



CoedLleol  
SmallWoods

# Connecting People, Nature and Place – Final Report

## Conwy Borough Council

Prepared by: Amy Spike Lewis

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Funded by  
UK Government



Wedi ei ariannu gan  
Llywodraeth y DU

WEDI'I YRRU GAN

**FFYNIANT  
— BRO —**

POWERED BY

**LEVELLING  
— UP —**

  
**CONWY**  
CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL  
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Executive Summary

The Green Skills Project was funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and delivered by Coed Lleol/Small Woods. It aimed to enhance skills and promote health and wellbeing among individuals furthest from the job market in Conwy. Running from July 2024 to January 2025, the project focused on providing accessible outdoor learning activities, fostering knowledge of the local environment, and promoting green skills related to woodland management and conservation. The initiative's overall targets were to support 100 individuals in developing life skills and engage over 60 participants in specialised training, offering both accredited and non-accredited courses.

The project's key objectives were:

- **Improving Confidence, Skills, & Wellbeing**
- **Providing Training & Volunteering Opportunities**
- **Creating Networks and Infrastructure**

A total of 98 individuals attended programmes on the project, and 44 attended more than one session. A significant proportion engaged with the project on five or more occasions. Additionally, the project engaged 139 school pupils and three teachers through its Green Skills Programme for schools with more planned for January 2025. This focused on promoting environmental awareness, creativity, and outdoor learning, providing lasting impact on the school. Additionally, leader training and volunteer opportunities were provided throughout the project including training for health professionals increasing the link to referral pathways.

The demographic makeup of the adult participants showed that 57% of attendees were female, with almost a quarter of adult participants in the 60-69 category. The project engaged with 9% unemployed participants, and 3% in caring positions, with many choosing not to disclose employment status. Additionally, 39% of individuals lived in areas categorised as deprived according to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Key outcomes included:

- **Health and Wellbeing:** Many participants reported improvements in mental and physical wellbeing, with a strong sense of increased confidence and a continued commitment to visiting woodlands and outdoor spaces.
- **Green Skills and Volunteering:** The project successfully provided participants with green skills training in areas such as woodland management and wellbeing leadership, opening pathways for further involvement in environmental careers.

While the project achieved its overarching aims, future initiatives may benefit from exploring reasons for non-attendance, improving referral pathways, and increasing visibility to attract a broader and more diverse range of participants. The success of this initiative in improving participant confidence and connection to nature demonstrates its impact, but further work is needed to continue to expand reach in future projects.

## Crynodeb Gweithredol | Executive Summary (Welsh)

Ariannwyd y Prosiect Sgiliau Gwyrdd gan Lywodraeth y DU, drwy Gronfa Ffyniant Gyffredin y DU, a darparwyd y prosiect gan Coed Lleol/Small Woods. Bwriad y prosiect oedd gwella sgiliau a hyrwyddo iechyd a llesiant ymysg unigolion sydd bellaf o'r farchnad swyddi yng Nghonwy. Rhedodd y prosiect o Orffennaf 2024 i Ionawr 2025, gan ganolbwyntio ar gynnal gweithgareddau awyr agored hygyrch, meithrin gwybodaeth ynghylch yr amgylchedd lleol, a hybu sgiliau gwyrdd sy'n berthnasol i reoli coetiroedd a chadwraeth. Targedau cyffredinol y fenter oedd cefnogi 100 o unigolion i ddatblygu sgiliau bywyd, ac ymgysylltu dros 60 o gyfranogwyr mewn hyfforddiant arbenigol, gan gynnig cyrsiau achrededig a rhai heb eu hachredu.

Prif nodau'r prosiect oedd:

### **Gwella Hyder, Sgiliau a Llesiant**

### **Darparu Cyfleoedd Gwirfoddoli a Hyfforddiant**

### **Creu Rhwydweithiau a Seilwaith**

Mynychodd 98 o unigolion raglenni ar y prosiect, a mynychodd 44 fwy nag un sesiwn. Llwyddodd cyfran sylweddol i ymgysylltu â'r prosiect ar bump neu fwy o achlysuron. Yn ychwanegol, bu i'r prosiect ymgysylltu 139 o ddisgyblion ysgol a naw athro drwy ei Raglen Sgiliau Gwyrdd ar gyfer ysgolion, gyda mwy ar y gweill ar gyfer Ionawr 2025. Canolbwyntiodd hyn ar hyrwyddo ymwybyddiaeth amgylcheddol, creadigrwydd, a dysgu yn yr awyr agored, gan adael effaith barhaus ar yr ysgol. Yn ychwanegol, darparwyd cyfleoedd hyfforddi arwain a gwirfoddoli drwy'r prosiect, gan gynnwys hyfforddiant ar gyfer gweithwyr iechyd proffesiynol, gan gynyddu'r cysylltiad i lwybrau atgyfeirio.

Bu i'r cyfansoddiad demograffig o gyfranogwyr oedolion ddangos bod 57% o fynychwyr yn fenywaidd, gyda bron i chwarter o gyfranogwyr oedolion yn y categori 60-69. Ymgysylltodd y prosiect gyda 9% o gyfranogwyr di-waith, a 3% mewn safleoedd gofal, a nifer yn dewis peidio â rhannu eu statws cyflogaeth. Yn ychwanegol, roedd 39% o unigolion yn byw mewn ardaloedd a nodwyd fel rhai difreintiedig, yn ôl Mynegai Amddifadedd Lluosog Cymru.

Ymhlith y prif ddeilliannau oedd:

**Iechyd a Llesiant:** Adroddodd nifer o gyfranogwyr welliannau yn eu llesiant meddyliol a chorfforol, gyda chynnydd cryf mewn hyder, ac ymrwymiad parhaus i ymweld â choetiroedd ac ardaloedd yn yr awyr agored.

**Sgiliau Gwyrdd a Gwirfoddoli:** Llwyddodd y prosiect i roi hyfforddiant sgiliau gwyrdd i gyfranogwyr mewn meysydd megis rheoli coetiroedd ac arweinyddiaeth llesiant, gan agor llwybrau at gymryd rhan bellach mewn gyrfaoedd amgylcheddol.

Er bod y prosiect wedi cyflawni ei nodau cyffredinol, efallai y byddai mentrau'r dyfodol yn elwa o ymchwilio'r rhesymau dros beidio mynychu, gwella llwybrau atgyfeirio, a gwella gwelededd i ddenu ystod fwy eang ac amrywiol o gyfranogwyr. Mae llwyddiant y fenter hon i wella hyder cyfranogwyr a chysylltiad gyda natur yn arddangos ei chryn effaith, ond mae gwaith pellach yn angenrheidiol i barhau i ehangu cyrhaeddiad mewn prosiectau i'r dyfodol.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. The Green Skills Project

The Green Skills Project was funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund as part of the People & Skills Key Fund. From July 2024 to January 2025, Coed Lleol/Small Woods delivered the project in Conwy, focusing on enhancing skills among individuals furthest from the job market. The initiative offered accessible outdoor green skills learning activities aimed at improving woodlands and fostering knowledge of Conwy's local environment. Additionally, it promoted preventative healthcare through outdoor health and wellbeing programmes.

The project included nature-based learning and skills development to boost confidence, while also creating networks for training, volunteering, and career progression. Courses were provided to inspire participants to explore environmental 'green' careers. By connecting communities, restoring and managing woodland sites, and improving accessibility, the project fostered environmental stewardship. Outcomes were tracked through robust monitoring, with a strong emphasis on building and strengthening partnerships. The overarching purpose of the project included:

- 1. IMPROVING CONFIDENCE, SKILLS & WELLBEING:** Providing outdoor health and wellbeing programmes, targeting those hardest to reach who experience disadvantages and are furthest from the employment market, improving confidence and skills in Conwy.
- 2. PROVIDING TRAINING & VOLUNTEERING:** Increasing green skills and knowledge through training and volunteering and promoting opportunities for progression and volunteering.
- 3. CREATING NETWORKS and INFRASTRUCTURE:** Connecting communities through creation of outdoor health and learning networks.

The project aimed to support 100 individuals in developing life skills and over 60 participants in attending specialised training sessions. Both accredited and non-accredited courses were offered, focusing on green skills such as outdoor wellbeing leadership, woodland management and conservation.

Building on the successes of previous initiatives, the project planned to:

- Expand and further develop social prescribing in collaboration with health professionals and the healthcare sector.
- Deliver four 6-week wellbeing programs, including Agored-accredited modules.
- Host monthly drop-in and volunteer sessions across various sites, incorporating woodland improvement activities.
- Provide staff and leader training in areas such as Wellbeing in Nature, Safeguarding, and Outdoor First Aid.
- Offer taster days for trainee GPs and other health professionals.

## 1.2. UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is a central pillar of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda and provides £2.6 billion of funding for local investment by March 2025. The Fund aims to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK investing in communities and place, supporting local business, and people and skills. The overarching objective of the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is Building pride in place and increasing life chances.<sup>1</sup>

The UKSPF aims to achieve this through three investment priorities:

- Community & Place.
- Supporting Local Business; and,
- People & Skills (including adult numeracy)

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is an initiative aimed at addressing inequalities and supporting local investment with £2.6 billion allocated by March 2025. The Fund focuses on domestic priorities, such as fostering pride in place, delivering high-quality skills training, and promoting pay, employment, and productivity growth to improve life chances nationwide.

The Fund encourages local places to build on their strengths and address specific needs, emphasising pride in place and improved life opportunities. It complements other funding streams and integrates with mainstream employment and skills programmes to enhance impact and streamline delivery. Councils and mayoral authorities in England, Scotland, and Wales lead the planning and implementation of the Fund's interventions, working collaboratively with local partners and the devolved governments of Scotland and Wales. This approach aims to ensure targeted investments that lead to visible, tangible improvements in both infrastructure and human capital, giving communities more reasons to take pride in their local areas.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus>.



### **1.3. About Coed Lleol/Small Woods**

Coed Lleol/Small Woods was established as Coed Lleol (Small Woods Wales) in 2002, the Welsh branch of the Small Woods Association, an organisation supporting woodland practitioners in sustainable woodland management since 1988 (originally as National Small Woods Association). In 2010, Coed Lleol/Small Woods launched a successful woodland health and wellbeing programme, known as Actif Woods Wales. The programme ran for a decade and established the charity's expertise in social forestry, connecting people with their local woodlands and natural spaces, whilst promoting healthy and sustainably managed woodlands. Since that time, Coed Lleol/Small Woods has expanded to deliver woodland wellbeing sessions in most counties of Wales. At time of writing, Coed Lleol/Small Woods is working on the Isle of Anglesey, and in Conwy, Pembrokeshire, Powys, Swansea, Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot, Blaenau Gwent and Rhondda Cynon Taff. Small Woods also delivers social forestry work over the border, in Shropshire.

The woodland wellbeing programmes predominantly engage adults and children who live in areas with high health needs, low employment rates and poor access to services. Additionally, they encourage and support social prescribing by working in partnership with health services and general practice surgeries, which refer people to programmes. Coed Lleol/Small Woods has actively professionalised and promoted social prescribing to outdoor health activities through the development of outdoor health clusters in four areas in Wales: The Dyfi Valley; Pembrokeshire; Gwynedd; and Rhondda Cynon Taff. Coed Lleol/Small Woods also has an established and well-respected training programme for staff, leaders, providers and health professionals to up-skill and embed wellbeing in nature into their everyday practice.

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

## 1.4. Wellbeing in nature and social prescribing

Evidence demonstrates that outdoor, nature-based activity can improve mental health, increase lifespan, and reduce the incidence of chronic disease<sup>2;3;4;5</sup>. Even a view or suggestion of nature via another sense (e.g. hearing birdsong or other natural soundscapes, smelling natural oils secreted by plants) can have potent effects in indoor environments, reducing stress and anxiety and boosting immune function<sup>6;7;8;9</sup>. The health and wellbeing benefits of time spent in – and connection with – nature is an area of research that has gained momentum in recent decades, reinforced by many studies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

People who live in greener neighbourhoods, or those close to the sea, report higher positive wellbeing, but only in response to recreational visits<sup>10</sup>. Frequency of visits to green spaces, inland waters and coastal areas has been shown to be associated with higher wellbeing and lower mental distress. During the COVID-19 pandemic, greater greenness within a 250m radius of a person's post code was a good predictor of higher levels of mental wellbeing<sup>11</sup>, suggesting that proximity to nature is an important factor in accessing it.

A longitudinal study of 2.3 million adults in Wales showed that greater exposure to green spaces was associated with reduced risk of future common mental health disorders, especially for those living in deprived communities<sup>12</sup>. While further research is needed into the causative pathways for the links between nature and wellbeing<sup>3</sup>, additional health benefits associated with undertaking nature-based activities include statistically significant reductions in diastolic

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<sup>2</sup> Lovell, R., Depledge, M. and Maxwell, S., 2018, Health and the natural environment: A review of evidence, policy, practice and opportunities for the future, Defra Project Code BE0109.

<sup>3</sup> Cervinka, R., Höltinge, J., Pirgie, L., Schwab, M., Sudkamp, J., Haluza, D., Arnberger, A., Eder, R. and Ebenberger, M., 2014. Green public Health – Benefits of Woodlands on Human Health and Well-being. [Zur Gesundheitswirkung von Waldlandschaften]. Vienna, Austria: Bundesforschungszentrum für Wald (BFW).

<sup>4</sup> Pretty, J., Peacock, J., Sellens, M. and Griffin, M., 2005. The mental and physical health outcomes of green exercise, *International Journal of Environmental Health Research*, 15 (5) 319-337.

<sup>5</sup> Park, B., Tsunetsugu, Y., Kasetani, T., Kagawa, T and Miyazaki, Y., 2010. The physiological effects of Shinrin-yoku (taking in the forest atmosphere or forest bathing): evidence from field experiments in 24 forests across Japan, *Environmental Health and Preventative Medicine*, 15 (1) 18-26.

<sup>6</sup> Ulrich, R. S., 1984. View through a window may influence recovery from surgery, *Science*, 224, 420-421.

<sup>7</sup> Ratcliffe, E., Gatersleben, B. and Sowden, P. T., 2013. Bird sounds and their contributions to perceived attention restoration and stress recovery, *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 36, 221-228.

<sup>8</sup> Gould van Praag, C., Garfinkel, S., Sparasci, O., Mees, A., Philippides, A., Ware, M., Ottaviani, C., and Critchley, H., 2017. Mind-wandering and alterations to default mode network connectivity when listening to naturalistic versus artificial sounds, *Scientific Reports*, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Li, Q., Kobayashi, M., Wakayama, Y., Inagaki, H., Katsumata, M., Hirata, Y., and Miyazaki, Y., 2009. Effect of phytoncide from trees on human natural killer cell function, *International Journal of Immunopathology and Pharmacology*, 951–959.

<sup>10</sup> White et al., 2021, Associations between green/blue spaces and mental health across 18 countries, available at: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-87675-0>

<sup>11</sup> Robinson et al., 2021, Nature's role in supporting health during the COVID-19 pandemic: a geospatial and socioecological study, available at: <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/18/5/2227>

<sup>12</sup> Geary et al., 2023, Ambient greenness, access to local green spaces, and subsequent mental health: a 10-year longitudinal dynamic panel study of 2.3 million adults in Wales, *The Lancet – Planetary Health*, available at: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196\(23\)00212-7/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(23)00212-7/fulltext)

blood pressure, salivary cortisol and heart rate, and statistically significant reductions in the incidence of diabetes and cardiovascular mortality<sup>13</sup>.

Following a consultation period, where over 1,000 stakeholders were engaged, a National Framework for Social Prescribing was released by Welsh Government in December 2023<sup>14</sup>. In it, social prescribing is defined as being ‘an umbrella term that describes a person-centred approach to connecting people to local community assets. Community assets include community groups, interventions and services which could be delivered online or in person, as well as buildings, land or even a person within a community’. The intention of social prescribing is to connect people with their community to improve their health and wellbeing.

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<sup>13</sup> Twohig-Bennett & Jones, 2018, The health benefits of the great outdoors: a systematic review and meta-analysis of greenspace exposure and health outcomes, available at:

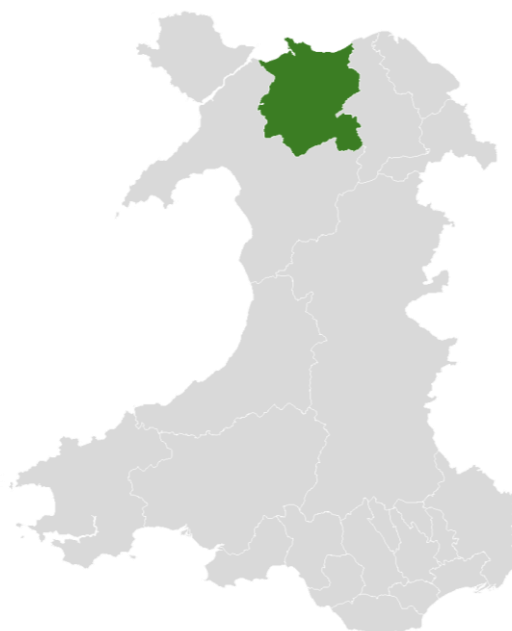
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0013935118303323>

<sup>14</sup> Welsh Government, 2023, National framework for social prescribing, available at:

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-02/national-framework-for-social-prescribing.pdf>

## 2. Approach

Between July and January 2025, the Conwy Green Skills Project with Coed Lleol/Small Woods delivered a variety of programmes aimed at fostering a connection with nature and promoting health and wellbeing in Conwy County (see Figure 1). These included in-person drop-in sessions, multi-session programmes, formal training, health professional days, and online workshops, providing opportunities for people of all interests, abilities and backgrounds to participate.



*Figure 1 The Green Skills project ran in Conwy, between July and January 2025.*

In-person events included activities like forest bathing walks in Gwydir Forest, which focused on mindfulness and nature connection, and a wild food and medicine workshop at Bryn Euryn. Other events included a menopause walk and a Samhain celebration, which embraced Celtic traditions and nature. Multi-session programmes included *Step into Nature*, which combined mindfulness and nature connection in Gwydir Forest, *Green Woodworking* workshops that offered practical skills, and *Woodland Wellbeing* sessions in Bodlondeb Woods, designed to improve mental health through woodland-based activities. Three volunteers were engaged over the course of the project, attending over 30 sessions.

Formal training opportunities included a two-day Health Walk Leader course held in Llanfairfechan, offering an Agored-certified qualification for those interested in leading health walks as well as tool and fire safety training day in January 2025. Health professional taster days were organised at Caerdroia and Pensychnant, introducing participants to nature-based wellbeing practices. Additionally, online programmes like *Nature Crafts* and *Foraging* provided flexible learning options, allowing participants to explore creative and practical skills from home.

These programmes aimed to help build skills, encourage outdoor engagement, and promote wellbeing through nature-based activities, enriching the local community and supporting mental and physical health. See below for a summary of activities that were run over the six-month period.

## 2.1. Drop-in sessions

The Coed Lleol/Small Woods project offered several free drop-in sessions focused on nature connection and wellbeing, monthly between July and November 2024 (See Table 1). These included two *Forest Bathing* walks with mindfulness in Gwydyr Forest, held on 25<sup>th</sup> July and 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 2024. A *Wild Food* learning event about wild food and medicine took place at Bryn Euryn on September 12, 2024. The *Menopause Walk* offered a nature-based approach to wellbeing on October 10, 2024. Lastly, a *Samhain* celebration, embracing Celtic traditions and the connection to nature, was held on October 31, 2024.

Table 1 Drop-in session schedule

Session name	Summary of activities	Delivery date
Forest Bathing	Walk and mindfulness in Gwydyr Forest	25/07/2024
Forest Bathing	Walk and mindfulness in Gwydyr Forest	23/08/2024
Wild Food	Learning event about wild food and medicine, Bryn Euryn	12/09/2024
Menopause Walk	Walk and mindfulness in association with Mind Cymru, Conwy mountain.	10/10/2024
Samhain	Celtic festival, celebrating nature	31/10/2024
New year wellbeing	A forest bathing walk introducing mindfulness concepts and self care, Coed Bodlondeb	06/01/2025

## 2.2. Multi-session programmes

Coed Lleol/Small Woods delivered several free, three-to-four-hour sessions as part of multiple programmes aimed at promoting nature connection and wellbeing (See Table 2). These programmes included *Step into Nature*, which offered six sessions of mindfulness and nature connection in Gwydyr Forest, held between September 13 and October 18, 2024. *Green Woodworking* ran for six sessions from September 24 to November 17, 2024, at Caerdroia, Gwydir Forest, teaching participants green woodworking skills. *Woodland Wellbeing* in Bodlondeb Woods, Conwy, included five sessions (with one cancelled), delivered from September 13 to October 18, 2024, focusing on wellbeing through woodland activities.

Table 2 Multi session programme schedule

Programme name	Session	Delivery date
Step into Nature, Gwydyr Forest	1. Mindfulness and nature connection	13/09/2024
	2. Mindfulness and nature connection	20/09/2024
	3. Mindfulness and nature connection	27/09/2024
	4. Mindfulness and nature connection	04/10/2024
	5. Mindfulness and nature connection	11/10/2024
	6. Mindfulness and nature connection	18/10/2024
Green woodworking, Caerdroia, Gwydyr Forest	1. Green Wood Working	24/09/2024
	2. Green Wood Working	01/10/2024
	3. Green Wood Working	08/10/2024
	4. Green Wood Working	15/10/2024
	5. Green Wood Working	22/10/2024
	6. Green Wood Working	17/11/2024
Woodland Wellbeing, Bodlondeb Woods, Conwy	1. Woodland Wellbeing	13/09/2024
	2. Woodland Wellbeing	20/09/2024
	3. Woodland Wellbeing	27/09/2024 Cancelled
	4. Woodland Wellbeing	04/10/2024
	5. Woodland Wellbeing	11/10/2024
	6. Woodland Wellbeing	18/10/2024

### 2.3. Online programmes

Table 3). The Foraging for Health & Wellbeing in Autumn course ran from September 16 to October 21, 2024, on Mondays from 5-6 PM, led by Coed Lleol/Small Woods tutor, Jody Marshall. This course focused on the health benefits of foraging. Additionally, the *Nature Crafts* course, led by tutor Peggy Beer, was available from October 18 to November 23, 2024, on Wednesdays from 5-6 PM, encouraging participants to explore new crafting techniques using natural materials. Both courses were free to those living in Conwy who were registered with Coed Lleol/Small Woods /Small Woods, with limited places and pre-booking required.

Table 3 Online programme schedule

Session	Session number	Date of delivery
Online Nature Crafts	1. Nature Crafts	18/09/2024
	2. Nature Crafts	25/09/2024
	3. Nature Crafts	02/10/2024
	4. Nature Crafts	09/10/2024
	5. Nature Crafts	16/10/2024
	6. Nature Crafts	23/10/2024
Online Foraging	1. Foraging	16/09/2024
	2. Foraging	23/09/2024
	3. Foraging	30/09/2024
	4. Foraging	07/10/2024
	5. Foraging	14/10/2024
	6. Foraging	21/10/2024

## 2.4. Formal training provided

A two-day training course was delivered in Llanfairfechan Village Hall on November 18-19, 2024, aimed at individuals in and around Conwy County interested in walking and leading walks (See Table 4 for a summary of all courses). The course focused on the health and wellbeing benefits of walking in nature, providing participants with the knowledge and practical skills to design and lead walks that promote mental and physical health within their communities. Led by professional health walk leaders from Coed Lleol/Small Woods, participants earned an Agored-certified qualification, equipping them to lead safe, effective walks. This was also available as an uncredited online training course for those not to attend the in-person event.

In January 2025, Coed Lleol/Small Woods also delivered a fire and tool safety course, providing a free day of training focused on best practices for managing campfires and using hand tools. Participants learned about safe preparation, people management around campfires, and safe cooking techniques, including the use of Kelly Kettles. The course also covered best practices for working with hand tools in group settings, offering attendees an opportunity to learn, share experiences, and discuss safety protocols. A Coed Lleol/Small Woods certificate of attendance was issued to all participants.

Table 4 Formal training sessions

Training certificate	Session name	Delivery date
Agored Training, Llanfairfechan	Health Walk Leader Training	18/11/2024
	Health Walk Leader Training	19/11/2024
Agored Training	Health Walk Leader Training (online)	19/11/2024
Coed Lleol/Small Woods Certificate	Fire and tool safety	16/01/2025

## 2.5. Staff and leader training

Two leaders and two volunteers attended training courses provided by both Coed Lleol/Small Woods and external providers. Two volunteers attended the health walk leader training (Section 2.1). In addition, one leader attended the Forestry Standard Training Course which was designed to update participants' knowledge of forest management in line with the latest UK Forestry Standards (UKFS), the foundation for sustainable forest management in the UK. The course covered legal requirements, good forestry practices, and management guidelines, aiming to equip participants with the skills to effectively manage forests. It consisted of 9 sessions, each taking around 1-1.5 hours to complete, for a total duration of 10-15 hours. The course was structured around key UKFS themes, including General Forestry Practice, Biodiversity, Climate Change, Historic Environment, Soil, Water, and People. Participants worked through online modules that aligned with these core learning outcomes, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the principles and guidelines essential for sustainable forest management in the UK.

In October, one leader also attended an update course for outdoor first aid certificate. The leader attended a two-day course based on the well-established First Aid for Mountaineers & Instructors, with a focus on addressing the specific challenges of taking young people into forests and the countryside for education and new experiences. The course covered topics such as recognising and managing fractures, shocks, and common illnesses. It also met the requirements for those working on Forestry Commission lands (EFAW+F). The sessions included both classroom learning and outdoor casualty management, and were held at The Woodland Skills Centre in Bodfari, North Wales. Finally, three leaders attended a food safety level 2 course in 2024.

## 2.6. Health professional days

The UKSPF Conwy project hosted two *Health Professional Wellbeing Days* in November 2024, aimed at encouraging health, wellbeing, and community professionals to explore the benefits of outdoor activities in nature (See Table 5). The first event was held on November 4 at Golgfa Gwydyr, Llanrwst, and the second on November 15 at the Pensychnant Conservation Centre. Both events ran from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM and provided health professionals with the



opportunity to try woodland activities designed to improve physical and mental wellbeing. Participants were encouraged to provide feedback on how these activities could be adapted for their clients and how to improve accessibility and inclusivity. These sessions highlighted the role of nature-based health interventions in supporting long-term change, with a focus on how these activities could be used for social prescribing.

*Table 5 Health professional schedule*

Session scope	Session name	Delivery date
Health professional taster days	Health Professional Taster Day, Golgfa Gwydyr, Llanrwst	04/11/24
	Health Professional Taster Day Pencyhnant	15/11/24

## 2.7. Volunteers

Four volunteers were registered for multiple events as part of the Green Skills Project. One volunteer was unable to attend most of the sessions but did manage to attend one training course. The remaining three volunteers actively participated in over 30 events between July 2024 and January 2025. This involvement provided them with the necessary skills and competencies to assist with future sessions, in one case leading to opportunities for paid work.

## 2.8. School groups

During the Autumn term, 2024, and the Winter term 2025 the forest school programme engaged schools in the Conwy catchment area, running from November to December 2024. Targeting Years 4, 5, and 6 (Key Stage 2), the initiative offered full-day forest school taster sessions to over 100 pupils across 3 schools. Activities included art, weaving, and crafting nature frames, designed to inspire creativity and deepen connections to the natural world. Alongside these, lessons promoted environmental awareness, exploration, and practical skills development. The programme enhanced pupils' physical and mental wellbeing while broadening their understanding of local ecosystems, providing a meaningful outdoor learning experience.

## 2.9. Publicity

Monthly sessions were promoted, and various posters were designed to highlight all the planned sessions. All staff were informed about the necessary branding for the project. Regular email updates, including bilingual publicity, were planned for both new and existing partners.

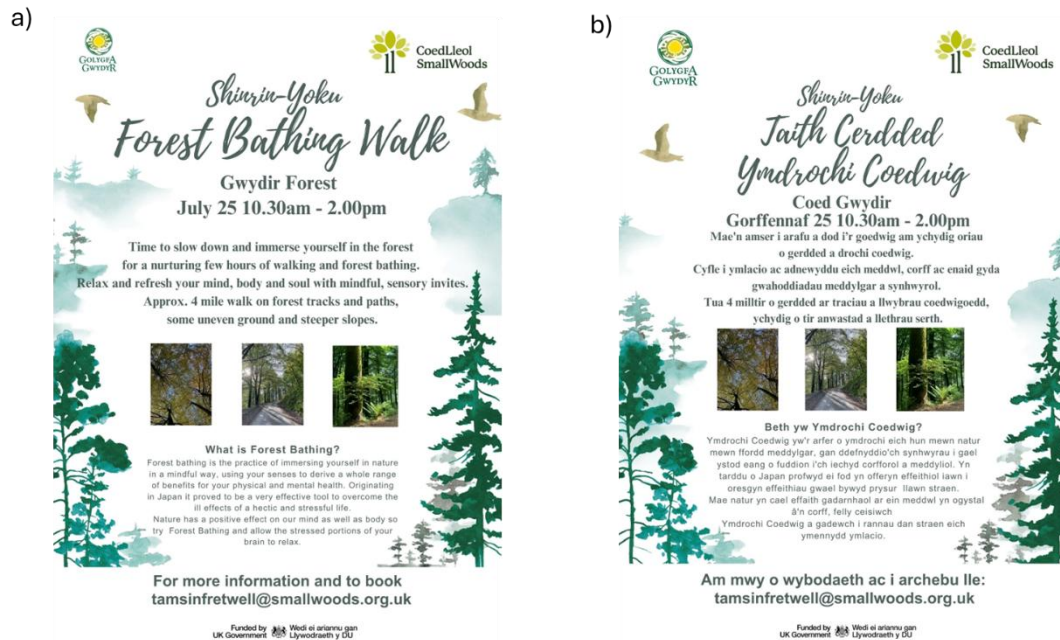


Figure 2 Example of bilingual publicity for a forest bathing event in Conwy in both English (a) and Cymraeg (Welsh; b)

## 2.10. Special Conditions

CLSW collaborated with Golygfa Gwydyr to promote each other's sessions, ensuring mutual support and increased visibility. However, CLSW ran independent sessions, focusing specifically on organizing and delivering events in the coastal areas of Conwy. This approach allowed CLSW to tailor activities to the needs of these communities while maintaining its own program structure and objectives.

## 2.11. Welsh Language

A project officer was recruited, who was highly proficient in Welsh, and a new Welsh-speaking leader was also appointed for the Green Woodworking programme that was planned for September. All posters and promotional materials were created in both Welsh and English to ensure accessibility and inclusivity for a wider audience.

## **2.12. Equalities**

All programmes were designed to be inclusive for everyone. Efforts were made to assess the accessibility of the sites, particularly for wheelchair users, and necessary adaptations were planned to ensure that everyone who wanted to attend could participate. Collaboration with referral agencies was actively pursued to support individuals in accessing the programmes.

The team worked to establish connections with these referral agencies, ensuring inclusivity for all participants. Sites were carefully evaluated, and forms were completed to assess their accessibility. This included reviewing provisions at each site, such as the availability of accessible toilets, phone signal, and car parking facilities, to ensure they met the needs of all attendees.

## **2.13. Net Zero**

Carpooling within the team was actively encouraged whenever possible to reduce the environmental impact of travel. In addition, meetings were held via Teams to further limit the need for in-person attendance, helping to minimize travel and promote sustainability. As part of a broader commitment to environmental responsibility, staff are also offered the opportunity to participate in Carbon Literacy training.

## 3. Evaluation Methodology

The majority of the registration forms were completed online, using Microsoft Forms, however a paper version was also available for those that requested it. All registrants agreed to collection and storing of their personal data via a General Data Protection Regulation statement. Where respondents did not want, or could not complete the questionnaire, a member of staff or carer was able to read and gain assent.

### 3.1. Demographics

The adult registration process included the collection of demographic data to ensure a clear understanding of participants' backgrounds. The data captured key details such as gender, age, and ethnicity, alongside information about employment status and socioeconomic circumstances. Additionally, health-related information was gathered to enable a risk assessment to be carried out, to help tailor the programme's delivery to meet the specific needs and challenges of participants and keep everyone safe. This approach ensured that the project could effectively support a diverse range of individuals while enabling accurate monitoring and evaluation of its impact. While health questions were mandatory, other elements, such as gender and ethnicity, included a 'prefer not to say' option.

### 3.2. Standardised tools for measuring health and wellbeing

A pre-and post-survey method was utilised to measure changes in adult participants' physical health and mental wellbeing. Surveys were completed with an online link, on paper or over the phone, during the registration process and upon completion of courses.

The three validated measures that were used in the pre-and post-surveys were:

1. the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS<sup>15</sup>), to measure the impact on wellbeing.
2. the International Physical Activity Questionnaire – Short Form (IPAQ-SF<sup>16</sup>), to measure changes in physical activity; and
3. the EQ-5D-5L health thermometer<sup>17</sup>, to measure self-perceived changes in overall health.

### 3.3. Other measurement tools

A non-validated short measure on nature connection was used to collect pre- and post-course scores, as well as an evaluative questionnaire relating to the Five Ways to Wellbeing. A post-activity survey established the participants' views about the programme and gathered participant ideas on what improvements could be made.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3214824/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://euroqol.org/>

## 4. Results

In this section we present results from participants that registered on the courses. In addition, further sections use qualitative measures to describe the impact from both school groups and volunteers.

### 4.1. Referrals

In total, seven adults were referred from two different mental health practitioners in Conwy. These were the Mental Wellness team in Conwy County Council (n=3) and Conwy Mind (n=4); in total these participants attended between one and seven sessions each. The majority of these participants attended one-off events, which lasted between 3 to 4 hours. These included forest bathing, learning about wild food in Conwy and a Menopause Walk between August and October 2024.

### 4.2. Practitioners

Sixteen individuals that worked for the Betsi Cadwalader University Health Board (BCHB) registered with Coed Lleol/Small Woods Conwy Green Skills Programmes as well as one individual that worked for the Mental Wellness team, at Conwy County Council. Of these the majority participated in the health professional taster days in Pensychnant and Llanrwst.

### 4.3. Registration and attendance

In total, non-attendance included 12 people who registered an interest in the Conwy Green Skills Project but, when contacted by the course provider, there was no response. In addition, four people registered for a course, but could not attend. These included the health walk leader training, online foraging course, and health professional taster days.

In total over 80 people attended one or more events or sessions as part of the Conwy Green Skills Project, with a total of 280 engagements across all the events (see Table 6). Over 37% of adult participants attended two or more events or sessions held by Coed Lleol/Small Woods over the project, which included attending two or more sessions in a multi-day programme (see Table 7). In addition, 22% of participants attended one or more events.

*Table 6 Summary of all courses and events, dates and number of registered participants*

Course Name	Number of Sessions	Dates (From - To)	Total number of attendances over the programmes
Wild Food	1	12/09/2024	8
Samhain	1	31/10/2024	10
Menopause Walk	1	10/10/2024	2
Coed Lleol/Small Woods Fire Safety Certificate	1	16/01/2025	13
Coed Lleol/Small Woods Tool Safety Certificate	1	16/01/2025	13
Forest Bathing	2	25/07/2024, 23/08/2024	17
Health Walk Leader Training	2	18/11/2024 - 19/11/2024	18
Health Professional Taster Day	2	04/11/2024 (Caerdroia) - 15/11/2024 (Pensychnant)	28
Online Health Walk Leader Training	1	November24	5
Step into Nature	6	13/09/2024 - 18/10/2024	23
Green Woodworking	6	17/09/2024 - 22/10/2024	30
Woodland Wellbeing	6	13/09/2024 - 18/10/2024	42
Online Nature Crafts	6	18/09/2024 - 23/10/2024	17
Online Foraging	6	16/09/2024 - 21/10/2024	42
Lantra Forestry Standard Training (Staff)	10-15 Hours	October to December 2024	1
Outdoor first aid	1	October 2024	1
School sessions	3	December 2024 to January 2025	9
Food Safety L2	1	2024	3

*Table 7 Number of different events addended by participants*

Total number of different events attended by a participant	Number of participants
1	78
2	14
3	3
5	2
6	1
Grand Total	98

## 4.4. Demographics

### 4.4.1. Gender, age, ethnicity

The statistics below are given for those who registered and attended at least one session of any adult course (n=83, a further 15 did not register but attended sessions); those who registered but did not attend are not included. The majority of participants were female 57% (n= 47) and 13% identified as male and as 1 % non-binary, with 29% of participants not completing the registration form (See Figure 3a). Age of participants ranged from the 30-39 category to the 70-79 category. The largest age category was 60-69 (24%, n=20), with over 31% of participants preferring not to say (Figure 3b). The ethnicity of the project attendees was as follows: 46% identified as White British/Welsh, while 30% did not register or preferred not to disclose their ethnicity. 2% of attendees identified as Black/African/Caribbean/Black British/Welsh, and 1% each identified as East Asian or British/Welsh East Asian, Mixed ethnic origin, White European (See Table 8).

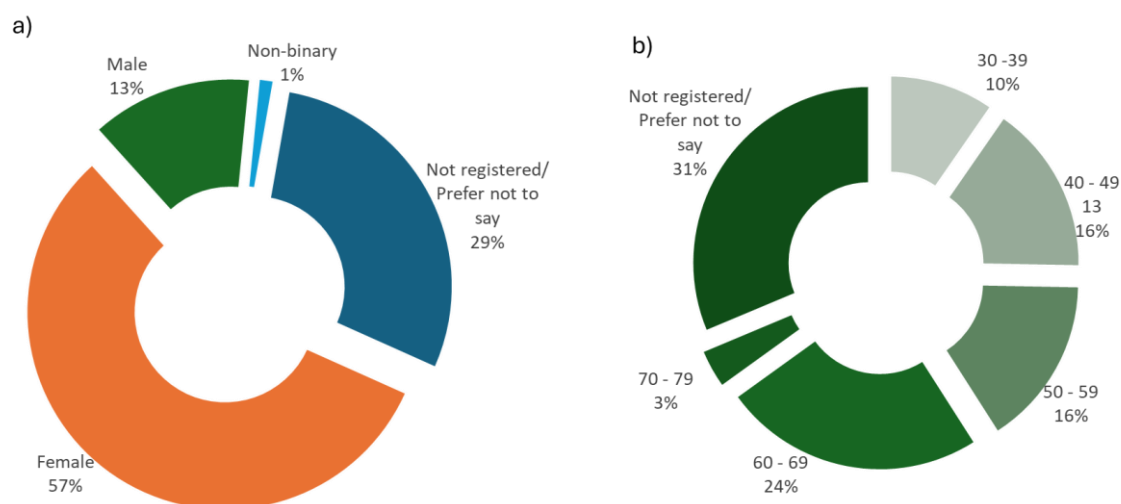


Figure 3 Pie charts showing the a) gender and b) age groups of registered participants

Table 8 Ethnicity of registered participants

Ethnicity	Number of registered participants
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British/Welsh	2
East Asian or British/Welsh East Asian	1
Mixed ethnic origin	1
Prefer not to say/ not registered	32
White British/Welsh	46
White European	1

#### 4.4.2. Socio economics

The largest group among participants stated that they were in paid employment or self-employment (34%, n= 28, See Figure 4). The attendees that provided postcodes (n=54) lived in both urban and rural areas, with the majority of post codes falling into rural classifications (57%, n=31), according to the UK Government Rural Urban Classification system<sup>18</sup>. Over 40% lived in C1 (Urban – City and Town; 42%), D1 (Rural – Town and Fringe; 28%), E2 (Rural – Village in a Sparse Setting; 14%) and D2 (Rural – Town and Fringe in a Sparse Setting; 9%) E1 (Rural – Village; 5%). Attendees’ post codes were situated within areas between the first and the tenth deciles of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation<sup>19</sup>. Lower numbers score higher in terms of deprivation; thus, the first five deciles represent the most deprived areas in Wales. Over 60% of attendees were in the sixth to tenth deciles, least deprived, while 39% of participants lived in the most deprived areas (See Figure 5).

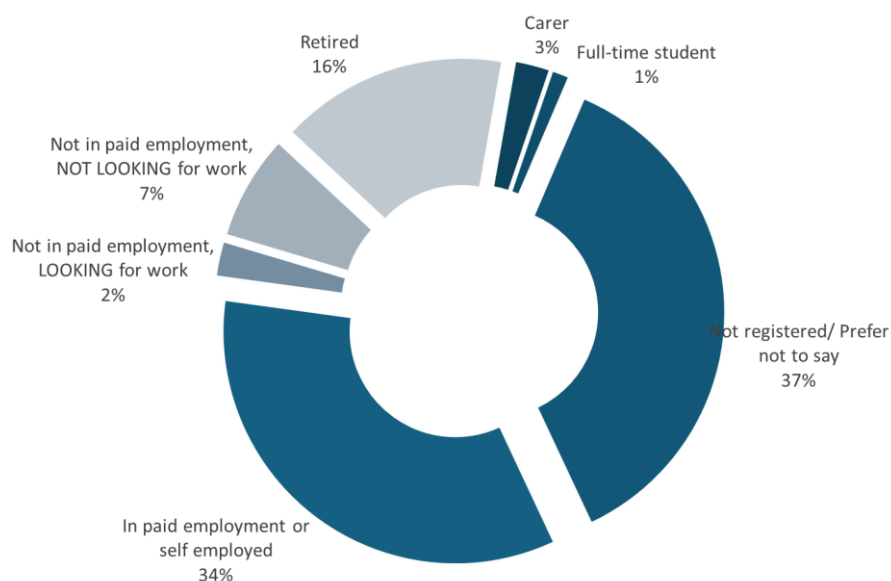


Figure 4 Employment status of registered participants as part of the Conwy Green Skills Project

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/2011-rural-urban-classification>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.gov.wales/welsh-index-multiple-deprivation>





Figure 5 Showing a) Proportion of participants from both urban (red; 43%) and rural areas (green 47%), according to the UK Government Rural Urban Classification system and b) Showing proportion of participants living in the most deprived areas of the UK (red, 39%) based on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (first to fifth deciles).

#### 4.4.3. Health and wellbeing

Registrants were asked if they felt that their health and wellbeing was limiting their lives, and to list their issues or concerns. Of the 53 participants that responded to that question, over 40 % stated that they did not feel limited by their health and wellbeing issues (n=36), 8% said they were limited a lot, and 15% limited a little (Figure 6a). Over half of attendees (47%) listed health and wellbeing issues or concerns during registration; in some cases more than one concern was mentioned (Figure 6b). Key health concerns were broadly categorised into: mental health conditions and symptoms (including anxiety, depression, and loneliness/isolation) – 23%; conditions and symptoms relating to activity levels, mobility, coordination and joints (including back and hip problems, dyspraxia and hypermobility) – 6%; airway- or fatigue-related conditions and symptoms (including asthma, long COVID-19, fibromyalgia, breathlessness and fatigue) – 8%; and long-term or chronic conditions (including those associated with the heart, kidneys, thyroid, as well as neurological and other conditions, high blood pressure and cancer) – 10% . Five percent expressed no health or wellbeing issues. Notably, 8% (n=7) specifically mentioned social isolation.

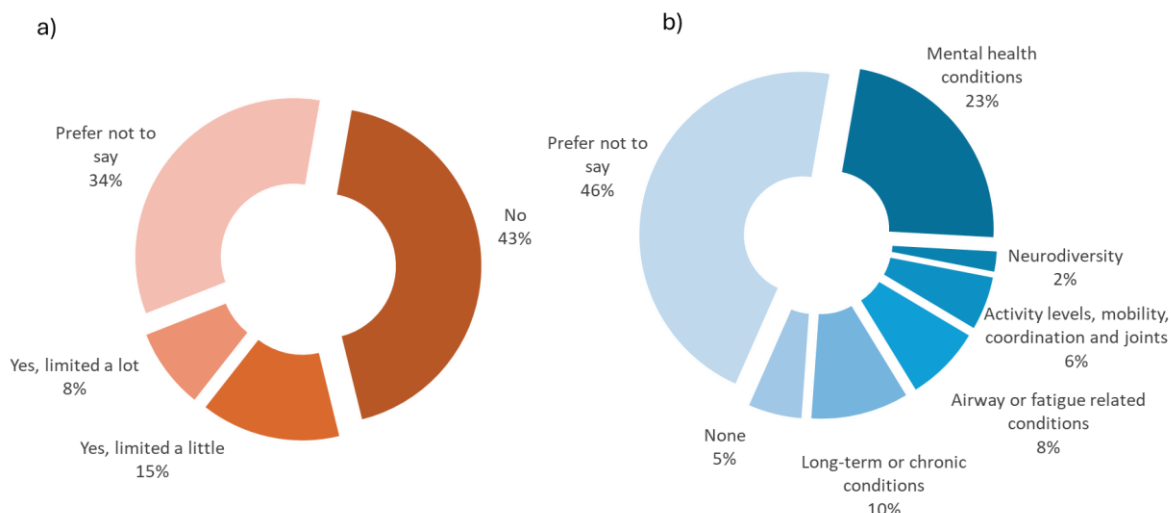


Figure 6 Showing a) How much participants felt their lives were limited because of health concerns, and b) What conditions were their key health concerns.

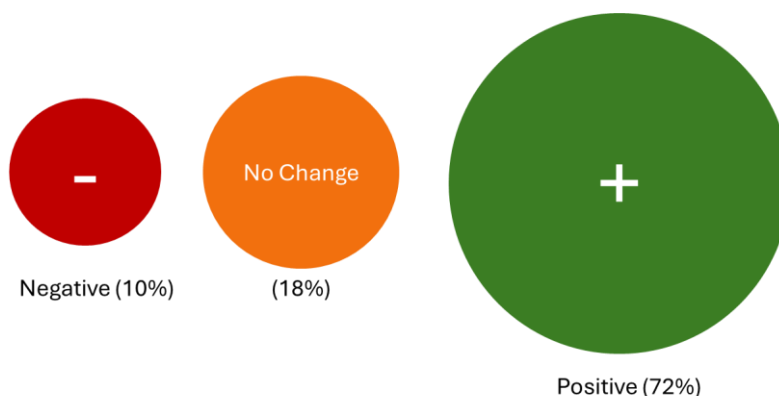
## 4.5. Evaluation responses

Of the 83 participants, 40 completed the pre-questionnaires and 16 completed the post-questionnaires, with 22% (n=18) completing both. The pre- and post-questionnaires included non-compulsory questions, which resulted in fewer scores that could be compared across the time frames.

### 4.5.1. Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS)

Across the group that completed the pre-scores, (n=40), the mean SWEMWBS score was 22.5 while across the group the post scores, (n=15), the mean SWEMWBS score was 25.8, showing an average of greater than a three-point rise in wellbeing, showing significant positive change at the group level as a result of the Conwy Green skills project.

At the individual level of the 16 participants, 11 completed all 14 questions (7 before and 7 after). All questions are required to be answered to give a SWEMWBS score at the individual level. Therefore 5 participants were removed from the analysis. We found an average increase of 4.5 points on the SWEMWBS score for those individuals that completed both pre- and post- surveys, which represents a significant increase in self-reported wellbeing. See Figure 7 for an illustration of the change in wellbeing scores across the participants.



*Figure 7 At the individual level, the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) was used to calculate the percentage reduction or increase in personal wellbeing, based on a sample size of 16 respondents that reported both before and after scores.*

#### 4.5.2. EQ-5D-5L Health Thermometer

The Health Thermometer responses were gathered from 40 participants in the pre-programme questionnaire and 17 in the post-programme questionnaire, with 17 participants completing both pre- and post-course assessments. This allowed for a direct comparison of health perceptions before and after participation in the programme. The analysis of these scores is essential to evaluate the impact of the course on participants' health and well-being.

Notably, 65% of participants reported an improvement in their overall health score after completing the course compared to their initial registration score (See Figure 8). This suggests that many participants felt a positive shift in their health perception after engaging in the course activities. On the other hand, 11% of participants indicated no change, maintaining the same health score from the beginning to the end of the course. Nearly a quarter, 24%, of participants reported a decrease in their overall health score by the end of the programme, highlighting that not all participants experienced an improvement. This mixed response underscores the fact that many programmes don't have a physical health feature. Variability in how individuals respond to the course also suggests that while the programme had a generally positive impact on health for many, others may have faced challenges that affected their overall health perception during this time.

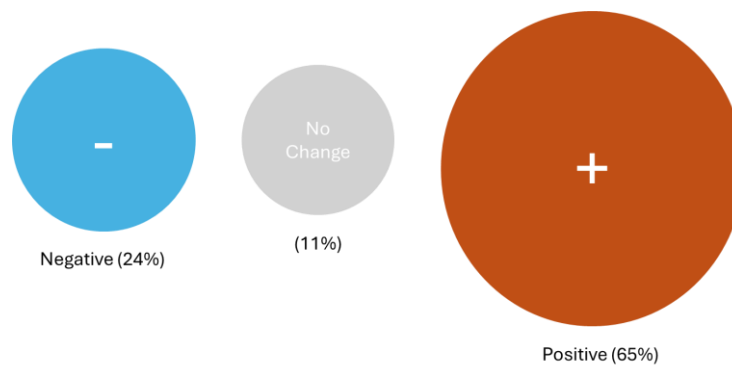


Figure 8 Showing percentage improvements in the Health Thermometer Scores across participants.

### 4.5.3. Nature Connection

In total 14 responses were collected to the nature connection questionnaire with both a pre- and post- response from the same participant (See Figure 9). Participants were asked how much contact they had with woodlands before the course, and how much contact afterwards.

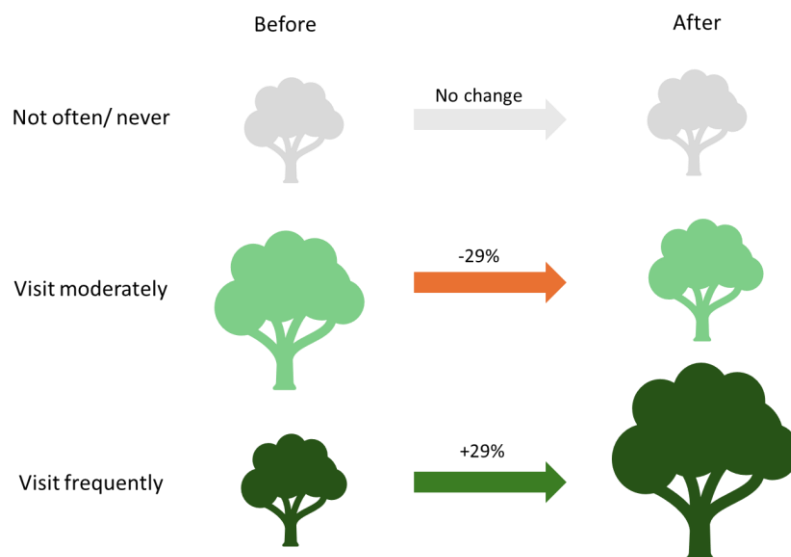


Figure 9 Showing frequency of visits to woodland before and after the Conwy Green Skills Project, as a percentage.

Before the programme, 7% of respondents visited woodlands only 2-3 times a year or less, while 50% visited often (every two weeks to every month), and 43% visited regularly (weekly or more). After the programme, the percentage of participants who visited often or weekly increased, with 71% visiting regularly and only 21% visiting occasionally. The percentage of those not visiting often was unchanged. This highlights a notable increase in participants' engagement with woodlands following the intervention.

Additionally, the evaluative questionnaire included three questions about connection to woodlands:

1. Do you think that you will continue to use woodlands or green spaces to improve your health and well-being in the future?

2. Do you feel that green spaces and woodlands are more accessible to you than they were before you started this programme?
3. Please tell us how the green spaces or woodlands are more accessible to you than they were before?

All participants that responded to this question indicated that they plan to continue using woodlands and green spaces to improve their health and well-being in the future (See Figure 10). Additionally, 47% of respondents reported that green spaces and woodlands are more accessible to them than before they started the programme. Eight participants provided open-text responses, detailing how these spaces have become more accessible, offering insights into their personal experiences and increased engagement with nature (see Figure 11).

*Figure 10 Percentage of respondents that felt green spaces were more accessible after the course, and percentage of those continuing to use green spaces to improve wellbeing.*



*Figure 11 Showing quotes from participants in response to whether they will continue to use woodlands or green spaces to improve their health and well-being in the future*

#### 4.5.4. Five Ways to Wellbeing

In total, 21 responses were collected to the post-programme evaluation questionnaire, which included eight questions related to the NHS's Five Ways to Wellbeing. These questions asked respondents to agree or disagree about how much the course had: been enjoyable; improved [their] confidence; helped [them] make new friends; taught [them] new skills and knowledge; connected [them] to local nature; helped [them] to feel part of the local community; helped [them] to do more exercise than [they] did before; and motivated [them] to get involved in volunteering (See Figure 12).

In terms of social connections, 6 out of 21 (29%) agreed, and 7 out of 21 (33%) strongly agreed that the programme helped them make new friends, while 8 out of 21 (38%) reported no change. The course also motivated some participants to exercise more, with 5 out of 19 (26%) strongly agreeing and 3 out of 19 (16%) agreeing that they were more active, though 8 out of 19 (42%) noted no change. On the skill-building front, 10 out of 20 (50%) agreed, and 10 out of 20 (50%) strongly agreed that they gained new skills and knowledge during the course. Additionally, 4 out of 20 (20%) strongly agreed, and 10 out of 20 (50%) agreed that the course motivated them to get involved in volunteering, though 2 out of 20 (10%) disagreed, and 10 out of 20 (50%) reported no change.



Figure 12 Percentage of responses to the Five Ways to Wellbeing-based questions, showing participants that either "Agreed" or "strongly Agreed" to the series of statements about the programme.

Regarding enjoyment, 13 out of 21 participants (62%) strongly agreed, and 8 out of 21 (38%) agreed that the course was enjoyable. For connection to local nature, 10 out of 21 participants (48%) strongly agreed, and 8 out of 21 (38%) agreed, showing a positive impact in this area. Eight out of 20 (40%) agreed and 8 out of 20 (40%) strongly agreed that their confidence was improved. Similarly, 7 out of 21 (33%) agreed and 6 out of 21 (29%) strongly agreed that the course helped them feel part of the local community.

## 4.6. Post-activity survey

As part of the evaluation form, participants were asked to feedback in five ways:

1. If the project has helped you to gain new life skills or practical skills, how have these skills improved or been used in your everyday life? (think about both practical and life skills)

2. How are you going to use the skills and knowledge you learnt to progress to further learning, courses, volunteering or employment?
3. Overall, please tell us if, or how, being part of this programme has inspired any changes in you (for your physical or your mental well-being, or anything else!)
4. Tell us what we could improve on
5. Overall, how would you rate your Coed Lleol/Small Woods experience? (1 star = poor, 5 stars = excellent)

#### 4.6.1. Life skills

Out of 13 responses, participants shared a variety of practical and life skills gained through the project, many of which they have integrated into their daily lives (See Figure 13). Skills like botanical identification, foraging, and crafting strengthened their connection to nature, with foraging boosting confidence, inspiring new recipes, and teaching food preservation techniques. Mindfulness and meditation were mentioned by participants as an effective tool for managing anxiety and improving focus. Practical skills such as woodworking were also valued, with participants stating they shared their skills and creations with family and friends. Many described a sense of achievement and creativity, motivating them to explore new hobbies and embrace new challenges with confidence. Overall, the project seemed to foster personal growth, inspiring participants to be more focused and engaged in nature.



*Figure 13 Quotes from participants on the Conwy Green Skills Project responding to the open-ended question: “If the project has helped you to gain new life skills or practical skills, how have these skills improved or been used in your everyday life?”*

### 4.6.2. Further development

In 18 responses, participants shared various plans for applying the skills and knowledge gained from the project to further learning, volunteering, or employment opportunities. Many intended to pursue additional courses in crafts, and plant-based learning, with some already engaging in further education or planning to deepen their skills through self-directed research. Volunteering emerged as a key theme, with participants returning to or starting roles in community settings. Others plan to share their new skills with local communities, such as by hosting craft sessions at village halls or encouraging friends and family to forage. For some, the course provided a pathway back to employment, boosting confidence and renewing a sense of purpose. Overall, the project inspired participants to continue learning, give back to their communities, and explore new opportunities aligned with their interests and skills.



*Figure 14 Quotes from participants in response to the question: "How are you going to use the skills and knowledge you learnt to progress to further learning, courses, volunteering or employment?"*

### 4.6.3. Inspired changes

In 19 responses, participants shared that being part of the programme brought meaningful changes to both their mental and physical well-being (See Figure 15). Many reported improved mental health, including reduced anxiety. The participants mentioned that the sessions provided a calming space to reflect, connect with nature, and find respite. Physically, the programme encouraged greater activity, with some participants exploring their local environments in a new way. Socially and emotionally, the programme fostered a sense of connection, offering opportunities to meet new people and share experiences in a supportive environment. Overall, the participants stated that the programme inspired them to integrate nature into their daily lives. Many felt more confident, motivated, and better equipped to use the tools they gained to support their ongoing well-being.





*Figure 15 Quotes from participants in response to "Overall, please tell us if, or how, being part of this programme has inspired any changes in you (for your physical or your mental well-being, or anything else)"*

#### 4.6.4. Delivery improvements

In total we received 13 responses to the final section of the questionnaire, where participants provided valuable suggestions for improving the programme while expressing overwhelming appreciation for them. Many requested that the programmes continue and expand, both in terms of availability and geographic reach, with some suggesting broader delivery across North Wales and closer collaboration with the NHS. Some participants highlighted the need for clearer alignment of activities with programme themes, noting that exercises like meditation sometimes felt unexpected. However, feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with respondents praising the tutors' enthusiasm, the overall organisation, and the quality of the sessions. Many expressed satisfaction with the programmes as they are, describing them as enjoyable, enriching, and beneficial. These responses highlight the value of maintaining the programme while considering small refinements to enhance accessibility, communication, and alignment. In total, out of five stars, respondents gave on average 4.76 stars.



*Figure 16. Participants gave the Green Skills, Conwy Project an average of 4.76 stars out of five.*

### 4.7. School groups

The school sessions worked with over 100 school pupils in the Conwy catchment, across three schools, as well as nine teachers. The head teacher of Ysgol Bod Alaw expressed gratitude for the Forest Sessions provided for Year 4, 5, and 6 pupils, highlighting that all the children enjoyed the experience and learned new skills such as creating nature art, starting a fire, and building a shelter. The staff were praised for their excellent work, and the session's timing and resources were described as perfect. Notably, even challenging students displayed

improved behaviour during the session due to the engaging atmosphere. The head teacher also mentioned the positive impact on staff, with one teacher taking her class out the following week to create a Christmas wreath, inspired by the session. The school looks forward to future collaboration and is now more confident in utilizing their own Forest School area (See Figure 17).

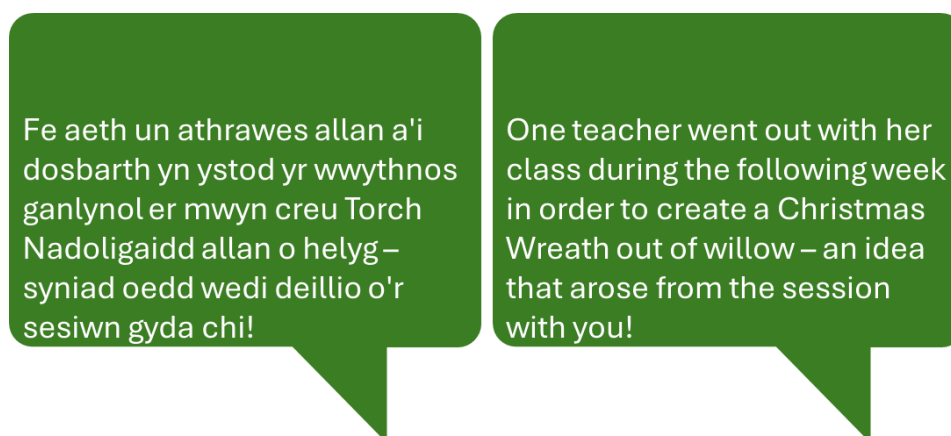


Figure 17 Feedback from a school in Conwy

#### 4.8. Volunteering

Four volunteers were registered for multiple events as part of the Green Skills Project. The remaining three volunteers actively participated in over 33 sessions contributing over 100 hours between July 2024 and January 2025. Feedback from one volunteer in January 2025 highlighted the benefits of volunteering with the project.

*“Volunteering on the six week well-being course, as well as forest school for Coed Lleol has greatly improved my confidence at delivering sessions which I hope to apply towards running my own in the near future. I am currently training to become a well-being in nature practitioner and I would relish the opportunity to continue volunteering for Coed Lleol. I have felt encouraged, supported and welcomed by all staff and volunteer members and I’m truly grateful for such a positive volunteering experience, I look forward to many more.”*

*Volunteer 6 week programme, Conwy*

#### 4.9. Leader Training

One leader attended an outdoor first aid course in October 2025. Additionally one leader attended the online UK Forestry Standards (UKFS) course found it to be a “high-quality, engaging experience”. The leader is due to complete the course by the end of December 2024. One of the volunteers within the project attended the health walk leader training provided by Coed Lleol/ Small woods.

## 5. Conclusions

The Conwy Green Skills Project, funded by Shared Prosperity and delivered from July to January 2025 aimed to support individuals furthest from the job market by improving confidence, enhancing green skills, and promoting health and wellbeing. The project engaged 98 participants across multiple programmes, along with over 100 Key Stage 2 pupils and 9 teachers across 3 schools in Conwy. The project offered a diverse range of courses, with a strong emphasis on nature connection and practical skills, including Forest Bathing, Health Walk Leader Training, and Online Foraging. These initiatives attracted a broad adult demographic, with 57% identifying as female and the largest age group being 60-69 years (24%). Most participants were employed or self-employed (34%), followed by retirees (31%) and those not in paid work (9%). A significant number (47%) reported pre-existing health or wellbeing conditions, with mental health being the most common concern (23%), followed by mobility issues (6%).


The project aimed to foster personal growth and environmental awareness, providing accessible outdoor learning experiences that connected participants with local woodlands and environmental education. Through accredited and non-accredited courses in areas such as outdoor wellbeing leadership and woodland management, the project encouraged participants to consider environmental careers. Notably, 37% of participants attended multiple courses, with 47% attending five or more sessions showing a high retention rate. Evaluation data from 36 participants indicated that 72% experienced improved mental wellbeing, as measured by the SWEMWBS scale, and 65% reported increased physical activity levels. Twenty nine percent of participants noted more frequent visits to woodlands after the programme, and all respondents expressed an intention to continue using outdoor green spaces. Additionally, the feedback from the schools suggested that the work had improved the behaviour of students, and follow up communications has shown that the schoolteachers have been inspired to put on their own forest school sessions since the project has finished.

Overall, the responses suggest that the project had a strong positive effect on participants, particularly in terms of enjoyment, connection to nature, and the development of new skills. However, there were some areas where fewer participants felt a change, such as in making new friends or doing more exercise. These insights can help inform future programme improvements. While the project successfully promoted community engagement, boosted wellbeing, and provided valuable green skills, several participants suggested improvements, mostly to deliver more over a longer time frame. The project's impact was positive, fostering long-term connections to the outdoors, with overwhelmingly positive feedback (4.76 stars average). Future developments could benefit from enhanced referral links with partners, which will now be strengthened by the health professional days which were well attended, to expand diversity and reach. Overall, the Green Skills Project significantly contributed to participants' personal development, wellbeing, and environmental awareness, with many expressing intentions to continue engaging with outdoor spaces and green activities in the future.

## 6. Acknowledgements

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**Cysylltwch â ni | Get in touch**

 [coedlleol@smallwoods.org.uk](mailto:coedlleol@smallwoods.org.uk)

 01654 701495

 [coedlleol.org.uk](http://coedlleol.org.uk)

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