



Cronfa Amaethyddol Ewrop ar gyfer Datblygu Gwledig
Ewrop yn Buddsoddi mewn Ardaloedd Gwledig
European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
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Bwlch Nant yr Arian - Melindwr Bike Trail



What were the projects aims?

The project was to provide an intermediate grade mountain bike (MTB) trail starting from Nant yr Arian Visitor Centre, the trail was designed primarily to introduce new mountain bikers to off road cycling and single track trails. The trail complements the existing proficient and expert grade MTB trails at Nant Yr Arian as well as the new skills park.

The 'blue grade' design focuses on and considers the needs of beginners and intermediates, families and young children and some riders with disabilities. That said the trail is also ideal for cross country riders and general recreational mountain bikers. The trail was built with a minimum width of 1500mm with mostly moderate gradients.

How were these aims achieved?

The project constructed an intermediate grade mountain bike (MTB) trail starting from Nant yr Arian Visitor Centre called the Melindwr Trail to evoke a sense of place.

The project included four lengths of intermediate graded trail connected by forest road. The total length of the constructed intermediate grade trail is approximately 9km as it also uses some forest roads. We chose 4 of the most rewarding sections from a wider, fully costed suit of sections to make a completely new trail to which further sections can be added to in the future, if funds become available.

Who was involved?

The project involved a wide

cross section of Natural Resources Wales Staff from different departments of the business and external specialists and contractors.

How was the project funded?

£128,000 Tourism Amenity Investment Support (TAIS)
£32,000 Internal Funds. NRW

Where did you go for help and advice?

Learning was taken from the Blue grade Minotaur Trail at Coed y Brenin Forest Park, Snowdonia' The MinoTaur Trail is a 9km intermediate, blue grade mountain biking trail.

What has been the greatest achievement so far?

There were no blue grade trails in Mid Wales, the nearest being at Coed y Brenin in North Wales

or the Hafren Forest in South Wales. Our Melindwr Trail has provided an easy means for riders to progress from riding forest roads or well-serviced bridle paths to purpose built single-track trails with specifically designed features to reward the rider according to their level of skill. The construction of the trail has allowed for the creation of new markets and the development of existing ones.

It has challenged the perception that mountain biking requires high levels of skill and an expensive bike. Anyone with intermediate cycling skills and an entry-level mountain, cyclocross, gravel or even hybrid bike can gain real excitement from the features included in this build. It has encouraged visitors to develop these skills and gain more enjoyment from these features as they learn to ride them in a more challenging manner and then even move on to higher-grade trails. This has provided us with the opportunity to develop the market as novice riders are introduced to the activity in a more progressive manner. It has also enabled us to support Welsh Governments health and wellbeing objectives, enabling users who may have otherwise been intimidated when only offered the more technically challenging "Proficient" grade trails.

This development has provided the experiences and facilities that people want in this area and has increased the provision of facilities that encourage

diversity and inclusion and improved the quality of the tourism experience.

A significant increase can be seen in the site mountain bike usage in the year 2020; it can be assumed that some of the increase could be attributed to Covid restrictions and allowable travel; however, the figures do show a significant increase in usage of the trails some of which could justifiably be attributed to the new trail.

And the biggest challenge?

Future maintenance of the trail in such a challenging setting, with difficult terrain and the presence of a working forestry/timber production environment.

Ensuring the trail remains appealing to regular riders, so a development plan might need to be considered and incorporated into the long-term maintenance schedule, to introduce possible new features as time goes by.

Any tips for those setting up a similar project?

Set aside plenty of time to plan and assess the feasibility of the project. Seek advice from as many experienced parties as possible. Case study a variety of similar projects and plan for the unforeseeable as much as possible re: time and cost.

Ensure learning is taken from staff experienced in this field and in the process.

Internally we have numerous qualified and experienced staff from site staff to procurement and finance staff who have been involved in the development of several similar trails and who were able to offer a unique insight, with the ability to use past projects to help smooth out the process and offer unique solutions to common issues and sticking points.

Secure advice and guidance from consultants and advisors in this field at an early stage. We have been able to draw upon the expertise of external consultants and advisors who had contributed to previous similar projects and had insight into design/resource knowledge and understanding of technical aspects of blue graded mountain bike trail builds. We also had the advantage of a long preparation period. The project had been in the planning stages for many years and benefitted from contribution from different experts in the field, and having the trail designed before the funding was available made applying for the funding and compliances easier.

So deciding on where the investment needs to be applied first and then identify any funding otherwise we are led by funding and not strategy

What's next for your project?

Good maintenance and promotion and looking for further funding to enable and develop a Green all ability trail, to provide the complete Mountain Bike experience for all.