



CoedLleol
SmallWoods

Personal wellbeing, growth and progression in nature – Final Report

Prepared by: Amy Spike Lewis

Date: February 2025



Executive Summary

The Personal Wellbeing, Growth, and Progression in Nature project, funded by Shared Prosperity, significantly exceeded its initial targets and made a substantial impact on participants in Swansea from April to December 2024. The project's goal was to improve the confidence, skills, and wellbeing of individuals facing barriers to employment and social inclusion through nature-based activities. The project surpassed its targets for participant engagement and volunteer involvement. It aimed to engage 25 one-off participants in environmental/nature-based volunteering activities and 1 long-term volunteer, but in reality, 73 adults attended one or more events or sessions, far exceeding the target. Additionally, one long-term volunteer supported the project, contributing 38 sessions from January to August 2024.

The initiative offered a range of accessible outdoor green skills learning activities, including 3 six-week programmes, 5 engagement events, and 5 volunteering events, totalling 27 events, which was close to the target of 28. These events engaged 86 participants in total.

Key highlights of the programme include:

- **Confidence and Skills Building:** The project played a pivotal role in helping participants gain new skills and build confidence. 88% of participants reported gaining new skills, particularly in areas like foraging, bushcraft, and mindfulness through nature.
- **Improved Mental Wellbeing:** The SWEMWEBS (Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale) scores revealed a 3.4-point average increase in mental wellbeing for participants who completed both pre- and post-assessments. Additionally, 76% of participants reported an improvement in their overall health perceptions after the programme.
- **Nature Connection:** A significant 74% of participants reported visiting woodlands regularly after the programme, compared to just 42% before. Moreover, 100% of participants expressed their intention to continue using woodlands and green spaces for improved wellbeing in the future.
- **Engagement with Deprived Areas and Vulnerable Groups:** The project specifically targeted individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. Over 39% of participants were from the most deprived areas (WIMD 1-5), and 11 participants were referred from services supporting those in recovery, unemployed, or facing social isolation.

Through its engagement with both urban and rural areas and its focus on vulnerable groups, the project successfully enabled individuals to connect with nature, improve mental and physical health, and develop pathways for ongoing personal and professional development. The positive feedback from participants and volunteers, including a 5/5-star rating from many respondents, demonstrates the success of the programme in delivering meaningful change.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Table of Figures	4
Table of Tables.....	5
1. Introduction.....	6
1.1. Personal wellbeing, growth and progression in nature	6
1.2. UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund	6
1.3. About Coed Lleol/Small Woods	7
1.4. Wellbeing in nature and social prescribing.....	8
2. Approach.....	10
3. Evaluation Methodology.....	12
3.1. Demographics	12
3.2. Standardised tools for measuring health and wellbeing	12
3.3. Other measurement tools.....	12
4. Results.....	13
4.1. Referrals and practitioners.....	13
4.2. Registration and attendance.....	13
4.3. Demographics	13
4.3.1. Gender, age, ethnicity	13
4.3.2. Socio economics.....	14
4.3.3. Health and wellbeing.....	15
4.4. Evaluation responses.....	16
4.4.1. Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEBWMS)	16
4.4.2. EQ-5D-5L Health Thermometer	17
4.4.3. Nature Connection.....	18
4.4.4. Five Ways to Wellbeing.....	20
4.5. Post-activity survey.....	20
4.5.1. Life skills.....	21
4.5.2. Further development	22
4.5.3. Inspired changes	22
4.5.4. Delivery improvements	23
5. Photos.....	24
6. Conclusions.....	25

Table of Figures

Figure 1 The project ran programmes in Swansea, between April and December 2024.....	10
Figure 2 Pie charts showing the a) gender and b) age groups of registered participants	14
Figure 3 Employment status of registered participants as part of the Project	15
Figure 4 Showing a) Proportion of participants from both urban (red) and rural areas (green), 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) based on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation.....	15
Figure 5 Showing a) How much participants felt their lives were limited because of health concerns, and b) What conditions were their key health concerns.....	16
Figure 6 At the individual level, the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWEBS) was used to calculate the reduction or increase in personal wellbeing, based on a sample size of 21 respondents that reported both before and after scores.....	17
Figure 7 Showing percentage improvements in the Health Thermometer Scores across participants.....	17
Figure 8 Showing percentage of participants within the group that visited woodlands at different frequencies both before and after the project.	18
Figure 9 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.	19
Figure 10 Showing quotes from participants in response to Do you think that you will continue to use woodlands or green spaces to improve your health and well-being in the future?.....	19
Figure 11 Percentage of responses to the five ways to wellbeing, showing participants that either “Agreed” or “strongly Agreed” to the series of statements about how the course made them feel.....	20
Figure 12 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?”	22
Figure 13 Quotes from participants in response to “Overall, please tell us if, or how, being part of this programme has inspired any changes in yourself (for your physical or your mental well-being, or anything else)	23
Figure 14 Photos from the Personal wellbeing, growth and progression in nature project in Swansea.....	24

Table of Tables

Table 1 Courses, sessions, dates and attendees for the project	11
Table 2 Volunteer details	11
Table 3 Ethnicity of registered participants.....	13
Table 4 Frequency of registrants visiting woodlands both before the project and after attending a programme.....	18

1. Introduction

1.1. Personal wellbeing, growth and progression in nature

From April to December 2024, the Personal Wellbeing, Growth, and Progression in Nature project, funded by Shared Prosperity, aimed to enhance the skills, confidence, and wellbeing of individuals in Swansea, particularly those facing barriers to employment and social inclusion. The project offered accessible outdoor green skills learning activities designed to improve participants' connection with nature while addressing issues such as poverty and social exclusion.

The initiative planned to provide nature-based wellbeing and skills development through 3x 6-week programmes, 5x engagement events, and 5x volunteering events. These activities focused on communication, teamwork, mental health, and practical green skills such as woodland management. Participants were expected to engage in hands-on experiences and progression pathways, including leadership roles and peer support.

Key objectives included:

1. Improving Confidence, Skills & Wellbeing:

Targeting disadvantaged groups to boost confidence, skills, and personal aspirations through outdoor health programmes.

2. Training & Volunteering:

Offering training in green skills and hands-on experience through 40 training sessions and 5x volunteering events. Volunteering opportunities were designed to develop leadership and teamwork skills, with the goal of supporting 1 long-term volunteer and engaging 25 one-off participants in environmental activities.

3. Creating Networks & Infrastructure:

Building connections within communities and improving access to green spaces, especially in areas affected by deprivation.

The project aimed to support 45 local events or activities and provide 40 individuals with training sessions focused on green skills. Additionally, it planned to create 28 opportunities for engagement, including 3x 6-week programmes (18 events), 5x engagement events, and 5x volunteering events. The overall goal was to improve access to green spaces and empower participants to continue their personal growth and career progression.

1.2. UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund

The overarching objective of the UK's Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is Building pride in place and increasing life chances. 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, emphasizing pride in place and improved life opportunities. It complements other funding streams and integrates with mainstream employment and skills programs to enhance impact and streamline delivery. Councils and mayoral authorities in England, Scotland, and Wales will 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 aimed 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.

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, it encourages and supports 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^{1;2;3;4}. 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^{5;6;7;8}. 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 visits⁹. 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 wellbeing¹⁰, 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 communities¹¹. While further research is needed into the causative pathways for the links between nature and wellbeing³, additional health benefits associated with undertaking nature-based activities include statistically significant reductions in diastolic

¹ 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.

² Cervinka, R., Hölte, J., Pirgic, 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).

³ 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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ Ulrich, R. S., 1984. View through a window may influence recovery from surgery, *Science*, 224, 420-421.

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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>

¹⁰ 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>

¹¹ 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 mortality¹².

Following a consultation period, where over 1,000 stakeholders were engaged, a National Framework for Social Prescribing was released by Welsh Government in December 2023¹³. 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.

¹² 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>

¹³ 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 April and December 2024, the UKSPF Swansea project with Coed Lleol Small woods delivered a variety of programs aimed at fostering a connection with nature and promoting health and wellbeing in Swansea County (see Figure 1).

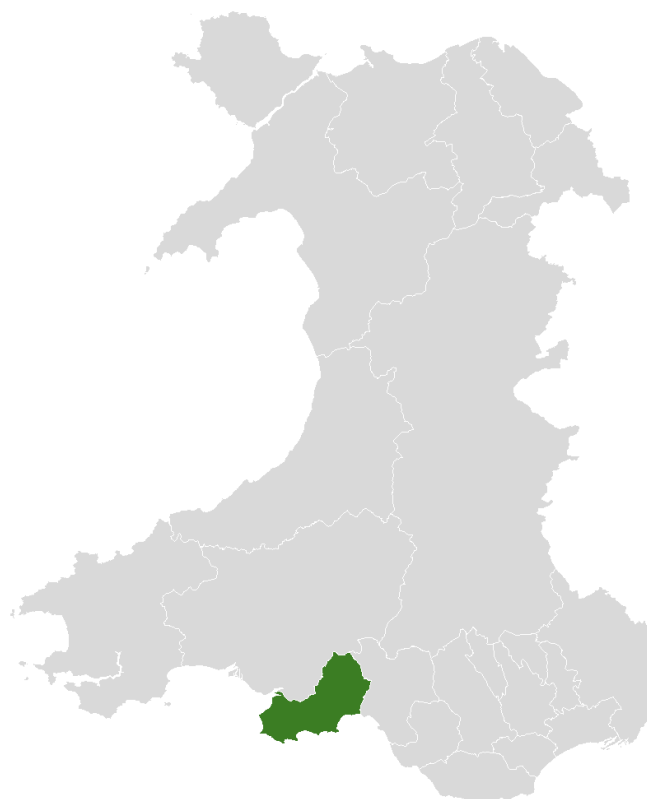


Figure 1 The project ran programmes in Swansea, between April and December 2024

In-person events included a variety of activities aimed at promoting wellbeing through nature. These included the 6-week courses, such as Recovery with Nature, specifically focused on participants in drug and alcohol recovery in Swansea, focusing on using nature to improve mental health and wellbeing, Herbal Foraging, where participants learned about local plants and their medicinal uses, and the Clyne Hill Walking Group, which combined outdoor walking with mindfulness and nature connection. Engagement events included foraging walks for Swansea University medical students and mental health nursing students, offering hands-on experience in herbal foraging while exploring the health benefits of nature.

Monthly sessions, held on the last Wednesday of each month, offered adults the chance to engage with nature through a range of activities such as Bushcraft Skills, Art in Nature, Herbal Foraging, Nature Crafts, and Christmas Wreath Making. These sessions aimed to improve mental and physical health, build confidence, and foster a deeper connection with the environment.

Volunteering events provided hands-on opportunities for individuals to contribute to nature-based projects. Over the course of the programme (from January 2024 to August 2024), one

long-term volunteer dedicated a total of 38 sessions, each lasting between 2-4 hours. This volunteer gained valuable experience and skills while supporting the project's environmental initiatives. These volunteering opportunities helped create pathways for personal growth and further involvement in environmental stewardship.

Throughout the programme, nature-based wellbeing activities supported participants' connection with the environment, enhancing mental health and equipping them with valuable skills for personal and community development.

Table 1 Courses, sessions, dates and attendees for the project

Course Name	Number of Sessions	Dates (From - To)	Total number of adult individual attendees over the programme
6-week wellbeing courses	18	30/04/2024 –15/10/2024	35
Engagement events	4	7/11/24 – 21/10/24	13
Volunteering sessions	5	26/06/2024 - 11/12/24	38
Total Adult Sessions	27		86
*Note this is total individual adults per course, in some cases some individuals will have participated across multiple programmes			

Table 2 Volunteer details

Total number of volunteers over the programme	Dates (From - To)	Total of sessions volunteered
1	January 2024- August 2024	38

3. Evaluation Methodology

All demographic questions and measures can be found in an example registration questionnaire in Appendix A and evaluation in Appendix B, the majority of these were completed online, using Microsoft forms, however a paper version was also available for those that requested it. Informed consent was collected, as well as a GDPR 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. This 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 help tailor the program's delivery to meet the specific needs and challenges of participants. This approach ensured that the project could effectively support a diverse range of individuals while enabling accurate monitoring and evaluation of its impact. Only the health questions were required to be completed, other elements such as gender and ethnicity were optional to respond to.

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 (SWEMWBS¹⁴), to measure the impact on wellbeing.
2. the International Physical Activity Questionnaire – Short Form (IPAQ-SF¹⁵), to measure changes in physical activity; and
3. the EQ-5D-5L health thermometer¹⁶, 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 (See Appendix B).

¹⁴ <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs>

¹⁵ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3214824/>

¹⁶ <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 participants and volunteers.

4.1. Referrals and practitioners

In total, 11 adults were referred from different services in Swansea, including a recovery group (eight participants) as well as job centre and voluntary services. The majority of these participants attended the recovery with nature programme. In total nine (80% of) referred participants attended more than one session with a mean attendance of over 4 sessions.

4.2. Registration and attendance

In total non-attendance included 16 people who registered an interest in the project but when contacted by the course provider, there was no response. In total 73 people attended one or more events or sessions as part of the Personal Wellbeing, Growth, and Progression in Nature project, with a total of 199 engagements across all the events. Over 55% (n=40) of adult participants attended two or more events or sessions held by Coed Lleol/ Small woods over the project duration, which included attending two or more sessions in a multi-day programme.

4.3. Demographics

4.3.1. Gender, age, ethnicity

The statistics below are given for those who attended at least one session of any adult course (n=73); those who registered but did not attend are not included. The majority of participants were female, making up 58% (n=42) of the total, 1% identified as non-binary, and 40% of participants identified as male or preferred not to disclose their gender (29% male, 1% preferred not to say) (Figure 3a). Age of participants ranged from the 30-39 category to the 70-79 category. The largest age group was 50-59 (23%, n=17), with 18% (n=13) in the 60-69 category. Additionally, 6% of participants preferred not to disclose their age (Figure 3b). The majority of participants classed them selves as white British or Welsh (90%) see table 8 for all ethnicities of participants.

Table 3 Ethnicity of registered participants

Ethnicity	Number of registered participants
Asian or British/Welsh Asian	2
I prefer not to say	1
Mixed ethnic origin	2
White British/Welsh	66

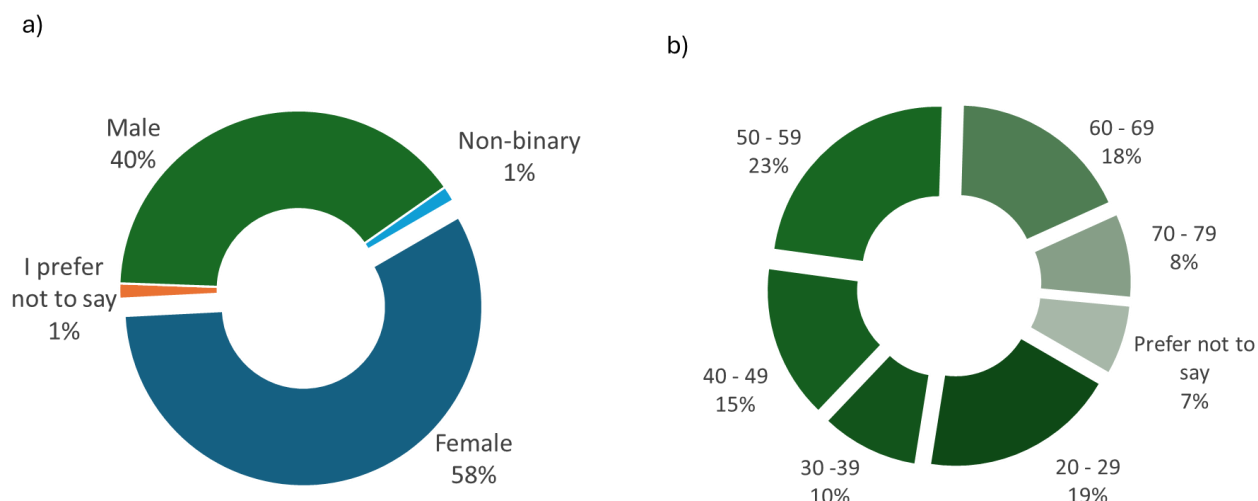


Figure 2 Pie charts showing the a) gender and b) age groups of registered participants

4.3.2. Socio economics

The statistics below are given for those who attended at least one session of any adult course (n=73); those who registered but did not attend are not included. The majority of participants were in paid employment or self-employment (19%, n=14). A significant portion were full-time students (16%, n=12), with 13% (n=13) not in paid employment and not looking for work. Additionally, 5% (n=4) were not in paid employment but actively looking for work, and 25% (n=18) were retired. A small number (1%, n=1) were volunteering for Coed Lleol, while 15% preferred not to disclose their current circumstances.

The attendees who provided postcodes (n=54) lived in both urban and rural areas. The majority (61%, n=33) lived in urban areas (C1 - Urban: City and Town), while the remaining attendees lived in rural areas, classified as D1 (Rural – Town and Fringe, 9%, n=5) and E1 (Rural – Village, 11%, n=6), according to the UK Government Rural-Urban Classification system. Attendees' postcodes were situated within areas across the deciles of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD). Over 60% of participants lived in the least deprived areas (WIMD 6-10), with the remaining 39% residing in the most deprived areas (WIMD 1-5) (See Figure 4).

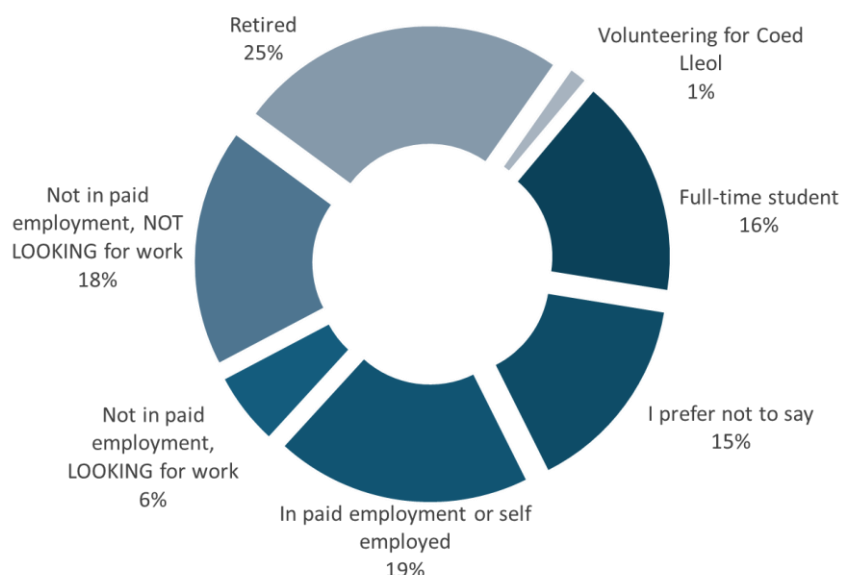


Figure 3 Employment status of registered participants as part of the Project



Figure 4 Showing a) Proportion of participants from both urban (red) and rural areas (green), 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) based on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation.

4.3.3. Health and wellbeing

Registrants were asked if their day-to-day activities were limited due to health problems or disabilities expected to last at least 12 months. Of the 73 participants, 67% (n=49) reported that their activities were not limited, while 25% (n=18) indicated that their activities were limited a little, and 3% (n=2) felt their activities were limited a lot. Four participants preferred not to answer this question (See Figure 5a).

Regarding health concerns, 47% of participants listed at least one health issue or concern during registration, with some mentioning multiple issues (See Figure 5b). The most common

concerns included mental health conditions (27%), followed by long-term or chronic conditions such as heart, kidney, or thyroid problems, as well as neurological conditions (10%). Conditions relating to activity levels, mobility, coordination, and joints affected 6% of participants, while 4% experienced airway or fatigue-related conditions such as asthma, long COVID-19, fibromyalgia, breathlessness, and fatigue. A specific concern about social isolation or loneliness was noted by 4% (n=4) of participants. Additionally, 3% (n=3) of participants mentioned neurodiversity as a concern. 7% of participants reported no health issues, and 46% preferred not to disclose their concerns.

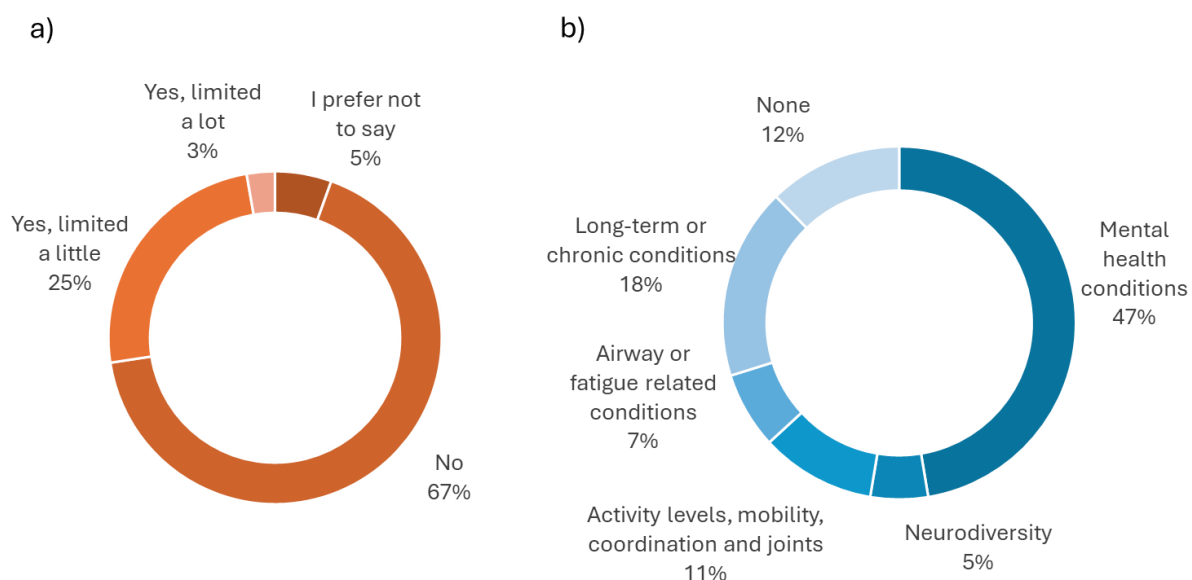


Figure 5 Showing a) How much participants felt their lives were limited because of health concerns, and b) What conditions were their key health concerns.

4.4. Evaluation responses

Of the 73 registered participants, 25 (34%) completed both the pre and post questionnaires. The pre and post questionnaires included non-compulsory questions, which resulted in fewer scores that could be compared across the time frames.

4.4.1. Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEWMS)

Across the group that completed the pre-scores, (n=64), the mean SWEWMS score was 23 while across the group the post scores, (n=23), the mean SWEWMS score was 26, 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 project.

At the individual level of the 21 participants completed all pre and post questionnaires (7 before and 7 after). All questions are required to be answered to give a SWEWMS score at the individual level. We found an average increase of 3.4 points on the SWEWMS score for those individuals the completed both pre and post surveys. See Figure 6 for an illustration of the change in wellbeing scores across the participants.

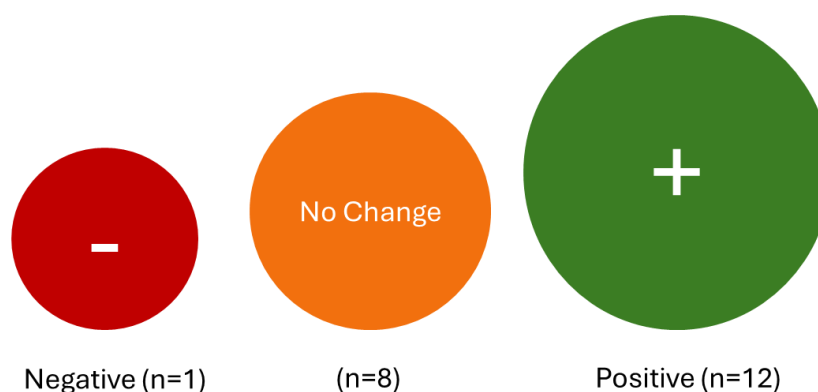


Figure 6 At the individual level, the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWEBS) was used to calculate the reduction or increase in personal wellbeing, based on a sample size of 21 respondents that reported both before and after scores.

4.4.2. EQ-5D-5L Health Thermometer

The Health Thermometer responses were gathered from 21 participants in both the pre- and post- course questionnaire. 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, 76% of participants reported an improvement in their overall health score after completing the course compared to their initial registration score (See Figure 7). This suggests that many participants felt a positive shift in their health perception after engaging in the course activities. Only 4 participants indicated no change, maintaining the same health score from the beginning to the end of the course and 5 indicated a decline. This mixed response underscores the variability in how individuals respond to the course and 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.

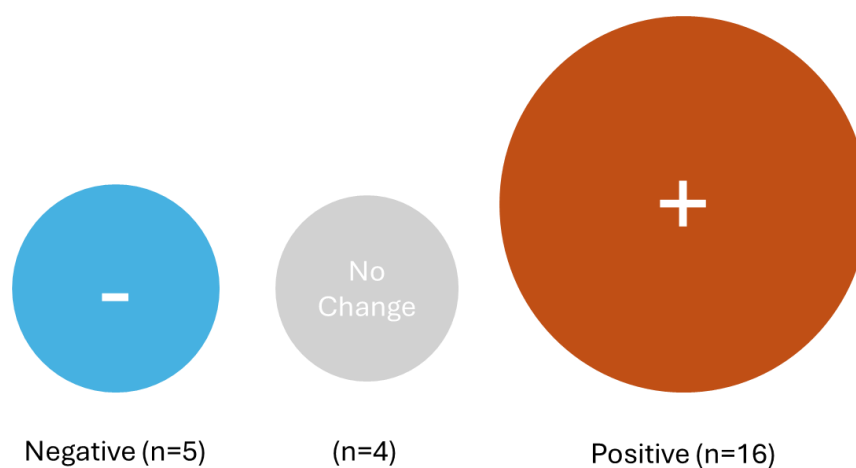


Figure 7 Showing percentage improvements in the Health Thermometer Scores across participants.

4.4.3. Nature Connection

In total 19 responses were collected to the nature connection questionnaire with both a pre and post response from the same participant (See Figure 8 and Table 9). Frequency of registrants visiting woodlands both before the project and after attending a programme. Participants were asked how much contact they had with woodlands before the course, and how much contact afterwards.

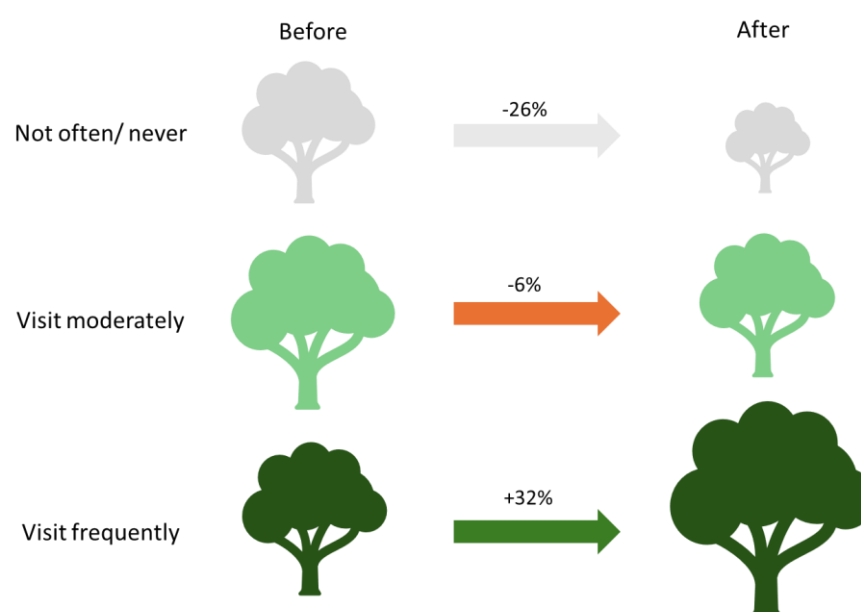


Figure 8 Showing percentage of participants within the group that visited woodlands at different frequencies both before and after the project.

Table 4 Frequency of registrants visiting woodlands both before the project and after attending a programme

Frequency of visiting woodlands	Before Project (%)	After Project (%)
Don't go very often (2-3 times a year or less)	26	0
Go often (every two weeks to every month)	32	26
Go all the time (weekly visits or more)	42	74

Error! Reference source not found. shows a significant change in participants' access to woodlands before and after the intervention. Before the programme, 26% of respondents visited woodlands only 2-3 times a year or less, while 32% visited often (every two weeks to every month), and 42% visited regularly (weekly or more). After the programme, the percentage of participants who visited often or weekly increased, with 74% visiting regularly and none at all visiting infrequently. This highlights a notable improvement in participants' engagement with woodlands following the programmes.

Additionally, the post evaluation questionnaire included three further questions about their 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 (100%) indicated that they plan to continue using woodlands and green spaces to improve their health and well-being in the future (See Figure 9). Additionally, 100% of respondents reported that green spaces and woodlands are more accessible to them than before they started the programme. Twenty three participants provided open-text responses, detailing how these spaces have become more accessible, offering insights into their personal experiences and increased engagement with nature.

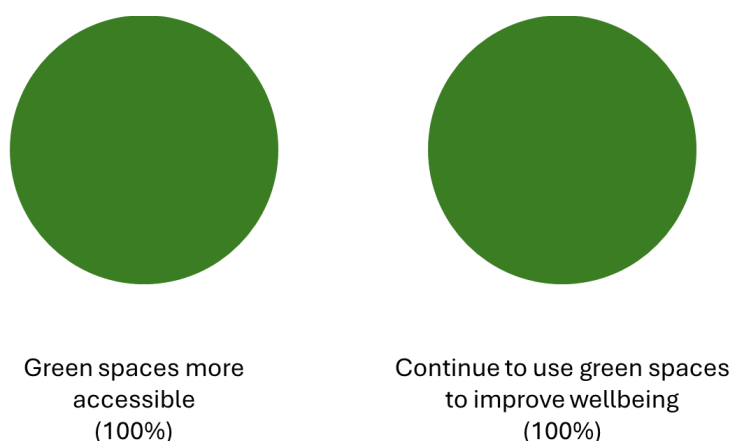


Figure 9 Percentage of respondents that felt green spaces were more accessible after the course, and percentage of those continuing to use green spaces to improve wellbeing.



Figure 10 Showing quotes from participants in response to Do you think that you will continue to use woodlands or green spaces to improve your health and well-being in the future?

4.4.4. Five Ways to Wellbeing

The course had a strong positive impact on participants, with 92% (n=23) agreeing that it was enjoyable, and 92% (n=23) also agreeing that it connected them to local nature. Regarding confidence, 56% (n=14) strongly agreed, and 40% (n=10) agreed that the course improved their confidence, while 60% (n=15) strongly agreed, and 32% (n=8) agreed it helped them feel part of the local community. In terms of social connections, 56% (n=14) agreed, and 40% (n=10) strongly agreed that the course helped them make new friends. For exercise, 36% (n=9) strongly agreed, and 44% (n=11) agreed that it motivated them to be more active, although 20% (n=5) reported no change. Regarding skill-building, 88% (n=22) agreed that they gained new skills, while 40% (n=10) strongly agreed and 24% (n=6) agreed that the course motivated them to volunteer, though 32% (n=8) noted no change. Overall, the course was particularly impactful in terms of enjoyment, connection to nature, skill-building, and confidence, but the effects on social connections, exercise, and volunteering were more mixed, offering areas for future improvement.

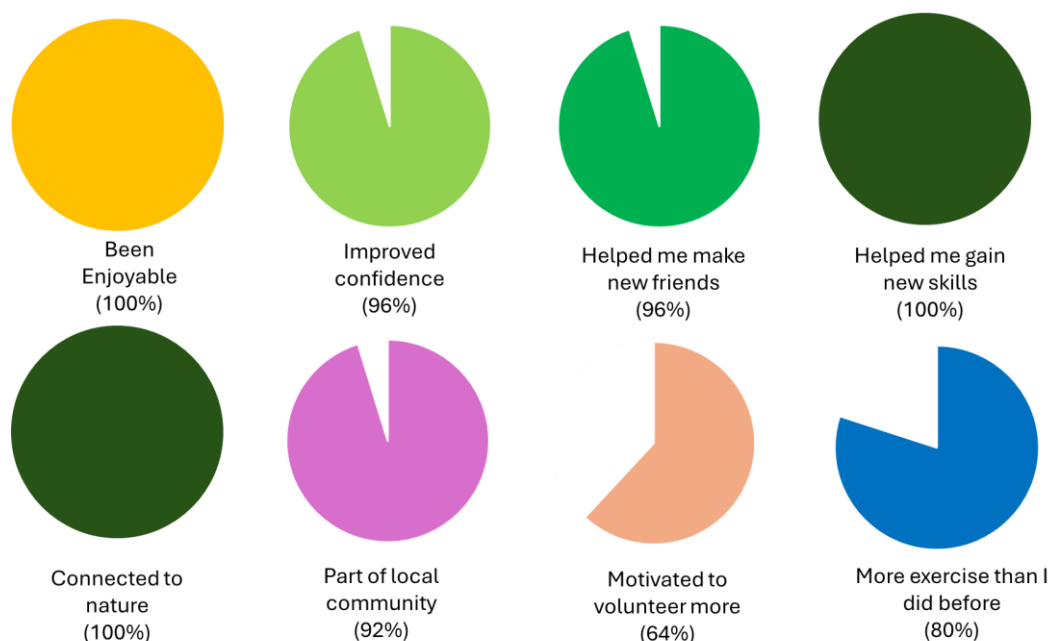


Figure 111 Percentage of responses to the five ways to wellbeing, showing participants that either "Agreed" or "strongly Agreed" to the series of statements about how the course made them feel.

4.5. 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 yourself (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 experience? (1 star = poor, 5 stars = excellent)

4.5.1. Life skills

Out of 21 responses, participants shared a variety of life and practical skills gained through the project, many of which they have integrated into their daily lives. 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 the use of nature for mental well-being were also highlighted, with many noting how the activities helped reduce stress and improve focus. Practical skills such as mushroom identification and creating natural products from foraged plants were also mentioned, and several participants expressed excitement about applying these skills in their daily lives. Overall, the project had a strong impact on participants, encouraging them to explore new hobbies and improve their mental health.

"These walking sessions have been good for my mental health. To be out in the beautiful woodland with expert guides imparting their wealth of knowledge is very special."

"To relax, take notice, help the environment, teamwork".

"It was thoroughly informative, hands on, meeting new people and talks around the lovely campfire."

Figure 12 Quotes from participants on the programme 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?"

4.5.2. Further development

In 18 responses, participants shared their plans for using the skills and knowledge gained from the project to further their learning, volunteering, or community involvement. Many expressed an interest in attending additional courses focused on woodland activities, foraging, and herbal medicine, with some eager to deepen their understanding of plant identification and sustainable practices. Volunteering and community engagement were also significant themes, with participants planning to join local woodland projects, protect nature reserves, and share their newfound skills with others. A few mentioned using their experiences to improve personal well-being, reduce stress, and engage in new group activities. Overall, the project motivated participants to continue exploring nature-based learning, contribute to their communities, and pursue new personal and professional opportunities.

"I would love to do more courses located in woodlands and also to pass what I have learnt on to other members of my woodland group".

"I am going to continue improving my skills and sharing what I have learned with others in the community"

Figure 123 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?"

4.5.3. Inspired changes

In 22 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 improvements in mental health, including reduced anxiety and a stronger sense of calm. The sessions provided a space to reflect, connect with nature, and find relief from daily stress. Physically, the programme encouraged increased activity, with participants exploring local woodlands and incorporating outdoor walks into their routines. Socially and emotionally, it helped create a sense of connection, offering opportunities to meet new people and share experiences in a supportive environment. Overall, the programme inspired participants to integrate nature into their daily lives, leaving them feeling more confident, motivated, and better equipped to continue using the tools they gained to support their well-being.



Figure 134 Quotes from participants in response to "Overall, please tell us if, or how, being part of this programme has inspired any changes in yourself (for your physical or your mental well-being, or anything else)"

4.5.4. Delivery improvements

In total, we received 20 responses to the section asking for improvements to the programme. Many participants expressed a desire for more frequent courses, suggesting that the programme should be offered regularly and to a wider audience. Several respondents requested additional events in both familiar and new locations, with some asking for the sessions to be extended from six to eight. A few participants suggested that more opportunities for learning, such as in-depth exploration of trees or wildflowers, would be beneficial. There were also requests for practical improvements, such as including the addition of online booking form. While feedback on the organisation and delivery of the programme was overwhelmingly positive, these suggestions highlight the desire to extend the reach of the sessions. In total 25 respondents gave 5/5 stars.



Figure 15. All participants gave the programmes 5 stars out of five.

5. Photos

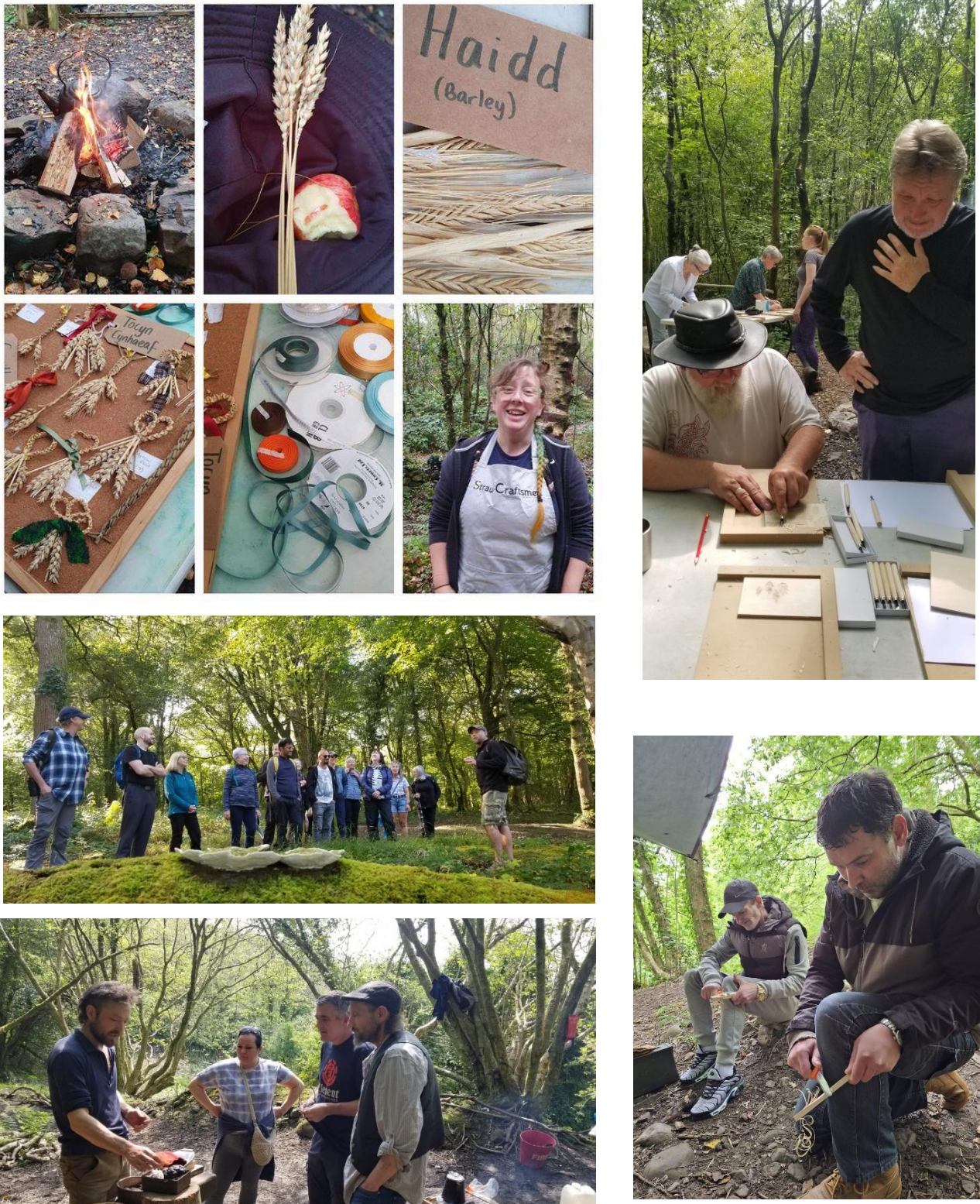


Figure 14 Photos from the Personal wellbeing, growth and progression in nature project in Swansea.

6. Conclusions

The Personal Wellbeing, Growth, and Progression in Nature project, funded by Shared Prosperity, successfully achieved its goals of enhancing participants' confidence, developing green skills, and promoting mental and physical wellbeing. Delivered between April and December 2024, the project made a significant impact on individuals facing barriers to employment and social inclusion, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Through a variety of accessible nature-based activities, participants gained valuable skills, deepened their connection to the environment, and saw improvements in their overall health and wellbeing.

The project exceeded its targets, engaging 73 individuals instead of the planned 25, with many participants attending multiple sessions. This impressive turnout highlights the strong interest in the programme and its potential for creating lasting change. In addition to engaging individuals, the project reached over 39% of participants from the most deprived areas, demonstrating its effectiveness in targeting those most in need of support. The programme successfully encouraged regular engagement with nature, with 74% of participants visiting woodlands frequently after the project, compared to just 42% before.

Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, with many reporting increased confidence, new skills, and a greater sense of wellbeing. These outcomes were complemented by a positive shift in participants' attitudes towards nature, with 100% expressing a desire to continue using green spaces for their health in the future.

Looking ahead, the project's success underscores the importance of ongoing collaboration with referral partners and the need for continuous outreach to ensure the programme can benefit an even wider range of individuals. Further expansion and strengthening of these partnerships will be vital in broadening the programme's impact, ensuring that it continues to serve as a catalyst for personal growth, community engagement, and environmental awareness.

Cysylltwch â ni | Get in touch

 coedlleol@smallwoods.org.uk

 01654 701495

 coedlleol.org.uk

Dilynwch ni | Follow us

   CoedLleol

Rhif Elusen Gofrestredig **1081874** Registered Charity Number