



Llais y Goedwig Members Update February 2010

Dear Llais y Goedwig members - A warm welcome to all the new groups and individuals who have joined Llais y Goedwig over the winter. A lot has happened since the AGM in November and the next year promises to be both challenging and exciting.

What your Board has been doing...

Llais y Goedwig is a membership organisation with leadership and donkey work provided by a Board of eight, who were elected at the AGM on the 21st November. They are:

Roger Davies (Golgyfa Gwydyr . Conwy) - Chair
Jane Gronow (Individual member, Powys) - Treasurer
Jenny Wong (Coetir Mynydd . Gwynedd) - Secretary
Fay Sharpley (Pobl y Fforest . Camarthenshire)
David Williams (Blaen Bran Community Woodland . Torfaen)
Carolyn Swaine (Longwood Community Woodland . Ceredigion)
Dave Petty (Coed Marros - Pembrokeshire)
Alun Lewis (Ebbw Fach Trail - Blaenau Gwent)

Once the website is launched we will have Llais y Goedwig email addresses you can use to contact the Board . in the meantime send correspondence through Coed Lleol.

The Board has regular meetings the first Tuesday of every other month. All members are welcome to attend meetings, to submit suggestions or raise issues for discussion. The next meeting is on the 2nd March in Machynlleth (10:30 am to around 4 pm) and you can find minutes of all our meetings on our website.

Llais y Goedwig is presently an Unincorporated Association and it was agreed at the AGM to formalise the association as a Company limited by guarantee. We are close to finalising the Memorandum and Articles of association and will be registered Llais y Goedwig with Companies House in the next few weeks. An Action Plan has been prepared and the next steps will be the formulation of a full business plan.

The new website (www.llaisygoedwig.org.uk) will be launched at the beginning of March and with your input and suggestions we hope this will develop into a source of information and be a social network for all those interested in communities and woodlands in Wales. The website will be fully bilingual and we need volunteers to take charge of reviewing and updating content on pages for funding etc.. So do let us know if you would be happy to manage a page or two on the website.

We have just christened the Llais y Goedwig bank account with a £999 start-up grant from Environment Wales which will be used to develop the website and business plan.

Some very exciting news - Llais y Goedwig has been adopted as the *principal supporting organisation* for four action points of the Woodlands for People section of the Welsh Assembly Government's Woodlands for Wales Strategy Action Plan. This is both recognition, a privilege and significant challenge. Llais y Goedwig's responsibility is for action over the next five years for the following:

- Explore the legal and operational issues associated with transferring woodland management responsibilities to community groups and enterprises. Formalise ways of working in partnership in order to deliver effective community development objectives, particularly in relation to the Assembly Government woodland estate.

- Develop, publish and promote guidance for woodland owners and organisations working with communities.
- Develop, publish and promote guidance and support for communities and other groups to help them establish beneficial links with woodlands and woodland owners.
- Help identify the best ways for communities to access funding and resources for woodland activities, providing support and promoting opportunities.

We will be working in close partnership with Forestry Commission Wales (FCW), Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) and other partners and, of course, all members will have a major say in what we do and how Llais y Goedwig meets these responsibilities.

We are presently negotiating a contribution from FCW towards funding for Llais y Goedwig over the next financial year (2010-2011) and hope to be in the position of being able to employ a full time member of staff and establish a small office, provisionally in Machynlleth, in the next few months. Meanwhile, Communities 2.0 (see below) have offered to help develop interactive content for the Llais y Goedwig website and set up a virtual office for the Board.

Members of the Board have also had an opportunity to speak on behalf of community woodland groups to the FCW Sales & contracts concerning the recent call for firewood framework contracts. We will be reporting on this at greater length in the next Update . in the meantime, if you have any observations on firewood contracts please let us know (via Zena).

An important part of any action plan is the establishment of monitoring to ascertain if actions are indeed having an impact and producing the planned effects. FCW are therefore commissioning a survey of community woodland groups as a baseline for the Woodlands for People strategy. So you may well be approached to answer questions about your group and how it operates. Llais y Goedwig is requesting regular updates from FCW on progress with this study.

URGENT - OPEN CONSULTATION

One of our members has drawn attention to the BWW Stakeholder consultation on the proposed First Steps grant scheme. This is a proposal by the Forestry Commission for new plantings and some management activities (fencing) for small parcels of land 0.05 - 2 ha. Up to £5,000 will be available as a simple one-off payment administered through a contract with a single external agency. It looks as if this scheme will be of interest to community groups looking at smaller projects and this consultation is a good opportunity to ensure this new grant meets the needs of community groups. If you have a few minutes could you please answer a few questions to help us prepare a Llais y Goedwig response to the consultation:

- 1) Would a grant for new plantings below 2 ha in size be of interest to your group?
- 2) What sort of land below 2 ha in size could you access for planting? (brownfield, farmland, neglected woodland, other??)
- 3) Would a small grant for maintenance activities in areas of existing woodland (less than 2 ha) be useful to your group?
- 4) What sort of activities would you like to see supported in this way?
- 5) Is administration of such a grant through an external agency (rather than Forestry Commission) likely to make the grant more or less accessible to you?

Send your ideas to Zena or Jenny who can also provide a copy of the full consultation document:

Zena (zenawilmot@smallwoods.org.uk 01654 703366

Jenny (jenny.wong@wildresources.co.uk)

SUMMER 2010 EVENTS – Woodland management road-show

Over summer 2010 Llais y Goedwig will be running four events focused on the management of community woodlands. We hope these events will be hosted by a community woodland groups in a different part of Wales to cover basic principles of woodland management with workshops focusing on

specific regional issues. There will be plenty of time for networking and lots of good food! These events are being organised in response to feedback from members requesting more information on woodland management at the AGM.

Road-show objectives:

- Helping groups gain confidence in adaptive approaches to woodland management
- Empowering groups to use participatory approaches to decision making relating to their woodland
- Addressing issues relevant to community woodlands (e.g. vandalism, silviculture etc.)
- Respond to members request for workshops on community woodland management

More information will be available soon so watch out for an event near you! Coed Lleol will be organising these events for us so please contact Debs or Zena (<http://www.coedlleol.org.uk>) for further information, to offer suggestions or if your group would be interested in hosting a road-show.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Managing woodlands for nature and culture - 17th Feb Ganllwyd

This course is run by Natur with Lantra support.

Speakers are Dr George Peterken and Emma Plunkett-Dillon

Ganllwyd Village Hall, 9 to 4.

Free - but with booking charge of £25.

Objectives for the course:

- To enable those involved in decision-making about the management of woodlands in Wales to improve their understanding of the biodiversity and historic interests of these woods and their conservation needs
- To review options for how these conservation needs may be met
- To provide information to stimulate national debate over future management of western oak and other important

Email to: events@natur.eu.com for further information.

Climate change grant

<http://www.sustainablefundingcymru.org.uk/news/environment-wales-climate-change-grant-opens-today>)

This is a competitive WCVA/Environment Wales one-off grant which has to be spent before May 2010 (yes in the next 3 months). The grants are for £200 to £2000 to raise awareness of climate change. It would be good to have some woodland projects apply for this grant to demonstrate what we can contribute to the climate change agenda so its not just about turning out the lights. However, youd have to be fast as the programme closes on the 1st March. Contact the WCVA helpdesk on 0800 2888 329, email climatechangefund@environment-wales.org for an application pack or contact your Environment Wales development officer.

FCW Pathfinder programme

Forestry Commission Wales is currently looking at options for transferring management responsibility for some Assembly Government Woodlands (or unused buildings) to community groups through leases or management agreements. The 'pathfinder' process will consider legal, financial and operational issues to inform the development of a national framework. Five community groups have come forward as 'pathfinders' so far, looking at potential leases and at co-management of woodlands, where communities would have a much higher level of say in how woodlands are planned and managed. There is scope for more pathfinder schemes - groups who have innovative ideas and would like to be more involved in their local Forestry Commission Wales managed forest should contact Barbara Anglezarke - Woodlands for People Policy and Programme Manager (barbara.anglezarke@forestry.gsi.gov.uk). Pathfinder is exploratory and is not a grant scheme - you

will need to develop your own funding arrangements - you may not get all you hope for, but it's a good opportunity to work with FCW and will help shape the way in which the Assembly forests can be used and influenced by local people in the future.

Communities 2.0 (<http://www.clickconnectdiscover.org/>)

This is a new WAG project delivered by the Wales Co-op Centre to help community groups, voluntary organisations and social enterprises in Wales to benefit from digital technology. This includes websites, broadcasting (radio, video) and advice on purchasing and using a computer. This is not really a grant scheme but can provide lots of free advice and assistance in making the most of the opportunities presented by high tech approaches to communications and work. You can access Communities 2.0 through your local Wales Co-op Centre (<http://www.walescoop.com/who-we-are/meet-the-team/staff-list/>).

Communities and Nature <http://www.ccw.gov.uk/enjoying-the-country/communities-and-nature.aspx>

Some of you may have heard of the Communities and Nature (CAN) project being run by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW). This is a European funded project to generate increased economic growth and sustainable jobs by capitalising on Wales's environmental qualities, particularly its landscape and wildlife. First impressions of this were that it was going to be a protracted procurement process through Sell2Wales and be mainly about large sums of money going to larger organisations such as County Councils. The first round of Small Scale Activities appeared to be the most appropriate for community woodlands and a few groups did attempt the application process.

Indeed the procurement process is protracted and to obtain funding you would need to be prepared to complete at least three sets of forms and attend a couple of meetings over the course of a year. But there is no minimum size of project so you can apply for relatively small amounts of money to any call. The CCW team is friendly and sympathetic to the needs of smaller applicants and is available to help groups through the process (it is very important to attend workshops for one-to-one advice on your application). Match funding of at least 45% of the costs of your project is required but if cash is short there are two ways this can be tackled:

- In-kind match funding is allowed so you can count your volunteer time as your sole contribution to the project. Use the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) in-kind labour rates (see document on link below) and be aware that you will need to keep scrupulous records of hours worked in the form of signed timesheets (<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/wefo/publications/applyingforfundingguidance/090521matchfundinginkinden.pdf>)
- Help CCW make the case for a contribution from WAG to provide cash match funding for groups which have limited financial resources. The CAN team need evidence that this is needed and how it will be used to make the case to WAG. So do get in touch with the CAN team if you would like to do a project but can't because you don't have cash match funding.

Llais y Goedwig is investigating whether a Better Woodlands for Wales grant for woodland management from the Forestry Commission can be used as match funding for CAN. We'll let you know once we have a definitive answer on this.

The next round of CAN procurement is due to be launched in February for Connections and Paths followed by one for Visitor Facilities later in the year. It appears that these calls may also include the option to bid for a Community engagement grant of up to £10,000 to complement your project.

RECENT EVENTS

Presentations and notes from all Llais y Goedwig events are on the Coed Lleol webpages and will be transferred shortly to our new website. If you would prefer hardcopy of this material please contact Zena and she will make you some copies.

Linking Communities and Woodlands

On Friday 9th October a community woodland networking day for South East Wales was held in Llanhilleth, Blaenau Gwent. The event was organised with the local Ebbw Fach Trail - an association of different local community and woodland groups - who gave a talk and took those who were

interested for an inspirational walk around their woodland projects. Roger Davies, Chair of Llais y Goedwig, gave a presentation describing the role of Llais y Goedwig in linking community woodland groups in Wales. Barbara Anglezarke of FCW outlined their support for community woodlands in Wales. There followed workshops on *landscaping in community woodlands* and *community woodland networking and support*.

The event was free and 73 people attended with very positive feedback from what was considered to be a successful day, and a great chance for networking.

Conference and AGM- A Celebration of Community Woodlands in Wales

On the 20th and 21st November Llais y Goedwig held it's biggest event yet; a two day conference and the first Llais y Goedwig AGM in Lampeter hosted by the Longwood Community Woodland group. The conference was sponsored and organised by the Coed Lleol project of the Small Woods Association funded by Forestry Commission Wales and the Countryside Council for Wales.

Speakers at the conference included representatives from community woodland groups, FCW and Elin Jones AM, minister for rural affairs. Over 60 people attended and there was great feedback, with all involved saying what a useful and informative event it had been.

Demystifying Woodland Insurance and Liability

On the 16th January Coed Lleol, Llais y Goedwig, Small Woods Association and the Confederation of Forest Industries UK (ConFor) collaborated to put on a seminar focusing on woodland insurance and liability. Despite the snow, over fifty people from across Wales and the Midlands attended this day of lively presentations, interactive workshops, information and discussion.

One of the participants said: *"This has widened my understanding of my responsibilities towards wildlife in the woodlands I work in. It has inspired me to research the variety of insurance policies that may be relevant to our new group. I also enjoyed the opportunity and enough time to network with woodland owners."*

If you missed the workshop but are interested in knowing more about woodland insurance and liability we will be putting together a fact sheet based on this seminar. This should be available soon!

Get involved!

Llais y Goedwig membership is free for 2010! Please encourage any community woodland groups you know to join and take advantage of the benefits membership can bring. We need a strong and committed membership . get involved and help shape the organisation! If you want to know more then do get in touch. The Update is for everyone and if you wish to contribute to it then do send items to Zena (Coed Lleol).

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