity of who can do what in local green spaces (permissions)	3%
	Provide (shared) resources (tools etc.)	1%

Partnerships with others (who are engaged in environmental or social prescribing) (13%)	Partnerships with other organisations - including councils.	8%
	Litter-picking sessions and providing more bins.	2%
	GPs and health pros to socially prescribe activities (link to primary and secondary care)	3%
Access - transport and infrastructure (9%)	Transport & active travel promotions	2%
	Develop more accessible H&W woods with infrastructure (BMX ramps/shelter/playground)	7%
Funding and lobbying (2%)	Funding	1.5%
	Lobby councils and government – planning decisions	0.5%
Culture Shift (3%)	Culture shift - encourage ownership of land.	3%
Consultation (1%)	Consult more with local communities.	1%

How can we keep supporting health and well-being and looking after woodlands in an uncertain funding climate? How might we achieve this without finding it?



There were 273 suggestions provided by the 177 stakeholders around how Coed Lleol (Small Woods) could become more sustainable in an uncertain funding climate (i.e., how could the work be done with less or no funding). The stakeholders were able to suggest a range of ways that the work of Coed Lleol (Small Woods) could be carried forward using different strategies. The two ideas that received the most comments were to engage volunteers (26%) or to charge or collect donations from participants (14%) – however, a range of ideas was presented.

The idea to recruit more volunteers was broad, and there were suggestions to recruit from existing participants, the community, local businesses & large companies (as part of their corporate responsibility) and also to work with other groups in partnership that have similar interests. There were some suggestions for longer-term volunteering and one-off volunteer days with the potential to have a Nature Volunteer Champion Scheme (or something similar to the Neighbourhood watch – Nature-hood watch). There were also suggestions that an exchange programme works well to recruit and maintain volunteers (i.e. free cake and refreshments in exchange for volunteering or free skills and learning in exchange for volunteering). It was also offered that Coed Lleol (Small Woods) needed to support existing

groups (who had received free 6-week courses) to continue to meet and progress independently (this could be via peer support, training, or volunteer support) – it was felt by some, that this approach could create more woodland well-being groups that are self-supporting (5%). An appendage to this was to provide bespoke training and resources for these groups to understand and maintain good practice (5%).

The ideas that were presented to charge participants for activities were also varied (14%). These ranged from charging a nominal fee or donation to having a subscription service where people pay monthly for access to activities and special offers throughout the year. It was also suggested that a sliding scale for payment from participants might be useful (to support those less able to pay).

Others suggested that corporate sponsorship or donations might be a good way to be able to sustain the existing groups for more disadvantaged people. It was suggested that large corporations, small local businesses, churches and NGOs could help fund groups in their own areas (13%). Alongside this suggestion, some of the stakeholders suggested that charging corporate organisations for team-building workshops or training could help fund groups for more disadvantaged communities ('the Robin Hood' method) (3%). Some of the suggestions were to work with non-corporate groups, like schools, religious groups, community groups and charities who might have funding to pay for sessions (10%). Or working in partnership with others where resources, expertise and funds could be pooled (6%)

Organisational fundraising activities that Coed Lleol (Small Woods) could undertake were suggested by some (10%). These included collection boxes, a donation button on the website (or at sessions via a devise or PayPal), a will or a Legacy scheme, fundraising events (festivals, night walks, camping, raffles cake sales etc.) and crowdfunding. A few comments were to sell some of the products made at groups to raise funds (1%)

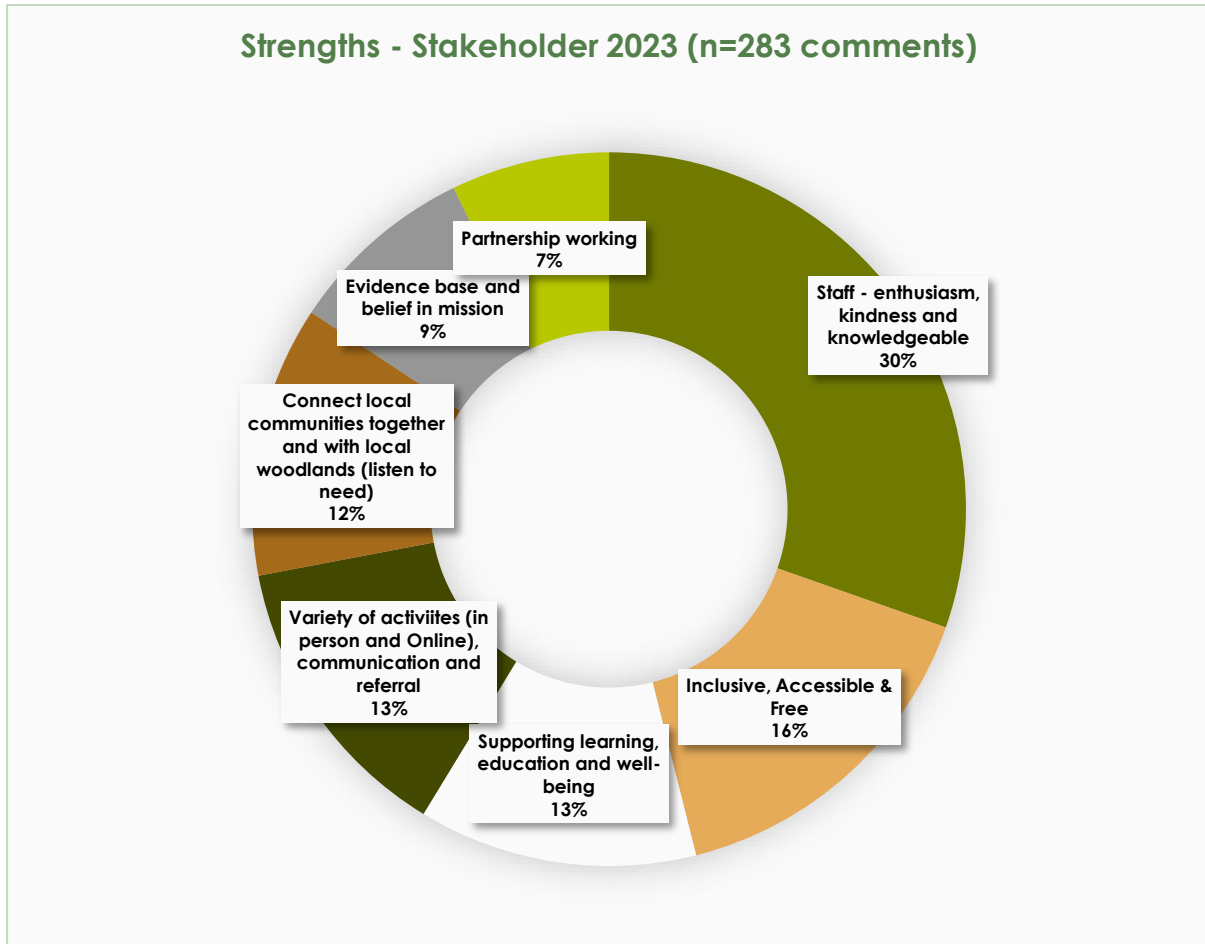
Others suggested applying for more large-scale funding (core funding – 5%) and encouraging core funding via advertising and getting buy-in from the health boards (7%) (NHS/Government). A key point was that the publicity and evidence-based needed promoting so that more people hear about and understand the benefits of the well-being in nature approach (8%). A few suggestions were made for more online resources (1%) which are more cost-effective and can be shared widely.

The major and minor themes are presented in the table below,

Major theme	Minor theme	% of responses
Volunteering/Exchange or supporting independent groups (26%)	Volunteering / Exchange Scheme	16%
	Create supported follow-on groups that independently meet.	5%
	Teaching resources and training - to train others to run.	5%
Charge participants or collect donations (14%)	Small fee, donation or subscription	14%

Sell workshops (13%)	Sell corporate workshops to fund free services	3%
	Work with communities/schools/religious groups etc. who might pay.	10%
Core or Grant Funding (11%)	NHS or Government core funding.	7%
	Large grant funding.	3%
	Cannot be done without funding.	2%
Corporate Sponsorship (10%)	Corporate Sponsorship for global, national and local businesses.	10%
Organisational fundraising (10%)	Fundraising schemes, collections, and activities	9%
	Sell products made by participants.	1%
Publicity & Advertising - evidence base (8%)	Promote evidence base and advertise more	8%
Partnership working (6%)	With key organisations to share resources, knowledge and funds	6%
Online activities (1%)	More cost-effective online	1%

Strengths of Coed Lleol (Small Woods)



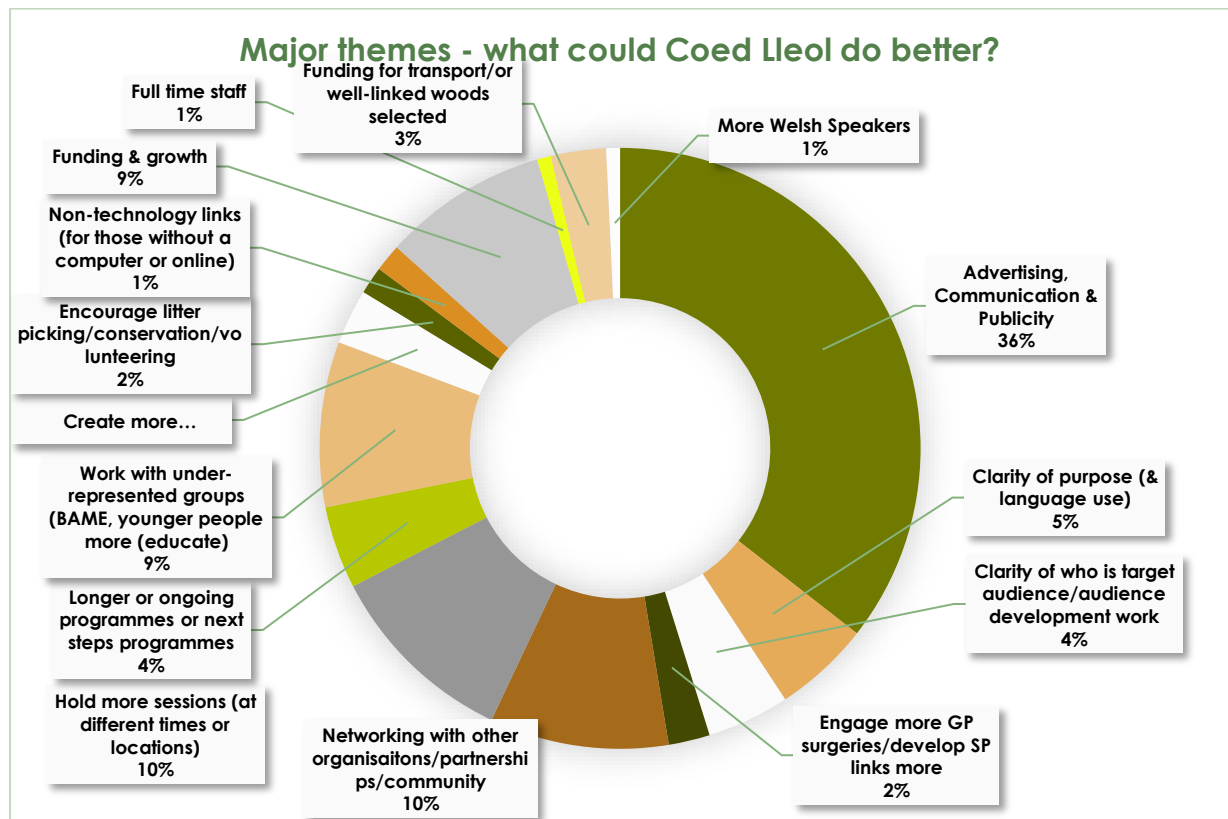
293 comments were collected from the 177 stakeholders about the strengths of Coed Lleol (Small Woods). By far the largest number of comments were connected to the appreciation of the approach and knowledgebase of the staff (30%) - this includes project officers, management, and leaders. The staff were highlighted for their empathy, kindness, inclusiveness and their passion and enthusiasm for their role. Coed Lleol's provision of a variety of activities (online and in person) alongside their support of learning, education and well-being was also flagged up by the stakeholders (26%).

It was also felt that a key strength of Coed Lleol (Small Woods) groups was their inclusiveness and accessibility to all (regardless of their physical or mental health) (16%) – it was also felt that courses being free and well-pitched to meet the needs of the participants was also a key strength.

The ability of Coed Lleol (Small Woods) to connect local people to local green spaces and to connect local communities together was also highlighted as a strength (12%). Effective partnership working (7%) and a belief in their mission backed up by a strong evidence base were also highlighted (9%) as shown in the table below.

Major theme	Minor theme	% of responses
Staff (30%)	Passion and enthusiasm	12%
	Kindness and compassion	10%
	Great Staff & leaders & volunteers	5%
	Knowledgeable	3%
Inclusive, Accessible & Free (16%)	Inclusive & accessible (disabled/all)	12%
	Free and accessible courses	4%
Supporting learning, education, and well-being (13%)	Teaching and educating (providing opportunities for training and volunteering)	6.5%
	Helping people with health and well-being	6.5%
Variety of activities (in person and online), communication and referral (13%)	Variety of activities.	12%
	Easy access to online information, referral & accredited courses & communication.	1%
Connection (12%)	Embedded and engaging local community.	6%
	Connecting to local woodlands & wildlife.	4%
	Connecting to young people.	1%
	Listening and responding to community needs	1%
Evidence base and belief in mission (9%)	Evidence base & belief in the power of nature for health and well-being - experience	9%
Partnership working (7%)	Partnership working.	6%
	Connecting to environmental projects (lost peatlands) and SWA.	1%

What could Coed Lleol (Small Woods) do better?



135 comments were gathered from the 177 stakeholders. There was a range of ideas about what Coed Lleol (Small Woods) could do better. Central to the suggestions was the need for better advertising and publicity and clear a Unique Selling Point and clear communications (46%). This was especially highlighted around the purpose of the organisation and the target audience. It was suggested that providing a range of advertising options both online and offline would help to promote more widely (an overreliance on Facebook communication was mentioned by a few stakeholders). It was suggested advertising and publicity could be improved by providing a list, diary or programme of activities planned, promoting an 'invite a friend' scheme and advertising more through networks with a clear message and an easy registration system with follow-up instructions. Widening access was also raised (17%), and this included working with a broader range of currently under-represented groups (young people, men, and those from minority ethnic communities) and ensuring that sessions can be accessed by as many people as possible (via good transport links, good pathways, seating and access within the selected sites, and by providing Welsh language materials and sessions). Other comments suggested that more sessions in different areas could be beneficial as well as providing clearer progression routes and routes into conservation, woodland careers and volunteering.

It was also suggested that a continuation and expansion of partnership working (12%) would help longevity and promote working together rather than in competition. Moreover, it was suggested that partnerships that also tied in joined-up delivery, social prescribing with GP surgeries advertising and one-stop-shop registration etc. would be beneficial to communities wanting to access Coed Lleol's services. Finally, 10% of the responses

concerned seeking consistent continued funding for continuation and growth (depending on funding received). One stakeholder commented, “The emphasis needs to move away from sourcing funding to deliver short-term projects which, because they are free at the point of delivery, actually hold back the progress to sustainable social prescribing and move towards supporting organisations to establish sustainable structures where the income is from what they do and not from short-term funding”.

The table below provides a summary of the major and minor themes,

Major theme	Minor theme	%
Public facing publicity (46%)	Advertising, Communication & Publicity	36
	Clarity of purpose (& language use)	5
	Clarity on target audience/audience development work	4
	Non-technology links (for those without a computer or online)	1
Accessibility (17%)	Work with under-represented groups (BAME, younger people more (educate)	9
	Create more accessible woodlands	3
	Funding for transport/or well-linked woods selected	3
	More Welsh Speakers	1
More or longer-term programmes & progression routes (15%)	Hold more sessions (at different times or locations)	10
	Longer or ongoing programmes or next steps programmes	4
	Encourage litter picking/conservation/volunteering	1
Partnerships (12%)	Networking with other organisations/partnerships/community	10
	Engage more GP surgeries/develop SP links more	2
Funding & Growth (10%)	Funding & growth	9
	Full-time staff	1

Conclusions

The 2023 consultation provides a useful indication of the views and suggestions of key Coed Lleol stakeholders.

The 177 stakeholders suggested a range of ideas for connecting current and future generations to nature, and to help encourage communities to use and look after their green spaces. There was a clear message that if people were encouraged to regularly use nature spaces, they were more likely to value and look after them.

The central responses to these two questions were education (and training) and working with young people (via schools/community/intergenerational) and the wider community. It was felt that allowing both the freedom to explore nature alongside structured opportunities to access and use nature in a collective way (via a range of groups and provisions that breaks away from high-octane hiking or biking) would help people to connect, use and, ultimately, to value nature. Connecting to nature campaigns and targeted advertising was felt to strengthen both the understanding of the benefits of nature for well-being and the visibility of the activities. Moreover, it was suggested that improved access (via transport, accessible pathways, walking routes and benches) would help provide greater opportunities for all people to access nature.

Education and training (in school and the community) were highlighted as a key need for communities to continue the use and maintain their local green spaces. It was felt that engaging people through fun and structured activities (such as Coed Lleol) was a good starting point for encouraging a longer-term engagement with nature, conservation and volunteering. It was suggested that volunteering needs to be offered in a range of ways – through one-off opportunities, structured groups or regular drop-in sessions. Again, clear messaging, publicity, and communications were highlighted by stakeholders as essential to be able to encourage and support communities to use and look after their green spaces.

There was a range of suggestions given for the longer-term sustainability of Coed Lleol's activities in an uncertain funding context which should be considered and explored further. The main suggestions were to encourage more volunteers or self-sustaining groups that are supported in some way by Coed Lleol (through smaller funding pots, training, resources or in other ways). Some of the stakeholders were not opposed to levying a small fee for participants to help support the groups (comments suggested that a donation towards the cost, a scaled cost or a small subscription would be preferable to a full costing). Others suggested a corporate strategy of charging for corporate team building or well-being workshops or seeking corporate sponsorship. Others suggested the continuation of grant-funded sessions or an organisational fundraising campaign (involving different methods from events to money-box donations).

The stakeholders highlighted the staff as a key asset as well as the way the staff interact and care for the participants who attend sessions. The accessibility of sessions along with the sessions being free on the point of delivery was also described as a strength by stakeholders. The combination of offering a wide range of learning and well-being activities was also seen as a key strength. The benefits of partnership working and connecting people

within the community (to each other and local nature spots) were also highlighted by stakeholders.

The improvements suggested centred strongly on improved advertising, publicity and communications (including clarity of message, mission and target audience).

The key strengths and areas for improvement that stakeholders highlighted in the consultation should be considered in any future changes in the structure or delivery of activities.

Coed Lleol (Small Woods) has a proven track record in improving the well-being and physical health of participants. It has a growing training and educational arm (via Agored) that could be utilised further to encourage current and future generations to understand, use and look after their natural green spaces. Future planning should consider:

1. More joined-up services/communications that link those who attend 6-week sessions to longer-term learning, training or volunteering opportunities (including Agored).
2. Explore how to work in partnership with schools (primary & secondary) and how to influence curriculum design to integrate nature connection (including woodland skills and woodland well-being)
3. Develop community learning programmes that focus on conservation, and woodland/land management and extend the existing well-being in nature course (WIN) to community volunteer groups.
4. Use clearer messaging on the organisation's overall mission, target audience and overall aims.
5. Consider a mixed approach of well-being groups and volunteering (drop-in/groups/one-off opportunities) – especially in hub areas. Consider the woodlands selected at the start of a project for the ability to contribute to the maintenance and management of the land by volunteers (there are some woodlands where work cannot be done by volunteers). Integrate more volunteering tasks and training, where possible, into the existing drop-in or follow-up sessions.
6. Review the suggestions provided for self-sufficiency (note: ideas such as charging for corporate team building workshops are already being actioned). Carry out further

consultation on charging a fee for activities for participants (and explore a subscription method further)².

² Conduct a full cost-based analysis (if not already undertaken) to aid in future directions. Consider new models of delivery that could cut costs whilst maintaining the core values of the organisation. For example, having a full-time administrator for 2-3 project areas, freeing up project officers to deliver more (paid/funded) sessions. Training project officers to deliver some sessions themselves and integrating volunteering into some programmes.