

Case Study

Bridgend County Borough Council

Project summary

Llais y Goedwig has had a number of projects running with the support of Bridgend Borough Council, or instances where we have been successful in our aims because of long standing relationships with individuals in the Council.

These have included work around Tree Protection Orders with Coed yr Hela, A Management agreement with Bedford Park LNR, and the legacy of a Tree Ambassador scheme. Llais y Goedwig has also supported the delivery of BCBC's plans to develop Social Enterprise opportunities at Bedford Park, a Local Nature Reserve with community volunteers and local mental health charities.

Tree Ambassadors

In 2018 Llais y Goedwig were appointed by BCBC (via Rob Jones, Countryside Management) to create a Tree Ambassador programme in order to engage with local groups and organisations to communicate the project and identify 'Tree Ambassadors' to identify trees or woodland areas across Bridgend that they wished to protect and help monitor and manage. LlyG recruited 20 Ambassadors who received training, support and resources to help them look after their identified trees.. A film about that project can be found [here](#). The project allowed for continued working with the Countryside management team at BCBC and seeded further ideas for collaborative working.

Tree Protection Orders

Following storm damage (and as a result of some Ash being weakened by existing dieback), Coed yr Hela Woodlands saw a number of trees fall close to pathways, causing potential danger to the public and visitors to the site. The group contacted Bridgend County Borough Council's Planning Department about felling, who advised that as there were tree protection orders in place, they would need to have a full assessment of the trees from an Arborist before they could give permission. This would take time, and carry a large cost.



Coed yr Hela reached out to Sasha Ufnowska, Llais y Goedwig, for advice. Sasha was able to enlist the help of Rob Jones at BCBC, an existing partner in the council. Rob and Sasha walked the site with Kim from Coed yr Hela, documented the potentially dangerous trees, wrote up an assessment for the planning team, and was also able to step in whenever there was a disagreement about the action to take, and at any impasse, allowing trees to be felled economically and without issue.

Bedford Park Management Agreement

Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) appointed Llais y Goedwig to manage Bedford Park LNR for and with the local community, developing a volunteer base and supporting a programme of volunteer-led activities with the aim that the site would become an exemplar site for managing Council woodlands with volunteer groups. The initial agreement led to a further contract to identify social enterprise activity that could take place within the LNR to add value to the volunteer offer within the park

Through this commission we were able to consolidate community links, recruit more volunteers and engage with more and varied groups to widen participation and use of the site. Working closely with BCBC colleagues and local groups to ensure that Bedford Park is managed for and with local people.



Llais y Goedwig worked closely with the Planning and Countryside teams in relation to a £46K Landfill tax grant secured by Llais in 2023, and subsequently with volunteers to develop a tree nursery site. The site and group were part of the Welsh Government Campaign *My Tree our Forest*, aiming to give every household in Wales the chance to pick up a tree for their garden or have a tree planted on their behalf. Regular Friday volunteering groups have continued throughout, as well as local organisation Mental Health Matters Wales (MHMW) regular weekly sessions on site, and Bridgend College Roots to Employment group. We were also able to support volunteer conservation work on other sites with the Bedford Park volunteer group and the MHMW group, at Frog Pond Wood and Sker Farm. Training was provided to set up a tree nursery on site, and the dormouse boxes that were made and installed as part of a joint project with NRW resulted in the first sighting of dormouse in the park for years – and in one of our boxes!

These projects continue to ensure good links with local communities, enhance skills and confidence, and ensuring pathways and habitats are regularly maintained and enhanced.

What worked well, what didn't work so well:

The examples given provide examples of Llais y Goedwig's impact as a third party, able to create partnerships with other like minded organisations, make links between distinct projects, and between teams within the council, to increase their impact and the overall experience for the volunteer.

Because of the strong relationship we'd already developed with the BCBC Countryside team, Sasha

was able to help the Coed yr Hela group.

We saw a progression from the tree ambassador scheme in Bridgend, to launching the *My tree our forest* campaign at Bedford Park, to training up volunteers via the Llais y Goedwig managed *CommuniTree* project to support development of their own community and small scale nurseries. The end result being the Bedford park group purchasing and growing a number of trees, ready to transfer to the polytunnel and raised beds at the Park.



What has been learnt:

The legacy of the Tree Ambassadors scheme was in its people, who were now additionally trained, and engaged in working with trees. The project has seeded other ideas and projects that otherwise would not be possible. It also built upon existing relationships in the council, that meant when Llais y Goedwig, or the groups we work with, needed extra support, we had supportive and/or critical friends at BCBC we could contact.

In the case of the tree protection orders. Without the additional support of Llais y Goedwig as a third party with knowledge of the council departments and who can help with what, Coed yr Hela, as a small volunteer led group would have been left spending thousands of pounds on an unnecessary Arborist assessment, all the while with potentially dangerous trees remaining in place while they were unable to act.

Conclusion:

We will continue to work closely with BCBC colleagues and local groups to ensure that Bedford Park is managed for and with local people. And to build on the successes of previous projects, for example build more dormouse boxes as part of a joint project with NRW, and continue to develop the tree nursery as source of local provenance trees for Bridgend and the wider South Wales area.