

PROJECT: FOREST GARDEN AND SOLAR PANEL INSTALLATION

APPLICANT: GOLYGFA GWYDYR



STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGED
64



LOCATION
LLANRWST, CONWY



TOTAL PROJECT VALUE
£21,963.00

GREEN COMMUNITIES FUND OVERVIEW

The Green Communities fund, delivered by rural development agency Cadwyn Clwyd, aims to support improvements to outdoor community activities and infrastructure.

Supported through the Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing grant, 30 local areas in Denbighshire, Conwy, Flintshire, and Wrexham have been given support to transform their outdoor community spaces for wildlife to thrive and to create desirable places to live, work and play.

Some groups opted for funding for renewable energy systems, such as solar installations, to reduce carbon emissions and help reduce their fuel bills.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Golygfa Gwydyr is a not-for-profit social enterprise which supports the local community with mental and physical health, and wellbeing activities.

Following the loss of several trees due to storms, plans were made to transition part of its woodland and performance space (known as the Caerdroia Labyrinth) into a forest garden.

In the colder months, the organisation's building becomes a warm hub for the Conwy community, so it was considering renewable technology to alleviate electricity bills.

OBJECTIVES

The group was focused on restoring the labyrinth, as well as its heritage damson orchard, and in turn, continue to promote the value of connection with the outdoors.

Rosie Evans, community development worker at Golygfa Gwydyr, said: "Once the forest garden is fully established, we hope to provide low-cost and healthy produce to those who need it the most."

Bringing the community together, whether at its forest sites or at its centre, is ultimately the main aim of the organisation.



ACTIVITY

Planting has begun at the forest garden, with additional fruit trees, vegetables and nuts, which are all bee and wildlife friendly.

Mulching, the process of suppressing weeds and adding nutrients to the soil, has been completed, which was a vital aspect of the upgrades.

To support this, a chipper was purchased with the funding, and will make use of waste wood from the site that Golygfa Gwydyr manages through a community management agreement with Natural Resource Wales.

In addition, a pump was acquired to irrigate the garden, with a transportable two-stroke engine as the power source, and a rough-cut field mower for clearing brambles and small branches.

Rosie continued: "We have increased our skills, too, as some of the money has paid for a member of the team to train for a lowland leader qualification.

"They will be able to take visitors on walks through the forest, promoting more physical activity outdoors."

To help identify the right configuration for a solar panel installation, Golygfa Gwydyr worked with social enterprise Datblygiadau Egni Gwledig (DEG), which specialises in reducing fuel poverty and encouraging the uptake of renewable energy in North West Wales.



"THE ADDITIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY CAME AT THE RIGHT TIME AS HEATING COSTS WERE RISING AND OUR FIXED PRICE TARIFF WAS ENDING. NOW WE CAN AFFORD TO KEEP OUR BUILDING WARM AND WELCOMING FOR LOCAL PEOPLE WHO ENJOY GATHERING TOGETHER AND PARTICIPATING IN OUR SESSIONS."

-ROSIE EVANS

OUTCOMES

Ten solar panels have been installed at the Golygfa Gwydyr building and it is expected that the group will reduce electricity bills by up to £2,000 per annum.

Rosie reflected: "Our forest garden has benefitted greatly from the grant and Cadwyn Clwyd's support has helped us increase our capacity to manage the forest sustainably and continue its use as a community resource."

Although the labyrinth was damaged by extreme weather, the organisation has had the opportunity to elevate the space further and in turn, increase volunteer roles and encourage wildlife to flourish.

This project has received funding through the Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government.