



# TIR COED

## HEALTH & WELL BEING

Woodlands are ideal venues for facilitating healthy minds and bodies. The following projects and events have been organised to promote the health and wellbeing benefits local woods can bring to local communities.

### A) Mental health.

#### The Woodlands for Wellbeing Project

Woodlands for Wellbeing was a pilot project, which sought to encourage those groups that support people with mental health problems to use the countryside as a tool in helping their Service Users to regain their well-being. The project involved Mental Health Centres within Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire, and Powys that wanted to establish green woodwork sessions at their Centres in order to transfer the skills learnt to their Service Users.

##### The aims of the Project:

- To empower people at risk of social exclusion, giving them the skills and self-esteem to avoid falling into self-destructive patterns, such as offending or addiction.
- To embolden those who may feel disempowered, giving them new opportunities and new horizons.
- To enable all, whatever their background or disadvantage, to move towards their true potential and become an active member of their community.

Between March and September 2006, 39 Support Workers from 20 different Mental Health Organisations were given a series of 6 training sessions in the safe use of hand tools, greenwood techniques and willow work.

The Woodlands for Well-being project also provided work manuals and capital funds for the participating Mental Health Centres to purchase hand tools and equipment to enable Support Workers to pass on acquired skills to client groups and so secure sustainable transfer of skills. All participating centres were linked with local Forestry Commission and community or privately owned woodlands, which provide a setting for woodland activities with Service Users.

**Support Workers working on shave horses that they have made themselves.**



## Some feedback from the Woodlands for Wellbeing project

*“The project has been a real eye-opener, this is just what the Mental Health Sector in Wales needs. We will be able to take our members through similar courses of work from willow weaving to pole-lathe work. This will facilitate social activity and promote hand/eye skills and enable (the Centre) to work with green and sustainable materials- from small acorns come big trees!”*

Pete Collins, Carmarthen Mind Support Worker.

*“I have received positive feedback from Service Users in the local community who would not usually access our Centre. The course had been creative, relaxing and would be recommended.”*

Kim Geary, Director, Carmarthen Mind Resource Centre.

- Carmarthen Mind Resource Centre is leading green woodwork sessions for Service Users within the Centre.

*“Very well structured and enjoyable workshop for all involved. I feel I have learnt and achieved things I would never have dreamt I could do – from making a CD rack, to hurdles, to a shave horse. Very enjoyable, thank you. I will benefit as a Support Worker by being able to pass on skills learnt from the workshops (to Service Users) to help raise confidence and self-esteem. Engaging in an enjoyable and purposeful project, will be a great achievement for the young people involved.”*

Melanie Godfrey, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

*“The process of learning new skills, working with a new material and sharing skills has reinforced the purpose of my work within mental health, and made me realise how challenging it can be to try something new, and ultimately how rewarding this can be. I’m amazed at how much I’ve learned. Having never handled a saw before, I am now contemplating all kinds of projects with wood! Through skill sharing ... members will acquire new skills, enhance their learning opportunities, develop confidence, improve self-esteem, and have some FUN!”*

Sue Kelsall, Project Worker, Links Workshops.

- Links Workshops in Llanelli have undertaken a series of 10 woodcraft sessions at a local woodland with their Service Users and plan to run more during Spring 2007.

*“...Brilliant training, overcoming difficulties, moving forwards, a sense of achievement and a finished product. This is what I would like to transpose to the Club (members).”*

Rik Mowbray, Support Worker, Hafal Aberystwyth Social Club.

*“The training has been excellent. Mike and Sue (the trainers) have been an inspiration to me and to clients. Their enthusiasm and sense of fun are highly infectious!”*

Karen Harding, Support Worker, Gorwelion Resource Centre.

- Hafal Aberystwyth Social Club and Gorwelion Resource Centre are joining forces to develop ‘Woodland Rocks’, a six-week project involving Service Users from both Centres. Participants will undertake 6 afternoon sessions making musical instruments from natural and recycled materials, they will then compose, play and perform musical arrangements.

To read a press release on the Woodlands for Wellbeing Project, [click here](#)

## **B) Health Walks Leaflet.**

With the support of the local health centre and the assistance of the F.C.Wales social team, based at Nant yr Arian, a leaflet – “Health Walks in the Ystwyth Valley” – has been produced. Copies of the leaflet will be available to patients at the local surgeries as well as to the general public. To obtain a free copy of the leaflet please contact Tir Coed.

## **C) Woodland Health Open Day.**

A Sunday afternoon nap was not on the cards in the Ystwyth Valley on September the 28<sup>th</sup> when around 200 people gathered to celebrate Rural Health Week. Tir Coed organised the event in partnership with Forestry Commission Wales and the Small Woods Association’s Coed Lleol project. The special guest for the day was Catrin Davies, Commonwealth Games swimmer and Welsh ladies record holder.

In the newly opened community centre at Llanilar various local therapists, including specialist nurses from Bronlais hospital, displayed and demonstrated their work. Organisations and therapies represented included :

Parkinson’s Society; the Bowen technique; hypnotherapy & counselling; Ceredigion Community Health Council; osteoprosis; cardiac rehabilitation; art therapy; palliative care; aromatherapy; respiratory problems; British Heart Foundation and community nurses.


Exercise bike sessions were followed by pulse and blood pressure monitoring, foot massages were provided as well as a Yoga taster session.

Local food producers sold their produce and there was plenty to occupy the children as well with woodland based activities, face painting and a bouncy castle. Local Scouts groups very kindly helped with serving refreshments.

The fine weather and high turn out far exceeded everyone’s expectations. At Tynbedw woods a large group enjoyed the spectacular views across the valley on the guided woodland trail while others took part in a Tai Chi taster session in the woods. An orienteering challenge for beginners was very well received with over 30 teams of local families and organisations taking part.

The afternoon’s activities were brought to a sociable end with a “healthy” barbeque for all in the woodland.

[Woodland Health Open Day Leaflet](#)

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A similar event was organised during the summer of 2004, centred around the village of Llanafan. The village hall was packed with local therapists and health specialists demonstrating their work, as well as local food producers and children’s activities. Meditation and Chi Kung taster sessions were also on offer.



For the more agile there was a choice of two woodland walks or an orienteering competition to take part in, many took up the challenge despite the miserable weather! Forestry Commission Wales, who are equally keen to see communities make more recreational use of their local woodlands, provided support throughout the event.

Our special thanks to members of the local Youth Club for providing refreshments throughout the day.

#### **D) Recreation in the Ystwyth Valley.**

The National Assembly owns around 3,210 hectares of woodland in the Ystwyth. Within these woodlands there are wonderful opportunities for walkers, horse riders and cyclists using numerous footpaths and bridle ways, as well as miles of forestry hard tracks. Better way marking of the existing provision is an ongoing process.

In addition, Sustrans are developing a family friendly cycle route between Aberystwyth and Tregaron, part of which runs through the valley.

For more information on recreational and tourist facilities in the Ystwyth Valley and surrounding areas, click on Pentir Pumlumon's web site (local tourism based community regeneration group): <http://www.pumlumon.org.uk/>