

Trywydd Iach

Cysylltu pobl â'r awyr agored

Outdoor Health

Connecting people with the outdoors

Trywydd Iach Project

Evaluation Report

Year 1 2021-2022



"Being out in nature, sitting around the fire doing the mindfulness sessions. The tension just seem to leave me. Being with likeminded people, no one seemed to judge or worry either and it felt good"

(Participant, Ynys-Hir Woodland Activity Session)



Contents

Background	4
Part 1 – Trywydd Iach: Social Prescribing to Outdoor Health	6
Introduction	6
Year One Outputs: Social Prescribing	8
Referrals	9
The Participants	10
Health Issues	11
Evaluation	12
Methodology	12
Mental Wellbeing Benefits	13
Physical Health Benefits	14
Overall Health Benefits	15
Nature Connection and Woodland Contact	15
5-ways to Wellbeing Measures	16
Inspiring changes in participants	17
Improved mental wellbeing	18
Social Wellbeing	18
Improved Physical Health	18
Increased Confidence	19
Connection to nature	19
Provided Inspiration & Motivation	19
Improvements	20
Overall Rating	20
Part 2 – Trywydd Iach: Healthy Travel	21
Year One Outputs: Healthy Travel	21
Outcomes year one: Healthy Travel	22
Recommendations from the Community Consultation events	23
Barriers	23
Comments from Participants	23
Secondary School Consultation	24
Healthy Travel Board	24
Working in partnership	24
New proposals for cycling and or walking routes	25
Training sessions	25
Areas of improvement	26
Conclusions – Year One Trywydd Iach Project	26

OUTPUTS

Trywydd Iach - Outdoor Health Project

Year 1
December 2020 - December 2021

130

People Registered for Activities through the Trywydd Iach Project

1



2

87
People took part in one or more Outdoor Health Activity



6 different Outdoor Activities were offered

3

Woodland Activity Groups (x2), Walking Groups (x2), Animal-Assisted Therapy, Family Woodland Sessions



4

Signposting

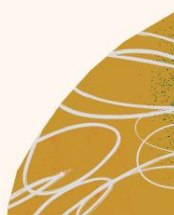
14 participants were signposted to other projects (Actif Woods, Dolau Dyfi and Online activities)

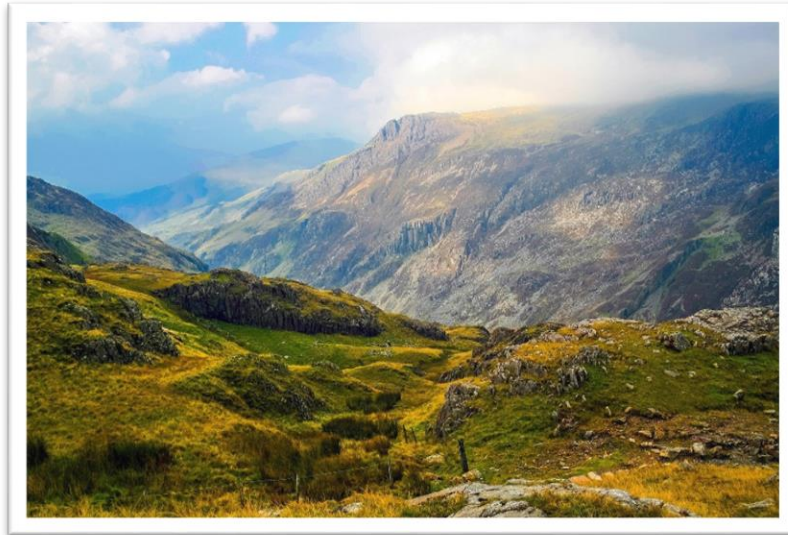


Referrals

5

Just over 50% of registered participants were referred. 50% self-referred after hearing about or seeing advertising. Referrals came from, GP's surgery, MIND, Cyfle Cymru, Camad, DDAS, Community connectors and more





Background

There is a growing body of evidence that demonstrates that outdoor nature-based activity can improve mental health, increase lifespans, and reduce the incidence of chronic diseaseⁱ. Currently, it is estimated that only a quarter of the population in Wales participate regularly in outdoor recreation and 47% are active for fewer than 150 minutes per weekⁱⁱ. The NHS report that one in four people will experience mental health issues at some point in their livesⁱⁱⁱ. The rise in mental and physical health issues are putting additional stress on GPs and the NHS, with an estimated 20% of all GP appointments concerning social rather than medical health issues^{iv}.

In Wales, it is recognised that despite the first-class natural resources to hand many people are not accessing them regularly, and opportunities for social prescribing to outdoor health activities in some areas were minimal or uncoordinated. Moreover, although several independent agencies and charities offer outdoor health and wellbeing activities there was no joined-up network (or partnership) that could link them to healthcare providers to explore and ensure best practice across this sector and embed social prescribing more fully to encompass outdoor health and wellbeing.

Social prescribing to Outdoor Health (or 'Green Social Prescribing') has been gaining ground and recognition in Wales (All Wales Social Prescribing Network). There is a need to streamline the process, offering a wider choice of outdoor activities for all abilities, and developing a joined-up system for registration, monitoring and evaluation thus addressing some of the challenges that were identified from research. Social prescribing to outdoor health can play a role in supporting people to engage with outdoor activities to address social isolation, some mental and physical health conditions whilst also acting as a preventative health measure.

Barriers for Health Professionals	Barriers for Participants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A lack of knowledge about the benefits ● A lack of knowledge about what activities are available and when (short or long term) ● A lack of confidence over the governance, cost-benefit and (health) training of providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social Anxiety ● Transport ● The need for one place to access all ● Concerns over access in the outdoors (accessible pathways, seating, toilets, parking)

Key barriers to participation identified in consultation with health professionals and the community

In 2019, Coed Lleol – Small Woods Wales worked in partnership with EcoDyfi on a short pilot project to develop a system to promote and support social prescribing to outdoor health in the Dyfi Valley area. Follow-on funding has developed this project into Trywydd lach – Outdoor Health Project working to connect people to outdoor activities in this area.

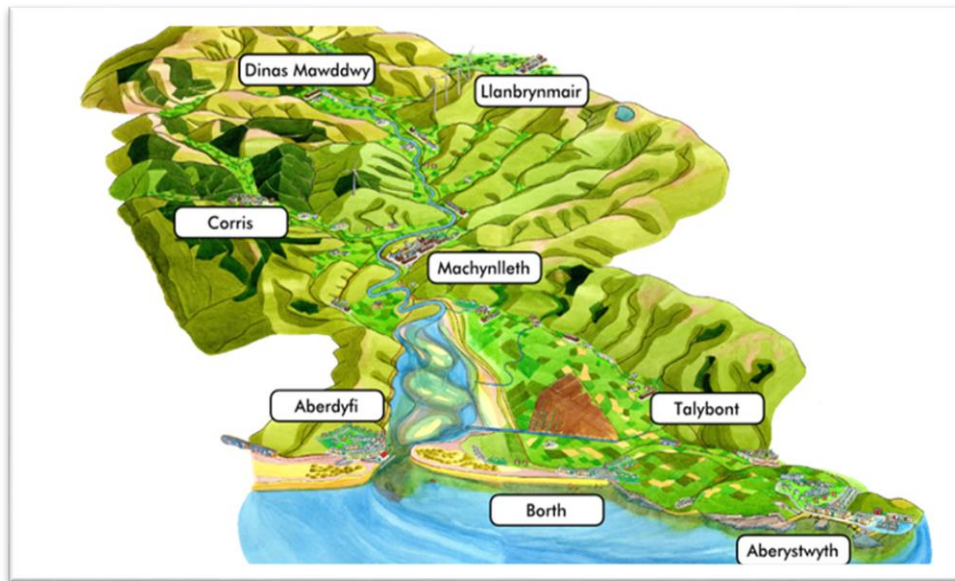
During the pilot, consultation was undertaken that highlighted the need for greater levels of connectivity across the area so that residents can access areas safely on foot or by bicycle. The Trywydd lach project responded to this with the launch of the ‘Healthy Travel Project’. This aims to progress the initial consultation with key stakeholders to establish potential safe healthy travel routes within the Dyfi Valley Area.

Part one of this report will cover the outputs and outcomes of year one of the Trywydd lach – Social prescribing to outdoor health and part two will explore the key achievements of the Trywydd-lach – Healthy Travel

Part 1 – Trywydd Iach: Social Prescribing to Outdoor Health

Introduction

Trywydd Iach (The Outdoor Health Network) has addressed the challenges by developing a single point of entry for 6 different outdoor health activities that are accessible to the communities of the Dyfi Valley (see map below).



Map of Dyfi Valley/Biosphere Area

The project also developed a referral system where people in need can either be referred directly by their GP surgery, link, or support worker to the project for a consultation and subsequent registration to suitable activities. Alternatively, people can refer themselves to the project, thereby providing the potential to take pressure off public services which are already under great strain (see diagram below). In response to the initial evaluation, continuous delivery and signposting have been encouraged for participants who need longer-term support to engage and access the outdoors. So far, the project has established referral links with 4 GP surgeries¹ as well as Mental Health Charities and community and link workers. Although there is a long way to go to embed this practice more fully into the health sector across Wales this project provides valuable learning that has been the catalyst for roll-out to three other Welsh Regions (Rhondda Cynon Taf, Pembrokeshire and Gwynedd).

¹ The surgeries that were involved in the project are Dyfi Valley Medical Practice, Machynlleth, Church surgery, Aberystwyth, Borth Surgery and Tywyn Health Centre.



Trywydd Iach – Outdoor Health Network process for referral

Year One Outputs: Social Prescribing

The Trywydd lach project has registered 139 people and engaged 87 participants (78 adults and 9 children) in one or more activity from April 2021-January 2022. December-March was recruitment, training, and set-up, delivery was delayed due to Government Lockdown (January-March 2021). Despite the late start, the project was just under its target of 100 participants per annum.

During May 2021-December 2021 the project has delivered the following,

Type of Session	Number of Sessions	Number of participants
Walking Group – Machynlleth (Every Friday – Friendly Walkers from the surgery)	31	14
Walking Group – Aberystwyth	31	20
Woodland Wellbeing Activity Sessions - Ynyshir	15 (9 summer sessions, 6 Autumn sessions)	18
Woodland Wellbeing Activity Sessions - Ynysmaengwyn	6	10
Woodland Wellbeing Activity Sessions – Family Sessions	10 (5 November sessions, 5 December sessions)	17 (8 adult and 9 children)
Animal Assisted Therapy – Dyfi Donkeys	14 (7 Summer sessions, 7 Autumn sessions)	15
Additional Sessions – due to demand		
Follow-on Animal Assisted Therapy Sessions	8	11
Follow-on monthly woodland sessions	5	13
Totals	120	87 (excluding double counted participants who attended more than one activity)

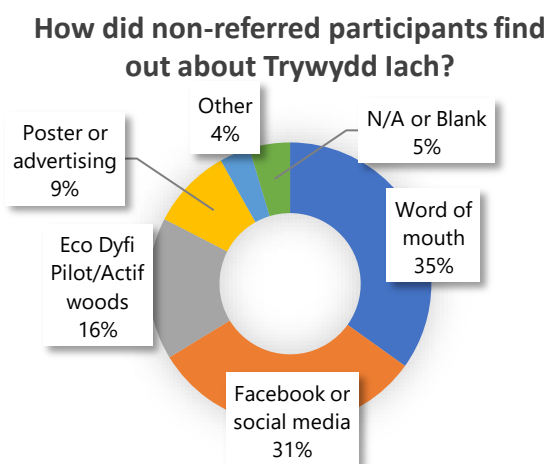
The ongoing evaluation highlighted the need for continued support for participants to support mental wellbeing and physical health longer-term. Both the group setting and the support of the group provided was seen as an essential part of engagement for many of the participants. The Trywydd lach project were able to provide a series of follow-on activities in the form of a bi-weekly Animal Assisted Therapy group and monthly Woodland Activity group to support this need. Additionally, one participant has been active in setting up a 'participant-led – project supported' peer support monthly group. These actions provide a valuable model for the project going forwards.

Referrals

The project in year one had just under 50% referred participants and just over 50% of participants who self-referred (after hearing about or seeing posters/advertising/social media about the project). The referrals came from the following health services,

Referral type	Number of participants referred	Number who engaged
Church Surgery Aberystwyth	6	2
Machynlleth Surgery	3	3
Tywyn Health Centre		
Unspecified NHS/GP referral	3	2
Mind	8	8
Camad	2	1
CMHT	1	1
DDAS	4	4 (Actif woods Ceredigion)
Mental Health Services	2	2 (Actif Woods Signpost)
PAVO	1	1
Cyfle Cymru	1	1
Treherne Care group		
Cerrig Cornel Care home	2	2
Ceredigion community connector	2	1
Powys community connector	1	0
Hywel Dda		
Tan-y-maen	1	1
Age Cymru		
Social worker /support worker	3	3
Eco-Dyfi Pilot/Dolau Dyfi	3	3 (Path Maintenance)
TOTAL Referred	43 People	49% Referred

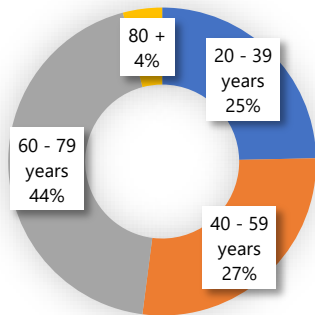
Participants who self-referred heard about Trywydd Iach – Outdoor Health in several ways as shown in the chart below,



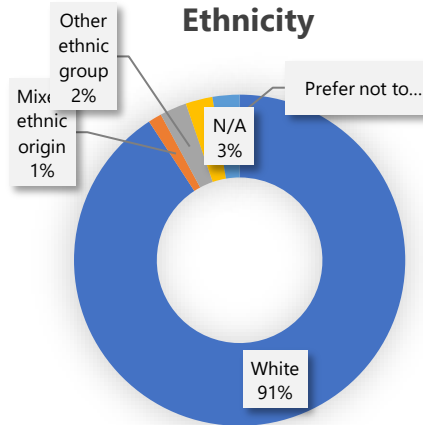
The Participants

78% of participants in year 1 were female, 20% male and 2% did not state their gender

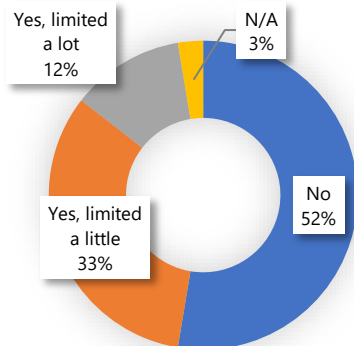
Age group of Trywydd lach participants



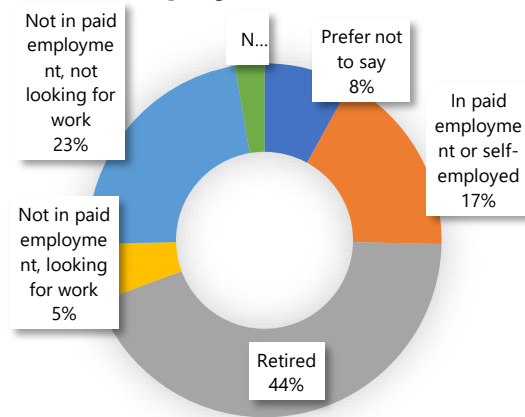
Ethnicity



Are participants limited because of health issues or a disability which has lasted a 12 months or more



Employment status



The participants came from the following Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation areas and urban-rural contexts,

42% live in E2 – Rural village in a sparse setting

38% live in D2 - Rural: Town and Fringe in a Sparse Setting

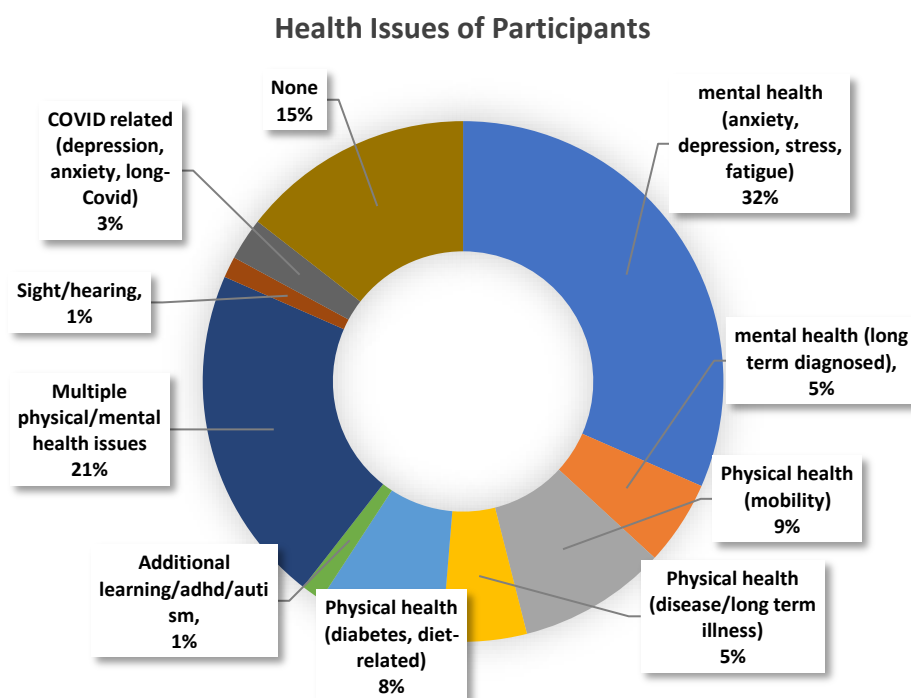
14% live in C2 - Urban: City and Town in a Sparse Setting

22% of participants live in WIMD 1-5 (most deprived)

78% of participants live in WIMD 6-10 (least deprived)

Health Issues

The participants self-declared health issues are shown in the chart below. 75% self-declared health issues at registration (some may have had health issues that were not declared) .Most participants listed mental health issues – depression, anxiety and stress (32%) or longer-term mental health conditions (5%) many had multiple physical and mental health conditions (21%).



The participants had a range of health issues that demonstrate that the Trywydd lach network was able to connect people with health needs to the outdoor activities. In comparison, data from Coed Lleol (Woodland Wellbeing) shows that 50% of participants self-declared health issues, indicating that the cluster approach is more able to attract and engage those with health needs.



Evaluation

57% of the participants returned evaluation forms². This provided a good basis for understanding the reception to, and impacts of, the Trywydd Iach Programmes.

Methodology

A pre-and post-survey method was utilised to measure changes in participants physical health and mental wellbeing. Surveys could be completed with an online link, on paper or over the phone.

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

- The Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) was used to measure the impact on wellbeing
- The International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ) was used to measure changes in physical activity
- The EQ-5D-5L health thermometer was used to measure self-perceived changes in overall health

The results of each are presented in the following section.

² This gives a sample size (95% confidence level, 7% margin of error). Further evaluation forms are expected in the coming months from walking groups that should result in a 5% margin of error.

Mental Wellbeing Benefits

The Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)³ was used to calculate the overall wellbeing scores for the participants. This utilises a two-week recall, self-report, wellbeing indication using a 5-point scale on fourteen set wellbeing indicators³. Wider research across the UK using this method has found that the average wellbeing score for adults is 51 points (out of a possible 70 points). A point score change of three or above is considered a 'meaningful change' in wellbeing. The Participants completed a WEMWBS test before starting the programme and then completed the same test once the programme had finished.

39 participants so far have completed both pre-and post- WEMWBS. The mean score for wellbeing rose from 43 (out of a possible 70) to 47, showing that the activities that the Trywydd lach programme provided were able to contribute to increased wellbeing across the cohort. Taken on an individual level 77% of the participants who completed both the pre-and-post-WEMWBS evidenced increased wellbeing. 64% showed a significant change of above 3 points.



“The biggest change in me is to my mood and mental health. Having a session to look forward to each week adds both structure and hope to my days. Being amongst other like-minded people ensures I don’t feel too isolated, which is a constant issue for me as I live alone and experience severe depression and anxiety. The fact that everything is planned, there is no pressure on participants, and everyone understands the issues we are all struggling with means it feels like a genuinely safe space, and perhaps the only times in my week when I can genuinely relax and feel like I have nothing to worry about”

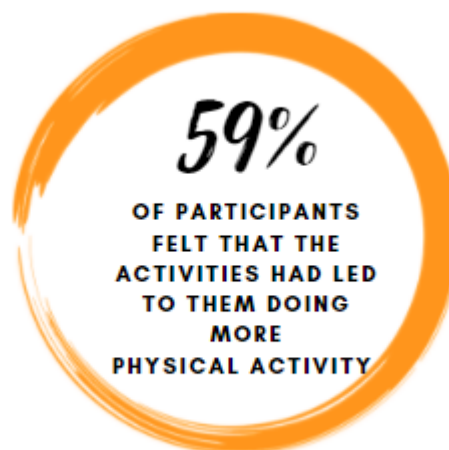
³ The 14 WEMWBS indicators are:

I have been feeling optimistic about the future, I’ve been feeling useful, I’ve been feeling relaxed, I’ve been interested in other people, I’ve had energy to spare, I’ve been dealing with problems well, I’ve been thinking clearly, I’ve been feeling good about myself, I’ve been feeling close to other people, I’ve been feeling confident, I’ve been able to make up my own mind about things, I’ve been feeling loved, I’ve been interested in new things and I’ve been feeling cheerful.

Physical Health Benefits

Physical health changes were measured using the short version of the International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ)^{vi}. IPAQ uses a self-report, 7-day recall, of the amount and duration of vigorous, moderate and walking exercise that a participant recalls from the previous week. The scores are converted into an overall MET score that provides an indicator of weekly physical activity. To calculate change, individual scores are converted into a single MET score that provides an indicator of weekly physical activity. A high MET score of over 1500 indicates a high level of physical activity, a MET score of between 600-1500 indicates a moderate level of physical activity and a MET score of under 600 indicates a low level of physical activity.

32 of the participants completed both pre-and post- IPAQ questionnaires. The average mean rose from 3080 MET points to 3746 MET points (an overall increase of 666 MET points). Taken individually, 50% of the participants evidenced increased MET scores, 3% showed no change and 47% evidenced a decrease in physical activity.



"I've been extremely inactive throughout Covid so this project has helped to gently ease me back into more physical activity again, and I find myself spending more time in my own garden working. I always have more energy on the days I am able to participate in these sessions"

(Trywydd Iach Participant)

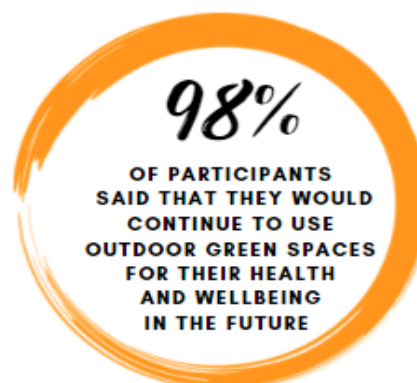
Overall Health Benefits

Overall health was measured using the 'health thermometer' from the EQ-5D-5L^{vii} where participants were invited to state how good or bad they felt their health was on that specific day. The participants were shown a 0-100 scale, where 0 was 'the worst health that they could imagine' and 100 was the 'best health they could imagine'. 32 of the participants successfully completed both pre-and post- EQ-5D-5L health thermometers. Mean scores rose from 59 to 72 (an increase of 13 points). Taken on an individual level, 66% of those showed increased, self-declared, levels of overall health from the start of the programme to the end of the programme.



Nature Connection and Woodland Contact

The Trywydd lach activities aim to encourage the greater use of outdoor green spaces to promote the use of outdoor green spaces for longer-term health and wellbeing. Outdoor contact was measured using a pre-and post-evaluation question with options to state how much annual use of outdoor green spaces are made. 31 participants provided pre-and post-responses to this question. Before the activities, 29% of the participants took frequent visits (weekly or more) to outdoor green spaces, following the activities this rose to 58%. 98% felt that they would continue to use outdoor green space for their health and wellbeing in the future.



5-ways to Wellbeing Measures

The evaluation asks a series of rating-scale (1-5) to establish how far the activities are undertaken to align to the NHS's 5-ways to wellbeing. The results are presented below.

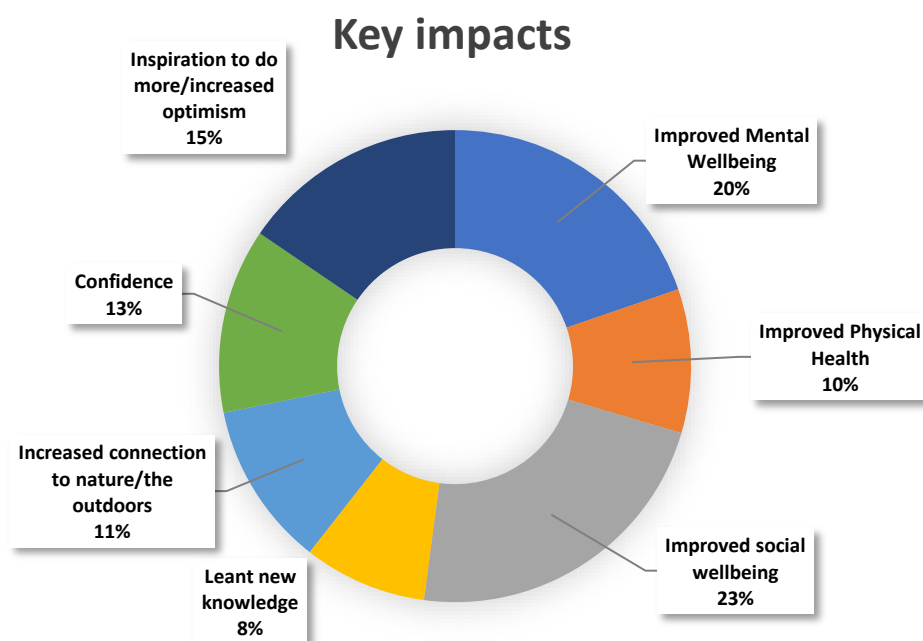


Mapping onto the 5-Ways to Wellbeing



Inspiring changes in participants

The participants were asked an open-ended question about how the Trywydd Iach Activities may have inspired any changes in themselves (physical or mental wellbeing or environmental change) through the course of the programme. The responses were themed and coded into the following themes, mental wellbeing benefit, physical health benefit, social wellbeing benefit, learning new skills and knowledge, and being in nature benefits and environmental benefit (satisfaction/helping others). Some participants provided more than one response; in these instances, each response was coded individually. The chart below illustrates the impacts as stated by the participants.



The comments received reflect a fusion of impacts that often crossed over the themes. The key themes are illustrated in a selection from the comments received that are presented in the below table,

Improved mental wellbeing

"This has been completely transformational to my mental health and wellbeing. Being in a safe space with beautiful surroundings, supporting facilitators and like-minded people whilst learning new skills is more beneficial for any other counselling or treatment I have done (which is a lot!). A huge part of these groups is the sense of community they engender, and I cannot recreate that with independent woodland visits. I feel this group offers truly dramatic benefits for me"

(Participant, Ynys-Hir Woodland Activity Group & Animal Assisted Therapy)

"It has taught me how to relax and re-focus my thoughts away from the turmoil around me, in the news and on social media. It has renewed my ability to see the essential good in people and nature"

(Participant, Ynys-Hir Woodland Activity Group)

"It has helped me to be less anxious about going out and joining in with community activities"

(Participant, Animal Assisted Therapy)

"Being part of Actif Woods has been truly amazing! Although I still suffer from my mental health it has vastly improved. I feel like I want to connect with others again. It's a shame that its duration is so short. I really hope that funding gets increased as things like this actually change people's lives. I was blessed to be part of it and know that it helped everyone else in the group. I have also practised some of the skills that I have learnt in the course, which really helps to take my mind off things"

(Participant, Ynys-Hir Woodland Activity Group)

Social Wellbeing

"I think that the pandemic has resulted in myself and my partner becoming isolated due to being older and avoiding people in an effort not to catch Covid 19. Also, a recent house move meant we did not have the opportunity to meet people as easily. Trying new tasks and meeting like-minded people has been nourishing and life-affirming. I have enjoyed the sessions enormously and am going to miss going very much"

(Participant, Ynys-Hir Woodland Activity Group)

"It was great to have the opportunity to connect with other parents and do some crafts in a safe space for my daughter"

(Participant, Family Woodland Sessions)

"Meeting new people and I now love being in woodland areas"

(Participant, Woodland Activities Ynysmaengwyn)

Improved Physical Health

"Improved fitness. I always look forward to our group walk on Friday although I walk daily. It's great to have a chat with different people"

(Participant, Walking Group, Machynlleth).

"Being more active and making time for myself"

(Participant, Woodland Activity Group, Ynysmaengwyn)

"Inspired me to get out and move more. Gave me the confidence to meet a group of strangers and interact"

(Participant, Ynys-Hir Woodland Activity Group)

Increased Confidence

"It's given me more confidence and meeting different people and being outside"
(Participant, Animal-Assisted Therapy)

"It has helped me to realise speaking up for myself is a good thing and knowing my own limits and boundaries"
(Participant, Woodland Activity Group, Ynys-hir)

"It has helped me to be less anxious about going out and joining in with community activities"
(Participant, Animal-Assisted Therapy)

"the walking group has helped me to get out of the house"
(Participant, Walking Group, Machynlleth)

Connection to nature

"It has inspired me to make sure I make time to re-set/be still in nature and how important and valuable outdoor health is to everyone. It was nice to meet people who value that"
(Participant, Animal-Assisted Therapy)

"It's changed the way I look and listen while outdoors. Just standing or sitting with your eyes closed and listen to your surroundings can bring calm to yourself"
(Participant, Woodland Activities Ynysmaengwyn)

"I think more than anything I was surprised at how it impacted on my mental wellbeing. I spend a lot of time in the outdoors, but on the course, I have learnt to connect and view it a different way which has made me feel calmer and refreshed"
(Participant, Animal-Assisted Therapy)

Provided Inspiration & Motivation

"It has made me do more outside. Even if it's just a walk for 10 mins. These woodland groups have reminded me of being young and being outside. These groups help me because it's something to look forward to each week"
(Participant, Participant, Ynys-Hir Woodland Activity Group)

"It gives me the motivation to go out in the fresh air and meet with others"
(Participant, Walking Group Aberystwyth)

"I loved the chat and meal around the fire as well as the moment mindful listening practice. I have since enjoyed soup and mulled cider around my own campfire in my garden, with friends to celebrate the Winter solstice so it has inspired me to gather my friends' round and use my own garden more. I've also been wild swimming in the sea with friends since and sat around a fire afterwards since so it's made me realise how much I enjoy this activity. It gives me a real boost and beats Winter blues"
(Participant, Family Woodland Sessions)

"It has taught me how to relax and re-focus my thoughts away from the turmoil around me, in the news and on social media. It has renewed my ability to see the essential good in people and nature"
(Participant, Woodland Activity Group, Ynys-hir)

Improvements

19 participants offered improvements that could be made to the activities. These are presented below for each type of session,

Type of session	Improvement suggested	Number of comments
Animal Assisted Therapy Session	More mindfulness activities More variety in the mindfulness	2
Woodland Sessions (adult)	More flexible on times to attend (weekends) More locations that are easier to access (Tywyn/Aber) Follow-on or continuation of sessions beyond 6 weeks Resource sheets and more help for skills-based activities (i.e. woodworking)	2 2 9 2
Woodland Session (Family)	Age-appropriate activities for babies-in-arms or target older children Sessions are too long and not set up for babies-in-arms (especially during the winter)	1 2
Walking Group	Vary the walking routes in Aberystwyth to maintain interest	1

Overall Rating

Overall, the participants who completed their evaluation forms rated the Trywydd Iach activities 4.67 stars out of 5



4.67 Average Rating

Part 2 – Trywydd Iach: Healthy Travel

Active travel is a key priority in the Welsh Transport Strategy that dovetails with Wales’ Well-Being for Future Generations Act. Encouraging healthy travel (or Active Travel) is an essential government strategy that can benefit both human and environmental health^{viii}. Central to this strategy is the need to encourage and support a shift towards emission-free walking and cycling as an alternative to car use. To achieve these goals a network of, “safe, direct, comfortable and attractive walking and cycling routes” are needed across Wales. Consultation undertaken during the 2019 pilot reinforced the need for safe walking and cycling routes within the Dyfi Valley that linked key villages and towns.

The Healthy Travel initiative was developed to actively encourage and support community members to contribute to the conversation about new routes and to support walking and cycling initiatives across the region.

Year One Outputs: Healthy Travel

Activity Undertaken	The target for year 1	Achieved
Penparcau community consultation	6 community consultations (225 people consulted per year)	6 community consultations (321 people consulted) (157 attended community consultation, 164 school pupils consulted)
Aberystwyth community consultations (x1)		
Tre’r Ddôl community consultation		
Machynlleth community consultations (x2)		
Camaes community consultation		
Secondary School Consultation		
Healthy Travel Project Board Established	Establish Board	Project Board established
New routes proposed and mapped	2	On-going (for year 2)
Training provided	10 sessions	Planned for year 2 delivery

Outcomes year one: Healthy Travel

7 Community consultation events took place between September and October 2021 to assess the needs regarding cycling and walking routes and potential barriers that might exist for cyclists and walkers. The events were arranged in Penparcau, Aberystwyth, Tre'r Ddôl, Machynlleth and Cemaes. A total of **157** attended the events. Comments from the community suggested that people valued face-to-face events^{ix}.

People were encouraged to share their comments verbally or by written consultation. A total of **47** written consultations were received. The data collected in the consultations was shared with Powys, Gwynedd and Ceredigion Councils^x.

During the events, information was also shared about Powys and Ceredigion's online Active Travel Mapping Consultation. Each Council must produce an Active Travel Network map which sets out its aspirations for new routes. **83** responded to the commonplace platform in Machynlleth and **89** in Aberystwyth. The total number of responses was much higher in these Towns than in the other Towns in Ceredigion and Powys as shown in the tables below.

Ceredigion

Aberystwyth	Lampeter	Cardigan
89	5	21

Powys

Town	Responses
Welshpool	21
Llanidloes	6
Machynlleth	83
Knighton	16
Ystradgynlais	2
Brecon	36
Builth Wells	1
Llandrindod Wells	5
Newtown	6

The higher number of responses from these areas to the online consultation may have been a result of Trywydd Iach's community engagements, as there was a higher response rate in both of the target areas. David Allday, Active travel Officer in Powys shared in a telephone conversation that the Council looks closely at towns with strong community involvement.

Recommendations from the Community Consultation events

There were several recommendations for route development received as part of the community consultation. These are presented below,

- Connect villages and towns along the A487 between Penparcau and Machynlleth with safe cycling and walking routes
- Footpath/ Cycle path between Dolfach –Llanbrynmair – Powys
- Extend cycle path between Penegoes and Glantwymyn.
- Need to improve walking routes from Llugwy along the Dyfi by Machynlleth and develop the former railway line into a multi-use path between Ffriddgate and Pantperthog -Gwynedd
- Improve routes between the town/ station/ school in Machynlleth
- Create a network of safe routes in Aberystwyth Town

A video was created by Trywydd Iach that illustrates the need for safer cycling and walking routes. This can be found here, <https://vimeo.com/664469130/4301a1ce5b> (this has been shared with Lee Waters, Deputy Climate Change Officer, Welsh Government)

Barriers

The community were also asked to highlight any barriers that they felt prevented them from using healthy transport more often. The key barriers were,

- Lack of connecting routes between villages and towns
- Cambers on cycle routes make it difficult for cyclists on tricycles
- Cycle paths should be maintained to the same standards as the roads. The hedges need to be trimmed and standing water and mud cleared from the surface
- Poor public transport
- Limited space for bikes on trains
- No provision for bikes on buses – a need for bicycle racks on buses
- There are a number of dangerous roads for cycling on – i.e. Derwen Las Village road dangerous bend, cycle path into Talybont ends up in a dangerous road before arriving into village.

Comments from Participants

Some of the comments from the consultation are presented below,

“Cycling puts my life at risk but it should be a pleasure and it is on certain routes. Cycling is the speed of life, for happy healthier lives”

“The route from Aberystwyth to Machynlleth is good where there are paths but they end up spitting you onto busy, dangerous sections!”

“I used to be able to cycle to Machynlleth from my home in Tre Ddôl. Now I’m slower I find it too scary on the uphill left bends, so now I am another car on the road making the situation worse for other cyclists”

“We need cycle provision on buses – rack on outside like in other countries and training for families”

“I live in Abercegir, east of Machynlleth. I would love to see a cycle path between Penegoes and Glantwymyn. This would enable me and my children to cycle to school and to the shops instead of driving every day.”

Secondary School Consultation

A sample of **164** pupils between 11 and 15 from a school in Machynlleth participated in the survey. The survey has identified that very few of the young people who were surveyed cycled to school. Increasing the number of pupils using Healthy Travel to get to school faces several structural and behavioural barriers. The main barriers are the distance some of the young people live from school making Healthy Travel more difficult. Moreover, free school buses provide a good alternative to many of the children who live in the rural villages. Most of the young people both live in Machynlleth and walk to school, but few showed an appetite for using active transport to get to school when asked. There was a small proportion of pupils interested in cycling to school, but distance and lack of cycle paths were cited as a reason for those young people not to attempt this.

However, the pupils expressed an interest in cycling and outdoor activities. The consultation identified that 25% of the young people would be interested in a bike club (see report – appendix A) The Project will explore the possibility of working closely with the school to encourage pupils to cycle to school

Healthy Travel Board

The Project successfully set up a Healthy Travel Board to guide and advise on engaging community involvement and developing new proposals for cycling and walking routes. A partnership between the three local authorities and Sustrans was successfully established^{xi}.

Working in partnership

Working in partnership is seen as a key strength of developing the project and achieving its overall aims. The project has established important partnerships with the following,

Local Authorities	Officers from Gwynedd, Ceredigion and Powys County Councils
Charities	Sustrans
Town and Community councillors	Alun Williams – Aberystwyth Town Council Ellen ap Gwyn -Councillor and Leader of Ceredigion County Council Michael Williams, Machynlleth Town Councillor
Cycling groups	Wheel Together Lorraine Langford -Breeze and Social Club Ystwyth Cycling club
Community Organisations	Steffan Rees – Cered Cletwr Community Hub – Tre'r Ddôl Penparcau Community Hub Tŷ Cemaes – Rural Hub Beicio Dyfi
Local Businesses	Summit Cycles – Toby Brag
Local Primary schools	Plascrug and Talybont pupils created Active Travel Posters

The project will continue to nurture existing partnerships and establish new partnerships in year 2. Members from the Trunk Road agents are now also connected to the partnership.

New proposals for cycling and or walking routes

A strong theme emergent from the community events was the need for safe cycling and walking routes from Penparcau to Machynlleth. Following the advice from the Project Board, the project will therefore explore the possibility of acquiring funding to commission a feasibility study for the whole route in year 2 of the project.

Training sessions

The consultation allowed local voices and specific needs to be highlighted. Following the feedback received from the local people at the events, the project will develop the following training programmes during 2022.

- Improve women's confidence to cycle safely on the roads
- Develop bike maintenance skills
- Provide cycling training for families
- Map reading skills
- Leadership skills

It is important to develop training programmes to meet and respond to the specific needs of the local communities to ensure maximum uptake and utility.

Areas of improvement

There were several areas of improvement and development highlighted by the project board at the end of year one of the project. These are as follows,

- Extend the members of the Project Board. A member from the Welsh Government Trunk Road Agent has been invited but hasn't responded.
- Liaise with community and public travel agencies
- Deliver training programmes
- Explore funding opportunities to commission feasibility studies for walking and cycling routes

Conclusions – Year One Trywydd Iach Project

The Trywydd Iach – Outdoor Health: Social Prescribing project has provided a continuation of a joined-up system for referring participants to a range of multi-levelled outdoor activities. These activities have shown benefits to the physical health and the mental wellbeing of many participants. The project so far has illustrated how this method can engage with people with health conditions and match specific outdoor activities to people's needs and abilities. The project is beginning to address some of the gaps identified in wider research around social prescribing, i.e. strengthening and streamlining the connection between the health sector and outdoor providers; having a single point of entry for multiple activities; taking pressure off the health sector to match participants with activities and; providing evidence of the effectiveness of these types of interventions.

The points of note for this evaluation are as follows, although 50% of participants had come through referrals and 50% self-referred (although many had health issues) only 12 came from the GP surgeries/NHS referral. Analysis shows that some surgeries were more proactive than others in referring participants. The lack of numbers directly from GP surgeries was connected to the Covid-19 pandemic that has increased GP workloads and prioritised vaccinations and boosters giving GPs and Practice managers less time to engage with the project. Referrals were more forthcoming from other health and support organisations.

Analysis of the demographics of the participants showed that 78% of the participants were female (the walking groups attracted almost exclusively female participants) and only 22% were from areas 1-5 WIMD (most deprived areas). The project will try to address this in year two.

It was noted that some participants felt that the 6-week sessions although successful, were not long enough to create a continued method to support people with long-term health needs, both mental, social and physical. As a response to this, the project set up monthly sessions for the woodland and animal-assisted therapy sessions as well as supported a participant to establish peer-support sessions. The model of a 6-week programme, followed

by a monthly open-access drop-in session is potentially a working model that will both kick-start someone's engagement and offer continued support longer-term – however the model of supporting participants to set up their groups is also worth investigating as a more sustainable longer-term option. The feasibility of the existing model and cost-effectiveness of a new model will likely be a focus for year two (focusing on how to support the maximum number of people most effectively within the confines of time and funding available)

The Trywydd Iach – Outdoor Health: Healthy Travel project has been successful in engaging the community and collating views about healthy and low carbon travel options. Their views have been shared with the Local Authorities and will hopefully lead to improved outcomes for the communities. Trywydd Iach will hopefully secure funding for commissioning a feasibility study for new walking and cycling routes. The face to face consultations was valued by the local community and the online consultation set up by the Local Authority has enabled an easier way for some people to consult on Active Travel Mapping. The consultations highlighted the need that people living in rural areas to have safe short walk and cycle routes that connect them to key towns or villages that are, at present, lacking connecting pavements or cycle routes that make them safe to do so. The consultation established several key areas where this may be a priority (i.e connectivity even within Machynlith – between the station the town, Derwen Las Village road dangerous bend, cycle path into Talybont ends up in a dangerous road before arriving into the village). Year two will focus on developing more connections with the community and with key organisations that can help make the change.

Recommendations

Trywydd Iach: Social prescribing

- Connect with GP surgeries to establish any barriers/blocks to referrals
- Ensure activities provided can attract men and women
- Consider how to attract more people to the surgery walks
- Consider the timings of the sessions to be able to attract a wider range of people (at present all are within working hours Mon-Fri)
- Review the model of delivery so it works best for participants longer-term within the confines of the funding
- Consider reviewing the model of the cluster where the project officer is managing the cluster and also delivering sessions.

Trywydd Iach: Healthy Transport

- Seek views from a wide range of individuals and groups. People who are not supporters of cycling and walking will also offer useful insights.
- Ensure that there is fair geographical representation in our future events. Ensure that we engage all the communities in the Biosphere e.g. Tywyn.
- Liaise with National/ Local transport services to develop provision for bikes on buses
- Work with partners to develop a range of targeted training programmes

ⁱ Brag, Wood & Barton, 2013 Health and the natural environment: A review of evidence, policy, practice and opportunities for the future, Exeter University, 2018 and Cervinka, Renate, Holtge et al, 2014. Green public Health – Benefits of Woodlands on Human Health and Well-being. Austrian Research Centre for Forests, Pretty J, Peacock J, Sellens, M and Griffin, M. 2005. The Mental and Physical Health Outcomes of Green Exercise' International Journal of Environmental Health , 2005 15 (5) 319-337. Park, B et al. 2010. The Physiological effects of Shinrin-yoku: evidence from field experiments in 24 forests across Japan. In Environmental Health Prev Med 2010 15 (1) 18-26 to name a few

ⁱⁱ Natural Resources Wales survey 2014, 2018.

ⁱⁱⁱ Health in Wales, NHS. <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/healthtopics/conditions/mentalhealth>

^{iv} [Torjesen, I \(2016\) Social prescribing could help alleviate pressure on GP's, BMJ 352: 143](#)

^v [The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale \(WEMWBS\)](#)

^{vi} [Validity of the international physical activity questionnaire short form \(IPAQ-SF\): A systematic review \(nih.gov\)](#)

^{vii} [EQ-5D \(euroqol.org\)](#)

^{viii} <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-01/active-travel-act-guidance.pdf>

^{ix} Evidence gathered in the form of, Details of participants – *NAS 11. Monitoring, Evaluation Monitoring of Healthy Travel* NAS Photos of events NAS 10. Photos 19Sep21events
Video of events

^x Evidence can be accessed through, *Details of written consultations NAS 11. Monitoring, Evaluation Monitoring of Healthy Travel, Powys residents, Ceredigion residents, Gwynedd residents.*

^{xi} Evidence for this: *NAS 6 Project Board Documents Trywydd Iach –Healthy Travel Board Meeting minutes NAS 14 Active. Healthy Travel - Healthy Travel Project Board Presentation 2021NOV05*

Report written and prepared by Dr N Simons, Coed Lleol, February 2022

Appendix A

Trywydd Iach

Cysylltu pobl â'r awyr agored

Outdoor Health

Connecting people with the outdoors

Trywydd Iach – Outdoor Health School Survey Machynlleth, July 2021

Report by Dr N. Simons, Arfon Hughes & Sian Davies

July 2021



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Method	3
Sample group	4
Results – Active Travel	5
Conclusions – Active Travel	7
Results – Outdoor Activities	8
Key Findings.....	8
What type of Activities Interest Young People?.....	9
Preferred activities per year group	10
Preferred Activities by Gender.....	11
What other Activities are young people interested in?	12
What creative ideas have young people got for new places for young people?	13
What barriers do young people face that might stop them from taking part?	14
What do young people consider to be the benefit of increased activities?.....	14
What type of health issues do young people have?	15
Conclusions – Outdoor Activities	15

Introduction

Trywydd Iach – Outdoor Health Project is a partnership project led by Eco Dyfi and Coed Lleol with funding from the Big Lottery Fund. The project aims to streamline social prescribing to outdoor health and explore ways to improve Active Travel^{xi} in the Dyfi Valley area.

The Dyfi Valley area holds an abundance of green spaces but not all are accessible to the wider community or used for organised activities that bring people together for learning, physical health and wellbeing. The Trywydd Iach project works with GP surgeries, health professionals and outdoor health activity specialists to identify accessible areas and support people living in the Dyfi Valley to access and take part in a variety of outdoor health activities. The activities include walking groups, animal-assisted therapy, woodland activity groups, gardening groups and outdoor Qi Gong.

Trywydd Iach is keen to work with people of all ages in the Dyfi Valley area to provide outdoor activities that reflect community needs. Pre-teens and Teenagers are a key target group that are often harder to engage. Consultation with this group is vital to understand their needs, target suitable activities and address any barriers that this age group might face. The report summarises a consultation survey distributed to a sample of 164 eleven- to fifteen-year-olds from a school in Machynlleth (Welsh-medium and English medium)

Method

A paper survey, available in English or Welsh, was distributed to one class from each year group in Ysgol Bro Hyddgen. 164 young people completed the survey. 35% completed the survey in Welsh and 65% in English. Data was transferred and analysed using Excel.

The aim of the survey was:

Active Travel

- To establish current levels of active travel to and from school
- To explore any barriers young people face around transport/active travel.

Outdoor health Activities

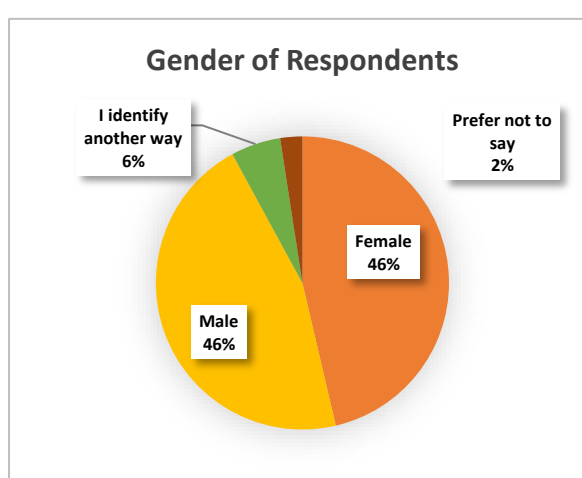
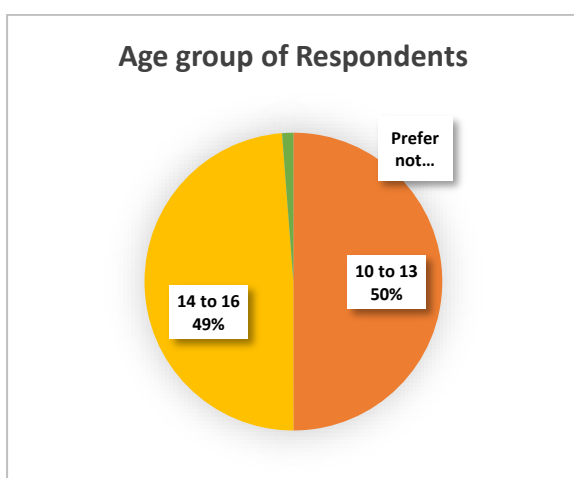
- To examine which outdoor activities interest young people (11-15 years)
- To explore whether young people would like to be more involved in outdoor activities
- To establish whether the young people feel that there is enough to do in Machynlleth and surrounding areas
- To explore any barriers young people might face in joining outdoor activities
- To examine what benefits young people might see in taking part in outdoor health activities

Sample group

Year Group & Age

The sample group had an even spread by year groups and genders. The number collected represents a good sample from the whole school population of 470 (confidence level 95%, Margin of Error 6%). The table and charts below illustrate the sample group for the survey.

Year group	Number of responses per group
Year 7	28%
Year 8	20%
Year 9	27%
Year 10	25%

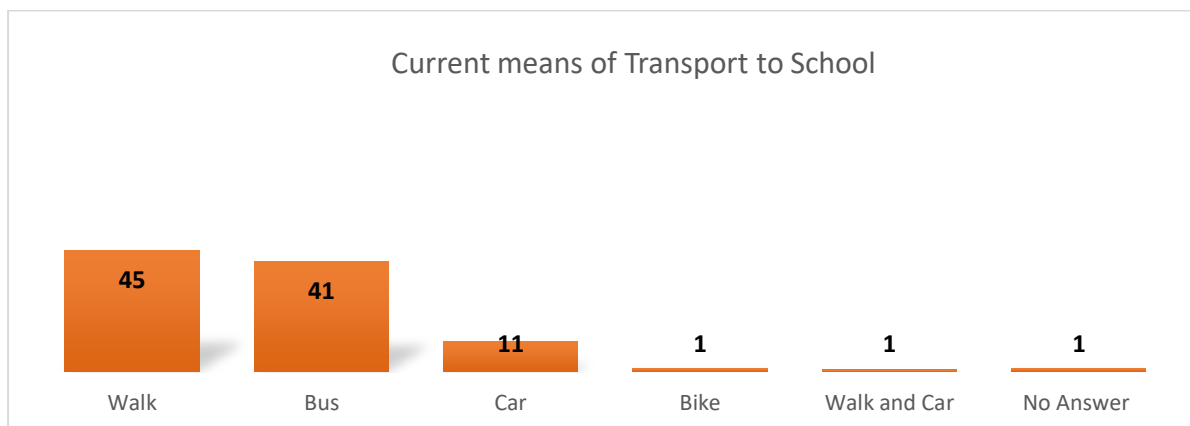


The young people who responded to the survey came from both urban and rural areas. Just under half (48%) live in Machynlleth. 66% live in Machynlleth or the surrounding area (5 miles or under). 34% of the young people who responded to the survey live over 5 miles from the school, with some living as far as 12 miles. The map below shows the distribution of the young people,

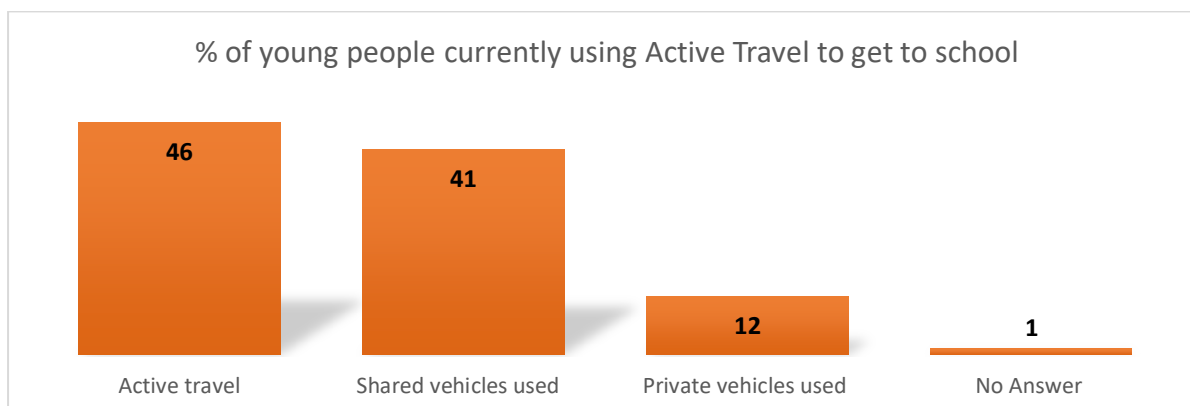


Results – Active Travel

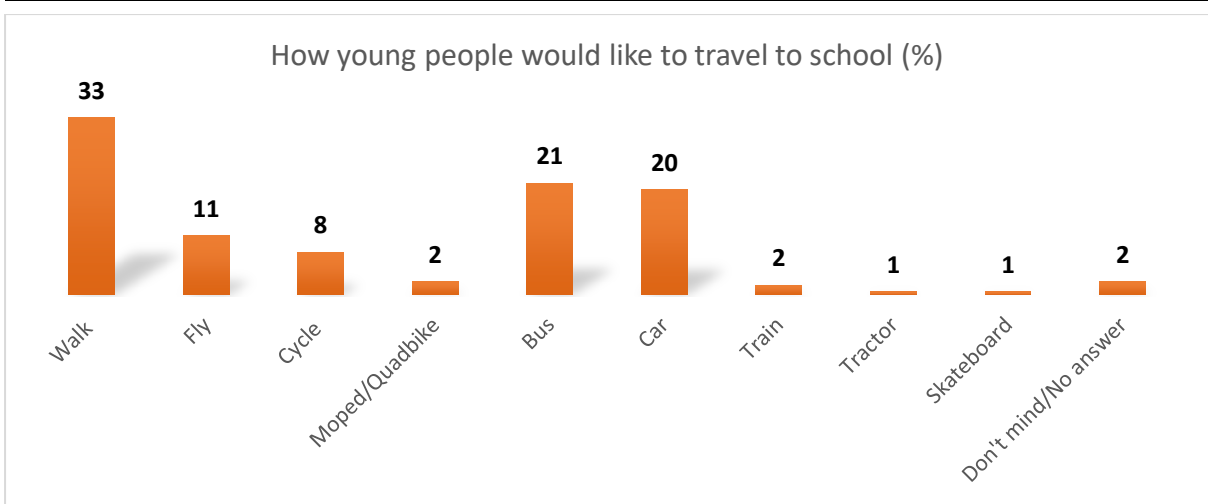
The young people were asked how they currently travel to and from school. Most of the young people, because they live close to the school, walk to school (45%). A large percentage catch the bus to school (41%). Very few of the young people who were surveyed cycled to school (1%). The chart below illustrates the means with which the young people currently travel to school,



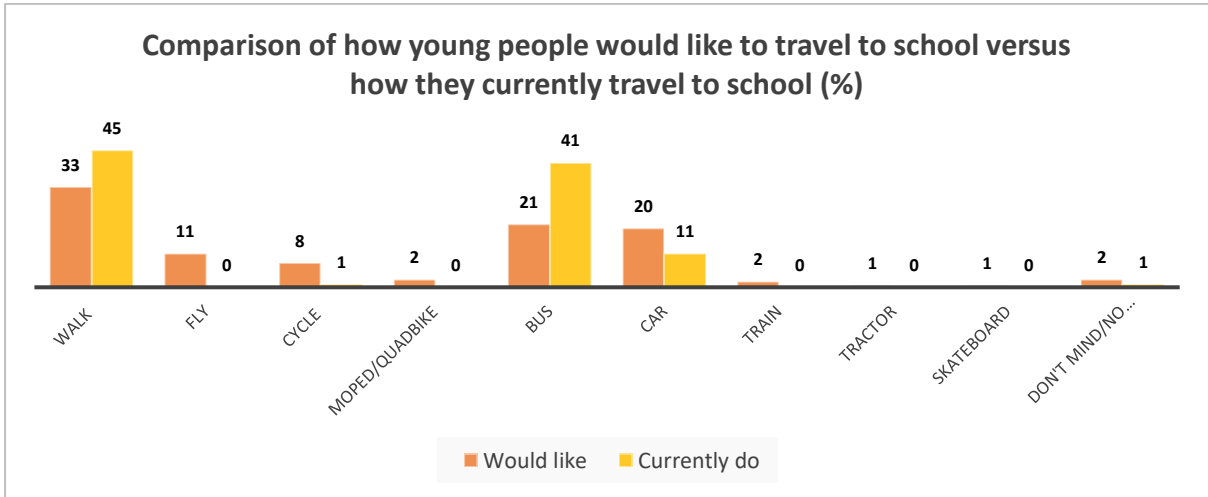
Synthesis of the data shows that currently, 46% of the pupils used active travel to get to school.



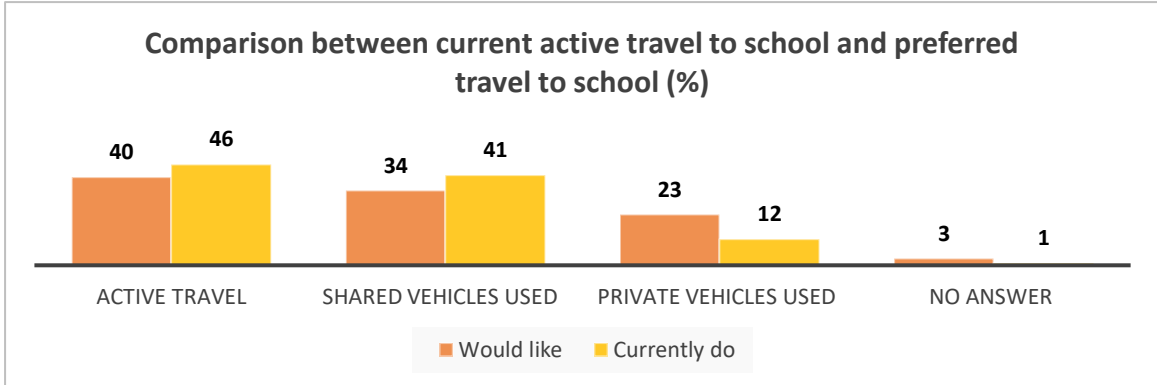
The chart below shows how the young people who responded to the survey would like to travel to school if they had the choice.



Comparing this data with how the young people currently travel to school (below) indicates that the young people do not have a huge appetite for active travel to school with decreases seen in 'walking' and increases in 'by car', however, those requesting cycling saw a small increase of 7% (note: some students listed 'joke' answers such as 'by jet').



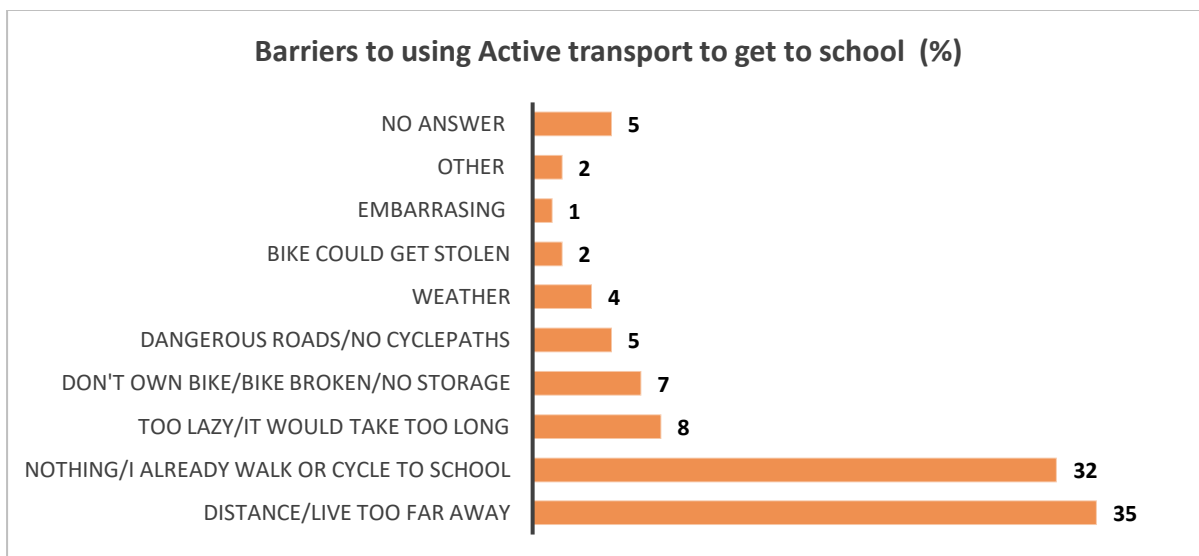
Comparative data for active travel (chart below) shows that the young people surveyed have less desire for active travel than they currently action,



Further analysis of the data shows that of the 40% of young people who would like to do active travel to school, 32% *already* used an Active travel method to get to school. This means that only 8% of the

young people who don't currently use Active travel preferred an Active travel method when asked (14 pupils). However, out of these 14 young people, 13 felt that they lived too far away to use an active travel method to get to school and 1 listed the weather as a barrier.

The young people were asked what barriers they faced that might prevent them from walking or cycling to school. Distance was cited as the greatest barrier, as many of the young people live in rural villages that are over 5 miles in distance from school (see map above). A few of the young people cited other reasons, such as being too lazy or that the journey would take too long or not owning a bike or fear of getting their bike stolen. Weather and dangerous roads were also mentioned in lesser numbers. The chart below presents the barriers faced by the young people,



Conclusions – Active Travel

In conclusion, increasing the number of Active Travellers to school faces several structural and behavioural barriers. The main barriers being the distance some of the young people live from school making Active Travel more difficult. Moreover, free school buses provide a good alternative to many of the children who live in the rural villages. Most of the young people both live in Machynlleth and walked to school, but few showed an appetite for using active transport to get to school when asked. There was a small proportion of pupils interested in cycling to school, but distance and lack of cycle paths were cited as a reason for those young people not to attempt this.

Results – Outdoor Activities

Key Findings

65% of the young people surveyed would like there to be more activities and things to do for young people in Machynlleth (4% were not sure, 13% said 'no' and 18% did not answer). The young people who would like more activities were asked an open-ended question about why activities or having more things to do was important to them. The responses were themed into the following,

- Improve physical health (32%)
- To give more to do in local areas/at weekends/for our age (31%)
- To have fun/make us happy (29%)
- To provide more social contact/opportunities (23%)
- To curb boredom (23%)
- To be outdoors more & not on technology (11%)
- Learn new things (10%)
- Improve mental wellbeing (10%)

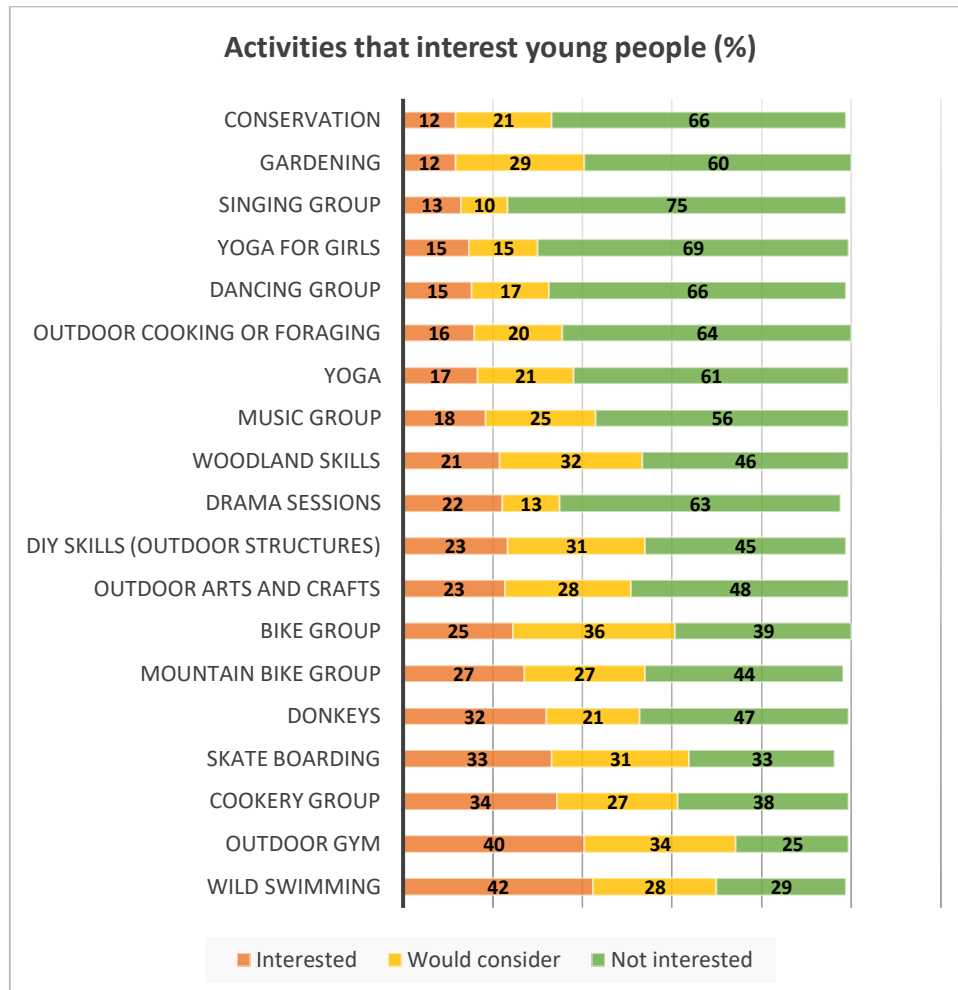
Over half of the young people were not sure or didn't think that there were not enough places for themselves or other young people to go when they were not in school (23% = No, 32% = not sure 41% = yes).

90% of the young people would like there to be more spaces for young people to use in Machynlleth (73% were positive about this, 17% were not sure) Only 4% did not want more spaces for young people (6% N/A)

22% of the young people gave contact details to get involved in future activities

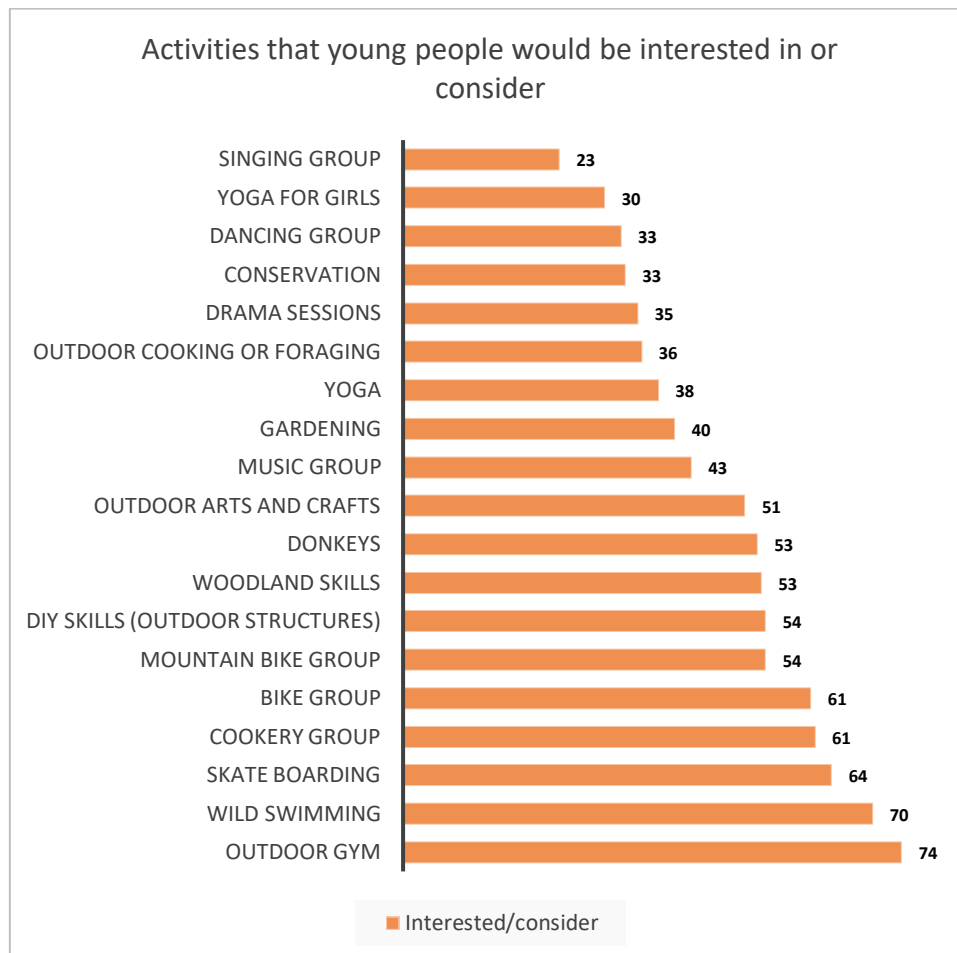
What type of Activities Interest Young People?

The young people were asked which activities (from a list) that they would be interested in doing, would consider doing and would not like to do. Overall, the young people expressed the most interest in wild swimming, outdoor gym, cookery groups, skateboarding and spending time with donkeys/animals. The results are presented in the chart below,



The above chart shows that the young people were the least interested in conservation activities, gardening, singing or dancing groups, foraging and yoga for girls.

The below chart shows the activities that the young people would be 'interested in' or 'would consider'. Slight changes in levels of interest are shown, with Outdoor gym, wild swimming, skateboarding and cookery group and then bike group the top five respectively. Singing, Yoga for girls and dancing and conservation groups were the least popular choices.



Preferred activities per year group

The top five activities that each year group selected are presented in the tables below,

Year 7: Interested	Year 7: Interested/would consider
Outdoor Gym (54%)	Skate boarding (87%)
Skate Boarding (52%)	Outdoor gym (80%)
Wild swimming (50%)	Cookery Group (78%)
Cookery Group (50%)	Bike Group (71%)
Mountain bike group (41%)	Wild swimming (71%)

Year 8: Interested	Year 8: Interested/would consider
Mountain bike group (39%)	Outdoor Gym (73%)
Cookery Group (39%)	Cookery Group (73%)
Outdoor Gym (36%)	Bike Group (67%)

Wild Swimming (33%)	Woodland Skills (64%)
Woodland Skills (33%)	Wild Swimming (64%)
Bike Group (33%)	x

Year 9: Interested	Year 9: Interested/would consider
Wild Swimming (41%)	Wild Swimming (75%)
Outdoor Gym (34%)	Outdoor Gym (75%)
Donkeys (30%)	Woodland Skills (59%)
Skateboarding (23%)	Skateboarding (57%)
Cookery Group (18%)	Bike Group (52%)
	DIY Skills (outdoor structures) (52%)

Year 10: Interested	Year 10: Interested/would consider
Donkeys (45%)	Outdoor Gym (68%)
Wild Swimming (43%)	Wild Swimming (68%)
Outdoor Gym (35%)	Donkeys (60%)
DIY Skills (outdoor structures) (30%)	DIY Skills (outdoor structures) (55%)
Cookery Group (30%)	Cookery Group (53%)
	Bike/Mountain Bike (53% respectively)

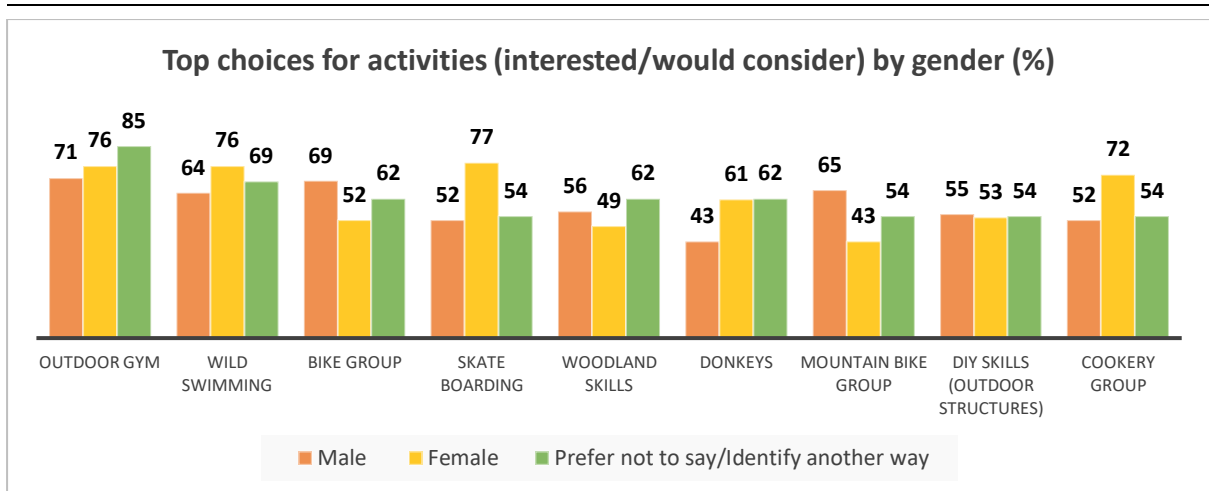
From the tables above the year 7 students were the keenest on taking part in activities (this group showed higher percentages of 'interested' and 'interested/would consider').

Preferred Activities by Gender

When analysed by gender there were slight differences in preference. A greater number of female students showed an interest in the top activities than the male students ((this group showed higher percentages of 'interested' and 'interested/would consider). Over 10% more girls showed an interest in wild swimming and nearly twice as many girls showed an interest in a cookery group than boys.

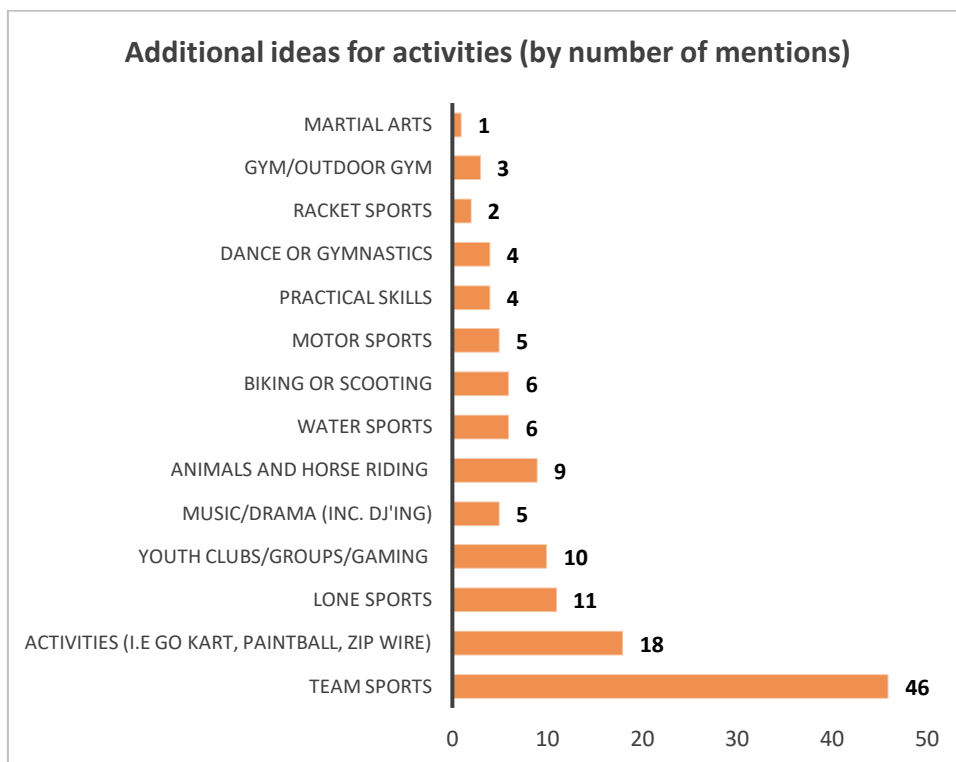
BOYS: Interested (top 5) n=75	GIRLS: Interested (top 5) n=75	PREFER NOT TO SAY/IDENTIFY ANOTHER WAY: Interested (top 5) n=13
Outdoor Gym (39%)	Wild Swimming (49%)	Woodland Skills (46%)
Wild Swimming (39%)	Cookery Group (45%)	Bike Group (38%)
Mountain Bike Group (33%)	Outdoor Gym (43%)	Outdoor Gym (38%)
Bike Group (25%)	Skate boarding (43%)	Donkeys (38%)
Cookery Group (24%)	Donkeys (39%)	Cookery (31%)
Woodland Skills (24%)		Arts and Crafts (31%)
Donkeys (24%)		Skateboarding (31%)
Skateboarding (24%)		

The top nine choices with combined 'interested' and 'would consider' are presented below by gender, outdoor gym, wild swimming, and bike groups are the top three choices that appeal to all genders.



What other Activities are young people interested in?

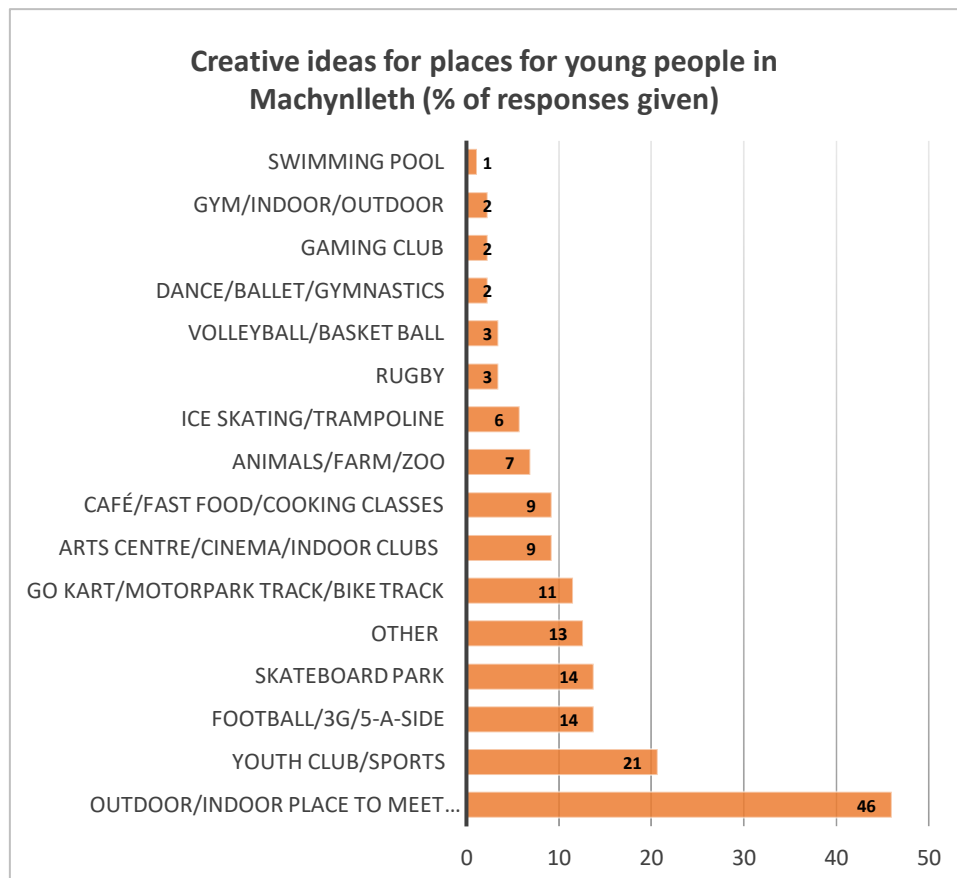
The young people were asked whether there were any activities that they were interested in that were not listed in the survey. 97 of the young people responded to this question with several listing more than one activity. All choices were themed and the total number of mentions for each is presented in the chart below,



Most of the young people suggested some type of team-based sport such as football, rugby, volleyball, or hockey – these may already be available in school, so this might indicate the need for these activities to happen independently of school. Others were more ambitious and wanted to take part in paid activities such as go-carting, paintball or zip wires. 10 young people suggested a youth club for social activities such as gaming or crafts or general sports.

What creative ideas have young people got for new places for young people?

90% of the young people felt that more spaces for young people in Machynlleth were desirable (73% definite/17% not sure), The young people were then asked to be creative in their ideas for spaces for young people. 87 of the young people presented suggestions. Below are the ideas that they came up with (% of responses given),



Most of the young people simply wanted a safe independent space (either indoors or outdoors with a shelter) where young people could hang out and have fun. It was unclear from some of the responses whether this was a place only for young people, rather than being 'led' or 'organised' by adults. One young person commented,

"Just somewhere sheltered with benches and tables where there is no adult supervision"

And another,

"Ardal i gwrdd / siarad /cael partis - an area to meet, talk and have parties"

And another,

"Rhywle lle allwn ymlacio, cael hwyl a bod o gwmpas mond pobl oedran ni. Somewhere where we can relax, have fun with people the same age as us".

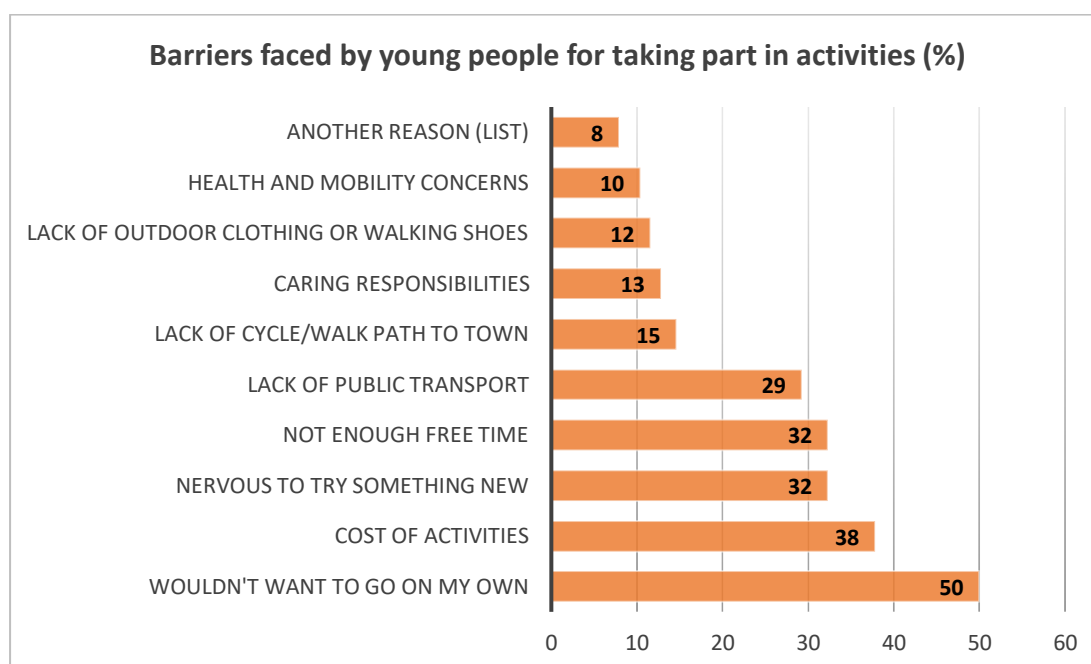
Others requested more places for sports or a youth club,

“Lle i wneud llawer o chwaraeon yn yr un lle. - A place to do a variety of sports in the same place”

Both indoor and outdoor football (including 5-a-side) was a popular choice as well as a skateboard park (tying into their interest in skateboarding above).

What barriers do young people face that might stop them from taking part?

Most of the young people didn't feel that they had any barriers that might stop them from taking part in the activities. However, for some young people, the social anxiety of going on their own/trying something new and the cost of activities were seen as the main barriers. The chart below lists all the barriers cited,



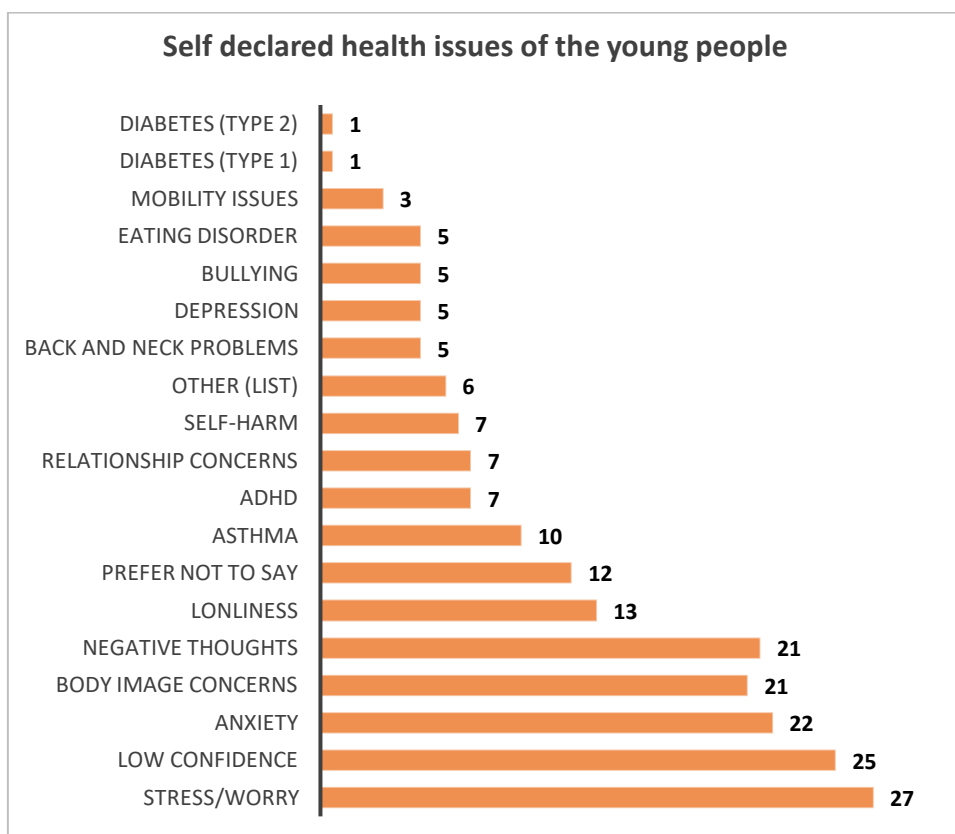
What do young people consider to be the benefit of increased activities?

The young people saw the main benefit of an increased number of activities in their area to be on their physical health, this reflects the dominance of sport-related interest from the young people. 70% of the young people felt that an increased number of activities would benefit or strongly benefit their physical health, 61% felt they would benefit or strongly benefit their mental wellbeing and 63% felt that they would benefit their overall health. This is illustrated in the chart below,



What type of health issues do young people have?

58% of the young people listed at least one mental or physical health issue. Mental health issues affected young people more than physical health issues, stress, low confidence, anxiety, body image concerns and negative thoughts impacted around 20%-30% of the young people (note: some of the young people listed more than one option). These are shown in the chart below,



Conclusions – Outdoor Activities

The survey showed that 65% of the young people felt that there was a need for more activities in the local area and 90% thought that there was a need for more spaces for young people to go in the area. Interest in the listed outdoor activities varied, although there was a high desire across all year groups and genders for an outdoor gym, wild swimming, a bike group, a skatepark/skateboarding group, and cookery lessons (popular especially in year 7 and year 8). The year 7 students and female students were the keenest on the suggested activities. When asked for other ideas, sports dominated the open-ended choice for most students (team games, lone sports such as sailing, canoeing, boxing) although there was a healthy interest in activities such as go-karting, trampolining and paintball. Although many of the young people expressed an interest in the activities, only 22% gave contact details through the survey indicating that additional measures, including targeted activities based on these results and trust-building, may be needed to encourage further take up from this age group.

The young people, above all, desired an independent covered space where young people could hang out and socialise – this could be indoors or outdoors (with a shelter). Sports facilities were also desired as places where young people could go, keep fit and socialise. Skateboarding and a skatepark also formed a key interest and desire for the young people.

The young people listed both structural barriers (cost/public transport/lack of suitable clothing/lack of cycle or walking route) as well as psychological barriers (not wanting to go alone, fear of the unknown) to taking part in new activities and these need to be addressed in any activity selected.

The young people saw the benefit in the activities principally on their physical health (70%), although a high percentage of the young people also suggested that increased activities could impact positively on mental wellbeing (61%) and overall health (63%). This is significant, as 58% of the young people listed at least one physical or mental health issue, with mental health issues dominating. One of the main barriers listed by the young people was connected to social anxiety (not wanted to go alone or nervous to try something new). This indicates that further support to engage may be needed to approach specific social anxiety barriers that young people face.

This survey has provided a good basis for understanding young peoples active travel and activity needs.