

Come Outside! Programme Update

Summer is Here! And since our last Programme Update, Come Outside has supported even more network members to get people outdoors, enjoying their natural environment. And the outdoor activity groups have certainly been making the most of the sunny weather we've been having.

The Come Outside Programme aims to remove barriers and support people from Community First areas to use the natural environment to increase physical activity, and improve skills, confidence, and overall well-being.

Our work now extends to over 30 groups, enabling over 400 people to access the outdoors, try new activities, and have a great time.

Take for example these two enthusiastic ladies, who are part of the Waun Wen Thursday Club in Swansea. This group were interested in trying something a little different to indoor chair exercise. When cycling was suggested some concerns were voiced, but adapted bikes from Bikeability allowed everyone in the group to participate.

This has happened through the work of our network members, people like you, working together in partnership. And to enable these partnerships to keep developing, we'd like to keep you updated on what's been happening.

KEEPING in TOUCH

Welcome to our three new networks: **Torfaen** and **Bridgend** completed their networking workshops last month by developing some exciting outdoor activity ideas, and in **Rhyl** some really innovative projects are gaining momentum. More on that later.

We carried out a survey in April to find out how our network members prefer to communicate. The vote was overwhelmingly in favour of email updates (so here is the second one), as well as a switch from national to regional meetings.

So, with that in mind, we will be holding events in North and South Wales in Autumn and Spring.

In addition, we'll be holding a Summer Celebration on the 17th July at Parc Penallta in Caerphilly County Borough. This will be an opportunity for everyone to meet up, have fun, and develop new ideas for enjoying local greenspace. We will have some of our outdoor groups there trying activities such as fire lighting, solar observation, making clay sculptures, and pond dipping.

There's a free picnic lunch at 12:00, and the event runs until 4pm.

If you'd like to join us, sign up here <http://bit.ly/1rSVzDL>



The Great Outdoors

with the Hafal Group from Merthyr Tydfil

This programme is all about getting a dose of nature. There's so much evidence that proves we humans fare better both physically and mentally when we're in touch with our natural environment. Just take for example one of our groups in Merthyr Tydfil:

Now the sun may be warming your face, but this group's experiences should warm your heart. We linked Hafal, the mental health charity, with some outdoor organisations and many Hafal members were keen to try the taster activities we offered. They've been unstoppable since April, going on six taster sessions with another two upcoming soon.

Recovering from mental health difficulties, this group found that focussing on tiny little water creatures during their pond dipping activity was a session of therapy like no other.

And it wasn't just the group members loving it of course. Hafal worker Lee McCabe said, after their bushcraft session with Jeff Calligan of Mountain and River Activities, "I've really got the bug. I wish I could stay here."



What Hafal Members Said

I didn't realise this was on our doorstep...We found lizards and slow worms. I held a slow worm; it was a wonderful experience and it lifted me up. It made going on this walk so worthwhile whilst clearing litter from the area. The amount of litter was staggering, what's the matter with people?

The way back was hard for me...but I did it with the help of everyone, and I learned a lot. It makes me want to do more and I am looking forward to it. The outdoor activities are helping me both mentally and physically. I know it's going to take time, but if I keep on one day I might get there.

It was a lovely day. I haven't had a lot of them. I suffer from asthma and a lot of other ailments, mental and physical, and I find this type of activity helps.

The whole experience was brilliant. Thank you!

Besides pond dipping, the group have done bracken clearance and litter picking, geocaching (digital treasure hunt), a heritage walk, and next month they are trying out fishing. They also did a bushcraft session which involved learning about and tasting edible wild foods such as hawthorn leaves, wild garlic, and nettles. They made a fire with just flint and steel, which they used to cook trout and make tea with kelly kettles.



Roundhouses Project in Rhyl

Come Outside! is supporting a group called Men's Sheds to work with young people in their community, joining a partnership of the Wildlife Trust, Dens Project Rapa, and Denbighshire Countryside Service.

A pilot roundhouse is set to be built this summer, which will allow intergenerational relationships between the Men's Sheds members and the young people. Through volunteering they will gain confidence, knowledge, and

skills as they build the structure and mini wildlife reserves in the centre of their own communities.

This inspiring project will create roundhouses similar to this one in Felin Uchaf.



Adapted Bikes enable everyone to participate

In Swansea, adapted bikes have been a hit. The Waun Wen Thursday Club, who are all in their 70s, weren't quite comfortable balancing on two-wheeler bikes. By getting them in touch with Bikeability Wales, they were all able to have a go.

At the end of the first session, with their concerns lessened and spirits raised, the group were vocal about going again.

After a second session at Bikeability, they've built up the confidence to increase the challenge. Their next session will be cycling along the beautiful woodland cycle path to Swansea's seafront at Blackpill.



I've never cycled before. This is wonderful!

I was really nervous before coming today... I was just going to sit and watch. But after coming here and seeing the bikes I felt relieved.

This place is lovely and quiet. I'd love to come back and spend some more time here.

Men Behaving Dadly

This dad's support group in Barry have told us about their interest in learning about nature walks, foraging, and fun, educational activities that they can share with their families.

They talked about the differences in how children play in the outdoors now compared to when they were younger, and how they want to make sure their kids can grow up enjoying and

appreciating their local green spaces.

We're working on partnering them up with the right people so they can do just that.



Foraging for Food

Foraging walks have been very popular and why wouldn't they be? It's always nice to learn about edible plants that grow and flourish all around us. Here are a few examples of groups using the natural environment to satisfy their appetites:

at the Great Plymouth Woods



Community members of Ely in Cardiff have created a group aptly named Edible Trails Group after showing interest in developing some edible trails in their local area.

Recently, they took part in a Forage and Feast Day after we linked them up to Edible Landscaping. The group learned about edible plants that

grow wild in the nearby Great Plymouth Woods. After a walk collecting the provisions, they made and enjoyed wild garlic pesto, nettle fritters, and this delicious salad.



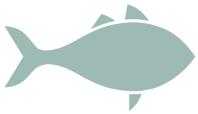
Next on their agenda is to map out edible wild food in their community and develop a map for everyone the area to use.

in Torfaen

Network members are keen to get trained up in foraging and show community members what wild foods they can eat.

The Plasmadoc Wild Rangers group tried out fishing with Chirk Fisheries.

Check out that casting action!



and in Wrexham

it's fish that's on the menu



That's not all...

There's loads more going on across all twelve of the areas we are now working in. New groups are forming at an exciting rate, getting outdoors to enjoy nature. Taster activities that our partners have provided range from rock wall climbing to gardening, hawk demonstrations to geocaching, and so much more.

If any of this interests you, get in touch at ComeOutside@NaturalResourcesWales.gov.uk



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