

The Outdoor Partnership NEWSLETTER



Caru Eryri '24

The team are busy planning and getting prepared for another season of volunteering!

Caru Eryri is a programme offering opportunities to volunteer in the outdoors and play a part in protecting the natural environment of the park.

There are opportunities across the Park, from Easter to September, and anyone is welcome to join; old volunteers and new!

The day will involve a scenic walk, as part of a group and with an experienced leader, to be a presence in popular areas and clear away any rubbish left behind.

You don't need any specialist equipment – everything you need will be supplied on the day. You just need to be able to spend the day walking on rugged terrain, and enjoy good company and great views!

You won't have to commit to a certain number of days, and by registering on the programme you can discover all the opportunities that are available:

Register here:

<https://app.betterimpact.com/PublicOrganization/12f4d61b-0071-4828-9c7f-451844508fef/1>

News from our Regions

Gwynedd

The Amser Chwarae programme of open air activities for Gwynedd's Young Carers launched in January this year. This was made possible thanks to a grant from the Carers Trust to provide experiences and respite opportunities for individuals with caring responsibilities. Three groups of young carers from the Bangor and Arfon area faced the challenges of the Beacon Climbing Centre in a series of enjoyable sessions. They also went caving during the half term, under the guidance of the Arete Centre. Having reached an opening in the trees above Cwm Penmachno, in they went to the depths of the mountain. The darkness was broken only by torchlight, and around each corner there were new challenges to face, including paddling a raft through a chamber full of water, a zip wire across a small lake and climbing up a bubbling river which flowed down the adit. It was a new experience for every one of them and one they will remember forever!

The carers of South Gwynedd were offered a day at the Rhos Y Gwaliau Centre during the holidays. This small group had to climb and defeat a complicated Via Ferrata course which went up the side of a cliff and fell into a gorge, working its way down until the land was flatter once again. Having regained some energy over lunch, they went to another nearby gorge where, on this occasion, they climbed and walked their way up the river. Thankfully the sun was shining and the temperature was high!

The sessions have now ended but the groups are enthusiastic about doing more in the future. We hope to be able to secure funding to offer more Amser Chwarae sessions for these children and young people.

We are also pleased to report on our Gwynedd Wellness Walks. Recently, we were successful in applying for funding to launch a Wellness Walks programme here in Gwynedd and, following an incredible reaction from hundreds of people when the announcement was made, the programme has now started.

Wellness Walks is an established programme run and managed by a social enterprise called Mental Health North West CIC. It's based on some simple truths we all know – backed up with some proven therapeutic strategies that are informed by factual research. We all know going for a walk is good for us, that nature has a special way of putting things in perspective and that talking about things with others helps.

On the weekend of the 3rd and 4th of February, the eight successful candidates that had been chosen to become the volunteer walk leaders started their training in Bethesda, on a Lowland Leader Training course. Under the expert guidance of Kelyn and Helen Barnard – former Chief Instructor at Plas y Brenin - the group ventured into the hills under grey skies. Luckily the weather didn't dampen spirits and the course went without a hitch.

The walk leaders will now consolidate and log more lowland walks before an assessment. They will also be attending First Aid courses to ensure they are suitably qualified. We look forward to seeing their progress and wish them well for the rest of their training.



**CARU
ERYRI
CARE FOR
SNOWDONIA**



The Outdoor Partnership

NEWSLETTER



Central South Wales

It's been time to get out and get logbook days for the ladies doing their walk leader qualification.

It's one thing to go and do the training, but it's another to get the logbook days and to be motivated to practice navigation. The ladies had a great 'quality lowland leader logbook day' out in The Gower. They started by practicing 6 figure grid references, how to read a map, planning a route, what they need to carry as leaders, what a quality lowland leader brings to a walk etc, so they enjoyed passing the Neolithic ossuary, the Cathole Cave where such animal remains as the woolly rhinoceros were excavated. We ended at Three Cliffs, gazing at the sea and Pennard Castle. What a quality day!

AMSER has continued, but sadly, before Christmas, one of the sessions organised had to be re-arranged due to adverse weather conditions. This week, the groups of young carers made it on their Adventure day. Initially, the plan was for gorge walking and crate stacking, with a focus on team work and employability. But we decided February would be better spent in a canoe, rather than jumping into waterfalls! The group from Merthyr headed to the Dolygaer Centre where they explored Ponsticill Reservoir by canoe and then worked as a team to do the crate stacking activity back on site! The feedback was they had made new friends and all had a great day out.



Sperrins Region

In January, TOP delivered the Power of the Outdoors for All workshop at Greenhill YMCA, in partnership with Tollymore NOC Sport NI. The workshop had a variety of different speakers including Disability Sport NI, Mountaineering Ireland and Greenhill YMCA, along with Paul Kellagher and Laura McEvoy who fund raised over £5000 for TOP to further develop and deliver inclusive adventure activities.

It was an insightful morning in which our speakers delivered topics of good practice within inclusion, the barriers we face, and projects that have been delivered across NI.

After lunch, four inclusion sessions were delivered ranging from Trail 0 – Inclusive Orienteering, Climbing for All, Inclusive Paddling and Inclusive Hill Walking where participants got hands on experience with delivery and how to progress these activities within their own organisation.

TOP are committed to developing inclusive adventure and have since set up an inclusive steering group as a method of further shared learning and developing projects.

News from our Regions

Cumbria

We kick off with the Copeland Canoe Club. The Canoe Club was founded back in 1981, and since then many thousands of people, young and old and in between, have enjoyed access to paddlesport activities right here, on their doorstep, in Whitehaven. It's all about promoting the fun of paddlesport activities – canoeing, kayaking and SUP – as an amateur sport. Whether you're a total newbie or a seasoned pro, paddling is for everyone at the club.

They've been part of the British Canoeing family since 1983 and even earned "Quality Club" status in 2023. The club is very active, with a wide range of activities and events running throughout the year. In the winter, they take over the local pool for training with their fantastic volunteer coaches. And when the weather warms up, they're out on the water at Ennerdale, Bassenthwaite, and more. From gentle lake paddles to thrilling river runs, there's something for everyone, including playing in the surf at St Bees and longer sea kayaking trips.

They are passionate about getting more women and girls involved in paddling and are lucky to have Alison Bird representing them on our club committee. They are involved in the #shepaddles initiative, through which Claire, Clare, Surya, and Alison as certified Paddlesport Instructors for SUP. Big thanks to British Canoeing for their support.

Every year, they host a fun International Women's Day session and offer SUP taster sessions and awards. The club is a real gem in our community, and they're always on the lookout for volunteers to help keep the adventure going. Come and join them for some paddling fun!

In other news, The Outdoor Partnership is delighted to have been awarded £9,900.00 from Sellafeld Ltd. The funding is to set up a Women's Climbing Club in West Cumbria. The club will run from the climbing wall in West Lakes school, Egremont and will offer beginner courses and open sessions for experienced climbers to come along to. The aim is to build a community of women who want to climb, have fun and learn new skills. Keep an eye on our events page for upcoming courses.



The Outdoor Partnership NEWSLETTER



Gwent

2024 is gearing up to be a year full of opportunities for people in Gwent to access meaningful outdoor adventure activities. We kick-started the year off by continuing to support young carers in the region with a variety of adventure days. 50 young carers from Torfaen started the new year with climbing and bouldering activities, with a whole host of activities planned for the next few months.

We are working in partnership with Gwent Wellbeing College, Adferiad Recovery, Gwent Integrated Autism Service and Gwent Drug & Alcohol Service to develop a new Adventure Therapy Programme that will support service users to access adventure to improve their wellbeing.



In celebration of International Women's Day, we teamed up with Crosfield Outdoors to provide a Women's Night Navigation Course! The course was open to any women aged 16+ and introduced navigation in poor visibility/the dark. A basic level of map reading in daylight conditions was needed to get the most out of this session. Crosfield Outdoors kindly gave their time free of charge to support our work in encouraging more women to access the outdoors. All proceeds from the course were donated to Longtown Mountain Rescue Team.

The Longtown Mountain Rescue Team was originally formed in 1965 to help people in difficulties within the Black Mountains. The role of the team has now expanded to include a wide variety of potential situations, where the police consider the team's assistance and expertise would be of benefit. The team consists solely of volunteers from all walks of life, with a wide variety of occupations, who give up their free time to combine a love of the outdoors with serving the community, assisting people in distress. This commitment means they can be on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, as well as attending the training required to increase and maintain the necessary skills needed to operate.

Rydym yn Ymwybodol o Ofalwyr
We are Carer Aware



News from our Regions

Swansea Bay

It was a busy February Half Term with Amser and the Young Carers Adventure Program. Despite some bad weather, the Neath Port Talbot, Swansea, Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire groups enjoyed some pretty epic activity days. Some groups did get a little bit soggy, but everyone came away smiling! The activities included indoor climbing, outdoor climbing, raft building, archery, rafting, team building and bushcraft!

A massive thank you to the awesome providers for working with these fantastic groups: Tread Gower, Dynamic Rock, Crosfield Outdoors, Llys Y Fran, Llandysul Paddlers and Peggy Beer.

The Outdoor Partnership are also working towards the Investors in Carers Award. The Investors in Carers (IiC) scheme is a quality assurance scheme which has themed standards, an audit and certification processes and rewards, which recognises best practice. It has been designed for use across a generic range of settings and necessitates the compilation of an evidence folder.



The Outdoor Partnership

NEWSLETTER



Club Focus - Mynydd Du

We close with a Club Focus which focuses on the Mynydd Du Climbing and Mountaineering Club.

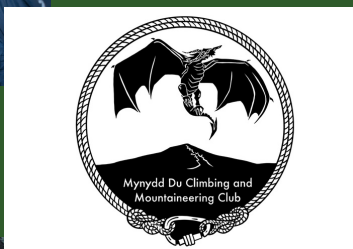
This club has only been established since December 2022, but in that short time it has done lots of great things. Based mainly in the Abergavenny and Torfaen area, a gang from sister club, Mynydd Du Fell Runners, recognized the need for a way to help families and beginners to get climbing, came together to establish a branch of the club, and the Mynydd Du Climbing and Mountaineering Club was born!

With over 100 members, the club has grown and worked towards the needs of their group. Their regular offering is the weekly adult social climbing sessions that are held at various venues; from Green Spider to Llangors to Summit Centre, and a monthly family trip, where structured sessions are organised with club instructors with provision for novices, juniors and all kit provided.

It is a well-equipped club, having successfully gained a Be Active Wales grant from Sport Wales to set themselves up and be able to offer opportunities for everyone, from families with no outdoor background that have never climbed before, all the way through to experienced members who challenge themselves. And that is the beauty of the club; they have a diverse offering and are keen to engage with anyone with an interest in climbing and mountaineering in the Mynydd Du area.

To be able to offer such a diverse range, the club needs, and very much values, its core of committed volunteers who are upskilling themselves to qualify and help run club activities. This is exactly why we, at The Outdoor Partnership, love working with and supporting them. In the last year, 6 volunteers have completed the Climbing Wall Instructor training course through our coach education programme and are now working towards the assessment. This will allow the club to hold more regular family sessions and develop those young whipper-snapper climbing ninjas of Mynydd Du!

Furthermore, volunteers are looking to train in the RCI and WMCI so that they can progress the club and their members over the years. This is a young club with big ambitions, and we're here to help them on their way. If you're in the Mynydd Du area and interested in climbing and mountains in any way, check them out.



News from our Regions

Mid Wales

We start our news with an incredible story of first-hand experience from Paul Argent. Paul is an inspiring advocate for the power of the outdoors and shares his story in his own words:

"I was always the person in my family and friends who loved the outdoors, I would climb my local mountains, Cadair Berwyn, every weekend, and had started running in the hills with my son, Mackenzie, so I was very fit and loved the outdoors. I relocated my family from the South coast of England up to Wales so we could be close to the mountains (and to take up a dream job in Telford). However, in Jan 2022 I was diagnosed with a late stage glioblastoma brain tumour, I had surgery to debulk the tumour, but unfortunately suffered a stroke during surgery, leaving me left side paralysed and unable to walk. I moved to a rehab hospital in Newtown, learning to walk again at the age of 50! I was able to come home in March 2022, and was able to keep up my ability to walk by walking laps of my garden (I am lucky to have a couple of acres on a hill, but missed the mountains so much), mentally I was struggling with being constrained to my house, after being in a hospital bed for months. I reached out to my GP and physio, and they helped me get in touch with Bethan and The Outdoor Partnership.

The Outdoor Partnership has contributed massively to my success in battling my illness, it has enabled me to stay positive and determined mentally, and my doctors have attributed my positivity and determination to my recovery. They have been amazed at my recovery, the last scan showed the tumour has been reduced in size significantly, but I'm still on trial treatment involving chemotherapy, so continuing my walks in the beautiful outdoors of Wales is vital to my wellbeing, both mentally and physically. I am so hugely grateful to both Bethan and Andy for their hard work helping people like myself experience the healing benefits of our outdoors."

We wish Paul well with his recovery and are currently exploring new ways to be able to continue our support for him on his journey back to the mountains. You can read his full story here: <https://bigblogwales.org.uk/2024/03/28/changing-lives-by-opening-doors-to-the-outdoors-wales/>

We have also been busy with our Inclusive Climbing Club at Llangorse. The sessions have started again and have been fully booked, with a great atmosphere. Huge thanks to Delyth and Dean for volunteering at the club, as this support makes these sessions possible.

February also saw the restart of the Amser funded Young Carers Sessions in Ceredigion and Powys. Thanks are due to the Llain Activity Centre for introducing young carers to the mud run, high ropes, climbing tower and archery, and Peggy from Connecting in Nature CIC for her Chinese New Year themed campfire crafts. We are looking forward to more adventures with Crosfield Outdoors, including caving, canoeing, climbing, archery and more, as well as some e-biking with Ieuenctid Cambria Youth.

Brecon Canoe Club also welcomes Bec and Damo to their pool sessions. A huge thank you to Steve Rayner from Brecon Canoe Club, and coaches Chris and Dave, for an action-packed pool session recently. Both Bec and Damo from Brecon Integrated Sport showed off their paddling (and swimming) skills in the pool and came on amazingly during the session. They'll be back, so watch this space!

