

Adroddiad Gwerthuso Prosiect / Project Evaluation Report

Enw'r Prosiect / Name of project: Community Engagement Officer to develop a Sensory Garden at Gwrych Castle

Beth oedd y mater a ddyluniwyd y prosiect i fynd i'r afael ag o? / What was the issue the project was designed to address?

1. To complete the creation of a sensory garden at Gwrych Castle
2. To create a new post funded by LEADER to deliver the completion of the garden and to provide volunteering opportunities
3. To enable volunteers to interact with their heritage and environment

Sut oedd y prosiect yn bwriadu mynd i'r afael â hyn / How did the project propose to tackle this?

Since the 1920s the gardens at Gwrych have been derelict. We harnessed the enthusiasm and skills of local volunteers to reinstate the formal terrace and transformed it into a community-created sensory garden that was opened for people in the local area to visit and enjoy. A dedicated new job role in the form of a community engagement officer enabled us to deliver this vision thanks to LEADER.

The volunteers learnt how to re-point the walls using lime mortar and then how to dig out and turn over the flower beds in preparation for planting. The volunteers planted the beds based on colour, smell, size and touch. The project has grown the volunteer's enthusiasm for heritage and the outdoors, by enabling them to see tangible changes as the garden grows and to keep on reaping the benefits of working as part of a team in an inclusive and friendly environment.

Pa wersi a ddysgwyd o gyflawni'r prosiect? A fyddech chi'n newid unrhyw beth os byddai y prosiect yn cael ei redeg eto?/ [What lessons were learnt from delivering the project? Would you change anything if the project was to be repeated?](#)

As with our other projects, to repeat the project again it would be much easier because of the relationships. During the middle of the project, we purchased the freehold of the castle we meant that huge changes came rather quickly for the trust. Due to the works being carried out on the gardens, we have an area set aside for volunteers to work in and for members of the public to enjoy whilst the wider site is derelict. This gives people a flavour of how the castle was like prior to it becoming a ruin. This project has been an important lesson for us as it has focussed us on how we want to tackle the future restoration of castle site as whole.

Beth oedd effaith y prosiect? Amlinellwch beth a gyflawnwyd, gan gynnwys unrhyw astudiaethau achos (os yn berthnasol. / [What has been the impact of the project? Please outline the achievements and include any case studies \(is appropriate\).](#)

The impact has been:

- 20 new volunteers have been engaged with the garden works
- 2 people took on the community engagement role. The first person set up their own business following 6 months with the trust, which we helped them to do. The second person has continued with their role with the trust.
- The gardens have been noted for their biodiversity, use of natural materials and its thriving bee population.
- relationship with Shirley Williams of Fusion Project which is opening up doors to do much more in the local area there. And we are also learning what we can do
- articles in the local paper which show that Gwrych is doing more than just restoration which, hopefully will lead to more involvement with local area
- from the parents who were involved Gwrych has gain some more volunteers for our events

The volunteer panel meets monthly at the management meetings. They come forward with ideas for the gardens. Margaret Flaherty, the volunteer head gardener, feeds back to the group of garden volunteers what has been discussed and actioned etc.

We have worked with several schools, including Emrys ap Iwan, Rydal Penrhos, local junior schools and Llandrillo College. We work closely with Itaca who bring up volunteers to help and to enjoy the gardens. Tesco's have had volunteer days up at the castle gardens together with commercial bodies such as BT, Vodafone, local stonemasons.

Our greatest engagement with the community has been through opening the gardens daily to the public. We are now open 7 days a week between 9am and 4pm each day. We regularly engage through leaflet drops to all of the surrounding housing estates, have articles in local and national press appear in television and radio programmes, post daily on social media (our facebook followers are just below 10,000). We also use twitter, Instagram and snapchat as ways of engaging new audiences. We attend community events with stalls and displays, such as the Abergele Carnival.

Sut fydd y prosiect yn gynladwy yn y dyfodol? Beth yw'r camau nesaf? / [How will the project be sustainable in the future? What are the next steps?](#)

- Visitors to the gardens regularly make donations to support the works of the volunteers allowing us to replenish plant stock and to carry out general maintenance.
- We would like to have Gwrych honey produced and are looking into the creation of hives on site.
- Surplus plants are sold and this has been very popular. This could potentially be another income stream
- Log sales are also something we would like to develop further to add to our financial sustainability.
- It is sustainable by now being part of the wider castle site under the ownership of the trust. Prior to June 2018 the garden was part of only 5 acres leased by the trust. The trust now owns 250 acres, including the main castle building.
- The final part of the garden restoration is the building of the great conservatory. This is our next step!

Unrhyw sylwadau eraill / [Any other comments](#):

Case studies – These have been anonymised as they are personal.

Case Study 1

Volunteer A is a retired professional gardener who lives in Abergele. She is in her mid-70s and came to volunteer through the Abergele Garden Society following a lecture about the trust and the restoration of the castle in 2017. Volunteer A has been pivotal in developing the volunteer panel for the gardens and has become the head gardener, coming in at least 3 days a week. It is through her and the volunteer panel's vision that the garden has been shaped. On open days she organises a plant stall to raise further funds for purchasing items for the gardens. Since losing her husband, the castle has been able to fill a void in her life and has enabled to make new friendships and have a renewed sense of purpose and fulfilment.

Case Study 2

Miss B is a retired social worker who lives in Old Colwyn who wanted to try something new when she recently retired at the age of 60. She is a member of the volunteer panel and her passion is the pond and water plants. Miss B so enjoys her three days at the castle, that her husband, 'S' has also volunteered his time. Miss B has a mobility issue so drives and parks on the formal garden terrace as the walk up the hill is often too much for her. We have adapted the garden so that Miss B can weed beds, plant and prune from a seated position. When we had a leak in the pond, Miss B spent days rescuing all of the tadpoles and transporting them to temporary accommodation. Miss B is a fluent Welsh-speaker and often conducts tours of the gardens for visitors.

Case Study 3

Mr C was 16 when he first volunteered at the castle in 2017. When he finished his GCSEs, he entered a period of great difficulty, having issues with the police, an abusive partner and also the sad experience of his parents splitting up. Following this period of dark times, he wanted to do something different. He had heard through his aunt that there was a volunteering opportunity at Gwrych and he offered his time. Mr C suffered a stroke in the womb and has paralysis down his left hand side. This has meant that he has struggled walking and his concentration has been diminished. Under the guidance of the community engagement officer, and support of the volunteer panel, Mr C has not only continued to volunteer at the castle, but has progressed to be a paid employee, taking minutes for meetings and assisting the trustees with admin work.