



Llanrhidian Higher Community Council  
Cyngor Cymuned Llanrhidian Uchaf



Planning Solutions Consulting  
Experts in visitor experiences

## Feasibility study - Graig Y Coed Project



Prepared by

Planning Solutions Consulting Limited

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## Executive summary

Work has been progressing on an initial concept proposal to develop Graig Y Coed as a community woodland led by a Volunteer Committee. Located on the edge of Penclawdd, Swansea, the creation of the woodland would bring the site into community use by providing a valuable recreational and environmental resource. Over the past 4 months, Planning Solutions Consulting Limited has been consulting with key stakeholders to carry out feasibility study for the project.

The site has a rich heritage linked to former industrial uses and offers attractive long-distance views across the salt marshes and estuary from the upper level. The site is served by two car parks and is within walking distance of Penclawdd and the local primary school. It has some existing low key recreational use, however, the topography of the site is relatively steep and the site is overgrown.

A module of primary research has been carried out generating over one hundred responses. Consultation was carried out with approximately 20 stakeholders and interested parties. The research and consultation identified positive support for the proposition to improve the recreation, amenity and environmental value of the site.

An options appraisal identified three future scenarios for the site:

- Option One: Continue as is (the baseline position)
- Option Two: Create a community woodland, as proposed by the Volunteer Committee
- Option Three: A more intensive level of development with a central hub building

A weighted scoring matrix with a number of assessment criteria has been used to evaluate the different options.

Option Two was identified as the preferred option, which is more appropriate in form and scale for the site. The option will have a positive environmental impact, it has a strong community focus and is more straightforward to deliver and operate. The preferred option is focused on:

- Re-establishing a formal network of trails
- Introducing interpretation at key points within the site
- Developing seating and picnic areas and viewing point(s)

- Providing an outdoor classroom type facility

Running alongside this, the woodland will be replanted and there will be associated planting to enhance the biodiversity of the site.

At the time of reporting, indicative capital costs were identified as being in the order of £160,000.

In terms of governance, it is broadly felt that Llanrhidian Higher Community Council, (subject to further discussions), could be responsible for managing any capital and revenue funding which is required to deliver the project and the overall management of the site.

There is a clear the role for community involvement in terms of the maintenance of the woodland, which could be led by the Volunteer Committee, who have been the driving force behind the project. It is recognised that the 'volunteer' base is limited and there is a need to attract new volunteers. To help develop the base of volunteers, it is recommended to recruit a part-time volunteer co-ordinator on a short-term contract (subject to available funding).

A third-party contractor would also be required to support the volunteers for specific tasks and activities.

There are limited revenue generating opportunities and the project will require ongoing revenue support. As noted in the main report, the project will lead to clear outcomes for the community, including but not limited to:

- Reducing social isolation through providing opportunities for volunteering and informal recreation usage and conservation of the site
- Improving physical health and wellbeing ranging from providing opportunities to volunteer through to formal and informal recreational activities (preventative healthcare)
- Creating a place where biodiversity can thrive and through the planting of native tree species, carbon lock up will be achieved. The ongoing collection and monitoring of environmental data will provide opportunities for citizen science projects

- Building community resilience through the regeneration of a woodland for and managed by the community (including usage by Scouts and education groups)

## Crynodeb Gweithredol

Mae gwaith wedi bod yn mynd rhagddo ar gynnig cysyniad dechreuol i ddatblygu Graig y Coed yn goetir cymunedol dan arweiniad Pwyllgor Gwirfoddol. Byddai creu'r coetir ar y safle, sydd wedi'i leoli ar gyrion Pen-clawdd, Abertawe, yn arwain at ddefnydd cymunedol trwy ddarparu adnodd hamdden ac amgylcheddol gwerthfawr. Yn ystod y pedwar mis diwethaf, mae Planning Solutions Consulting Limited wedi bod yn ymgynghori â rhanddeiliaid allweddol i gynnal astudiaeth ddichonoldeb ar gyfer y prosiect.

Mae gan y safle dreftadaeth gyfoethog sy'n gysylltiedig â defnyddiau diwydiannol blaenorol, ac mae'n cynnig golygfeydd atyniadol am gryn bellter ar draws y morfeydd heli a'r aber o'r lefel uchaf. Gwasanaethir y safle gan ddau faes parcio ac mae o fewn pellter cerdded i Ben-clawdd a'r ysgol gynradd leol. Gwneir rywfaint o ddefnydd hamdden cymedrol ohono ar hyn o bryd, fodd bynnag, mae topograffi'r safle yn gymharol serth ac mae wedi tyfu'n wyllt.

Mae modiwl ymchwil sylfaenol wedi'i gynnal, gan ysgogi dros gant o ymatebion. Ymgynghorwyd â thua 20 o randdeiliaid a phartïon â diddordeb. Nododd yr ymchwil a'r ymgynghoriad gefnogaeth gadarnhaol i'r cynnig i wella gwerth y safle o ran hamdden, amwynder a'r amgylchedd.

Nododd proses gwerthuso opsiynau dri senario ar gyfer y safle yn y dyfodol:

- Opsiwn Un: Parhau fel y mae (y sefyllfa sylfaenol)
- Opsiwn Dau: Creu coetir cymunedol, fel y cynigir gan y Pwyllgor Gwirfoddol
- Opsiwn Tri: Lefel fwy dwys o ddatblygu ynghyd ag adeilad a fydd yn hyb canolog

Defnyddiwyd matrices sgorio wedi'i bwysoli a oedd yn cynnwys nifer o feini prawf asesu i werthuso'r opsiynau gwahanol.

Nodwyd mai Opsiwn Dau oedd yr opsiwn a ffefrir, sy'n fwy addas i'r safle o ran ei ffurf a'i raddfa. Bydd yr opsiwn yn cael effaith amgylcheddol gadarnhaol, mae ganddo ffocws cymunedol cryf ac mae'n symlach i'w gyflawni a'i weithredu. Mae'r opsiwn a ffefrir yn canolbwyntio ar y canlynol:

- Ailsefydlu rhwydwaith ffurfiol o lwybrau
- Cyflwyno deongliadau mewn mannau allweddol ar y safle
- Datblygu mannau eistedd, ardaloedd picnic a golygfannau
- Darparu cyfleuster tebyg i ystafell ddosbarth yn yr awyr agored

Ochr yn ochr â hyn, bydd y coetir yn cael ei ailblannu a bydd yna blannu cysylltiedig yn digwydd i wella bioamrywiaeth y safle.

Ar yr adeg y cyflwynwyd yr adroddiad, nodwyd bod y costau cyfalaf dangosol o gwmpas £160,000.

O ran llywodraethu, y teimlad cyffredinol yw y gallai Cyngor Cymuned Llanrhidian Uchaf, (yn amodol ar drafodaethau pellach), ysgwyddo'r cyfrifoldeb am reoli unrhyw gyllid cyfalaf a refeniw gofynnol i gyflawni'r prosiect, ynghyd a rheolaeth gyffredinol y safle.

Mae yna rôl amlwg i gynnwys y gymuned o ran cynnal a chadw'r coetir, a allai gael ei arwain gan y Pwyllgor Gwirfoddol, sydd wedi bod yn ysgogi'r prosiect. Cydnabyddir bod yna sylfaen gyfyngedig o wirfoddolwyr a bod angen denu gwirfoddolwyr newydd. Er mwyn helpu i ddatblygu sylfaen y gwirfoddolwyr, argymhellir bod cydgysylltydd gwirfoddolwyr rhan-amser yn cael ei recriwtio ar gontract byrdymor (yn amodol ar y cyllid sydd ar gael).

Byddai'n ofynnol cael contractwr trydydd parti hefyd i gynorthwyo'r gwirfoddolwyr i gyflawni tasgau a gweithgareddau penodol.

Cyfyngedig yw'r cyfleoedd i gynhyrchu refeniw, a bydd angen cymorth refeniw parhaus ar y prosiect. Fel y nodir yn y prif adroddiad, bydd y prosiect yn arwain at ganlyniadau clir i'r gymuned, gan gynnwys y canlynol, ond heb fod yn gyfyngedig iddynt:

- Lleihau arwahanrwydd cymdeithasol trwy ddarparu cyfleoedd i wirfoddoli a defnyddio'r safle at ddibenion hamdden anffurfiol a chadwraeth
- Gwella iechyd a llesiant corfforol, a fydd yn amrywio o ddarparu cyfleoedd i wirfoddoli i weithgareddau hamdden ffurfiol ac anffurfiol (gofal iechyd ataliol)
- Creu man lle y gall bioamrywiaeth ffynnu, a thrwy blannu rhywogaethau o goed brodorol, bydd modd cloi carbon. Bydd y gwaith parhaus o gasglu a monitro data amgylcheddol yn darparu cyfleoedd ar gyfer prosiectau gwyddoniaeth dinasyddion
- Meithrin cydnerthedd cymunedol trwy adfywio coetir ar gyfer y gymuned ac a reolir gan y gymuned (a fydd yn cynnwys defnydd gan y Sgowtiaid a grwpiau addysg)



## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Brief and structure

The extension of the Rural Development Plan and funding package provides an opportunity to address some of the issues and challenges facing the northern rural wards in the City and County, particularly in Penclawdd, Pontarddulais, Llangyfelach and Mawr.

Over the past four months, the Means in partnership with Planning Solutions Consulting Limited, has been undertaking a series of feasibility studies on behalf of the Swansea Rural Development Partnership to support sustainable community regeneration in northern rural Gower. Although different in terms of required outcomes, a common structure has been adopted across the feasibility studies for each area. This report is structured as follows:

- **Section Two** – provides an overview of Graig Y Coed. The location, access and the woodland itself alongside car parking and site ownership are considered. The concept as developed by the Volunteer Committee is set out. It should be recognised that considerable time and resource has been invested by the Volunteer Committee in terms of developing the community woodland concept for Graig Y Coed. A summary SWOT analysis has been used to set out the key strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities associated with the site.
- **Section Three** – it is important to understand the characteristics of the ward where the development project is located and a review of the ward has been carried out. Summary implications for the project have also been identified.
- **Section Four** – evidence of demand has been identified through an online survey which generated 104 responses, which was promoted by Llanrhidian Higher Community Council. Consultation has also been carried with a number of key stakeholders and interested parties.
- **Section Five** – sets out two development options. A low-key development scenario based upon the concept developed by the Volunteer Committee and an enhanced option, a medium scale development scenario. We have also included a baseline position – a continue as is as an option.

For each option a short description is provided, a project rationale is identified, key audiences are set out and the associated benefits and constraints have been identified.

A weighted scoring matrix has been used to evaluate the options and for the lead option indicative capital costs have been identified.

- **Section Six** – sets out a commentary on governance / delivery and alongside this a high-level five-year financial model for the project has been prepared and key outputs identified.
- **Section Seven** – sets out our summary comments.

## 1.2 Graig Y Coed

The focus of this feasibility study for **Graig Y Coed** is to test the opportunity for a community woodland, which the concept for has been developed a Volunteer Committee. The ‘development package’ for Graig Y Coed will help to create an accessible woodland and recreational resource for the community and significantly enhance the biodiversity value of the site.

Our methodology for the feasibility study has involved site visits by two members of the team, consultation with key stakeholders and interested parties and a module of primary research. This is alongside desktop research into the local market and an analysis based on our consultancy experience of working on countryside projects across the UK.

We have also used our sister company’s operational experience of managing visitor centres and recreation sites which have a strong focus on the outdoors. These include:

- CONKERS a 120-acre discovery park in the National Forest ([www.visitconkers.com](http://www.visitconkers.com))
- The Cotswold Country Park and Beach, a water sports and parkland offer (<http://www.cotswoldcountryparkandbeach.com/>)
- Kent Life, a 28-acre heritage park and farm attraction (<http://www.kentlife.org.uk/>)

The preparation of this feasibility study has been very much helped by the input of Jeremy Parkhouse, Clerk to Llanrhidian Higher Community Council.

### 1.3 External factors

It is important to acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic emerged during 2020. A number of outdoor recreation sites reported significant increases in visitor numbers during 2020 and 2021 and in some instances has helped to engage with new audiences. We also need to recognise that the economic impact of COVID-19 has affected the availability of funding from Councils and other organisations.

Additionally, the recent cost of living increases are affecting everybody. Increases in the cost of fuel may have the effect of reducing the number and frequency of leisure day trips to destinations which are not readily accessible by public transport, walking routes or cycling trails. Equally, it may place greater demands on sites closer to where people live and where there is no entry charge or parking fee. These sites could become more popular.

There will also be increasing costs to manage and maintain sites. Additionally, inflation along with supply chain and labour issues will increase capital development costs.

## 2.0 Site context and concept

### 2.1 The site Graig Y Coed

#### 2.1.1 Location and access

Graig Y Coed is located in-between Penclawdd and Crofty and is sited adjacent to the Graig Y Coed Playing Fields and pavilion building.

Micro road access to Graig Y Coed is via the B4295 which runs along the north coast of Gower linking Llanrhidian through to Swansea. The site is also serviced by public transport via the 116-bus route between Swansea and Llangennith. Whilst the focus is on local community usage, it is important to highlight that the site is also readily accessible from the M4.

In May 2022, Gower Pilgrimage Way opened. The 50-mile route links 17 historic churches and starts in Penclawdd and finishes in Bishopston. The Wales Coast Path also passes by Graig Y Coed and there is a wider network of footpaths in the immediate area, including one along the upper boundary of the site which links Penclawdd and Hermon Chapel.



*Lower-level boundary and entry point into Graig Y Coed*

The closest National Cycle Route (Route 4) is to the north in Gowerton. Penclawdd Primary School is within walking distance of Graig Y Coed.

#### 2.1.2 Graig Y Coed

Former uses associated with Graig Y Coed are related to the extraction industries (former collieries and a quarry) and latterly the site was utilised by the US military during World War Two.

The Woodland Trust carried out a tree planting scheme approximately 15 years ago which has led to the establishment of tree cover over parts of the site. Scrubland also covers areas within the site. As part of the project, a number of trails were introduced. Limited maintenance has been carried out and the woodland area is not readily accessible although there is some reported usage. Japanese Knotweed has been identified within a small area of the site.

The topography of the site is relatively steep in parts and it rises from approximately 14m above sea-level at the playing fields to 49m at the upper-level car park. This does present accessibility issues but there will be design solutions to address this issue.

As can be seen on the image below, with the redline boundary, the site is bisected by a 'V-shaped' area of land which is currently outside of the leasehold area (the owner of the land has not been identified). A public footpath runs along the boundary of the woodland on the upper-level of the site 'connecting' the site.<sup>1</sup>



Source: Client team

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<sup>1</sup> Planning, ecological and other site assessments will need to be carried out as part of any future development work.

From the upper-level, there are attractive long-distance views and the adjacent Hermon Chapel adds a further point of interest to the woodland experience. It was also mentioned that there are spectacular sunsets across the estuary which are popular among photographers.



*Impressive long-distance views and Hermon Chapel*



*Impressive sunsets – image kindly supplied by Councillor Sarah Hughes*

Outside of the site boundary there is a pavilion building incorporating toilets, changing facilities, a small kitchen and garage / workshop space. The pavilion services the football and rugby pitches.



*Pavilion building*

The site and adjoining areas have a rich history, which to some degree remains hidden and is not accessible. For example, former colliery and quarrying uses, military uses linked to WW2 and a nearby Iron Age Fort (Pen-y-Gaer). This will be made visible through the use of interpretative panels and guided walks.

### 2.1.3 Existing car parking provision

The site is serviced by two car parks: a surfaced car park adjacent to the West End Playing Fields (lower level) – which is outside of the redline boundary and an unsurfaced smaller car park adjacent to Hermon Chapel (upper level). We understand that there are some reported incidents of anti-social behaviour in the upper-level car park.



*Lower-level car parking area adjacent to the football and rugby pitches and unsurfaced upper-level car park*

### 2.1.4 Ownership

Graig Y Coed is owned by the Council of the City and County and Swansea. A lease with a peppercorn rent, for a period of 125 years, was entered into between the Council of the City and County and Swansea and Llanrhidian Higher Community Council in May 2020 for the land (which is referenced as Graig Y Coed Nature Reserve).

### 2.1.5 Other considerations

Whilst investment has been secured to develop the pavilion building, MUGA and skatepark it is recognised that there is a lack of a community outdoor woodland space, which is accessible to people of all ages within the ward.

On another note, it is important to highlight that the Department for Transport produces annual traffic counts (based either on a manual count or estimation) across the UK road network. The nearest count point to the site, along the A4295, is at Crofty. The manual

count from 2019 indicates an average daily vehicle flow of 4,161 vehicles – just over 1.5m vehicles movements per annual.

## 2.2 Concept proposition

The concept to for community woodland at Graig Y Coed has been developed by a Volunteer Committee. It is recognised that the Volunteer Committee has invested a considerable amount of time in developing the concept and has also carried out community consultation with local residents and schools (which demonstrated strong support for the project). The earlier consultation also secured commitment from 30 people to volunteer to assist with the project, including volunteers with specialist skills in ecology and the use of heavy equipment. It is recognised that the capacity of the current Volunteer Committee needs to be enhanced.

Please see the outline concept plan below.



Source: Project Committee

The proposal focuses on introducing low key, but high-quality recreational infrastructure to make the woodland a more accessible resource for members of the local community and



provide an outdoor learning space for Penclawdd Primary School, which is within walking distance of Graig Y Coed.

Proposals for the visitor infrastructure includes introducing:

- Welcome noticeboards at three key access points
- Bilingual interpretation panels
- Seating
- Picnic areas
- Viewing point(s)
- An outdoor classroom area
- There is an existing network of trails which is currently overgrown and unusable and as part of the project 1km of gravel paths and 200m of tarmac pathway will be introduced
- In terms of the landholding the ambition is to establish a woodland plantation on 2/3 of the land and a wildflower meadow on 1/3 of the land

Alongside investment in the physical infrastructure there is also ambition to improve the biodiversity of the woodland itself and to record wildlife present on site. Clearly, this presents a number of opportunities or topic areas for both education visits and interpretation such as improving habitat (bees, insects,) through to climate change (carbon capture) etc.

### 2.3 Summary site SWOT analysis

Below we set out a SWOT analysis which highlights the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with the site.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previous community engagement carried out which demonstrated support for the project</li> <li>• Existing development proposal in place</li> <li>• Nearby primary school and Scout group (within walking distance)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenging development site - steep topography of the site which will make it difficult to 'access' for some users (although this could be overcome via trail design)</li> <li>• Condition of the woodland (lack of maintenance)</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing wildlife / habitats, providing additional points of interest</li> <li>• Some existing infrastructure (car parks) and trails (albeit the trails are not readily accessible)</li> <li>• Attractive long-distance views</li> <li>• Presence of the pavilion building</li> <li>• Nearby offsite walking trails</li> <li>• Long lease secured (essential from a funding perspective)</li> <li>• Once established, low ongoing maintenance costs (subject to ongoing involvement of the volunteers)</li> <li>• Some existing usage (indicating demand)</li> <li>• Site is accessible by public transport</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatively small size of the overall site</li> <li>• Access to upper-level car park is poor (along a steep, narrow single-track road)</li> <li>• Some reported issues of anti-social behaviour</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p>	<p><b>Threats</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of formal green / recreation space for families and other people living in Crofty, Penclawdd, Llanmorlais and Wernffrwd (although access to the wider Gower). This presents an opportunity to develop a community resource, accessible to a broad range of 'users'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spread of Japanese knotweed</li> <li>• Limited capacity of the site to expand if it becomes well used (apart from acquiring missing parcel of land)</li> <li>• Any unknown ground conditions linked to previous uses of the site</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities linked to the health and wellbeing agenda</li> <li>• Improved biodiversity - new habitats will create points of interest in terms of attracting new wildlife to the woodland</li> <li>• Group and education usage linked to primary school and Scouts</li> <li>• Contracted volunteer co-ordinator role (on a short-term contract) to help develop the volunteer base</li> <li>• Provide new 'training' opportunities for footballers / rugby players (running on trails)</li> <li>• Opportunities linked to uncovering rich (built and natural) heritage through interpretation</li> <li>• Securing 'missing' parcel of land</li> <li>• The use of offsite signage including banners along the front of the football and rugby pitches (subject to negotiation) presents an important opportunity to raise awareness of the project amongst local residents and others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current, capacity of volunteers</li> <li>• Potential vandalism / anti-social behaviour</li> </ul>
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## 3.0 Penclawdd area profile

### 3.1 The community

The overall population of the ward is just under 3,600 residents (3,569), which is the 12<sup>th</sup> lowest ward population in Swansea. At a county level, the population of the County and City of Swansea is forecast to increase from 249,275 residents in 2022 to 264,213 by 2042.<sup>2</sup>

A summary area profile for Penclawdd ward<sup>3</sup> is set out below:

- Population: 3,600 (source: mid-2020 estimates, rounded - Office for National Statistics / ONS)
- Neighbouring Wards: Gowerton, Fairwood, Gower
- Area: 1,412 hectares / 14.12 km<sup>2</sup> (ONS, 2020)
- Population Density (2020): 253 people per km<sup>2</sup>
- Population Change (2015 to 2020): 0 / +1% (ONS estimates, rounded)
- Employment: 600 (ONS workplace estimate, 2020). Major employers: Crofty Industrial Estate occupiers, Swansea Council (school)

We set out in the table below a breakdown of the age profile of residents living in the ward and how this compares to the average for Swansea. The representation of toddlers, young children and teenagers up to the age of 15, living in the ward of Penclawdd, is slightly below the average representation recorded for the wider area (Swansea).

At the same time, representation of older adults those aged 45 to 64, 65 to 74 and 75 and over, living in the ward, is above the average for the wider area.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: 2018-based projections for local authorities in Wales, Welsh Government

<sup>3</sup> Source: Information, Research & GIS (Strategic Delivery Unit), April 2022. Please note: The information in this profile relates to the former ward prior to the Council elections on 5 May 2022. Profiles on the basis of the new wards will be developed as soon as possible.

Population	Penclawdd		Swansea %
	Total	%	
Aged: 0 - 4	125	3.5%	4.9%
5 - 15	375	10.5%	12.0%
16 - 24	296	8.3%	13.6%
25 - 44	727	20.4%	25.3%
45 - 64	1,025	28.7%	24.4%
65 - 74	553	15.5%	10.5%
75+	468	13.1%	9.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,569</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Information & GIS - Swansea Council, April 2022*

The number of residents within the ward with a long-term health problem or disability is 884. This represents 24.3% of the available population, this is slightly higher than the average recorded for Swansea. There is also a higher percent of one person households with residents aged 65 and over when compared to the average for Swansea (15.3% vs 13.4%).

In terms of the Welsh Index of Multiple deprivation, there are two Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) for Penclawdd and there is a significant difference between the two areas. Penclawdd 2 is more heavily deprived, ranking 86<sup>th</sup> out of 148 in Swansea and 1,255<sup>th</sup> of 1909 (this compares to 112 and 1667 respectively for Penclawdd 1).

Penclawdd 2 LSOA ranks relatively high in the deprivation index in respect of health and employment domains.

The table below presents an overview of the socio-economic profile of the ward. Encouragingly, in terms of employment and the classification of job 'types,' Penclawdd has a higher representation of residents who work in higher managerial, administrative and professional positions when compared to the average for Swansea. A similar pattern is repeated for residents in intermediate occupations. At the same time, the percentage of residents who have never worked and long-term unemployed is lower than the average for Swansea.

Socio-economic classification (NS-SeC)	Penclawdd	Penclawdd %	Swansea %
All usual residents aged 16 - 74	2,645	100%	100%
1 - 2. Higher managerial, administrative & professional	874	33.0%	27.5%
3 - 4. Intermediate occupations	661	25.0%	20.3%
5 - 7. Routine and manual occupations	847	32.0%	33.9%
8. Never worked and long-term unemployed	82	3.1%	5.2%
Not classified (full-time students)	181	6.8%	13.1%

Source: Information & GIS - Swansea Council, April 2022

In terms of economic activity within the ward, there is a higher percentage of residents, aged 16 – 74, who are classified as being economic active when compared to Swansea (65.9% vs 63%). The percentage of all benefit claimants in the ward is below the average for Swansea.

### 3.2 What does this mean for Graig Y Coed?

- The representation of older adults has implications in terms of designing the paths (in respect of gradients), the surface material in the upper-level car park and the position of facilities such as benches. It should be noted that the topography of the site will make access more difficult to older adults.
- The development of an accessible community woodland will provide opportunities for improving health and wellbeing. At the same-time, through volunteering there will be opportunities to reduce social isolation.
- Providing access to attractive outdoor environments at nil cost is likely to be an important consideration for Graig y Coed.

## 4.0 Consultation and primary research

### 4.1 Stakeholder engagement

As part of carrying out this feasibility study we engaged with a number of key stakeholders and interested parties and below we set out the direct feedback from the consultation exercise (please see **Appendix One** for the list of consultees, some of whom we met face-to-face on the site visit). It should be highlighted that consultees support the regeneration of the site to create an accessible community woodland and recreational resource.

#### The current proposals

The proposals as developed by the Volunteer Committee were recognised as being the ‘core offer’ and received broad support. Opportunities to enhance the proposals include, for example, the introduction of a shallow clay lined pond as part of the wider proposals to enhance the site’s biodiversity. It was generally felt by some consultees that the introduction of facilities such as toilets or a catering offer within the site boundary should be avoided or toilets could be considered as part of a secondary phase of development. Please see additional commentary below.

It was felt by consultees that the development of an accessible community woodland would have broad appeal among local residents and other user groups and would become an important ‘resource.’ The project is not defined by age, disability or disadvantage and could act as ‘focal point’ for the community.

It was highlighted that there is a storage room within the pavilion building which subject to further discussion could potentially be used by the volunteers.

#### Nature – creates a further reason to visit

There is existing wildlife present within the site boundary including butterflies (Autumn Blue), plants (orchids) and birdlife. Seasonal patterns of birdlife can also be observed over the marshes and estuary which is a further benefit. The investment will lead to the creation of new habitats and the ‘nature’ present on site could become a ‘draw’ or ‘attractor’ in its own right. However, a careful balance needs to be achieved between nature and recreational usage.

#### Group usage

It was felt that a dedicated space in the woodland setting could lend itself well to supporting informal group usage. From the Scouts through to the Penclawdd Primary School and

community led walks. Other group usage such as ‘yoga in the woods’ was also mentioned and use of the trails by the rugby club (for training purposes).

It is recognised that the Scouts (currently a Cub Pack) are seeking to develop Scout and Beaver packs too. They currently have limited external space associated with the building they use (however, they have access to a woodland area near Gowerton and a campsite near Swansea Airport).

### **Opportunities linked to wellbeing**

It is felt that there is demand for community led health walking activities in Penclawdd and Graig y Coed could be integrated within a looped route for future group walking activities. Swansea Council has provided training for a walking group leader in Penclawdd and in Swansea there are a significant number of established health walking groups. Apart from the physical health benefits wider health benefits will be linked to reducing social isolation (through group activities and volunteering).

During discussions with one consultee, Andrew Price, it was highlighted that Graig Y Coed could potentially be used for social prescribing, whereby the natural environment lends itself well to foraging activities, through to craft activities and the simple act of being in the woodland with a fire and a hot drink, all of which support health and wellbeing. The site benefits from a population being on its doorstep who are within walking distance of the woodland. Andrew Price is from Dryad Bushcraft and offers bushcraft activities and manages a social prescribing pilot project at Park Woods in Gower, where he has also regenerated a woodland site.



*Image kindly provided by Andrew Price.*



## Tourism

North Gower has attracted private sector investment in to the development of the tourism offer for example, the Rake and Riddle and GG's Gelato. The community woodland, particularly from the upper car park presents a good viewing point (particularly in terms of watching the sunset). Additionally, research commissioned by the Swansea Tourism team identified that the natural landscape of is a key attractor for visitors with 67% of visitors stating that the destination has a strong reputation for green tourism. Also, 46% of visitors take part in a low-level walking activity whilst on holiday (a low-level walk is less than 2 miles in length).

It is felt that investment in and the development of the community woodland would complement the wider tourism product. There is also a strong strategic link to Visit Wales who will be pushing 'trails' as a key theme during 2023.

## Other market considerations

Given the level of passing traffic on The Promenade, it would be beneficial to invest in roadside signage to promote the community woodland to passing motorists (helping to raise awareness). This would be alongside other marketing activities.

## Revenue support and volunteers

It was felt that Llanrhidian Higher Community Council would responsible for managing any future capital expenditure. It was it was recognised that there would be a need for ongoing revenue support for the project.

The role of volunteers will be central to the ongoing maintenance of the woodland, although there is a need to support the development of the 'pool' of volunteers (potentially by employing on a short-term contract a volunteer co-ordinator). Please see below for further commentary.

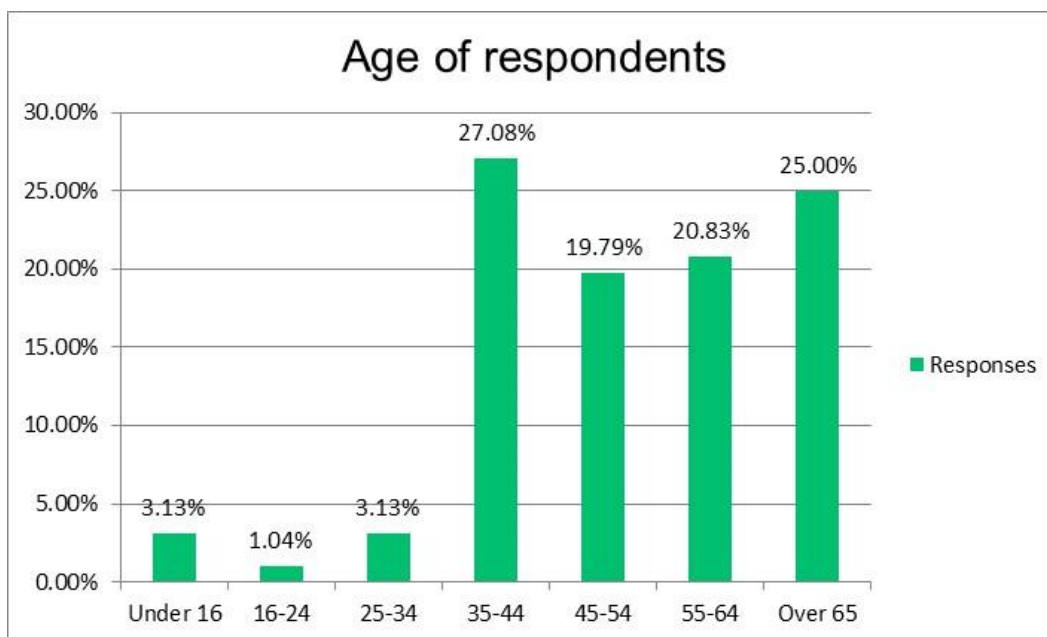
## 4.2 Primary research

Part of the feasibility study involved developing a short online survey which was promoted by a flyer which was distributed by Llanrhidian Higher Community Council. The survey generated just over 100 responses (104). Below we set the key findings to emerge in respect of developing the offer at Graig Y Coed.

**It should be noted that previously the Volunteer Committee had carried out a programme of engagement which generated 79 emails of support for the project. Additionally, 36 individuals offered to provide 'hands-on' help to support the project.**

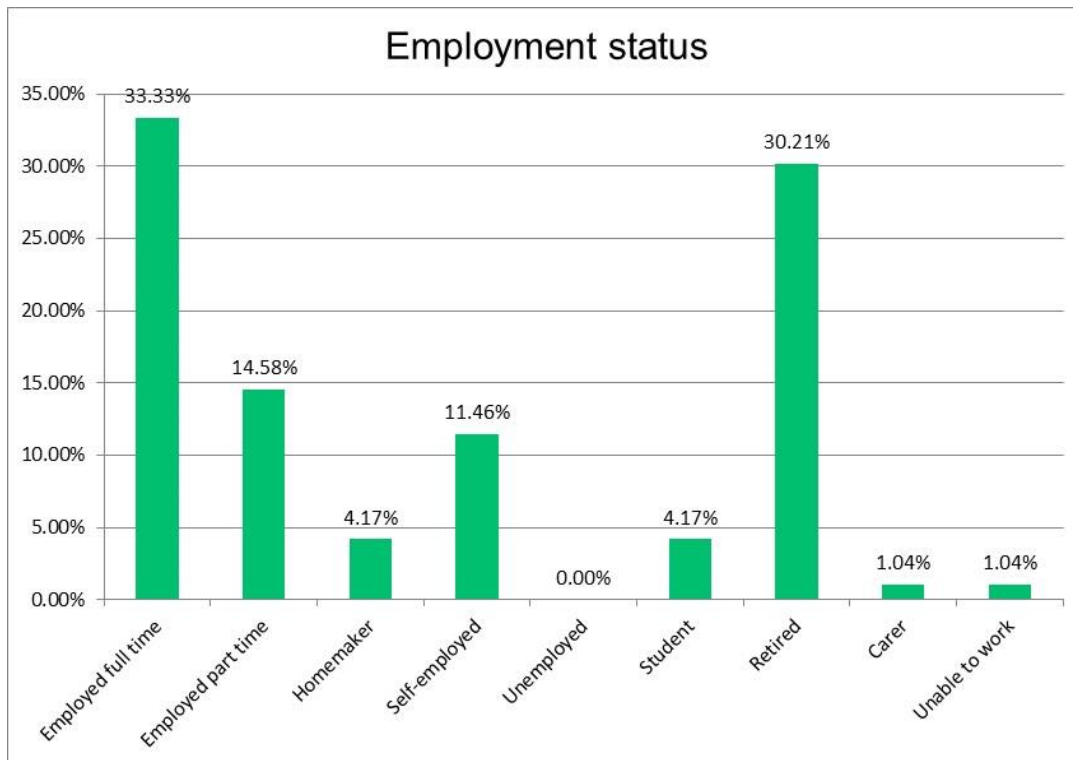
#### 4.2.1 Participants

The chart below provides a breakdown of the age range of participants. As can be seen a significant percentage of participants (25%) are aged 65 and over.



- 74% of participants live within 10-minutes of Graig Y Coed
- 22% of participants live between 11 to 20-minutes of Graig Y Coed
- 4% of participants live between 21 and 30-minutes of Graig Y Coed
  
- 63% of participants are female
- 36% of participants are male
- 1% preferred not to say
  
- 98% of participants are white
- 1% mixed or multiple ethnic groups
- 1% any other ethnic group

Participants were asked to describe their employment status 59% are in some form of paid employment (fulltime, part-time or self-employed), 30% are retired, 4% are homemakers, 4% are students and just over 1% are either carers or unable to work.<sup>4</sup> Please see chart below.



#### 4.2.2 Current usage

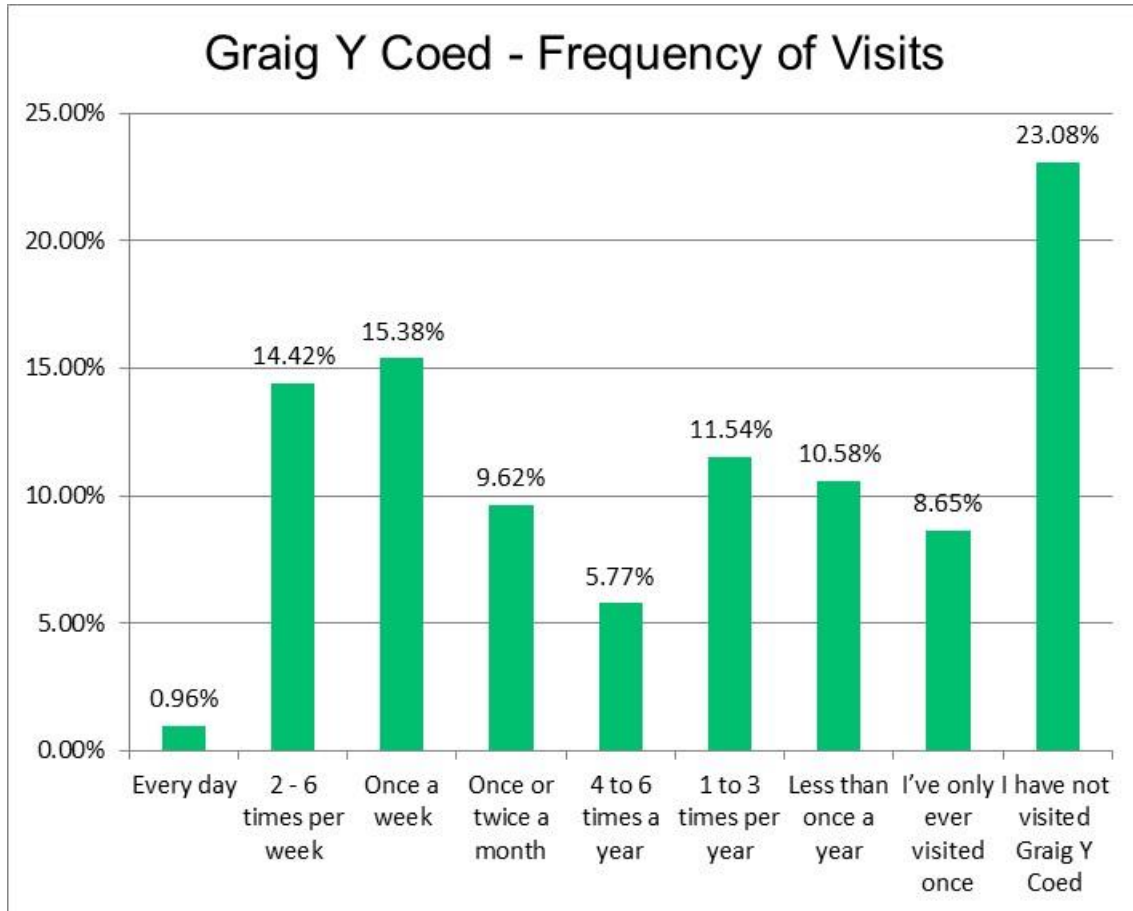
During the consultation and site visits it has been highlighted that there is very limited site use at present and it is difficult to access. However the survey has asked about current usage and we set out the responses below:

Participants were asked how often they visit the woodland - excluding walking along the lower pathway adjacent to the football and rugby pitches or the public footpath along the upper boundary of the site linking Penclawdd and Mount Hermon Chapel.

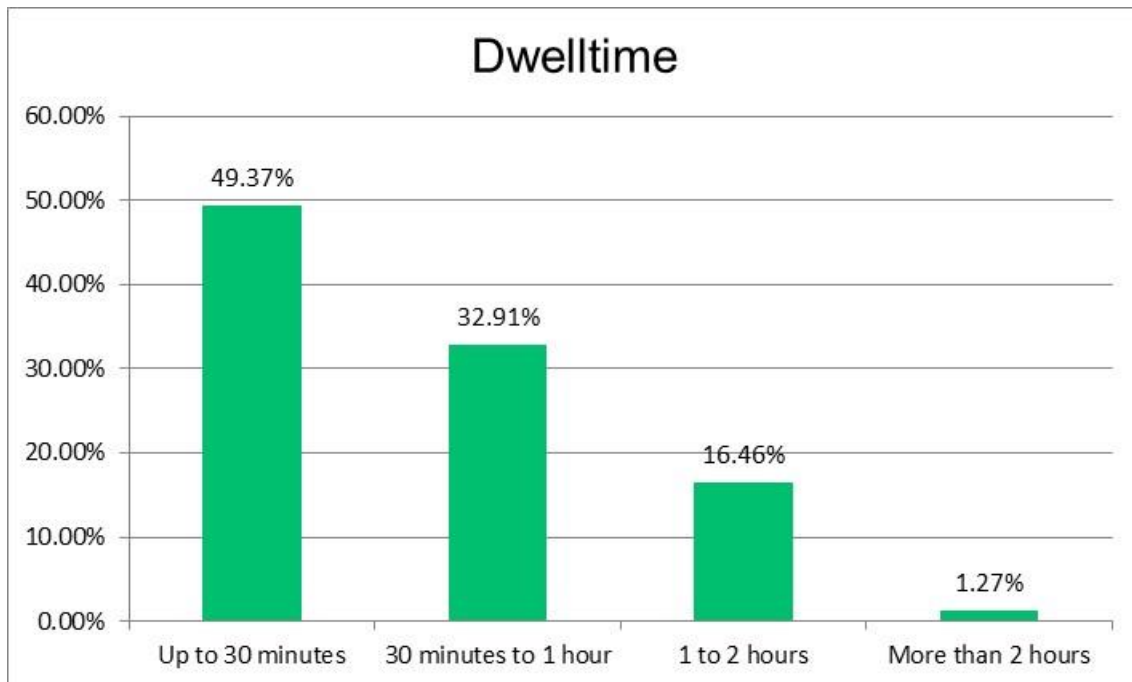
Overall 40% of participants visit at least once a month and 31% of participants visit at least once a week

9% of participants had visited once and 23% of participants had not previously visited the woodland. Please see chart below for detailed breakdown.

<sup>4</sup> Figures have been rounded



In terms of dwelltime the just under 50% of participants who visit Graig Y Coed spend up to 30-minutes onsite and further 33% spend between 30 and 60-minutes onsite. Less than 18% of participants spend more than 60-minutes onsite. Please see chart below for detailed breakdown.



Concerned about including this

#### 4.2.3 Looking to the future core component elements of the 'offer'

Participants in the survey were asked whether they felt individual elements of the potential 'offer' were either essential, desirable or not necessary. In the table below we set out the results. We also show overall support (bolded) which combines both the essential and desirable columns.

Elements	Essential	Desirable	Support the idea	Not necessary
Seating	66.32%	31.58%	<b>97.90%</b>	2.11%
A network of self-guided walking trails	45.83%	50.00%	<b>95.83%</b>	4.17%
Site plan / map at gateways into the woodland	64.58%	31.25%	<b>95.83%</b>	4.17%
Enhanced biodiversity	58.51%	37.23%	<b>95.74%</b>	4.26%
Directional signage	53.61%	40.21%	<b>93.82%</b>	6.19%
Areas for featuring wildlife and/or the heritage of the site/local area	55.32%	38.30%	<b>93.62%</b>	6.38%
Improvements to the upper-level car park (opposite Mount Hermon Chapel)	59.79%	28.87%	<b>88.66%</b>	11.34%
Play trail within the woodland	41.05%	47.37%	<b>88.42%</b>	11.58%
A picnic area	46.81%	37.23%	<b>84.04%</b>	15.96%
Appropriate interpretation	31.52%	52.17%	<b>83.69%</b>	16.30%
Outdoor classroom facility	21.05%	58.95%	<b>80.00%</b>	20.00%
Orienteering trail	18.09%	58.51%	<b>76.60%</b>	23.40%
Toilets	28.42%	46.32%	<b>74.74%</b>	25.26%
Small-scale organised events / activities e.g. forest bathing, yoga, nature walks, bushcrafts	21.05%	52.63%	<b>73.68%</b>	26.32%
Play area	19.57%	50.00%	<b>69.57%</b>	30.43%
Dog activity area (fenced)	26.60%	37.23%	<b>63.83%</b>	36.17%
Men's Shed type of offer	11.96%	41.30%	<b>53.26%</b>	46.74%
Refreshment offer	7.53%	43.01%	<b>50.54%</b>	49.46%

The table shows that there out of the 18 different elements 14 generated a combined percentage of over 70% (i.e. at least 70% of participants with felt the 'element' or proposed 'use' or 'activity' was either essential or desirable). This helps to demonstrate demand for developing a community woodland recreational and environmental resource.

It is important to highlight that several 'uses' identified in the primary research generated a high score, but some we do not think are suitable. For example, a dedicated play area generated a positive score in terms of overall support (70%), however, funding has been secured to upgrade the play area in the village. Therefore, there is little merit to introduce another dedicate play offer within the community woodland. Although, there may be opportunities to introduce play elements along part of a proposed trail (subject to funding).

Similarly, toilets generated an overall positive score of 75%. There are a number of pros associated with introducing a dedicate toilet block – increasing appeal, broadening access and increasing dwelltime. However, there are a number of constraints associated with this option particularly in terms of capital ask (likely to be over £150,000 for a standalone toilet block) and finding a suitable location within the site boundary. Importantly ongoing costs in terms of opening, closing and cleaning the toilets on a daily basis, periodic maintenance and utility costs will not be insignificant. A potentially lower cost option could involve introducing two external W/Cs adjoining the Pavilion building itself (which has existing services). The introduction of toilets may be better suited to a second phase of

development. For 'prebooked' group visits it may be possible to use the existing toilets in the pavilion building (subject to negotiation). It was highlighted that public toilets are available in the Penclawdd Health Centre, which are within walking distance.

Interestingly, the lowest combined score was generated by the idea of introducing a refreshment offer – only 50.54% of participants either felt this use was either essential or desirable. During the consultation it was felt that introducing a refreshment offer would displace trade from the existing catering providers located in Penclawdd and should not be taken forward.

Participants could also [provide further comments](#), some of which are set out below:

- *“Full disabled access is essential. The beauty of the natural rugged woodland should be preserved. Apart from a classroom facility no extra buildings should be erected on the site.”*
- *“Dog bins essential. Decent paths for all weather use.”*
- *“The site is overgrown at the moment but it is home to some rare nesting birds (including linnet and song thrush, both red listed species) which I have seen often in the spring and summer. There is also a patch of wild native bluebells (below the lower path) as well as moths and butterflies, including humming bird hawk moth, small blue butterfly, small tortoise shell, peacock and others. I hope the site can be managed in such a way that those species remain and are encouraged to thrive. I personally would not want to see the site over developed but, instead, managed and maintained and then further enhanced with native wild flowers and trees. An ecological survey needs to be done before any development plans are considered as you will have a clear picture of what is there are how those species can be helped to thrive. Butterfly Conservation and BTO can help with this.”*
- *“It is essential to provide a footpath access from the car park at Graig y Coed to Hermon car park as many local people feel daunted by the prospect of negotiating the extremely narrow lane by car. If there is suitable funding available it would be wonderful to widen the lane or at least provide additional passing places.”*
- *“In an area where horses are widespread, I would have expected a riding trail or bridleway.”*
- *“I would want this development to be dog friendly as the majority of people I meet on my weekly walk have dogs with them. This is a lovely walk now although no significant signage. I personally I would prefer to keep this natural environment with enhanced footpaths and those that are there maintained and not allowed to become impassable as many are at present.”*

- *“I think the key issue is access for people who live further than a walk away. Having good car parking unlocks the site. Make it feel owned and cared for. People don't need too much to enjoy nature. Adventure and fitness trails encourage kids and younger people.”*

There we **some concerns**:

- *“The car park is currently used as a location for the taking and sale of illegal recreational drugs. Some of the young people involved, including girls, look to be under 16 and as such must be classed as vulnerable. This problem must be addressed if this scheme is to be any kind of success.”*
- *“Waste of money as people are having difficulty with rising costs and utilities. Money better invested assisting people to live and improving the shocking road condition in the village.”*
- *“As is always the case, litter will be a concern as has been proved by similar projects throughout the UK. The North Gower area is a hotspot for illegal fly tipping and this must be addressed before the launch of this project.”*

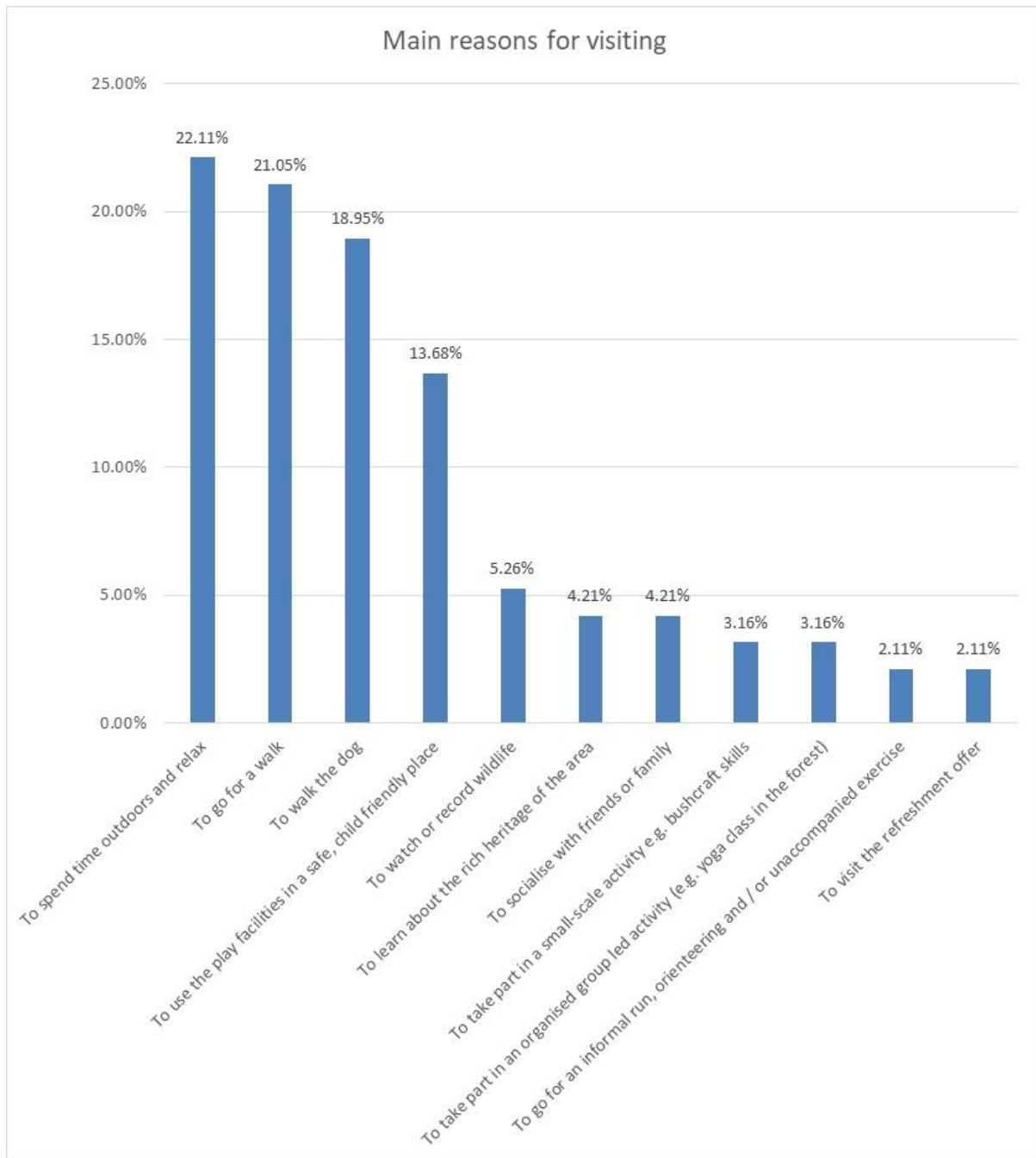
#### **4.2.4 Future demand**

Participants were asked *“Would investment in the facilities and services you identified above as either essential or desirable encourage you to visit either for the first time or more often?”* 94% (93.81%) of participants stated they would, 3.09% stated they were not sure and 3.09% stated no.

#### **4.2.5 Motivations for visiting the community woodland**

The top three main reasons why people will visit Graig Y Coed in the future account for 62% of all responses. The key reasons are to spend time outdoors, to go for a walk and to walk the dog. Please see chart below for breakdown.





Please note that whilst ‘to take part in a formal school visit’ was not selected by anyone engagement with Penclawdd Primary School identified that the school is keen to use the woodland. The school is certainly supportive of the new woodland area. It would present an opportunity to expand outdoor learning for pupils and possibly involving club based activities. The older pupils will be able to walk there and enjoy the experiences it offers. It will also benefit the wider Community in which the children live.

#### 4.2.6 Key benefits

Participant were asked in the future how important they felt that their visits to the community woodland will be in terms of four different areas:

- 87% of participants felt the visits would be important or very important in terms of mental or physical benefits
- 86% of participants felt the visits would be important or very important in terms of a place to learn about and connect with nature
- 82% of participants felt the visits would be important or very important in terms of spending time with friends and family
- 79% of participants felt the visits would be important or very important in terms of being a relatively inexpensive day out

Please see table below for a detailed breakdown.

	Unimportant	Slightly important	No real opinion	Important	Very important	Total Important + Very Important
Mental or physical benefits	3.09%	6.19%	4.12%	41.24%	45.36%	86.60%
A place to learn about and connect with nature	4.12%	4.12%	6.19%	39.18%	46.39%	85.57%
Time with friends and family	7.22%	3.09%	7.22%	42.27%	40.21%	82.48%
A relatively inexpensive day out	6.19%	4.12%	10.31%	38.14%	41.24%	79.38%

It is clear to see that the development of the woodland will provide a valuable space not only for wellbeing, but also about being able to connect with nature and spending time with friends and family.

#### 4.3 Summary

In summary there is broad support both from the research participants (members of the community), Councillors, stakeholders and interested parties for the development of a community woodland / recreation offer at Graig Y Coed.

## 5.0 Development options and evaluation

In terms of evaluating the option developed by the Volunteer Committee it is important to show that this has been tested against other alternative options, including a baseline option (continue as it) and a medium-scale intervention.

Below we set out three core options:

- Option One: Continue as is (the baseline)
- Option Two: Community woodland (developed by the Volunteer Committee)
- Option Three: Medium scale intervention

For each of the options we set out a short description, rationale and key audiences. We also identify key strengths / benefits and weaknesses / constraints associated with the option.

### 5.1 Core options

#### 5.1.1 Option One: Continue as is (baseline)

<b>Short description</b>	To continue as is with limited ongoing maintenance	
<b>Rationale</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To minimise costs and risk to the Council</li> </ul>	
<b>Key audiences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local residents (the latest survey highlighted some local usage)</li> </ul>	
<b>Strengths / benefits</b>		<b>Weaknesses / Constraints</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently, no real additional resource required from the Council (human or financial)</li> <li>• Currently, no capital funding requirement</li> <li>• Straightforward to continue as is</li> <li>• Low risk (financial) approach for Llanrhidian Higher Community</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remains an underutilised site</li> <li>• Does not meet a 'community' need as identified in the consultation or primary research</li> <li>• Limited health, wellbeing or environmental benefits achieved,</li> <li>• Heritage remains hidden (and potentially lost) f</li> </ul>

<p>Council (given current economic crisis where budgets are being squeeze)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for negative PR is site is left to 'decline'</li> <li>• Represents a missed opportunity</li> </ul>
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### 5.1.2 Option Two: Community woodland

<p>Short description</p>	<p>As developed by the Volunteer Committee the offer focusses on improving accessibility to Graig Y Coed by introducing a formal network of trails and supporting recreational infrastructure and interpretation .</p> <p>This is alongside enhancing the biodiversity of the site's setting</p>	
<p>Rationale</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regenerates a former industrial site to create an accessible community woodland (creating a 'space' suitable for all ages)</li> <li>• Provides opportunities for informal recreation and improving health and wellbeing</li> <li>• Secures the future of the site for the local community</li> <li>• Meets an identified need</li> </ul>	
<p>Key audiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local residents</li> <li>• Potential for some limited group usage (e.g. Scouts and local primary school)</li> <li>• Some limited potential for the visitor market</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Strengths / benefits</b></p>		<p><b>Weaknesses / Constraints</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speed of delivery in comparison to Option Three</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No revenue generating opportunity</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing 'Project Champion'</li> <li>• Creates a more welcoming environment and a focal point for the community</li> <li>• Meets a community need</li> <li>• Relatively low capital ask</li> <li>• Provides opportunities for volunteering</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing 'revenue' cost associated with bring the site back into use</li> <li>• Additional human resource required to manage which could involve the Llanrhidian Higher Community Council and on a day-to-day basis volunteers and specialist support from a contractor (as and when required)</li> <li>• Only limited provision of visitor infrastructure e.g. no toilets (helping to reduce costs but this will impact on appeal and dwelltime)</li> </ul>
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### 5.1.3 Option Three: Medium level development scenario – hub building

<p><b>Short description</b></p>	<p>This builds upon Option Two, as developed by the Volunteer Committee. The key difference is that this option includes a visitor hub building incorporating a small-scale café and toilets.</p>
<p><b>Rationale</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regenerates a former industrial site to create a community woodland</li> <li>• Provides opportunities for informal recreation and improving health and wellbeing</li> <li>• Secures the future of the site for the local community</li> <li>• Generates earned income</li> <li>• Creates employment opportunities and skills / training development through apprenticeships (landscape management and catering / hospitality)</li> </ul>

<p>Key audiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local residents</li> <li>• Local groups (e.g. Scouts, local primary school and others given provision of building)</li> <li>• Some penetration of visitor market to Gower</li> </ul>
Strengths / benefits	Weaknesses / Constraints
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revenue generating opportunities</li> <li>• Job creation and training opportunities</li> <li>• Provides all weather facility encouraging some year-round usage</li> <li>• Accommodates a wider range of user groups in an attractive built space</li> <li>• Creates a stronger community asset</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High ongoing revenue subsidy required placing considerable 'burden' on Llanrhidian Higher Community Council</li> <li>• Significantly higher maintenance and management costs and resourcing</li> <li>• Likely to displace 'trade' from catering outlets located in Penclawdd</li> <li>• High capital ask, particularly in relation to developing visitor hub type of building</li> <li>• Lack of experience of managing this type of projects during the operational phase</li> <li>• Difficult to accommodate on the site (no real accessible location to introduce a visitor hub type of building)</li> <li>• No project champion</li> </ul>

## 5.2 Evaluation criteria

We set out below the scoring / evaluation criteria which has been used to assess the different options.

Evaluation criteria	
Site and environmental considerations	
Physical site fit / integration (within existing landholding)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How well does the option fit in terms of location / wider space use requirements?</li> </ul>
Environmental impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The likely environmental impact particularly with regards to sustainability, waste, pollution and the suitability of the proposed use and with regards to the landscape and setting of Graig y Coed</li> </ul>
Market considerations	
Market appeal / fit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential to engage with the local market place (including group usage)</li> </ul>
Generate visits from wider marketplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generates visits from the wider tourism market in Gower</li> </ul>
Capital requirement and project delivery	
Capital costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have allocated a range of indicative high-level costs on a sliding scale for the scoring in respect of the estimated capital requirement – from the highest to lowest</li> </ul>
Practical project deliverability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ease of deliverability including development process (i.e. is it straightforward or are there concerns about taking forward / implementing the option?)</li> </ul>
Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of risk associated with delivery of the option - relating to the overall risks associated with taking forward the proposed option including securing funding, identifying a project champion and building the offer</li> </ul>

Operational and financial	
Complexity to operate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complexity to manage during the operational phase</li> </ul>
Revenue generation	
Operational costs	
Impacts	
Wider economic impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to generate direct and indirect employment opportunities and wider economic impacts through the supply chain</li> <li>• Ability to generate social and well-being opportunities for the local community</li> </ul>
Social and well-being benefits	

Please note a planning assessment has not been carried out.

### 5.3 Scoring matrix

Each option has been assessed and scored under each sub-criterion in an objective way to be able to compare the different options. The scores are appraised and allocated based on a range of Zero to Ten. For certain categories, e.g., development risks, a low score indicative that there high-levels of risk (these categories are shown with an asterisk).



Development options	SITE & ENVIRONMENTAL			MARKET			CAPITAL FUNDING & PROJECT DELIVERY				OPERATIONAL & FINANCIAL				IMPACTS			Total weighted score
	Physical site fit / integration (existing landholding)	Environmental impact	Site and environmental Subtotal (unweighted)	Market fit/appeal with community	Attract users from wider marketplace	Market Subtotal (unweighted)	Indicative capital cost*	Practical project deliverability	Development risk*	Development Subtotal (unweighted)	Complexity to operate	Revenue generation potential	Operational costs including maintenance*	Operational and financial Subtotal (unweighted)	Wider economic impacts	Social and wellbeing benefits	Impacts Subtotal (unweighted)	
Weighting	2.0	2.5		2.75	1.0		1.0	1.5	2.0		1.5	1.5	2.5		1.5	2.5		
Option One: Continue as is (baseline)	9.0	6.0	15.0	3.0	0.0	3.0	9.0	9.0	8.0	26.0	9.0	0.0	9.0	18.0	0.0	2.0	2.0	120.8
Option Two: Community woodland (as per community volunteers)	9.0	8.0	17.0	8.0	3.0	11.0	7.0	7.0	6.0	20.0	8.0	1.0	6.0	15.0	2.0	6.0	8.0	139.0
Option Three: Medium level development scenario – hub building	4.0	6.0	10.0	8.0	6.0	14.0	2.0	2.0	1.0	5.0	1.0	5.0	1.0	7.0	5.0	8.0	13.0	97.0

## 5.4 Summary commentary

In summary all options have clear benefits and constraints associated with them.

**Option Two**, the low-key development, as prepared by the Volunteer Committee generated the highest overall score. It is more appropriate in form and scale. The option will have a positive environmental impact on the woodland setting and it also has a strong community focus and is more straightforward to deliver and operate (with the use of volunteers). The option similar to Option Three there will require ongoing financial and human support to manage the woodland, but the project will deliver a wide range of positive outcomes.

As part reviewing Option Two there are opportunities to enhance the offer and these could be considered as a secondary phase (subject to securing additional capital funding). This could be used to ‘refresh’ the offer.

- Small-scale play equipment or sculptures along part of the trail
- Physical shelter (wooden)

Please see **Appendix Two**.

**Option Three** has a number of benefits, particularly in terms of providing scope for more year-round usage and generating some employment. However, in our view the it represents a challenging and high-risk option to take forward particularly from a development perspective as it would be challenging and costly to integrate a hub or visitor building and the supporting car parking required within the site boundary. During the operational phase the cost to manage and maintain the site and visitor hub would not be covered by income generated onsite and the option would require a significant level of ongoing annual revenue support. Furthermore, the introduction of a refreshment offer would duplicate and compete with the existing offer within Penclawdd (displacing business from the village). Additionally, within the wider study there is the nearby development of Penllergare Valley Woods, which will incorporate a high-quality visitor centre and associated facilities, which would to some level would compete with this option.

In terms of **Option One**, (the baseline option to continue as is) generated the second highest score, but in our view, this represents a missed opportunity for the community.

In terms of **interpretation themes**, given the ambition to increase the tree cover, an alternative interpretation narrative could be developed around the climate change agenda exploring the former extraction uses associated with the site and how the planting of trees

will lead to the capture and storage of CO2. A further consideration is the seasonal pattern of wildlife in the salt marshes and estuary. In terms of the wider environment, it is important to note that there is increasing consumer interest in the ‘environment’ – this can be seen on a number of different levels, for example: The RSPB has over one million members and the Annual Report notes “2021 Big Garden Birdwatch, which took place between 29 and 31 January 2021, was our biggest ever. More than a million people took part in the mass birdwatch” and people ‘reconnecting to nature’ throughout the cycles of lockdowns over the last 34 months.

### 5.5 Indicative capital costs

As part of the 2021 Lottery application capital costs were identified<sup>5</sup> and these are set out below (net of VAT). A 20% increase has been applied to the majority of the previous costs supplied.

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<sup>5</sup> Quotes were provided by contractors

Items	Indicative cost
Vegetation clearance to form paths and open areas (J Davis)	£5,872.35
Three concrete-founded access gates with motorbike inhibitors, plus disabled access kissing gate (J Davis)	£3,210.00
Capel Hermon car park limestone base and Tarmacadam (60mm) surface installation (J Davis)	£12,803
Capel Hermon car park concrete founded railings / safety barrier (J Davis)	£4,625
Fencing (Ark Fencing Supplies)	£14,100
Seating with concrete installations (Ark Fencing Supplies)	£6,960
Signs with concrete installations (tba)	£10,200
Laying paths with treated timber edging, some Tarmac (J Davis)	£34,800
Scouts / Guides / Picnic area and secured installations (J Davis)	£5,400
Classroom area and secured installations (J Davis)	£5,400
Trees with planting stakes and protection (various suppliers, some free)	£4,800
Machinery / tools for site maintenance (Celtic Mowers). Secure storage free	£10,008
Roadside banners	£500.00
Project website (using wordpress or similar)	£3,000
Community launch event	£2,000
<b>Indicative cost - sub-total</b>	<b>£123,678</b>
Contingency @ 20%	£24,736
PT Project Manager to take forward (funding, development)	£12,000
<b>Indicative cost excluding VAT and inflationary increases</b>	<b>£160,414</b>

Prior to any funding application these costs should be subject to detailed design work, a technical site assessment and input from a project QS.

We have included a contingency (20%) alongside an allowance for a part-time officer to project manage and take the project forward (pre-development, funding and during the development phases), a new project website and community launch event to celebrate the project.

The schedule of indicative capital costs does not take into account increasing tender prices or inflation. Contractors are currently extremely concerned about risk – largely due to supply and cost insecurities. It is therefore particularly challenging to accurately cost at this stage. Please note costs are likely to increase in the coming periods.

There will be the need for professional fees e.g. pre-development design, site surveys<sup>6</sup>, planning and QS inputs etc (costs not included). To measure the impact we would also recommend installing trail counters and the development of an interpretation plan, developed by a specialist consultant, would also be beneficial (these items are not costed).

During the site visit the presence of Japanese Knotweed was mentioned and the cost to eradicate this is not included within the schedule of capital costs.

A sustainable procurement process should be adopted whereby local suppliers (contractors) are used.

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<sup>6</sup> We understand that the Volunteer Committee has received offers of support from ecologists and other people with specialist skillsets

## 6.0 Delivery

### 6.1 Moving forward

#### 6.1.1 Pre and development phases

In terms of governance from the consultation it was broadly felt that Llanrhidian Higher Community Council, subject to further discussions, could be responsible for managing any capital and revenue funding which is required to deliver the project. They would also be responsible for overall site management.

In terms of any predevelopment work, funding applications and project managing the development phase we suggest funding is secured to provide 'additional human' resource to support Llanrhidian Higher Community Council.

#### 6.1.2 Operational phase

A Memorandum of Understanding would need to be prepared which would set out clear roles, responsibilities between Llanrhidian Higher Community Council and the Volunteer Committee ('Community Group' or groups) who would be involved in the ongoing day-to-day maintenance of the woodland.

Following on from the capital phase it was felt that the role for community involvement is critical in terms of the ongoing maintenance of the woodland. The form is yet to be decided but is likely that this could be led by the Volunteer Committee (Project Champions), which has been the driving force behind the project (there may be a role for the involvement of more than one community group). The Volunteer Committee are an un-constituted body.

It is recognised that specialist skills / services provided by a third-party contractor would also be required to support the volunteers.

Currently the 'volunteer' base is limited and there is a need to attract new volunteers to manage the woodland on an ongoing basis. It is recognised that during the earlier phase of community involvement a number of people offered to volunteer (including people with specialist skillset e.g. ecologists).

To help attract and develop the pool of volunteers it would be beneficial to recruit a part-time volunteer co-ordinator on a short-term contract (this role has not been costed).

Whilst volunteers often offer long-term commitment, there may be specific 'projects or initiatives within the woodland which require support on a short-term basis. These opportunities could be more attractive to undergraduate or postgraduate students at nearby Swansea University (or schools).

As part of developing the volunteer base consideration should also be given to identifying if there is an opportunity to introduce 'family volunteering' experiences, whereby family members can volunteer together.

Also, the skills of special interest volunteers, such as ecologists, could present opportunities to develop a volunteering programme linked to younger people so that they can build up knowledge and appreciation of the ecology (and heritage) of the local area through hands-on practical volunteering projects. We understand that the Volunteer Committee has access to volunteers with specialist skillsets e.g. ecologists.

### **6.1.3 Capital funding**

The funding strategy will need to be prepared which will require a co-ordinated approach between Llanrhidian Higher Community Council and Swansea Council with eligibility criteria that broadly supports the project and governance structures, for example, the built and natural heritage, climate change, education and community. Funding is likely to be secured from a mix of 'sources', which could include, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Shared Prosperity Fund and S106 agreements. A close watching brief needs to be kept as new funds emerge and funding criteria can change.

## **6.2 High-level financial analysis**

Key assumptions:

1. Costs are net of VAT
2. Inflation at 3% per annum
3. Some of the costs have been kindly provided by a local contractor
4. There is an allocation for support to the Volunteer Committee (training, clothing, sundries etc)

5. An allowance should be identified for additional support required within Llanrhidian Higher Community Council to manage the following the development phase
6. Insurance for the community woodland and volunteers would be bolted on to the Llanrhidian Higher Community Council at a nominal cost
7. No contingency has been included

It is recognised that there are no core/secured income generating opportunities and we set out below a high-level five year financial model, which similar to a number of recreational sites, shows a requirement for some ongoing revenue support.

Items (estimated costs)	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four	Year Five
Insurance (assumes within Community Council's own policy)	500	515	530	546	563
Purchase and maintenance of tools and equipment	250	1,000	1,030	1,061	1,093
Volunteer costs (assumes remains unconstituted body) - including allowance for training	2,400	2,472	2,546	2,623	2,701
Website hosting	150	155	159	164	169
Materials - annual bulbs, crush stones for paths, repairs to timber edges and hire of tracked power barrow (2 days)	1,375	1,416	1,459	1,502	1,548
<b>Third party contractor</b>					
Tree pruning / lift over hanging / low branches to pathway trees (1 Occasion January - March)	1,536	1,582	1,630	1,678	1,729
Non selective herbicide / fungicide application to pathway stone (3 Occasions March - November)	1,080	1,112	1,146	1,180	1,216
Removal of fallen branches / trees (as required - allowance of 1/2 day per annum)	210	216	223	229	236
Additional human resource within the Community Council (TBC)					
<b>Estimated annual costs</b>	<b>7,501</b>	<b>8,469</b>	<b>8,723</b>	<b>8,984</b>	<b>9,254</b>

It is likely after five years that some of the costs related to periodic maintenance will increase.



## 7.0 Concluding remarks

In summary the research and consultation has helped to identified support and demand to develop the community woodland project as set out by the Volunteer Committee. As the project is taken forward and matures subject to further funding there will be opportunities 'refresh' the offer by introducing 'new elements' to the woodland setting.

As noted, a partnership approach has been suggested for the ongoing maintenance of the site where the Volunteer Committee (which could include more than one community group) is responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of the woodland. Llanrhidian Higher Community Council would be responsible for financial management and overall management of the woodland site.

Whilst there is an identified ongoing revenue cost it is important to note the investment in creating a sustainable community woodland will lead to clear outcomes for the community, including but not limited to:

- Reducing social isolation through providing opportunities for volunteering and informal recreation usage and conservation of the site
- Supporting physical health and wellbeing through formal and informal recreational activities from play through to walking (preventative healthcare)
- Creating a place where biodiversity can thrive and through native tree species planting, carbon lock up will be achieved. The ongoing collection and monitoring of environmental data will provide opportunities for citizen science projects
- Building community resilience through the regeneration a woodland for and managed by the community (including usage by Scout and education groups)
- Revealing the hidden heritage of the site through interpretation

## Appendix One: List of consultees

- John Ashley, Walking Development Officer, Swansea Council
- Ceri Davies, Team Leader Specialist Parks & Technical Services, Swansea Council
- Councillor Leanne Davies - Chair
- Brian Farr, Local Area Co-ordinator
- Councillor Colin Guy
- Steve Hopkins, Tourism and Marketing Manager, Swansea Council
- Councillor Sarah Hughes
- Barbara James, Scouts
- Peter Kokelaar, Project Committee Member
- Sarah McCoubrey, Health and Well-being Manager, Swansea Council
- Councillor Melissa Roberts
- Jeremy Parkhouse PSLCC, Clerk to Llanrhidian Higher Community Council
- Andrew Price, Dryad Bushcraft
- Jacki Rees Thomas Play Sufficiency Officer, Swansea Council
- Terry Snell, Project Committee Member
- Neil Stokes, External Programme Officer, Swansea Council
- Mark Thomas, School Governor
- Vicki Thomson, Lead Programme Officer for Swansea , Swansea Council
- Geraldine Williams, Tourism Development Officer, Swansea Council
- Councillor Adam Woolliscroft

## Appendix Two: Examples

We set out below examples of specific elements to be included within the proposal for the community woodland alongside examples of other elements, which potentially, could also be incorporated within the scheme as a latter phase.



*Provision of information – map and text at entry to Broadland Country Park and Langley Park*



*Low impact natural play at RSPB Middleton Lakes*



*Play elements at Dinton Pastures Country Park*



*Outdoor shelter at Denham Country Park and shelter at RSPB Middleton Lakes*



*Part of outdoor classroom facility at Itchen Valley Country Park*



*Sense of welcome leading from the car park into Castell Henllys*



Long distance with historic interpretation [The Viewpoint – Battle of Prestonpans 1745](#)



Drumburn viewpoint looking out across the Nith Estuary



*Martin Mere – wildlife spotted on site (regularly updated)*