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Evaluation of Dyffryn Tywi - Hanes Tirwedd Ein Bro Project

Final Evaluation Report

Dyffryn Tywi Project

December 2021

Evaluation of Dyffryn Tywi - Hanes Tirwedd Ein Bro: Final Evaluation Report, Version 1

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Final Report, Version 1

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Glossary

Acronym/Key word	Definition
NBGW	National Botanic Garden of Wales
CCC	Carmarthenshire County Council
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
WEFO	Welsh European Funding Office
GIS	Geographic Information System
GP	General Practitioner
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
CSCDS	Co-operation and Supply Chain Development Scheme
WBFGA	Well-being of Future Generations Act
CCT	Cross-Cutting Theme
EU	European Union
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
SROI	Social Return on Investment
RDP	Rural Development Programme

Executive Summary

Introduction

- i. In April 2021 the Dyffryn Tywi Project commissioned Miller Research to conduct an external Interim and Final Evaluation of the Dyffryn Tywi - Hanes Tirwedd Ein Bro partnership project, hereafter referred to as the Dyffryn Tywi project. The evaluation was conducted across two stages with the Interim Evaluation being delivered in August 2021 and this report comprising the Final Evaluation of the project to be delivered in December 2021.
- ii. This Final Evaluation has entailed a desk-based review of project documentation and data, alongside interviews with 11 key stakeholders (including 9 network partners and 2 project apprentices) and the project team.

Key Findings

- iii. The Dyffryn Tywi project has progressed well despite initial delays owing to the approval of the funding application, staff departure and disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The project benefitted from having an effective project team and key inputs from a diverse range of network partners with an interest in the Tywi Valley area. As such the operation has exceeded or achieved the majority of its revised output indicators.
- iv. Network partners reported a positive experience of working with the project delivery team, appreciating the support and flexibility the project team offered. Inputs and priorities from network partners were effectively integrated into project delivery and the project team adapted well to the disruption caused by Covid-19 related restrictions.
- v. Stakeholders highlighted key benefits that the project delivered for local and national stakeholders, including greater opportunities for collaborative working in the Tywi valley, greater understanding of the heritage of the area and skills in traditional landscape management crafts such as hedge-laying as well as improved access to green

infrastructure and the associated benefits to health and wellbeing. Network partners are also confident that the opportunity exists to develop a diversity of tourism going forward through increased collaboration leading to the creation of one unified message coming from various tourist sites in the valley, which could be developed further in the future through collaboration with key strategic tourism partners such as Visit Wales alongside local farm owners in the area.

- vi. The project has been able to deliver effectively on expected outputs and outcomes despite disruption caused by Covid-19 restrictions and staff departure. Key impacts on delivery were felt in terms of delays in delivery of in person training and restrictions on numbers alongside virtual delivery of network partner meetings and restricted ability to visit network partner sites. Whilst the pandemic meant that there was a greater need to improve health and well-being outcomes, initial and subsequent plans to deliver 20 GP guided walks and a wellbeing Garden near Glangwili hospital had to be adapted as a result of pandemic restrictions on in person gatherings and hospital capacity to engage with project. However, 11 guided walks were published via the website and a greater number of benches were set up across network partner sites to improve access to green infrastructure and to deliver associated health and wellbeing benefits.

Conclusions

- vii. The project remains relevant and coherent to needs and policy drivers identified at the Interim stage of evaluation including the priorities established in recent Programme for Government 2021 to 2026 which established the need for an embedded response to the climate and nature emergency which Wales faces.¹ The project was clearly aligned with objectives and expected outcomes with partners commenting that the model used in the delivery of the project was an effective model which could be replicated to help inform collaborative, responsible landscape management of other areas in Wales. Whilst a

¹ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-06/programme-for-government-2021-to-2026.pdf>

number of expected outcomes have been identified as a result of project delivery, stakeholders expect the full impact of the Dyffryn Tywi project to be realised in the longer term beyond the project timeline.

1. Introduction

Background to Dyffryn Tywi – Hanes Tirwedd Ein Bro

- 1.1 The Dyffryn Tywi – Hanes Tirwedd Ein Bro project (referred to as the Dyffryn Tywi in this document) is an attempt to safeguard the historic character of the Tywi Valley. This character is distinct and not the result of any single factor. Instead, it is the combined effect of the valley's history, culture, geology, ecology, and the interaction of the animals, plants and people that have lived there and live there now.
- 1.2 In recognition of this complexity, and the interconnection of the assemblages and features that combine to give the valley its character, the Project emphasised collaboration, working with a diversity of partners and people that represent different perspectives, understanding and expertise, the full list of network partners can be found in Annex D.
- 1.3 The Project began in 2019 and was funded for two years through the Welsh Government's Sustainable Management Scheme (SMS), part of the Co-operation and Supply Chain Development Scheme (CSCDS), which delivers under measure 16.5 of the 2014 -2020 RDP programme.²

Background to Evaluation

- 1.4 Evaluation is a key requirement for recipients of EU Funding. The evaluation must report on the physical outputs that have been delivered as well as the outcomes and any resulting impact in the wider Tywi Valley.
- 1.5 Evaluation is a crucial element of any complex project with ambitious and far-reaching outcomes, outputs, and objectives. It not only allows progress and success to be measured and monitored through assessing outputs and outcomes delivered, but an understanding of

² <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-07/rural-development-programme-document-2014-to-2020.pdf>

how and why delivery has or has not contributed to success – who and what has led to change, why and how did this happen?

1.6 As part of the evaluation, Miller Research has produced this Final Evaluation report in December 2021, following an Interim report produced in August 2021.

1.7 The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 – Methodology
- Chapter 3 – Project Drivers
- Chapter 4 - Findings
- Chapter 5 – Conclusions

2. Methodology

2.1 The purpose of the Final Evaluation of Dyffryn Tywi was to assess the success of the project in relation to its objectives, determine outcomes and impacts, and provide recommendations for similar projects moving forward. In doing so the Final Evaluation would also represent an external evaluation as a condition of WEFO funding.

2.2 The evaluation was based on a Theory of Change approach which seeks to understand how the resources and activities of an intervention lead to the desired and observed outputs and effects. SROI principles³ were incorporated to investigate the full range of benefits arising from the Dyffryn Tywi project. The key features of the final approach included:

- establishing scope and identifying key stakeholders.
- mapping outcomes through engaging with stakeholders, developing a theory of change.
- evidencing outcomes and giving them a value where possible.
- establishing impact, identifying aspects of change that would have happened anyway or are a result of other factors.

2.3 The evaluation approach for the Final Evaluation of Dyffryn Tywi comprised of the following key research activities:

- Review of Project Documentation
- Developing a Theory of Change
- Interviews with 11 key stakeholders and the Dyffryn Tywi project team
- Final Evaluation Report
- Key-findings presentation

³ https://neweconomics.org/uploads/files/aff3779953c5b88d53_cpm6v3v71.pdf

Review of Project Documentation

- 2.0 The evaluation team reviewed all relevant project documentation to understand project progress to date. The primary purpose was to assess progress, check that the project has met its objectives and review delivery against Cross-Cutting Themes.

Developing a Theory of Change

- 2.1 Utilising the understanding of the project developed from the review of project documentation and data and initial scoping interviews the evaluation team developed a Theory of Change to guide our understanding of the project and design of topic guides to be used for fieldwork. The Theory of Change was based on two key approaches:
- The UK Treasury Magenta Book approach⁴, based on linking inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts to assess the causal flow of the project from concept to implementation.
 - The EU Better Regulations framework⁵, which takes a wider approach and assesses the project from the perspective of coherence (within the RDP and in the context of other programmes), relevance of objectives to identified needs, effectiveness of the project and efficiency of using resources to achieve outcomes.

Interviews with Stakeholder Steering Group and beneficiary businesses

- 2.2 For the fieldwork phases of the evaluation 11 semi-structured interviews were conducted virtually utilising topic guides derived from the Theory of Change as outlined above.
- 2.3 The sample for the interviews was agreed in consultation with the Dyffryn Tywi delivery team. The final sample consisted of 9 network

⁴ [The Magenta Book - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

⁵ [Better regulation: guidelines and toolbox | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](http://europa.eu)

partners and 2 project apprentices. The full list of organisations consulted can be found in Annex E.

Final Evaluation Report

- 2.4 All the findings from the data and documentation review and fieldwork conducted have been collated and set out in this Final Evaluation Report which assesses the success of the project in relation to its objectives, determines outcomes and impacts and provides recommendations for similar projects moving forward.

3. Project Drivers

Policy

3.1 This section highlights the policy context that the Dyffryn Tywi project has been delivering in while also assessing why a project like Dyffryn Tywi was necessary and how the objectives of the project aligned to address these needs.

3.2 Following a review of policies relevant to the Dyffryn Tywi project, the project was found to have addressed the following policies.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

3.3 A more equal Wales: Dyffryn Tywi has promoted equal access to employment and training opportunities as a result of the project and contributed to gender mainstreaming in land management through the visible involvement of women in the project team and the Network Partnership.

3.4 A more prosperous Wales: the project has contributed to developing several training and work opportunities through courses and apprenticeships, which provided young people with opportunities to gain high quality employment in the local area and reduce their likelihood of becoming NEET.

3.5 A more resilient Wales: Dyffryn Tywi has supported a collaborative evidence-based approach to sustainable land management in the area as well as supporting landscape interventions which have contributed to the sustainable development of the land and improvement of biodiversity and ecological resilience. Through providing training on land management interventions, it has secured sustainable development of the land in the future.

3.6 A healthier Wales: the project has contributed to a healthier Wales through the promotion of walking trails in the local area, development of the local area and installation of benches which facilitate and increase access to green infrastructure.

- 3.7 A Wales of Vibrant Culture & Thriving Welsh Language: Dyffryn Tywi has contributed to the Welsh language through the commission of research on Welsh horticulture and recovering 'lost' knowledge of Welsh names of plant species native to the land. The project also provided equal access to Welsh speakers through the bilingual production of the project website and social media posts.
- 3.8 A Wales of Cohesive Communities: the project had involved local partner organisations and local residents in the development of the Tywi valley and contributed to an understanding and appreciation of local heritage. The project addressed the following policies:
Co-operation and Supply Chain Development Scheme (CSCDS) - Measure 16.5 Sustainable Management Scheme
- 3.9 The project aimed to promote sustainable land management principles including promoting collaborative land management, establishing an evidence base for future landscape interventions, establishing a plan for landscape management with agreement from network partners and promoting the protection of the resilience of local ecosystems.
Environment (Wales) Act 2016: Part 1: Sustainable management of natural resources
- 3.10 Dyffryn Tywi promoted sustainable management of natural resources through the development of a collaborative, evidence-based approach to land management across all 15 Network Partners.
Prosperity for All: Economic Action Plan
- 3.11 The project was driven to improve wealth and wellbeing in the local area through development of natural surroundings and walking trails as well as providing quality employment and training opportunities to local residents.

Nature Recovery Plan for Wales 2015

- 3.12 Dyffryn Tywi aimed to increase biodiversity, particularly of native species and management of non-native species in order to promote ecological resilience of the area.

Amaeth Cymru: The future of agriculture in Wales

- 3.13 Dyffryn Tywi aimed to develop a wider understanding of agricultural heritage of the area and to promote sustainable agricultural land management across Network Partners to secure the land for future generations.

Programme for Government 2021 to 2026

- 3.14 The project was aligned with Welsh Government priorities as set out in the new Programme for Government 2021 to 2026 including the need to embed the climate and nature emergency in everything they do. The Dyffryn Tywi project was aimed at facilitating sustainable landscape management amongst network partners in the Tywi Valley in response to these emergencies.

Needs

- 3.15 The policy background outlined above indicated that there was a significant need for the Dyffryn Tywi project with a clear alignment to national Welsh Government priorities including promotion of sustainable landscape management and agricultural practices, health, and wellbeing, local communities, and economic development in rural areas.
- 3.16 In addition, the project addresses a number of local key needs in the Tywi Valley including:
- Restoration, preservation, and enhancement of local ecosystems dependent on agriculture and forestry
 - Promotion of resource efficiency and support for the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in agriculture, food, and forestry sectors

- Promotion of social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas
- Protection and restoration of natural resources and biodiversity
- Increased human health and wellbeing
- Development, regeneration, and increased access to green infrastructure

3.17 Stakeholders also noted a number of additional needs which may be relevant to the Dyffryn Tywi project including:

- Greater coordination and collaboration amongst network partners and local stakeholders including the sharing of best practise
- Greater promotion and collaboration across local attractions to create 'one unifying message' to potential visitors
- Greater integration of historic and natural approaches to landscape management
- To develop and share local, historic knowledge and skills in landscape management

Objectives

3.18 The objectives for the Dyffryn Tywi project are stated as follows:

- Sustainable management of the historic character of the Tywi Valley landscape
- Increase resilience of Tywi Valley's ecosystems.
- Deliver socio-economic benefits to the Tywi Valley's residents and businesses,
- Contribute to the well-being of local and national communities.

3.19 The objectives were relevant and proportionate to the policy context and needs of the local Tywi Valley area as outlined above.

3.20 Stakeholders are confident that the Dyffryn Tywi project has progressed well and should achieve its targets, with no concerns raised about current progress. Stakeholders also suggested that the timeline for the project could have been extended to allow for initial

disruption experienced at the beginning of the project and enable the project to capitalise on the momentum it has been able to build in a short period of time. Stakeholders recognise that some of the targets outlined above are likely goals to be realised in the medium and longer term.

- 3.21 Whilst socio-economic benefit could still be delivered within the timeframe of, particularly through delivery of training and apprenticeship opportunities to local residents, due to Covid-19 restrictions, the extent to which socio-economic benefits could be delivered within the timeframe was much reduced.
- 3.22 Some stakeholders regretted the short timescale available to drive increased tourism to the area. This also prevented engagement with additional stakeholders such as Visit Wales to attract a greater diversity of tourists to the area.
- 3.23 Network partners appreciated the flexibility of the project delivery team who enabled scope for steering the project according to the needs of network partners and allowed the partners to input their own ideas and expertise into the project design.

4. Findings

Progress on Outputs

- 4.1 This section of the report explores project progress and achievements against target activity indicators and workstreams of the Dyffryn Tywi project based on evidence gathered up to the 10th of December 2021, with the project drawing to a formal close in January 2022.
- 4.2 The outputs to be delivered by the project are divided into following six work packages highlighted in further detail below.

WP1: Project management, recruitment, and support

- 4.3 The project team were recruited in February 2020 following initial disruption related to turnover of project management staff. A Project Delivery Officer, Project Administrator and Woodland and Engagement Officer were recruited on a part time basis to deliver the Dyffryn Tywi project.
- 4.4 The delivery team suffered further delays relating to the Covid-19 pandemic with the project team being furloughed in early April 2020 which caused disruption to the initial engagement of network partners in the design and delivery of the project.
- 4.5 Stakeholders were positive about the effectiveness of the project delivery team in spite of the challenges faced on this project including the absence of dedicated project management resource. The team were found to be helpful and knowledgeable with the Project Officer's background in archaeology found to be useful given the importance of heritage to the project.
- 4.6 To support the independent evaluation of the project in line with WEFO guidelines, Miller Research were appointed to conduct an Interim and Final Evaluation of the project. Landsker were appointed to develop a project interpretation plan to explore ways in which the legacy of the Dyffryn Tywi project could be extended and built upon beyond the timeline of the project.

- 4.7 A website was developed (Annex B) which would constitute a key output of the project to share learning, promote events and project activities as well serve as a resource for the local community beyond the project delivery timeline. The website was set up in July 2021 and some webpages including the interactive GIS map are still to be uploaded following some minor delays.

WP2: Developing the network

- 4.8 Key to the delivery of the Dyffryn Tywi project was the engagement of network partners in the project's design and delivery in order to deliver effectively on the expected outcome of promoting greater collaboration and partnership in management of the local landscape.
- 4.9 To this end, the project team maintained a network of 15 partners who represented a diversity of expertise across natural and heritage informed landscape management. The partners included larger organisations as well as smaller local organisations which owned land in the Tywi Valley area. Of the 15 network partners, 12 partners signed an MOU with the project in order to facilitate consistent understanding of the project and effective delivery.
- 4.10 Due to Covid-19 restrictions on gatherings there was limited ability for network partners to meet in person. However, network partners continued to remain engaged through regular communications, virtual meetings, events, and courses undertaken. Stakeholder comments included the view that the impact of the project could be further developed through engaging local agricultural landowners in the area.

WP3: Enabling the sustainable historic landscape.

- 4.11 Through the Dyffryn Tywi project, baseline data and an integrated landscape record of the area has been established and will be shared with network partners through the GIS working group. It is expected

that this data will be used to inform evidence-based decisions made on landscape management interventions in the area.

- 4.12 The Dyffryn Tywi project plan initially entailed a larger scope of activities than could be effectively delivered within the disrupted timescale of the project, caused by staffing changes and the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, the project team engaged network partners to identify their priorities and narrow the scope of project to ensure effective delivery. Priority areas identified in consultation with network partners initially included hedgerows, meadows, and parklands, with the list later expanded to include traditional buildings and orchards.
- 4.13 Due to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic the initially envisioned GP guided walks were unable to be delivered as part of the project. However, 11 guided trails were uploaded to the Dyffryn Tywi project website which could be used by local residents and visitors in order to deliver greater health and wellbeing outcomes as well as a greater appreciation of the local landscape and greater access to green spaces.
- 4.14 Project apprentices and network partners noted positive improvements in their wellbeing as a result of engagement in training activities delivered by the project, particularly where these activities involved engaging with other people in an outdoor setting.
- 4.15 Whilst the project had planned and were in discussions with hospital staff to develop a well-being garden next to Glangwili hospital (Carmarthen) to deliver on positive improvements in health and wellbeing amongst patients, staff, and visitors to the hospital, due to challenges facing hospital capacity during the Covid-19 pandemic, the wellbeing garden was unable to go ahead within the timeframe of the project.
- 4.16 To further promote the Dyffryn Tywi project beyond the initial timeline of the project a strategic interpretation plan is being developed by Landsker to promote the key themes and legacy of the project and identify further future opportunities for engagement.

WP4: Exemplar landscape restoration and works

4.17 As part of the project a number of exemplar landscape restoration and interventions were delivered across network partner sites including the following:

- 900 trees planted
- Landscape interpretation board established
- Bat mitigation structure established
- 13 benches set up
- Parkland railings built

4.18 It is expected that the delivery of these interventions will enable greater access for residents and visitors to local green spaces and the interpretation board will enable a greater appreciation and understanding of the heritage of the local landscape amongst residents and visitors.

WP5: Landscape management interventions.

4.19 The purchase of landscape management equipment to be used to deliver interventions across network partners sites had initially been explored. However, on approval of the funding, WEFO informed the project team that money for equipment should be allocated to hiring such equipment rather than the equipment being purchased outright.

4.20 Whilst the hiring of equipment still enabled landscape management interventions to be implemented across partner sites the inability to purchase such equipment outright was felt by the project team as a loss to the project.

WP6: Skills development, training, and education

4.21 Indicators for WP6 (initially 26 training days delivered, and 150 participants engaged) were revised down following a reprofiling request, citing Covid-19 restrictions affecting the number of

participants able to be engaged through in person delivery and a shorter timescale, due to initial disruption. As a result, the revised indicators were 72 participants engaged and 12 training days delivered.

- 4.22 The project team has exceeded these targets with 250 participants engaged and a further 18 planned, alongside 42.5 training days delivered with a further 12 planned. Training courses covered a range of landscape management topics which addressed key network partner priorities such as meadows, hedgerows, and parklands. Courses were delivered across network partner sites and some courses delivered were accredited by external organisations such as LANTRA and City & Guild.
- 4.23 Training provision was appreciated by the network partners who were able to benefit from undertaking various courses in landscape management skills as well as hosting training sessions at their sites. Network partners indicated that not only did the training offer them the opportunity to increase their knowledge and skills in a particular area, but also realised additional benefits such as the ability to form connections with other network partners on the course and the opportunity to engage in outdoor activities, which were found to have a positive effect on their sense of wellbeing.
- 4.24 Whilst courses run by the project were well attended and appreciated by attendees, it was felt by some that there were opportunities to increase engagement with the courses beyond the immediate core group of attendees in order to extend the impacts of the courses run more widely. It is unclear how the project could have achieved this given the wider external challenges coming from Covid-19 restrictions.
- 4.25 In addition to the courses delivered by the project, two apprentices were recruited to undertake an NVQ Level 3 apprenticeship in Conservation Management delivered in collaboration with Coleg Sir Gar alongside helping to deliver landscape management interventions

across network partner sites. The project plan initially indicated that one apprentice would be recruited, and the project team successfully applied to recruit a second apprentice to ensure that sufficient education and training would be delivered over the course of the project given the expected challenges to training delivery as a result of Covid-19 restrictions.

- 4.26 The apprentices felt that their experience was good in spite of initial pandemic related disruption to recruitment. They appreciated the opportunity to get hands on experience in the field and appreciated the opportunity to learn from people with applied knowledge in the field alongside receiving a formal qualification which would be recognised by employers in the future.
- 4.27 The course was found to be pitched at the right level, with a good mix of practical work and more office-based management and planning, in addition the apprentices were engaged in other courses delivered by the project and have made 'useful' contacts with network partners. The project delivery team and the college were able to communicate throughout the apprenticeship to facilitate the process of training and development and one apprentice noted that they would have faced significant financial barriers undertaking the number of courses they did without the existence of the Dyffryn Tywi project.

Barriers to Delivery

Covid-19 Pandemic

- 4.28 The Covid-19 pandemic has meant some difficulties and alterations to project delivery. Following initial recruitment in early 2020, the project team were subsequently furloughed. This, alongside staff turnover and hesitancy to 'proceed at risk' with the project prior to funding being approved, represented a substantial delay to engaging with networks partners and shortened the project timeline.
- 4.29 The majority of network partner meetings and communications had to be conducted virtually to comply with Covid-19 guidelines, with only

one in person network partner meeting being conducted with the final network partner meeting being planned to be delivered in person. This was felt by network partners to be sufficient in terms of engagement and one partner noted benefits to virtual delivery including greater attendance and professionalism. However, partners also regretted the limited ability to conduct in person meetings at partner sites especially given the aims of the project to promote appreciation and understanding of the local landscape and the less formal nature to in person meetings which was considered by one network partner to be key to the way Wales works. In the absence of Covid-19 a more hybrid approach to project delivery would have been appreciated by network partners.

- 4.30 The project had explored the potential to deliver a series of public engagement events through Meadows week to promote greater understanding of the Tywi Valley, however the programme was reduced to reflect the limited resourcing within the project team, due to both roles being undertaken part time, to deliver an entire weeks' worth of programmes to a sufficiently high standard.
- 4.31 One partner noted that the lack of in person events due to Covid-19 restrictions may have limited the ability of the project team to produce wider public engagement work beyond the core group of network partners.
- 4.32 Covid-19 restrictions also hindered the delivery of in person, GP prescribed guided walks, as well as the planned replacement output of a wellbeing garden next to Glangwili hospital. However, the project team were still able to promote 11 guided trail walks uploaded to the website, offering a useful resource for residents and visitors to increase access to green infrastructure and improvements to wellbeing. In response to this, the project team reallocated the funding to establish additional benches at partner sites to deliver similar outcomes including increasing access to green infrastructure and the Tywi Valley landscape to those who face access challenges without places to rest, alongside the delivery of associated wellbeing benefits.

- 4.33 Covid-19 restrictions also posed a challenge to the delivery of training courses deemed to be 'non-essential', at one-point restrictions only enabled 6 participants to be engaged in training at any one time. It was appreciated that the outdoor nature of many of the training courses meant that delivery was not as affected as it could have been, yet a proportion of the courses required indoor delivery and so restrictions still posed a challenge to the team meeting their output targets on the number of participants engaged.
- 4.34 The project team faced indirect challenges through the impact of Covid-19 on network partners, with many partners indicating that they faced staffing and capacity issues during this time. As a result, some network partners indicated the project had been deprioritised and they had regretted not being more involved in the project from outset.
- 4.35 As a result of these barriers faced the project delivery team completed an application to reprofile in order to request an extension to the project end date to April 2022, revision of initial output indicators related to delivery of GP guided walks and training courses, alongside the vesting of funds in areas of significant underspend to more effective activities such as the recruitment of an additional apprentice and delivery of additional training.
- 4.36 The request to vest funds and revise indicators was approved and the project was extended to April 2022, however staff time for the project remained funded only up until January 2022. Therefore, the project team felt that the challenges of running the project under Covid-19 restrictions had not been adequately compensated for.
- 4.37 Network partners also felt that the project could have been extended further to account for the initial disruption faced due to external factors and to enable the project to continue as it was felt that the project had just begun to build momentum as it was coming to a close.
- 4.38 Challenges were caused by delays in receiving responses to the reprofiling request from WEFO. The lack of certainty hindered forward planning at critical points and affected project delivery.

Limited engagement with local farms

- 4.39 Whilst the project team had made efforts to identify and engage local agricultural landowners in the areas through discussions with key stakeholders including NFU and local Young Farmers, the project struggled to receive engagement from many agricultural landowners in the area. The project team suggested that in order to engage farmers, similar projects would need to present a clearer case for how engagement with the project would benefit their livelihood on the farm and adequately compensate farmers for their time, as every day used to attend a course represents a lost day working. Benefits that manifest in short time scales are a greater motivator than longer-term or more intangible gains. It was suggested that future projects would also need to consider the uncertainty farmers face as it not yet clear what the new agri-environment scheme will look like in Wales.
- 4.40 Stakeholders suggested that whilst agricultural partners were harder to engage in projects such as Dyffryn Tywi they could have represented an important repository of historical knowledge of agricultural land management practices in the area as well as being key to addressing local concerns including nitrate run off from farms and food provenance concerns.
- 4.41 Network partners noted that there is a sense that the Dyffryn Tywi project has built a movement that incoming farmers are interested in joining, in the recognition of needing to diversify their landholdings. However, it was also suggested that farmers that have been longer established in the Tywi Valley may be hesitant to consider changes to landscape management practises and as such may be a more difficult group of stakeholders to engage.
- 4.42 Stakeholders suggested that one route to engage more traditional, established farmers would be to tap into the sense of responsibility established farmers have in keeping knowledge about historical ways

of working alive, including the understanding of Welsh names of native plant species.

Cross Cutting Themes

4.43 As an RDP-funded project under the CSCDS, the Dyffryn Tywi project had to align with 'cross-cutting themes' (CCTs) to ensure that the project holistically aligns with key EU policy priorities. The application for funding outlined four CCTs that it aimed to deliver against, including:

- Equal Opportunities (including the Welsh Language)
- Gender mainstreaming
- Sustainable Development
- Poverty and Social Exclusion

4.44 These CCTs will be discussed, in turn, below. This will include a summary of how the project delivered against the CCTs.

Equal Opportunities (including the Welsh Language)

4.45 The Dyffryn Tywi project has been devised and delivered in a way that highlights and celebrates the cultural importance of the Welsh language to the Tywi valley, integrating the use of Welsh language where possible throughout the project.

4.46 In line with its Welsh Language Policy and in accordance with Welsh Language Standards, all the Project's interpretation materials were made available in both Welsh and English and celebrated the various backgrounds of past inhabitants of the Tywi Valley.

4.47 The Dyffryn Tywi project has enhanced public understanding of the heritage of Wales and of the impact of the Welsh on the world, and it will provide a cultural sense of place for visitors to the Tywi Valley as well as an historic sense of place.

4.48 The project has undertaken research which has contributed to re-learning of original Welsh names for plant varieties which has enabled

the regaining of lost knowledge in local landscape management using the Welsh language to promote understanding of the heritage of the area.

- 4.49 All project communications including the project website (See Annex B) and Facebook page have been made available bilingually in Welsh and English. This enabled the project to engage with Welsh speakers and offer equal access to information about the project in their language of choice in line with The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

Gender mainstreaming

- 4.50 Women were represented and engaged in key areas of project delivery including as part of the project delivery team and network of partners.
- 4.51 These representatives acted as visible role models, to encourage girls and women to become more involved in 'less traditional' sectors of employment and provides learning and training opportunities for girls and women in traditional countryside management skills.
- 4.52 The project used learning opportunities to engage girls and women in non-stereotypical gender roles, such as woodland management. Course records indicated that 82 women and girls have been engaged in courses delivered by the project.
- 4.53 In addition, with the project has helped to support the Tywi Centre with their mission to continue to develop further opportunities for cross-gender skills development in heritage construction.

Sustainable Development

- 4.54 Sustainability is at the heart of the project - NBGW is a signatory to Welsh Government's Sustainability Charter, and sustainability is a key objective of the Garden.

- 4.55 The project shared best-practice in sustainable management among the network of land managers to increase sustainable development across the Tywi Valley area.
- 4.56 Interventions funded by the project have contributed to improvements in ecological resilience and biodiversity of the area through the delivery of exemplar landscape management interventions.
- 4.57 The data, mapping and MOU developed between network partners in the area also ensure the landscape can continue to be managed in a sustainable way.
- 4.58 The training of two apprentices, as well as courses undertaken by network partners, provided training and knowledge of landscape management to ensure sustainable development of the local landscape for the future.

Poverty and Social Exclusion

- 4.59 Recruitment of apprentices and training delivered to network partners enabled the delivery of important land management knowledge.
- 4.60 Experience gained by the two project apprentices in the understanding, application, and management of land management interventions, will support them to secure quality local employment in the sector and will reduce their risk of being NEET in the future, through the acquisition of relevant experience and an NVQ Level 3 apprenticeship in Conservation.
- 4.61 The project aimed to develop a diversity of tourism in the area and local economy which would in turn increase opportunities for good employment and reduce risk of poverty in the area.

Outcomes

- 4.62 At the final evaluation stage, the contributions made by the Dyffryn Tywi project to the observed outcomes were assessed and these are explored below.

Greater awareness, collaboration, and networking amongst partners in the valley

- 4.63 The diversity and wealth of expertise across natural and built environments was well recognised and valued amongst network partners. Network partners appreciated the opportunity to engage and build relationships with larger network partners such as NRW, with whom it was felt there had been fewer opportunities to engage previously.
- 4.64 Although a number of partners indicated they were previously aware of one another, they indicated that prior to the project partners skirted around each other and may have viewed each other as competitors.

- 4.65 It was felt that the Dyffryn Tywi project has helped to foster a much greater sense of collaboration across network partners, enabling partners to form relationships with each other, offer support and learn from each other's experiences. It is hoped that going forward this partnership will be able to be maintained, albeit informally and would enable a more joined up approach to delivery of local works in the area and a more unified approach to tourism which could attract a greater diversity of tourists to the area.
- 4.66 It is hoped that greater partnership and collaborative work can be maintained beyond the end of the project now that relationships have been formed between these organisations. However, network partners were also concerned that the partnership may not be as effective in the absence of active management by the project team and dedicated funding, given the limited resource and competing demands from other organisational priorities faced by the network partners.

Improved level of skills and training amongst network partners and apprentices including traditional crafts

- 4.67 Network partners and project apprentices reported an increased confidence in their ability to plan and undertake landscape management interventions as a result of engaging with the courses run by the project in collaboration with network partners and external accreditation bodies. Courses also included the learning of traditional crafts such as laying hedgerows.
- 4.68 The project apprentices reported positively about their experience of the NVQ Level 3 qualification in Conservation Management that it contained the right balance of practical and theoretical knowledge to enable them to progress their careers in the future in the conservation sector. Both apprentices were keen to secure further employment opportunities in the area as a direct result of their engagement with the apprenticeship and had already begun their job search, with

recognition that their ability to secure employment in the area would be dependent on local labour market conditions.

Increased sense of wellbeing

- 4.69 Network partners and apprentices also noted the positive benefits of their engagement with the outdoors through the delivery of an in-person network partner meeting as well as outdoor training courses which improved their sense of wellbeing.

Improved understanding of the of the Tywi Valley landscape

- 4.70 The Dyffryn Tywi project developed an approach to sustainable, historically informed land management and partnership working that could be replicated elsewhere.
- 4.71 Network partners stated that the Dyffryn Tywi project improved their understanding of the Tywi Valley landscape and that the project website would be key moving forward as an ongoing repository for knowledge of the area and historical land management methods for the local community, researchers, visitors, and similar future projects. The use of the project website to aid wider research may contribute to establishing a historical method of how land in the Tywi Valley has been historically managed which will have much greater positive contributions to improving the understanding of the landscape more widely. This will be a valuable resource when attempting to develop more sustainable methods of land management.
- 4.72 Network partners also appreciated the focus on meadows restoration as a key historically informed landscape intervention given the key importance of meadows to the social history of the area. The Tywi Valley represents a site of rich natural and built heritage and the project has been able to engage a diverse range of stakeholders from the natural and built landscape to work together to pave the way for

the creation of a unified message to attract greater tourism to the area.

Increase resilience of Tywi Valley's ecosystems

- 4.73 Network partners and apprentices alike appreciated the opportunity to develop their understanding and skills in landscape management through courses run by the project. The training courses run by the project also provided further informal opportunities to network and build relationships with other network partners.
- 4.74 Restoration of meadows and species-rich grasslands will enable greater resilience of the local ecosystem and a more quickly established opportunity for carbon capture than planting trees. It was also noted by stakeholders how the distribution of seeds gathered from the NBGW's SSSI Waun Las site could be distributed to other sites, which would have a cascading effect in terms of the impact on local ecosystems in other areas.

Tourism

- 4.75 Stakeholders noted how Carmarthenshire has not traditionally been considered a destination for tourism when compared to neighbouring counties and there is the opportunity to develop it as a destination area given the number of tourist sites clustered in the Tywi Valley. There is potentially greater opportunity to do so since the pandemic with the growth of the more local holiday industry.
- 4.76 To fully capitalise the opportunity to promote the Tywi Valley as a tourist destination the project would have needed to engage wider tourism stakeholders such as Visit Wales to develop the branding and promotion needed to attract tourists to the valley. That greater focus on promoting tourism was not possible given the time and resource constraints the project faced. There is some concern from stakeholders around the views of Tywi Valley residents who may not want to promote the area as a tourist destination, indicating a sense of greater ownership over the area despite potential economic benefits to local businesses and residents.

Impacts

- 4.77 Whilst it is too early to assess the full impact, discussions with stakeholders indicated some expected impacts including:
- Development of collaborative and partnership working amongst local and national network partners
 - Protected ecosystems as a result of improved collaborative and evidence informed landscape management decisions and interventions.
 - Historically informed approach to landscape management
 - Increased economic development and prosperity
 - Improved access to Green Infrastructure
 - Increased health and wellbeing
- 4.78 Whilst there is hopeful potential for continued partnership and collaboration beyond the end of the project, there is concern among stakeholders that momentum will slow without the specific involvement of the project delivery team.
- 4.79 It is expected that external barriers and constraints highlighted above will play a role in whether the expected impacts can be realised beyond the timeline of the project.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The design of Dyffryn Tywi and its objectives were fit for purpose and highly coherent with the policy context related to the need to increase the human and environmental wellbeing of Wales. The outcomes of the project continue to be relevant to local and wider priorities.
- 5.2 The project delivery team were able to successfully achieve output targets, recovering quickly following initial disruption, utilising available resources to deliver effectively on progress outputs, meeting, or surpassing output targets.
- 5.3 The project delivery team were efficient with their project spend with some underspend related to Covid-related disruption. Where money could not be spent due to Covid-19 disruption it was re-allocated to more productive endeavours such as the establishment of more benches to improve access to green spaces and the delivery of more courses to improve the skills and understanding of landscape management skills amongst network partners.
- 5.4 The project has delivered well on intended outcomes, in spite of initial related disruption including improving collaboration between network partners, developing local skills and knowledge informed by the heritage of the area and improving the resilience of local ecosystems utilising collaborative, evidence-based ways of working.

6. Appendices

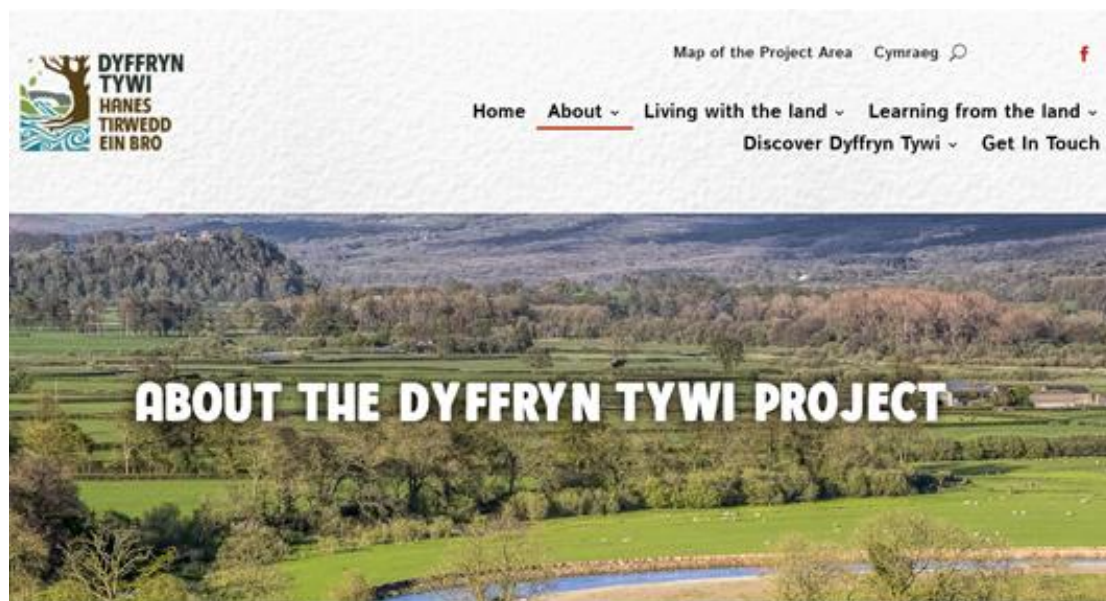
Annex A - Apprenticeship training



Local Hedge layer Malcolm Edwards (right), with Dyffryn Tywi hedge laying apprentices Osian Owen (left) and Dan Bakewell (centre). Osian Owen, one of the Dyffryn Tywi Project's Environmental and Conservation apprentices said: "I enjoy hedge laying as I find it both peaceful and stimulating, and the connection I feel to the land and past generations who would've done the same is special."

Source: <https://swanseabaynews.com/2021/08/03/bleak-future-for-welsh-hedgerow-landscape-warns-rural-environment-partnership-project/>

Appendix B: Dyffryn Tywi – Hanes Tirwedd Ein Bro Website



Source: <https://dyffrynTywi.org.uk/about-the-dyffryn-Tywi-project/>

Appendix C: Promotion of Scything and Haymaking courses

DYFFRYN TYWI HANES TIRWEDD EIN BRO

Free Workshop and Training Opportunities

Scything 1 day courses with Matthew Collinson (8 participants per day)

- Thursday June 10th - Golden Grove
- Thursday June 17th - Bishops Palace
- Saturday July 3rd - Bishops Palace - Meadows day event
- Saturday July 17th - Golden Grove - Lawn cut and picnic
- Saturday August 21st - National Botanic Garden of Wales
- Thursday September 16th - Dinefwr Park

Lantra Accredited Stock Checking with PONT at Dinefwr - September TBC

History and Haymaking with Scythe Cymru At Dyfed Permaculture Farm Trust (10 participants)

Tue 29th June & Sat 10th July

- ID of common species.
- The meadow year - spring management, hay making, aftermath grazing, storage, what to do with the hay
- The hay makers day - using scything rakes & pitchforks
- Traditional hay making techniques - all weather haymaking management of windrows, traditional hay racks & hay cocks
- Traditional hay making practices of Wales and other traditional practices in challenging climates

info@dyffryntywi.org.uk

Creatif a Amgylcheddedd Ewrop ar gyfer Ddiwydiadau Gwledol
Ewrop yn Fuddhugliwr mewn Ardaloedd Gwledol
European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
Europe Investing in Rural Areas

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Source: https://scontent.fbru4-1.fna.fbcdn.net/v/t1.6435-9/194605405_240917207801506_7922300387927086913_n.jpg?nc_cat=103&ccb=1-4&nc_sid=973b4a&nc_ohc=gCA9woPm vb4AX_7wT2 &nc_ht=scontent.fbru4-1.fna&oh=1cafa8ecb6cd73adc2b3d4796f741cda&oe=61348082

Appendix D: List of Network Partners

Network Partners
National Botanic Garden of Wales
Cadw
Tywi Gateway Trust
Natural Resources Wales
The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales
Tywi Centre
Golden Grove Trust
Llais y Goedwig
Dyfed Archaeological Trust
Keep Wales Tidy
Penpal Farm
National Trust
Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales
Welsh Historic Garden's Trust
Carmarthenshire County Council

Appendix E: Stakeholders consulted

Stakeholder consulted
National Botanic Garden of Wales
Cadw
Tywi Gateway Trust
Natural Resources Wales
The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales
Tywi Centre
Golden Grove Trust
Llais y Goedwig
Dyfed Archaeological Trust
2 Project Apprentices