

The Outdoor Partnership NEWSLETTER



Ayrshire

TOP Ayrshire launched the SUP safer Course at Troon Lifeboat Station last month, supported by local member of Scottish Parliament Siobhan Brown

Vincent McWhirter, TOP Ayrshire Outdoor Activities Development Officer, said "We had great start to our collaboration with RNLI Troon Lifeboat & Outdoor Partnership Ayrshire. A joint British Canoeing SUP Safer workshops. This water safety initiative will run for the next four weeks delivering eight certificated training courses to 64 Ayrshire paddlers thanks to funding from the Darroch Bequest. Thanks also to Craig and volunteers at [Adventure Paddle Co](#) for planning and delivering this course. The training will help increase people's knowledge and understanding of SUP safety at sea and inland locations and hopefully reduce [RNLI](#) and emergency services call outs."



The Girvan Adventure Programme

The Glendoune area in Girvan is ranked as one of the most deprived areas of South Ayrshire with 35% of young people living in poverty. The Girvan Adventure Programme (GAP), funded by TOP Ayrshire, allowed young people from the area to try new activities, learn new skills and increase their confidence and self esteem. It was amazing to see them thrive when challenged with new activities and push themselves to achieve. Having this access to quality outdoor education will have a lasting impact on these young people and they will remember these experiences for a long time to come. Youth workers that attended the outdoor activities with them were impressed at how well they took on new activities and saw their confidence increase during the days.

Youth workers also noted that for some young people getting themselves up and ready early on a Sunday morning was a big achievement in itself. The youth workers were very proud of the young people and also commented that they'd noticed that the young people themselves were proud of what they'd achieved. I would hope there would be further opportunities for young people to enjoy the many benefits of outdoor education and activity.

A partnership with Ayrshire Barnardo's groups offering a programme of indoor climbing and bouldering has also proved to be a great success. Targeted young people have been involved in a month-long skills development programme, building on teamwork, confidence and climbing skills. The partnership with Barnardo's will be developed over the coming year with other outdoor adventure activities planned.

News from our Regions

Coastal Cumbria



Connecting with the Outdoors, our exciting new project based in Mirehouse, Whitehaven, has got underway through funding from Well Whitehaven. The Outdoor Partnership is working with residents within the Well Whitehaven catchment to become more connected to the outdoor environment on their doorstep and the West Coast.

Through partnership working with Anja from Tale Trails, who created the kid friendly maps, we are engaging with school children, community groups and residents. The maps were developed to engage young people in the outdoors in a fun and imaginative way, helping to reconnect them with the natural environment and to improve both their emotional and physical wellbeing. In order to get children excited about their coast and local area, we are delivering school engagement sessions, bringing maps and stories to life, and empowering and inspiring young people to want to discover more and get out for a walk with their friends and families. So far over 120 children have been involved.

Mrs Sarah Jardine, on behalf of the school, said, "Just wanted to let you know how much the children and staff have enjoyed the sessions you have done with them. Both teachers are really glad they are involved with the project and have been raving about it all."

Several community days have taken place with plenty more to come. These days provide an opportunity to meet Anja, to listen to the amazing stories from around the coast, to engage in activities including art and walks and to find nature on our doorstep. Please see our events page for upcoming events or follow our Facebook page.

To ensure the project has long term development at its core, we are working with schools to deliver the Level 3 Taking the Curriculum Outdoors. This will enable schools to deliver outdoor activities, in order for young people to foster a lifelong connection with the outdoors.

To really follow the 'map' theme, West Cumbria Orienteering Club are mapping the local school's grounds and providing introduction to orienteering days, which will continue the children's development, engage them in competitive activities, and support the Level 3 learning outside the classroom. This is also utilized for community orienteering and club events. If you would like to come along, please see our calendar of events, or follow us on Facebook. To download the maps for FREE go to <http://taletrails.co.uk/>

In other news, three ladies, and the 14 year old daughter of one of them, all from Copeland canoe club took part in foundation safety and rescue training and the Level 1 Paddlesport Instructor award on SUP, funded by a bursary from British Canoeing. All were apprehensive before the course, worrying about their competence. They quickly realised they had underestimated their skills and abilities and they all managed well on the courses. The next steps for all will be to focus on building on personal paddling experience, such as developing skills in journeying and more challenging weather conditions, helping others in the club to develop through fun sessions, and also encouraging others in the club to start on their own coaching journeys.

The ladies also hosted Introduction to Stand-up Paddleboarding sessions in partnership with Cumbria Outdoors in June.

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Central South Wales

We recently had a weekly evening paddlesport event at Cardiff International White Water Centre, with the local Seren Dŵr slalom club. The Outdoor Partnership, Seren Dŵr, Cardiff Commitment, Cardiff Youth Service and local schools came together to provide four introductory sessions to kayaking. Two groups attended each session, a children's school group and a youth group for teenagers. Both proved to be really enthusiastic and tough! The sessions started off in near-freezing conditions and continued into the dark! The teenagers weren't satisfied with just being in the kayaks, they positively dived in the water and splashed around like it was a hot summer's day!

At the end of these sessions the participants can decide if they want to continue paddling and can join the Seren Dŵr kayak slalom club, which then offers affordable club sessions. Run by volunteer coaches, it has proven it can help students to develop their skills and abilities, with some members even going on to compete internationally. But at the heart of it, these sessions will have offered students an experience they will never forget, some new skills and great memories to take with them into the future. Thanks to Tavi from Seren Dŵr for putting in the huge effort to organize this, a keen paddler and passionate volunteer, it is folks like this that help our future generation develop a lifelong interest in all things paddlesport!



There are so many volunteers who open doors to get outdoors for some who may never get out and explore their local areas without this support from a local community group. It is therefore important that The Outdoor Partnership support the development of these future walk leaders, to offer hill skills courses and to move onto the lowland leader course, which is a nationally recognized walk leader qualification. This is why we recently ran both the hill skills course and the lowland leader training in Central South Wales. Thanks to Andy Meek's expertise, the manager of The Storey Arms Centre and their amazing staff, the feedback for these courses was 100% positive!

We were helped with bursaries from Mountain Training, the national governing body, for some attending the lowland leader training, which covered half the cost. Wales wouldn't be Wales without four seasons in one day and both courses definitely provided a variety of conditions for walking. Central South Wales is the ideal place to attain the lowland leader award, as we don't have the high mountains of North Wales. It is perfect for leading groups on coastal paths and in our green, green valleys!

News from our Regions



Central South Wales (continued).....

All attendees gained much valuable knowledge and skills and nearly everyone wanted to continue to move onto assessment and gaining the Lowland Leader award or moving on to the Hill and Moorland Leader award. This, in turn, will eventually mean more people accessing the outdoors, walking and improving their fitness and wellbeing.

Teachers who volunteer their weekends and evenings, community walk leaders, wellbeing leaders and orienteering leaders are all key to affordable outdoor activities for all. And a huge thank you to all those individuals who have been willing to partake in a full weekend's training and for working towards these qualifications for their community!

As summer approaches, we kicked off on Earth Day on 22nd April with Mums and Mini Me surf safety and confidence sessions. There were two sessions for mums only during school hours and two sessions for mothers and their child, where they learned how to take their children surfing and things to be aware of, hopefully encouraging them to get out in the water this summer. They can be the surf instructor and role model, as well as trying out surfing for themselves or re-exploring a passion from the past! These sessions finish off on Summer Solstice, June 21st with our last mums' surf and yoga session at Porthcawl, Bridgend. Watch out for our summer season of ASD friendly and inclusive surf sessions which will be hitting the beach soon.

There's always a need for more walking leaders in the community and we are finally underway with spending our 'Move More Eat Well' grant which South Riverside Community Development Centre (SRCDC) successfully secured! Three wonderful ladies have now completed the Lowland Leader Training, with the course full between them and some other awesome members from the Central South Wales community who want to get people out for their mental health and wellbeing. People like Lee Jones from the RCT People First, and Alex, a local social worker who wants to get people talking and walking! Andy Meek really supported this course and helped break down barriers such as transport, providing a mini bus on the first day, and we walked from the train station on the second day of training. Finally, we were lucky enough to receive bursaries from Mountain Training Wales for two of the ladies! Now all that is left to do is to get out walking, fill up the log books, and sign up for the assessment in September!

Plymouth

We are pleased to be supporting the planning of a project to bring together a refugee support group (Devon and Cornwall Refugee Support), Horizon Sailing, and Plymouth's Odils Foundation (a charity which teaches English to refugees).

The idea is that people can learn to sail (as this is an important aspect of Plymouth life) whilst learning to speak English at the same time. Some of the refugees had expressed an interest in sailing, and will be signposted to local sailing clubs for a year's free membership due to this project.

TOP Plymouth's role has been to bring the groups together and to support them in making a grant bid to help fund the project under the name 'Horizon Sailing'. The project itself has not yet started. It's also worth noting that the last time some of these people went on the water was in a boat across the Channel.

We will also be arranging more activities for the next school holidays, as well as setting up e-bikes for hire at local leisure centres.

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Gwynedd

At the beginning of April, No-Mad Adventures ran the second Hill Skills course of the year in Dolgellau. The Cyfres Copa Hill Skills Course was part of a new Cyfres Copa project which is intended to provide opportunities for everyone to gain skills and qualifications in a range of outdoor activities. Often it is a lack of knowledge and confidence that prevents individuals from experiencing the outdoors, so we are keen to support initiatives that break down these barriers. The course was subsidised by Byw'n Iach and was well attended. All the participants were eager to learn new skills and navigation techniques. The first day started with introductions over coffee and a classroom session covering the syllabus, journey planning, weather, and map skills. We then headed out to start our first walk in the beautiful Meirionydd countryside. The walk took us from Llanelltyd, up towards Llyn Tan y Graig and into the forested slopes of Mynydd Foel-uchaf and Moel Ispri.

One of the participants was Corrina. Corrina had always enjoyed hill walking, but until recently had suffered with obesity. Over the past two years she had made health changes to her life and now walks, scrambles, runs and strength sessions. Although she is now living healthily, Corrina didn't have the basic map skills to venture into new areas.

The timing of the course was great for Corrina who plans to do the three peaks challenge this year. She was very keen to develop confidence ahead of the challenge. Attending the course has helped Corrina go on more adventures and has contributed to her changing her lifestyle to support her physical health. She would be very keen to take advantage of a similar offer in the future, and gain leadership skills to support others facing obesity challenges to promote health and wellbeing.



The Outdoor Partnership is appealing for volunteers to help run Cycle Power rides in Plas Menai. Cycle Power is an adaptive cycling club for adults and children with disabilities or additional needs. The sessions at Plas Menai are held on the first and third Saturday of each month. No formal qualifications are required as these can be gained with support from The Outdoor Partnership Coach Education; however, experience in leading bike rides and first aid would be desirable. The club is looking for assistants to help users with helmets and bikes, or sometimes to guide along the cycle paths and help run the sessions. They are completely voluntary, and any training required will be provided. All prospective volunteers would be subject to DBS checks. For more information or to volunteer, please contact Steve Weake at Stephen.weake@btinternet.com

News from our Regions

Gwent

Throughout the spring, we have been working with Adferiad Recovery and Crosfield Outdoors to deliver an Adventure Therapy Programme for adults with psychosis.

The pilot has seen the social prescribing of numerous adventure activities to improve people's mental health and wellbeing.



Outdoor activities often involve submersion in cold water, and have an element of perceived risk attached to them, meaning they are an incredibly powerful tool for altering mood and supporting people's recovery!

Participants on the pilot have been out having a great time gorge walking, caving, paddleboarding, canoeing, mountain walking and rock climbing.

We have had a lot of other exciting programmes happening across Gwent including: Inclusive Adventure, Climbing Development Programmes and This Girls' Adventure. To find out more about what is happening in Gwent, contact the Outdoor Activity Development Officer or follow our Gwent specific social media accounts.

Mid Wales

We've had cause to celebrate for participants in two adventure programmes in Mid Wales thanks to the NRW-funded Opening Doors to the Outdoors project. In Newtown, a 10 week hill walking programme has just drawn to a close - a programme for those looking to improve their wellbeing through being active, meeting new friends and discovering new places on their doorstep. It was lovely to catch up with some of the group at the end of the 10 sessions to find out how they had got on. One participant summed it up nicely when she said "the Outdoor Partnership walks have made the world of difference to me." It won't be the end of the journey for this group and they all hope to continue walking and even take on some navigation training to explore some places off the beaten track. Huge thanks to Helen Menhinick at Bryn Walking for organising the programme and to walk leader Janet for providing such a welcoming and enjoyable walk programme. The next 10-week programme has already started in Llandrindod Wells!



Meanwhile, over in Brecon and Ystradgynlais, adults with additional learning needs have been taking part in various activities, from canoeing to bushcraft and orienteering and a dedicated few went on to complete a 4 day Activity Skills Programme which covered outdoor skills such as planning a day out, map reading, packing a bag and preparing for the weather. I suspect it won't be the last we see of this lot either. Thanks to Woodlands OEC, Gary Evans Outdoors, Manzoku Climbing and Mountaineering and Mountain Trike for running such great activities and to Simon Chaplin for volunteering his expertise and support as well.

We'd like to congratulate Stephanie Chaplin of the Mid Wales Mentoring programme on passing her Climbing Wall Instructor and Lowland Leader Award in the 4 months since turning 18. This is a phenomenal achievement for such a young instructor and I am sure just the start of great things to come. As well as being a young leader in the Cadets, a youth ambassador for DoF and studying for her Welsh Bac, she also gives up a lot of her time to volunteer at the inclusive climbing club sessions we have held in Llangorse and has helped many young people to reach new heights as well.

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Swansea Bay

The Outdoor Partnership Swansea Bay organized an event with Llandysul Paddlers and Merched y Môr for International Women's Day. Over 40 Women attended the event in Llandysul back on the 8th of March. The first part of the event was a social paddle on the lake where the women got to try out different paddle sports like paddleboarding and kayaking, even during the snow flurries! We then went inside to warm up and listened to a fantastic talk by Merched y Môr who are attempting to become the first all-female crew from Wales to take on the world's toughest rowing challenge across the Atlantic. We then finished the evening with some fantastic food provided by Llandysul Paddlers and some Outdoor Partnership Goodies.

One participant said, "Thank you once again for organising last night's event. I enjoyed my time spent on the lake and the guest speakers were inspirational. I was left feeling somewhat envious of them and wanting to know more. They are truly inspiring women. I would be very interested in attending any other events that you arrange and think it was a lovely way to meet new people and have some fun."



Throughout the first half of this year we have been trialling our new 'Hike and Swim' sessions in Pembrokeshire. They were such a big success that we are rolling them out across Carmarthenshire in May. The sessions in Pembrokeshire included teaming up with two fantastic providers; Helen who runs Welcome in the Wild, and Sue who runs Wild Swim Wales. In the past, we had previously worked with both of these providers individually with map reading and navigation and also wild swimming sessions. So we decided to encourage more people to try new things by collaborating with both providers to offer a longer session including a hike, map reading and navigation and a wild swim element. The session went really well with people signing up who had never tried map reading or wild swimming before. The first Session was around Cwm Yr Eglwys, Pembrokeshire and we went for a 5k walk around Dinas Head led by Helen from Welcome in the Wild, stopped off at Cwm Yr Eglwys Beach for lunch, before a swim guided by Sue from Welcome in the Wild. There were definitely women who had signed up predominantly for the hike, and some who had signed up for the swim, so it was great to see some of them achieving some walking distances they hadn't achieved before and some going in the sea for the first time.

One of the reactions given was, "My thanks, to Sue, Sioned and Helen. I normally average about 8000 steps a day and have been wanting to increase that. Today I more than doubled it, so great achievement for me! My feet are feeling it now."

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Northern Ireland

10 young people have been participating in the Mourne Mountains Youth Ranger scheme called 'Mourne Ambassador Programme' (MAP). The project is in partnership with The Mourne Heritage Trust and The Outdoor Partnership.

Our aim is for our young ambassadors to learn and educate others about responsible use of the outdoors from green to blue spaces.

To date, we've had a meet and greet with the Mourne Rangers and TOP, navigating our way through Donard Forest Park, whilst having some fun along the way! We've had our Trash Free Trails, looking after our heavily trafficked trails and sharing the findings in unique ways. We then made some creative artwork with what was found.

We've looked at Respecting Rural Businesses and the impact of our pets. We met some farmers in the Trassey area to discuss the impacts of dogs, tourism and many other topics. Finally, we've had Cycling and Trails, with the support of Life Adventure we rented some bikes with the MTB experts to explore our impact and how we can do our best to conserve when enjoying our beautiful trails and discussed controversial topics such as natural trails.

We have also been busy with the Climbing For All course. In partnership with Mountaineering Ireland – Ricky Bell and Paul Kellagher, we have trained seven coaches in Climbing For All. Climbing For All is a two day introduction to proving accessible and inclusive climbing sessions for people with disabilities. The course looks at theory, including the social model of disability, and people's own values and ethics. It looks at how to plan an inclusive session, route setting and venue considerations. It also introduces instructors and coaches to practical solutions including hoists. The purpose of the course is to give instructors and coaches increased confidence and skills to enable disabled people to experience and enjoy climbing. The course also provided the instructors with an opportunity to test their instructing and coaching skills in new territories. The course is recognized by Adventure for All, the BMC, AMI and MLTA as CPD.

Our seven trained instructors are now planning to take their new skills to pilot some inclusive climbing at the Gilford Climbing Wall over the summer months!!

Northern Ireland – Sperrins Area

We have continued with the Gap analysis of the Sperrins AONB and surrounding towns and council areas. This was conducted through face-to-face meetings with community groups and clubs, local authorities and national governing bodies. An online survey has also been sent out to all groups to gauge the interest, barriers and need for outdoor activities within the Sperrins.

The Outdoor Partnership, in partnership with Swim Ulster, is planning a Get Wet Stay Safe event for Gortin Lakes. The lakes have been a hotspot for open water swimming and recreational users in recent years.

As we approach the peak months for usage at the lakes we have identified the need for this program and it will hopefully enable us to promote better water safety in the future.