

A Positive Start!

Tir Coed's new project WICKED - Branching Out / Egin has been given an extra publicity boost through a very encouraging press release from Forestry Commission Wales. Roz Owen, Woodlands for People Policy Advisor, said,



"We are delighted to support the Branching Out / Egin project which will connect disadvantaged young people to woodland near them, whilst helping them to gain new skills and consider a career in the woodlands or a timber-related industry. There is a wealth of research that shows access to, and activity in, green spaces and woodland has a beneficial effect on people's physical and mental health and wellbeing and this project will contribute towards many of the Welsh Assembly Government's objectives for improving health, wellbeing and skills."

Gwyneth Davies, Tir Coed's Development Officer, said, *"With a growing recognition of the need for more vocational training programmes, there has never been a better time to introduce young people to the benefits of learning in and about the natural environment. Our main aim through the Branching Out / Egin Project is to enable young people to develop the confidence and skills to follow pathways to employment and become active members of their community."*

Special Interest:

- Volunteers receive 50 & 100 hour Millennium Volunteer Awards
- WCVA Officers from Cardiff visit Pen yr Allt Engagement Gateway project
- Benches installed at Wildlife Trust sites

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Following on from the taster sessions, full programmes at both Teifi Marshes and Castle woods have begun. After welcoming 12 young people to the taster sessions, numbers have dropped more recently; partly due to some of the young volunteers starting on college courses. With this in mind, the Project Manager is currently undertaking a fresh recruitment drive. 8 out of the 12 current volunteers have signed up as Millennium Volunteers (MV), which means that their voluntary hours can be recognised through MV 50, 100 and 200 hour Awards.



Castle Wood Programme - July 2010 to April 2011



Lead by Jamie Miller, and supported by Jo Steadman, this programme currently has 6 young people attending. The group, which generally has good attendance and is very focused, have used their 10 sessions so far to work on seating and a picnic table.

The first full session was spent walking around the Castle Woods Reserve, looking at possible sites for the seating, discussing suitable designs and liaising with visitors about where they would like to see seating installed. It was decided that the following types of seating will be created and installed:

- Next to the Castle: A 'throne' type chair – there is an application with Cadw for permission to site the throne next to the Castle.
- Within the Beech woodland leading up to the castle: 3 benches & table installing in a circle.
- At the footpath junction: a bench

The group have been working hard and have already installed their first 2 benches. The oak planking for the seating and table has been sourced from the Wildlife Trust Reserve at Pengelli. Aled Davies of the CAN Team has visited the project on 2 occasions to see how the group are progressing. Aled commented that "Tir Coed is one of the best (CAN) projects." Tir Coed is grateful for Aled's support. The group have also had a visit from Bill Krowel of Trinity College Outdoor Education Department to check out the work being done and to see if Branching Out would make a good case study for his students; Bill was impressed with what he saw and Tir Coed look forward to building a relationship with the department.

Heather Davies, of Trac Employment Support, also visited the project to discuss the possibility of referring young people who are part of the Community Task Force (for 18 to 24 year olds). A possible shared placement between Tir Coed and the National Trust is being considered.

A design has finally been agreed upon for the bird hide, preparation of materials will be the next job on the cards.



Pupils from Ysgol Rhys Prichard trying out a bench

Teifi Marshes Programme - July 2010 to February 2011

Participants at the Teifi Marshes project had been dropping, but with 2 new volunteers on board, taking us up to 6, and another 2 due to start soon, this project appears to be bouncing back. Attendance at the Teifi Marshes project has been mainly sporadic. However; the project is reaching many young people who are most in need of regular, rewarding activity.

Jamie Miller is also leading this programme, with support from Martin Aughton & Nick Barnes (alternate weeks), the group have had 9 sessions bench making and have visited Pengelli Wildlife Trust Reserve twice to inspect and load oak for the bench construction at both Reserves.

One of the benches has been installed, with a view overlooking the prestigious Wildlife Trust



'Glasshouse' visitor Centre, the bench is in full view at this popular Reserve. The Reserve Manager, Nathan Walton, is mighty impressed with the quality of the work and the appearance of the bench.

A monitoring visit has been made to the Teifi Marshes project, David Heald, WCVA Millennium Volunteers Programme coordinator, produced a positive report.

Moving on ... Planning permission for the Visitor Information Shelter at Teifi Marshes has been approved by Pembrokeshire County Council. During November, the group will be starting work on preparing materials for this exciting construction project, which will take pride of place in the car park for the site, right next to the Reserve entrance.

Funded by the European Social Fund (the Engagement Gateway programme, is managed by the WCVA) with match funding from Forestry Commission Wales, the Tudor Trust and the Millennium Volunteers programme.

Pen yr Allt – August 2010 – February 2011

Of the 8 young people who took part in the taster sessions, one has dropped out of the course, while 3 have progressed successfully on to college courses in Carpentry, Light Vehicle Maintenance and Farriery.

The full woodland course began in September. The 4 original members of the group have since been joined by 3 new referrals, one through Careers Wales and the other 2 through self-referral.

Most of the training carried out to date has concentrated on Sustainable Woodland Management with the trainees learning:

- how to assess which trees need to be extracted;
- how to fell a small tree using an axe and hand saw;
- coppicing techniques; and

how to grade and appropriately stack felled timber.



Tir Coed aims to deliver 4 Agored Cymru (OCN) units with the group over the coming months; work towards achieving these units has already begun.

The group was recently visited by a WCVA Engagement Gateway Officer from Cardiff and two Officers from the Ceredigion Association of Voluntary Organisations; described as a *“Wonderful visit”* by CAVO Volunteering Development officer the feedback was very positive:

“This is such a good project and the participants really enjoy it” observed WCVA Engagement Gateway officer.

The young people gave the visitors lots of positive comments too:

“Really like the way Ben teaches us, he helps us to do stuff and then shows us a better way and explains why, teaches us and encourages us” Project participant

“Enjoy working with everyone, getting to know new people.” Project participant

Coed Tamsin – October 2010 – March 2011



Having overcome initial difficulties in identifying sufficient numbers of referrals, this new group began taster sessions in mid-October with a full complement of 8 trainees (and one in reserve). Led by Bob Shaw and supported by Ffion Farnell the group meet weekly on a Wednesday at Coed Tamsin, near Aberystwyth.

The tasters have given the participants an opportunity to familiarise themselves with

a range of hand tools through a variety of green woodwork techniques and woodland management tasks. Most of the group have enjoyed the more focused work of splitting wood, using the side axe and shaping it with a draw knife and pole lathe. Some impressive examples of turned wood were produced even by the end of the 1st session!



Not bad for a first attempt at turning!

Some of the trainees have preferred the more physical woodland management tasks, such as bramble clearance and tree felling.

The group is very focused and most of the trainees appear to be committed to progressing on to the full course, which starts in mid-November.

Monitoring & Evaluation

The independent evaluation of the WICKED pilot project published in November 2009 by Wavehill Consultancy was the catalyst for developing a new monitoring & evaluation framework for WICKED – Branching Out/ Egin.

A new system has been created which allows the project mentor to collect data from participants at the start, at 3 month intervals and at completion of each project. Every young person will be supported through the questionnaire on a 1:1 basis. Data will be collated to create a visual representation of individual progress throughout the programme to help the young people recognise personal changes and improvements. This will also show the impact that Branching Out/ Egin is having on each individual in terms of their social, emotional, skills and knowledge development.

The intention is to work through the system with the first few groups as a pilot, to discover any practical adaptations that may be necessary.

The initial assessment stage has now been completed by Tir Coed's Project Mentor for all current participants.

The monitoring & evaluation framework will be reported on more fully in the next newsletter when 3 month reviews have been completed.

Agored Cymru units are being offered throughout the **WICKED - Branching Out / Egin** initiative to all young people who wish to obtain accreditation for the skills they are developing.

Although projects are still relatively new it seems that the young people are quite keen to gain credits as evidence of the work they are completing.

So far the units being offered are:

Level 1:

- Construction of a Basic Wooden Shelter
- Sustainable Woodland Management 2 – Introduction to Woodland Management
- Sustainable Woodland Management 3 – Introduction to Wood Processing
- Pole Lathe Turning

Level 2:

- Coppice Products
- Construction of a Basic Wooden Shelter

Tir Coed has added the Pole Lathe Turning unit to the centre's Agored Cymru (OCN) framework. This unit is being offered for the first time this autumn with a newly designed workbook. Workbooks for other units have been updated and systems of tracking Learners progress have been improved. These changes will help to make the whole process much more efficient and less time consuming for tutors to administer.

The main focus is always practical work first. The recording of evidence is a process which reinforces the learning that has taken place as well as acknowledging individual understanding and competence in each aspect of the course.

Accreditation work has already begun at 2 project sites and is due to begin at the others shortly.



50 hour & 200 hour Millennium Volunteers Awards already achieved!

Congratulations go to Pete Bodsworth, seen here receiving his certificates from Benjamin Grey, Pen Yr Allt woodland owner & tutor of the Engagement Gateway Woodland Skills group.

Pete has not missed a session at Pen Yr Allt since the group started in August;



so he achieved the 50 hour Millennium Volunteer Award with Tir Coed back in September but having previously clocked up 144 hours volunteering with Plant Natur he has now managed to log enough extra hours to gain the full 200 hour award.

Congratulations also go to Zedi Laugharne, from the CAN Castle Woods project, who has received his 100 hour MV Award by adding to the hours he completed with Tir Coed in spring 2010 on the Long Wood **wICKED** Volunteer Mentor programme.

Ray and Mark Miller have both received 50 hour MV Awards. Since being introduced to green woodworking at the CAN Castle Woods project, these brothers have shown a keen interest in developing their skills and an aspiration to set up their own business in the future. At the end of September, both were accepted onto the 6 month Coppicewood College Woodland Skills course. Support is being given by Tir Coed to try to find sources of funding to enable Ray and Mark to complete the training; this is proving to be quite a tough task, but we're all keeping our fingers crossed and wish them the best of luck.

Cheque this out!

Our thanks go to the CAVS youth panel who paid a visit to the Castle Woods project and presented the group with a cheque for £386.35 towards specialist tools. "We'll put them to good use!"



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government



GWIRFODDOLWYR Y MILENIWM



MILLENNIUM VOLUNTEERS



Comisiwn Coedwigaeth Cymru
Forestry Commission Wales



Cyngr Cefn Gwlad Cymru
Countryside Council for Wales



Cymunedau a Natur
Communities and Nature



the Tudor Trust



Acorn Camping Exchange for the junior young carers

As the last activity of the WICKED pilot project, Tir Coed organised a 2-day camping event for the youngest groups of young carers across Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Powys. On August 10th and 11th, 2010, a celebratory exchange visit was arranged at Gellie Liahona campsite, south of Aberaeron. The young people were split into 2 groups to take part in the following activities:

- Bushcraft workshops – run by Dryad Bushcraft; Workshops included building shelters, tracking games, making friendship bracelets and learning to light a camp fire safely. At the end of the session all were busy collecting wood for the evening campfire.
- Tree planting and woodland workshops – under the leadership of Benjamin Grey and Jade Mellor; The young people planted trees at a site near Ffostrasol and discovered why it is so important for the environment.

Later on at Pen yr Allt Woods, the young carers took part in a woodland treasure hunt and tried their hands at green woodwork. Many enjoyed using the shave horse and took home their products with great pride.

Over the 2 days a lot of time was spent chatting to each other and to support staff, sharing experiences and making new friends. The camp site offered an abundance of open green space which allowed energy to be expended while playing in a safe environment. This led to a mostly peaceful night, although some were still chatting at 3.30am!!

Feedback:

88% of young carers stated that they had made new friends.

Likes –

"Playing around the camp"

"Meeting new people"

"Staying in the tents"

How do you feel better?

"It made me feel proud"

"Calmer"

"I felt happy inside"

"Learning to do new things that I don't usually like to"

"Made more friends"



Dislikes -

"Sleeping in the tent" x 3

"Nothing" x 9

"Smoke in my eyes"



Feedback from Support Staff:

"The quiet young carers definitely came out of their shells over the 2 days of activities. New friendships were formed. New skills learnt towards boosting confidence."

"A number of boys were involved in squabbles/conflict and we discussed a better way of working together. Thoughtfulness of others was evident on several occasions." "They laughed a lot."

Although the project itself will not continue, the exchange visits have acted as a catalyst resulting in friendships being established and links being made between the young carers' organisations in the 3 counties which will continue over the long term.