



Y BARTNERIAETH AWYR AGORED

PROFIAD • MWYNHAU • LLWYDDO • GYDA'N GILYDD

THE OUTDOOR PARTNERSHIP

EXPERIENCE • ENJOY • ACHIEVE • TOGETHER

VOLUNTEER STRATEGY 2025



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1) **Background**

“Volunteering is a business investment”

Founded in north west Wales in 2004, now operating across the UK, The Outdoor Partnership (TOP) has been successfully ‘Enhancing People’s Lives through Outdoor Activity’ for many years, creating real employment opportunity for people in the outdoors; empowering communities and removing inequality of access to outdoor activity for underrepresented and disadvantaged groups; enabling people to make positive Mental and Physical health decisions.

We support people of all ages, gender, creed, nationalities, orientation, and socio-economic circumstances to take up outdoor activities as a life-long pursuit. We promote the mental health, physical health, social cohesion, and economic benefits which access to the outdoors can bring to individuals, communities, and wider society.

We work as enablers, facilitators, and occasionally deliverers. We have six core programmes which we adapt to meet researched local demand and circumstances: -

- Community Cohesion
- Pathways To Employment
- Health & Wellbeing
- Volunteering
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Adventure Learning

We have Outdoor Activity Development Officers across Wales, covering all 22 local authority areas within the recognised Sport Wales regions:

- Central South Wales
- Swansea Bay
- Gwent
- Mid Wales
- North Wales

And additional officers in specifically selected UK regions:

- Ayrshire
- Coastal Cumbria
- Plymouth
- North Yorkshire
- Coventry City
- Sperrins AONB in Northern Ireland
- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon, Ards & North Down, Newry, Mourne and Down in Northern Ireland.

2) **Introduction**

Our Vision:

Enhancing People's Lives through Outdoor Activity

Our Objectives:

- Deliver generational change to encourage lifelong participation in Outdoor Activities.
- Build capacity to support participation, performance, skill development and employment.
- Remove barriers, prejudice and perceptions which prevent people enjoying and benefiting from an active life in the outdoors.
- Develop TOP delivery model partnerships across the whole of the UK.
- Develop quality products providing enjoyable outdoor experiences from first time through to long-term sustainability.
- To broaden peoples understanding of the outdoors from doorstep to mountains and everything in between.

Our Priorities for the next 10 years include:

- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion targeting underrepresented, excluded groups
- Focus on disadvantaged young people
- Sustainable use of the environment and natural resources
- Improving people's mental and physical wellbeing
- Employability & education projects – improving skills and employability
- Shared learning, knowledge, and good practice
- Tackling & breaking down participation barriers
- Volunteering – building capacity in community clubs and recruiting TOP specific volunteers.

3) **Current Volunteer Recruitment, Deployment, Retention and Recognition – Community Club setting**

“Volunteers are a low cost NOT a no cost option”

Importance of volunteers

Community clubs and groups exist and operate because of the time given by volunteers; they are relied upon for all aspects of club life. They are the providers of thousands of outdoor activity opportunities for communities to participate in each year by making the activities affordable, accessible, inclusive, enjoyable, and safe to all.

Why people volunteer

People are motivated to give their time for free in a voluntary capacity for a number of different reasons.

- Because they enjoy the activity and a way of socialising.
- They want to give back to the sport/activity and their local community.
- To support a member of their family or friend.

- To improve their mental and physical health and wellbeing.
- Gain skills and experience.
- Help enhance career opportunities.

The current position

Currently volunteer leaders in community-based outdoor activity clubs and groups supported by the Outdoor Partnership give approximately 3 hours per week, 40 weeks per year. This is worth approximately **£2 million** a year in monetary value to local communities (this is based on professional commercial rate/ fees).

“Volunteers are central to the development and support of clubs.”

We carry out an annual audit of community clubs, identifying potential volunteers and volunteering needs and maintain regular contact between the local clubs and the Outdoor Activities Development Officers, and Volunteer Officer.

We will continue to raise awareness of The Outdoor Partnership to ensure all existing and potential volunteers are aware of the support and options available; from coach education to committee members within club settings.

Recruitment activities will include:

- Marketing drive and the use of Websites and social media
- Events and festivals
- Work in partnership with other agencies to set up sustainable volunteering opportunities e.g., Young Rangers scheme SNPA
- Volunteer recruitment events and open days for targeted groups and activities e.g. further/higher education settings
- Raise the profile of volunteers via press releases
- Focus on recruitment and development of young volunteers
- Utilise National Volunteer week, Sport Wales volunteer events and others
- Raise awareness of various roles from technical to pastoral to administrative and provide clear role descriptions.
- Word of mouth

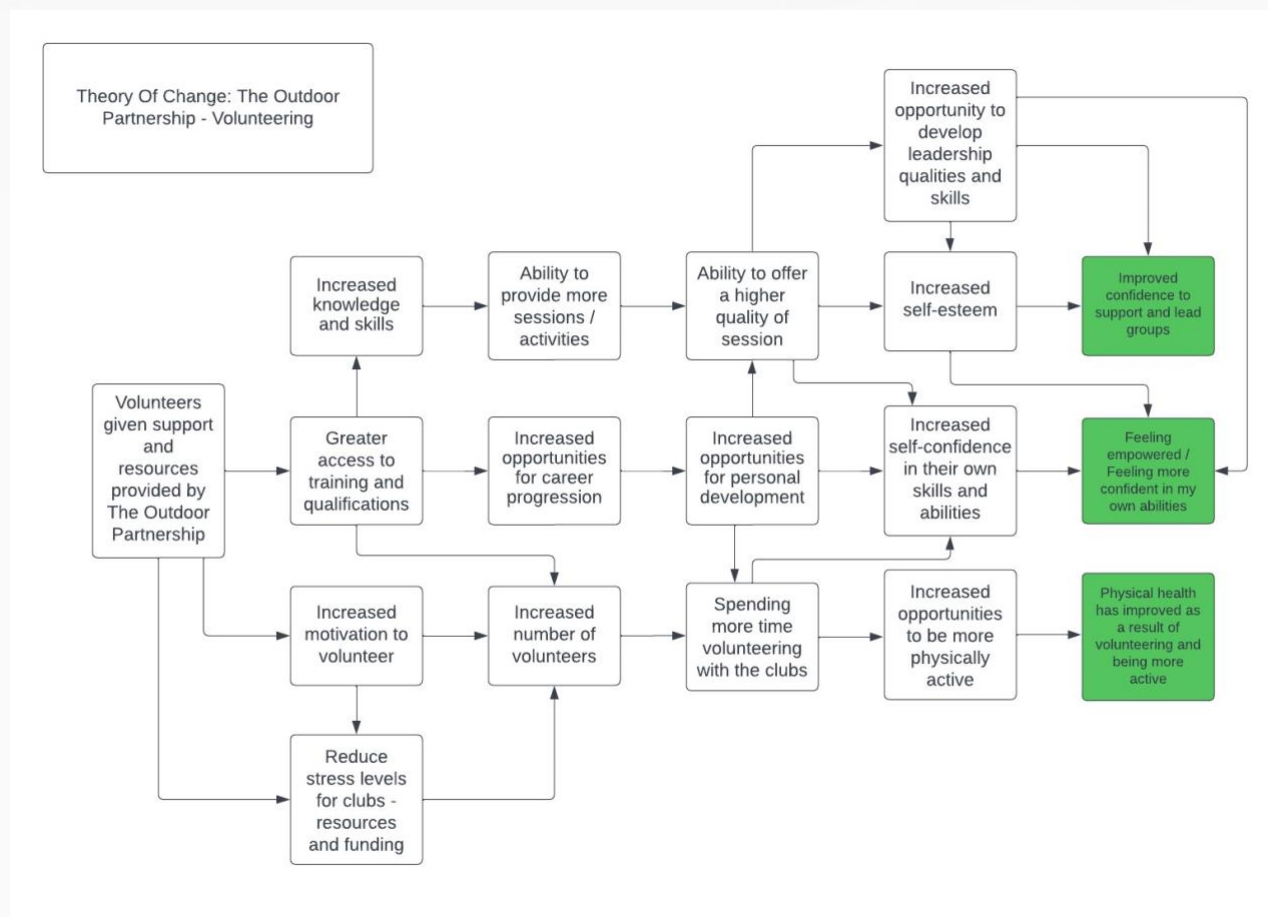
Rational and statement

All evidence highlights the importance of volunteers and their worth in the interest of the local communities. The Outdoor Partnership is committed to supporting volunteers in outdoor adventurous clubs, in recruiting more volunteers, providing mentoring, promoting opportunities to gain relevant qualifications and recognising and rewarding the efforts of volunteers.

Social Return on Investment (SROI)

The Outdoor Partnership conducted a study on the value and impact of volunteers and their role, alongside the support gained from TOP.

A Theory of Change model of the current provision was produced as a result of this research:



4) Future Volunteer Recruitment, Deployment, Retention and Recognition – TOP Volunteers

“Volunteering allows people to take responsibility for their own society”.

We want to make it easy and attractive for people to volunteer. We will develop ways of inspiring new volunteers to contribute to the development of outdoor activity provision and recognise fully those who are already involved to sustain their interest and contribution. We will support our partners to develop a welcoming, inclusive, friendly environment for volunteers which helps meet their motivations for volunteering and the needs of individual activities.

We will raise awareness of the Outdoor Partnership to attract new volunteers and new roles that suit a wide range of individuals and offer a diverse and inclusive volunteering programme.

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Potential partners

- Sport Wales, Sport Scotland, Sport NI and Sport England
- Local authorities
- WCVA and other home nation equivalents
- Local Voluntary Services Councils
- National Governing Bodies
- Outdoor activity centres
- Welsh Sports Association
- Federation of Disability Sport Wales (FDSW)
- National Parks
- Local businesses
- Universities / colleges / local schools
- Local, regional and national community groups (e.g. Young Farmers, DofE)

Deployment

“Volunteers are not paid – not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless!”

Potential volunteers will have an initial consultation with the Outdoor Activities Development Officer in their region or our Volunteer Officer if volunteering directly for the charity, to ascertain where they will be most suited within the organisation. Aspects considered include what they want to achieve from volunteering, the skills and experience they have, location and mode of transport / travelling, their knowledge, experience and interests.

Volunteers supporting the Outdoor Partnership directly and not via community-based clubs and groups will be given an induction. Job Descriptions will be produced for each role and action plans developed with individual volunteers.

5) Volunteer Retention

We want to support and develop volunteers and ensure that they have a great experience from their commitment and personal investment. We will provide a range of development opportunities for volunteers at all stages of their pathway.

A clear pathway of training to enable people to progress to their desired level in terms of volunteering should be identified which could include roles at a club.

Giving volunteers opportunities to gain recognised and relevant qualifications will develop their personal skills and knowledge to pass on to others. Existing volunteers will become more experienced through on-going training to be able to produce high quality sessions and provide participants with a positive learning experience. Showing the progression and opportunities in the qualifications system can motivate the volunteers to progress through the system and with the development they will have a wider skills base to offer other members.

Increased promotion and opportunities to attend coach education courses will help increase the number of existing volunteers attending further coach education and aid in the retention of the existing volunteers to help with the sustainability of the clubs.

Training Plan

Volunteers are essential for the delivery of outdoor activities in the community. The special skills that volunteers need to deliver outdoor activity sessions that are knowledgeable, consistent, high quality and safe is often gained from experience over time. Support, training and assessments are needed to ensure the new volunteers gain the required experience and retain in their role.

Volunteers to experience a variety of outdoor activities through introduction/ taster sessions which include hillwalking, climbing, canoeing, kayaking and mountain biking. Sessions will give the individuals an opportunity to gain insight and understanding of the responsibilities of volunteering within an outdoor activity club.

After the volunteer is assessed and a suitable volunteering role has been found along with an individual training plan, we will offer National Governing Body Award training and assessment courses and personal development through mentor support, skills workshops, Sports' Coach UK and Running sports workshops for the new volunteers.

- A comprehensive but non-exhaustive list of opportunities available to volunteers for NGB qualifications
- A comprehensive but non-exhaustive list of opportunities available to volunteers for mentor support
- A comprehensive but non-exhaustive list of opportunities available to volunteers for club development and management

Good practice documents will be in place e.g. Sport Wales Code of Practice.

We will ensure that our dedicated 'Volunteering' section on our website is current. We will continue to invest in our website and social media to ensure volunteers are supported throughout their journey.

6) Volunteer Recognition

“The Outdoor Partnership will develop a ‘volunteer award’ to recognise commitment, knowledge and safety.”

We want to acknowledge and celebrate the contribution that volunteers make to outdoor activities in their local communities. We want to seek ways to enhance the profile and recognition of the contribution made by volunteers. We want volunteers to feel valued and appreciated for their valuable contribution. As a result, we want to reinforce and broaden the culture of volunteering in outdoor activities and create a generational change across all our regions of operation. Examples of this could include:

- Our Annual Outdoor festival to thank your volunteers
- Volunteer of the month / year
- Other volunteer awards – Canoe Wales, WCVA
- Certificates

The Outdoor Partnership awards will be centred on club members and their view on volunteers within their club. The award will show our appreciation of volunteers fulfilling all aspects of making a club run successfully. Emphasis to gain the award will be placed on the amount of time given by the individual to volunteering in an outdoor activity club and what personal development they have made to improve their contribution to the club. The award will find and create partnerships with local businesses to sponsor prizes.

Volunteer awards established by other regional and national organisations will be researched and publicised to the clubs, such as Sport Wales, Voluntary services and Local councils.

The outcome of awarding volunteers will be seen in the increased nominations for the Outdoor Partnership awards, an increase in the number of nominations from outdoor adventurous activity clubs for regional and national awards, which will all contribute to the increased awareness of the work of the volunteers within the outdoor activity industry to other organisations and communities.

7) Evaluation

We want to ensure our volunteer strategy is effective and fit for purpose. We will use various methods to gain information on volunteers' experiences and use this information to improve the volunteer strategy.

- Follow up questionnaire
- What has volunteering been like, how often do they volunteer
- Approach to handle volunteers who leave
- Volunteer suggestions box at Outdoor Festival

Appendix I. – Volunteer Policy

(Separate document)

Appendix II – Case Study

A Welsh Charity is changing lives by connecting local people with the natural resources on their doorstep.

The Outdoor Partnership is a multi-award-winning charity improving opportunities for thousands of people in Wales to achieve their potential through outdoor activities. The Outdoor Partnership has been operating since 2004 bringing public, private and third sector organisations together to work effectively in the outdoor sector towards a common mission.

The charity was set up because there was an abundance of natural resources and facilities but few opportunities for and little engagement with local communities in North West Wales. Outdoor activities were something visitors and tourists did. During this time a report by Bangor University (2003) showed the negative impact the Foot and Mouth outbreak during 2001-2 had on the outdoors and the outdoor tourism industry in North West Wales. The report also identified a lack of engagement between local people and the outdoor industry in that limited outdoor activities were taught in schools, the limited number of local clubs were predominantly run by visitors and there was no pathway for improvement or employment. Most outdoor centres were staffed by instructors from other parts of the UK and only 4% of instructors were locally educated and spoke Welsh. The lack of Welsh speaking instructors impacted on engagement with local schools. Employment of local people in the sector was largely restricted to low paid roles such as catering, maintenance and housekeeping.

Over the last 17 years the charity has been inspiring people to participate in outdoor sports as a life-long pursuit, through a sustainable continuum from first time experiences, community development programmes, further learning, training, regular participation, volunteering and employability programmes.

Prior to this time, joining an outdoor club in North Wales would have been a very rare occurrence if you were a local resident and volunteering in the outdoors was virtually non-existent. Outdoor Adventure didn't really exist in the Culture of North Wales, despite the wealth of natural resource in the area, such as the Snowdonia National Park and Anglesey area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB):

“Only tourists climb!”

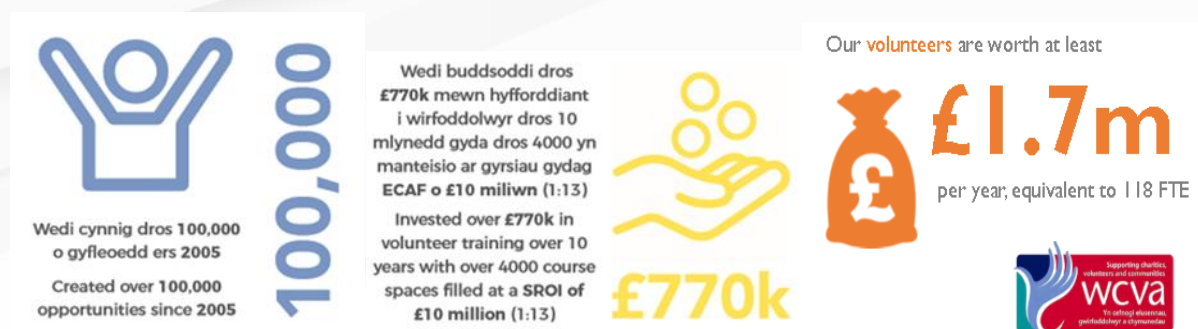
In 2005, the Outdoor Partnership began to turn its Mission into reality. Early work programmes focused on developing a continuum which could inspire local people to take up outdoor activities as a life-long pursuit. This involved setting up sustainable outdoor activity clubs in local communities across the three counties of Gwynedd, Ynys Mon and Conwy. Some of the early clubs included the Anglesey Adventure Club, Clwb Antur Dyffryn Peris, Clwb Antur Glaslyn and Clwb Beicio Mynydd Dyffryn Conwy.

One of the biggest challenges was to recruit local qualified, Welsh speaking coaches and leaders which, at that time, were few and far between. So, with the help of the Outdoor Partnership staff team, the clubs recruited qualified outdoor instructors from local authority outdoor education centres to help them establish themselves, attract new members and offer a series of club sessions. This model was not sustainable, and a Coach Education programme was needed to help support local people on the journey to becoming qualified volunteer leaders.

Another challenge to overcome was that volunteers in the outdoors need to acquire special skills, which are often gained from experience over time. To gain outdoor qualification takes a lot of time, effort and cost, so for most voluntary leaders this is not realistic with the pressures of 'modern life'.

Thanks to initial funding from Sport Wales, the WCVA and National Lottery Funding, the Outdoor Partnership overcame these barriers by establishing, what is now, a sustainable and inclusive 'Coach Education' programme, with the Outdoor Partnership as an organisation providing advocacy and support to independent community based outdoor clubs. The programme includes a series of mentor support sessions preparing new volunteers working towards National Governing Body awards, pre-requisite training and National Governing Body qualifications, CPD workshops including Safeguarding, First Aid, Disability Inclusion Training and many more.

Over the past 7 years the Outdoor Partnership has trained 6000 volunteers, who in turn provide regular participation and training for thousands of local people of all ages. Mountain Training UK identified that for every leader trained that person goes on to have an influence on 10 other people.



The project has developed to support volunteering roles other than just leaders and instructors and provides realistic opportunity for people with no outdoor skills to volunteer in a variety of roles within clubs, such as committee roles, equipment officers and social secretaries.

More recently the Outdoor Partnership has started providing its own volunteering opportunities at festivals, competitions and within environmental groups. Recently the charity has recruited four new volunteers with specialist skills onto the board of trustees improving the equality and diversity of the board.

The Outdoor Partnership has been instrumental in developing the outdoor activity volunteering culture in North Wales, from specialist activity for a select few, to an everyday norm available to all.

The charity's successful and innovative approach has been recognised as an example of best practice by Sport Wales and has been awarded significant National Lottery Community Fund and Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing (ENRaW) grants to extend this work to other regions in Wales, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

www.outdoorpartnership.co.uk