

# The Outdoor Partnership NEWSLETTER



## Ayrshire

TOP Ayrshire held its annual Emergency Outdoor First Aid courses recently, hosted by Prestwick Sailing Club. Instructor Iain Riddle delivered a great two day course preparing local outdoor adventure club members to be qualified First Aiders and ready for medical situations on the water and land. 12 candidates ranging from hill walkers, outdoor play instructors, canoeist, coastal rowers and sailors, all successfully passed the course which was subsidised by TOP Ayrshire funding.



### Club Support Programme: A story from Kyle Kayak Club volunteer; Lorna Jarvie:

I have become a Sea Kayak Leader, Paddlesport Touring Leader and Kayak Coach with the support of TOP Ayrshire Funding. This includes support towards all 3 assessments and many of the pre-requisites for the qualifications such as First Aid Training.

Our club, KKC, had an identified a shortage of coaches and leaders given the current demand from members. The club also has a lengthy waiting list, so we were keen to upskill more volunteers so we could increase the amount of opportunities the club could offer the community.

With the support of The Outdoor Partnership I am the first at the club to gain the Paddlesport Touring Leader qualification and first to gain the Sea Kayak Leader qualification under the current scheme. The combination of qualifications TOP has supported me to achieve now allow me to lead and coach unsupported and in remit on the full range of activities our club currently offers, from sea kayaking to moving water courses on the river. This means I can support a wide range of opportunities for a wide range of participants wherever there are gaps in our volunteer provision.

I am currently involved weekly in coaching our Juniors (primary school aged paddlers) in the pool throughout the off season, and I run the clubs' sea section, which I organise, coach and lead every week throughout the main season. As 2022 drew to a close I was delighted to be able to support the Clyde Christmas Paddle, taking a large group from Kyle Kayak Club to join up with paddlers from a range of West of Scotland Clubs. We decided to run the event as a fundraiser and I am proud to have been part of the organising group, with over £2900 raised for the RNLI.

With the benefit of these TOP supported qualifications I hope to be able to continue to offer events like this as well as new opportunities for those I am working with at the club in 2023.

## News from our Regions

### Coastal Cumbria

#### Healthy and Active Program: Wellbeing Through Nature - A Natural England funded program



In November, the Outdoor Partnership & Lakeland Wellbeing began a series of green social prescribing events to connect people with nature in the Whitehaven area of West Cumbria.

An initial 'gatekeepers' session was held to demonstrate what we can offer to those working as social prescribing leads for the local authority and NHS. We had a day of forest bathing, mindfulness, forest school and general chat about why being in nature is good for us.

These conversations helped us to understand the different needs of individuals and community groups and how we might approach different activities and bring nature to those who find it difficult to access the outdoors. Here is what some of the 'gatekeepers' had to say.

We all rush through life, and this was a fantastic opportunity to stop and appreciate our beautiful surroundings. The session was well led, friendly and welcoming. Well worth a try and makes you so much more aware of nature around us and the benefits of being immersed in it. Yesterday was fantastic. Thank you very much for the opportunity to try it out!

As part of the program in 2023, we have also been to the Warm Hubs in Whitehaven to offer nature crafting sessions in the winter months, seed planting, nature crafts and chatting about all things outdoors!

As the as the weather warms up a little, we have further sessions planned to include bush crafting for families with children who are Autistic, Womens sessions, and sessions to support people with their mental health.

The sessions will be evaluated to understand the impacts and benefits to participants, with a view to offering a 6-week Wellbeing in Nature course to help people begin and maintain a daily nature connection practice of their own with the long term aim of developing confidence and knowledge that will contribute to future independent exploration of these local natural spaces, alleviating pressure on the NHS by giving people tools to support and manage their own wellness.

### Coastal Cumbria: Womens Walking Group

Our monthly "Womens Walking group" has grown in numbers. The walks are supportive and informative; teaching navigation, route planning and safety on the hills. Following the popularity of the walks we are delighted to announce we have secured funding through Outdoor Citizens to support getting more women into the outdoors.

This project will now also run a regular program of differing outdoor activities including walks, wild swimming and water sports such as canoeing, kayaking and Stand Up Paddleboarding (SUP). The project will increase womens skills to enable them to become independent in the outdoors, have new experiences and access local volunteering opportunities within their local area. The sessions will be advertised through our Events page on the TOP website.

Check out the Facebook page for more information:  
<https://www.facebook.com/TOPCumbria>

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## Central South Wales

### Partnership Working

We are so grateful for our strong partnership with Summit Centre, the Rock UK Climbing and Adventure centre based in Merthyr Tydfil.

They have been such team players! They run the monthly Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) friendly climbing club; The club is for individuals and their families to come along to a climbing session that doesn't have over stimulation; the wall is closed to the public, the loud music is off and it is a group session for ASD and additional needs only.

We are thrilled to announce that thanks to Active Merthyr, the sport and physical activity development department for Merthyr Tydfil CBC, we have gained funding to continue this club for the next year! We also aim to expand by training 2 more volunteers, thus making the club more sustainable. We hope this will allow it to become fully inclusive in 2023!



### International Womens Day

We are completely stoked to have fully booked 40 spaces for our International Womens Day event; Mountain Biking at Dare Valley Gravity Bike Park on the 4th March.

It was an opportunity for girls to ride the amazing tracks at this top class venue, in a supportive and welcoming atmosphere.

With 2 female coaches working with the groups, it wasn't just about charging down the hills, but about developing confidence, trying new things, enjoying the uplift and building friendships; friendships that will continue the adventuring in the future hopefully!

A huge Thanks to Active RCT for part funding the event, meaning we could offer it for FREE!

And a massive Thanks to Gravity Bike Park. We have worked in partnership with them on a number of successful past events and this one was just as fun.

## News from our Regions

### Gwent

#### Pathways to Employment Program



The Pathways to Employment program has been happening for over a year now in Gwent. The latest run was delivered in the Caerphilly area and provided a variety of adventure days and a qualification for its participants. The group braved the icy January of South Wales, and got stuck in to gorge walking, bushcraft, stand up paddleboarding, rock climbing and caving in Porth Yr Ogof.

The main focus of the program is to improve people's mental health and wellbeing, while giving them an insight into the outdoor industry and a work-related qualification.

#### Youth Climbing Development Program

We have worked with Street Games and Monmouthshire Youth Service to fund and run a Youth Climbing Development Programme. It has seen young people from Abergavenny develop their climbing skills and visit a variety of climbing centres. Next month they will be heading outdoors to climb at some local crags.

#### Adventure Therapy Program

We established a pilot project, working with Adferiad Recovery and Crossfield Outdoors, to deliver outdoor based sessions as Adventure Therapy for individuals referred through Adferiad Recovery. Most recently we had a fantastic day in the Black Mountains, ascending Y Grib – also known as the Dragon's Back. It was the groups final session, and they celebrated with a little picnic in a sheltered spot on the ridge with a fabulous view.

Because of the success of the programme, we applied to the Gwent High Sheriff Fund via Community Foundation Wales to continue the programme and open the programme out to the wider community. After the initial application, we were shortlisted and invited to Coleg Gwent's Newport campus to present our proposal.

We are delighted to feedback that we, along with many other inspiring programmes were funded this year! This funding will allow us to provide 2 more runs of the Adventure Therapy Programme in Gwent, providing opportunities for 24 participants to access adventure activities.

### North Wales

#### Wild Winter activity days

- 2 free days of activities held for school aged children in Gwynedd at Arete Outdoor Centre. Both were fully booked within a day. Great opportunity for children to have their first experience of outdoor activities. Lots of fun was had at the gorge and climbing. 2 more days upcoming at CMC Adventure in Llanbedr. Lots of interest and publicity, and demand has again been high.

#### E-bikes for hire at local Leisure Centres in Gwynedd

- E-bike fleet has expanded and are now available for hire at Arfon Tennis Centre, Byw'n Iach Bangor, Byw'n Iach Plas Silyn, and Byw'n Iach Penllyn. Taster events will be organised at all locations for those who are interested. Led-rides can also be organised from certain leisure centres-contact your local leisure centre to find out more!

#### Climbing for All @ The Rock, Harlech

- In February, Graeme Hill, a leading expert on Inclusive Climbing, hosted a Climbing for All course for instructors from Harlech Ardudwy Leisure and Gwersyll yr Urdd Glan Llyn. The training looked at various topics, and how to overcome barriers to participation in climbing for individuals with disabilities.