

WORKSHOP TO REVIEW THE NORTH WEST WALES OUTDOOR PARTNERSHIP

22 April 2008

Plas Menai

Introduction

The Partnership became active on receipt of funds 2½ years ago and its current phase of funding will come to an end in 12 months time. The Partnership, wishes to build on the success of this initial phase by securing funding for a further phase and, in order to enable it to prepare its future strategy, members decided to hold a review. The review was a two-fold process which included objectively looking over the initial phase of the project, to learn lessons so that the future phase can be planned in the light of these. Members of the Partnership include: Plas Menai, Plas y Brenin, Conway Centre, North East Wales Outdoor Education Services, Mountain Leader Training Wales, Snowdonia-Active, University of Wales Bangor, The Countryside Council for Wales and Urdd Gobaith Cymru. The review was carried out in the form of a facilitated event and Siân Shakespeare was commissioned to plan and run the event as an independent facilitator. She organised participants into small discussion groups and the following notes are the fruit of these discussions. She agreed the following objectives for the workshop with the Partnership.

To:

- discover what has worked and what hasn't worked so well so far
- agree on the lessons learnt
- agree on priorities for the next phase
- agree an action plan for devising a strategy for the next phase.

Participants were asked to sit in the following groups:

- Clubs (x2)
- Outdoor providers/centres
- National Governing Bodies
- Local Authority Leisure Services
- Welsh language sector
- Partnership Staff & officers
- Environment/health/career/youth sectors

As a warm up session participants were asked to draw a picture of what they believed the project had succeeded in achieving so far. Groups came up with several interesting pictures encompassing points from their point of view before Amanda Davies, Partnership chair presented the mission statement and objectives which had been agreed at the outset.

Session one – project highlights

The review discussions started with groups identifying three occasions which had been particular project highlights for them and then they went on to analyse why these had been successful.

Pre March '03

- Research into the impact of the 2001 outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease due to the lack of outdoor activities in the countryside.

March '03 – March '04

- Initial partnership meeting at University of Wales Bangor
 - Luck
 - Compliance with 'Climbing Higher' WAG strategy
 - Like minded people having a shared vision
 - Passion and enthusiasm
 - Tenacity
 - Speaking with a collective voice

March '04 → March '05

- Ministerial support for Project and release of funds
- Launch of Partnership!
 - Believing in oneself and going for it (Field of Dreams)
 - Believing that if you build it – the people will follow!

March '05 → March '06

- Appointment of four dedicated Development Officers
 - Funding
- Clubs being able to access training more widely
 - Political will
 - Funding/sponsorship
 - Broader recognition of importance

March '07 → April '08

- Programme of activities
 - Demand and passion
- Centre and equipment for Clwb Antur Dyffryn Peris

- Secure funds for equipment for Cybi Kayakers
- Ensure the continuation of the PAA
- Continued funding
 - Links and networking
- 'Peilota'r Wobr Antur'
- Children and pupils persevering
 - Volunteer commitment
 - Appointment of officers with local knowledge
- Local people establishing local clubs
- Access to outdoor centres
 - Practical co-operation
- Orienteering Festival for Gwynedd and Conwy
- Welsh language ML training courses for leaders (walking and climbing)
- Anglesey Sporting Awards

Session two – project low points

Groups then went on to identify three events/occasions during the course of the Partnership project which had been less than successful for them and why they had been so.

- Slow progress with the modern apprenticeship
 - Lack of understanding of needs in terms of experience, credibility and safety
 - Lack of time allowed for things to develop
- Fragility of sustainability of increased number of clubs
 - Insufficient number of people to run them
 - Insufficient structures to support them, including long term funding
- Difficulty with securing insurance for multi-activities
 - Lack of collective Partnership negotiation between Clubs and insurance provider
- Difficulty of measuring true success and the impact of activities
 - Lack of a development model which includes changing views and attitudes of participants
- Difficulty of geography with some sparsely populated areas and long distances to facilities/natural resources
 - Should more resources be deployed or should they be distributed differently?
- Weak links with other established schemes

- No long term sustainability for Partnership due to insecurity of funding
 - Lack of lobbying to ensure Partnership aims remain on the Political agenda
 - Lack of links with WAG 'education 14 – 19' initiative
 - All eggs in one funding basket!
 - Vision should set out the case for funding in years 1, 2, 3, 4,+ etc
- Training development stalled
 - Lack of training incentives
 - Short term grants based funding
 - Short term contracts
- Staff turnover and lack of continuity of staffing
 - Insecure future due to short term funding
 - Challenge of recruiting for the type of job
 - Mis-match of expectations – outdoor instructors with weak admin and office skills
 - Subliminal message from establishment is one of lack of appreciation
- Public relations and communication with outside world could be stronger
 - Lack of appreciation that this is a marathon not a sprint
 - Over-reliance on people learning about activities via the website
 - Lack of media training
- Weak communication between Partnership and clubs, centres etc
 - Lack of awareness of what is going on, the bigger picture
- Not enough adults available to be club officers
 - Need for continuity and longer term input from Development Officers
 - People with the right skills need to be in place before clubs are left alone
- Clubs being used as a crèche
- Strategy overload for volunteers
 - Too many processes trying to engage volunteers
- Unrealistic timescales and expectations
 - Need to learn to crawl before walking
 - Need patience and a long term strategy

Session three - Lessons for the future

Having reviewed the high and low points of the Partnership initial phase participants then listed those points which should be embodied and applied in any future phase of the Partnership project.

The Partnership should:

- establish a means of keeping everyone up to date on roles and responsibilities
- establish a club network forum
- work more closely with the education sector
- plan for future years earlier in the project and secure funding for it
- publicise successes and the importance of the Sports Council funding
- build in the ability to attract funding if Partnership is successful
- highlight unique selling points to enable the Partnership to remain at the forefront of current and future political agendas
- take advantage of EU Convergence funding by linking its work with other agendas
- take project into other counties and ultimately across Wales
- broaden Partnership staffing skill set to include the ability to lobby and to be more strategic – reconsider the balance between the ability to deliver and to devise strategies
- provide a definition of what the Partnership will and won't do
- carry out structured and appropriate reviews
- adopt a champion/personality to promote the Project
- map needs in terms of the varied geography
- help clubs to secure physical space for equipment
- adopt a better communication structure

Session four - Factors influencing the area of work

The second part of the workshop considered the Partnership's future strategy. The starting point for this was that everyone listed those rules, regulations, policies and initiatives which currently or, are likely to affect their work in relation to outdoor activities. This exercise mapped out the 'external drivers' or factors which need to be taken into account in any future strategy.

- European Habitats Directive
- The curriculum from September onwards, the education authority and school policies

- Continued volunteer commitment
- The Wales wide health agenda
- Relative priorities in the light of tighter public finances
- Identification of 'outdoor activities' as a growth sector in regional economic strategies
- An appreciation of the potential and opportunities in the area
- Lasting legacy (+ or -) of Olympics in 2012 – financial focus may change to other areas of activity
- Time constraints of the school day
- Restructuring of DOE + T
- Lack of time of youth club leaders
- Continued training of volunteers
- Access to land and water is dependent on relationship with landowner – land/water managers should have positive obligations towards outdoor activities
- Negative impact of owner/occupier public liability in law
- WAG priorities and strategies
- Access to facilities in its wide sense
- Perceived cost value and risk of participating in outdoor activities
- VisitWales marketing strategies
- Not enough accreditation
- Problem of insurance
- Political realities in the light of the need to regenerate communities
- Greater demand from young people
- The results of the review of 'Climbing Higher'
- Local authority Green travelplans
- The confused reality of a plethora of organisations representing the outdoor sector
- Skills agenda – 'Learning Pathways 14 – 19'
- Definition of the 'outdoors' could be a weakness and lack of understanding of the concept of outdoors
- Child protection legislation
- Bathing Water Directive
- Local elections

Session five - Vision for the forthcoming three years

This session provided participants with an opportunity to devise their own visions as to what they would like the Partnership to achieve during the next three years. These were expressed as postcards written as groups to the AM at the end of the three years.

Dear Alun,

Congratulations on your new post and responsibilities (including health). We are pleased to tell you the Partnership you supported in 2005 has by now achieved the following.

1. Outdoor activities in the national curriculum with every school child having the opportunity to extend these into their leisure time.
2. Increased local participation.
3. At least 25% of all instructors now teach in Welsh.
4. Recognised standards have been set for this industry
5. Widely recognised benefits in terms of citizenship, training and improved health.
6. Established the Partnership as the most cost effective way of enabling challenging sustainable participation throughout Wales, which the SCW wish to fund.

* * *

Dear

We have:

- 24 existing clubs which are strong, thriving and self-sustaining (with some financial assistance for coaching and equipment)
- identified other communities who want to start clubs
- extended into other parts of Wales where there is a demand
- encouraged schools to "sign up" for the outdoor partnership award
- employed more local Welsh-speaking instructors
- created career opportunities via accreditation and qualification
- a healthier population through outdoor involvement
- strong links with N.W. Regional Institute of Sport and NGB. Cof E. LTAD

* * *

Dear AM

Thanks for all the cash and support you have given us over the last 4 yrs. The outdoor Olympic bid for 2020 is going well for North Wales. Glad to hear all of Wales is now involved and has the lowest obesity rates in Europe. None of this could have been possible without your ongoing financial support

P.S. I've heard that Job Centre attendance members are down and further education demand is on the UP.

A Dear AM,

If only we had had your ongoing financial support.

Imagine the possibilities ...?

BS 5790 : 2006 has been altered to widen the squeeze gaps in kissing gates accordingly ...

B. Dear A. M.

The Partnership has grown to cover 6 counties in North Wales and participation in outdoor activities has increased notably amongst local population.

The clubs started by the Partnership have grown stronger and are now self-sufficient, able to train and accredit their own leaders.

It's amazing to see how the Partnership has grown from its conception to now being an internationally celebrated initiative and an inspiration for future initiatives

* * *

Dear AM
The Assembly
Holyhead
CF5 2UY

Thank you for providing enough money so that the Outdoor Partnership has become integrated into local government and is sustainable as a result.

- Horizons have been broadened – those of people, communities and agencies
- The Partnership has a structure across North Wales
- Opportunities for local people to work in the sector across all levels.
- Career pathways for young people!

* * *

Dear Minister,

Thank you for your vision, support and recognition of the success of the three regional outdoor partnerships in Wales.

The ten year funding has allowed us to consolidate a sustainable network of community club members who gain, health, social, economic, environmental benefits.

* * *

Dear Minister,

Glad that you boycotted the Olympic ceremony to attend your local canoe club AGM!

Since 2008 every child in Wales has had a positive experience of outdoor activities and many 1000s have gone on to join local clubs, in a whole range of activities. Already we are seeing healthier and happier children who are far less likely to become a burden on the Health Service.

'Looking forward to seeing you on the water!

* * *

Dear A.M.

We have now:

- established an 'All Wales National Outdoor Partnership'
- implemented a National Outdoor Award (KS 2)
- established and clarified a clear concise 'Player and Coach Pathways' through a pyramid (maybe only through 2 – 3 phases)
- increased recruitment and job opportunities as a result of upskilling and training local people which in turn has increased the bank of coaches/instructors which offer increased provision
- smashed the 'Climbing Higher' targets
- only 1% of Welsh population classified as obese as result of outdoor participation.

* * *

- Stronger culture of outdoor activities and so economy of NW Wales has improved
- Strong career pathway
- Established a strategy which was adopted
- Robust and sustainable Partnership
- Incorporated into school curriculum
- Benefits for health, etc
- Increase participation at all levels - schools, clubs, etc.

Session six - Common themes/threads

Having listened to the range of visions participants collectively identified the common themes or threads running through them. These were listed so that they could be considered as potential areas of work to be developed during the next phase of the project.

- Higher profile for Partnership
- Increased employment opportunities
- Increase in use of Welsh language in the sector
- Increased doorstep opportunities on people's own patch
- Tapping into the health agenda and the associated funding
- Integration across North Wales and ultimately nationally
- Support and recognition of volunteers including remuneration
- Giving every child an opportunity to experience the outdoors
- Opportunities for people to do activities on their own or in a group
- Developing models for accessing activities when natural facilities are scarcer e.g. in the middle of Cardiff
- Establish multi-activity clubs
- Increased capacity within clubs and increase in the number of clubs
- Outdoor Partnership Award (regional and national)
- Closer links made with the school curriculum
- Commitment from all interested parties
- Green spaces used for storage
- Vocational training in outdoor activities in schools and colleges

Session eight - Prioritised crude objectives

Groups of participants then went on to prioritise the above areas of work and those which received two or more votes were listed as 'potential crude objectives'. The workshop ended with some participants signing up to volunteer to help the Partnership develop the strategy for the next phase, under the objective they are most interested in. However, other areas of work listed above will also be considered in the new strategy.

- Increased capacity within clubs – *Jamie AAC*
- Outdoor Partnership Award – *Martin Land, Jamie AAC, Guto Wyn, Iwan Jones Cystennin*
- Links made with the Schools National Curriculum – *Guto Wyn, Iwan Jones Cystennin, Tim Jepson*

- Links made with the health agenda
- Integration of project into local government across North Wales – *Siân Williams FCC, Matt Hayes FCC*
- Every child to have an opportunity to participate in outdoor activity – *Martin Land, Iwan Jones Cystennin*
- Higher profile for partnership – *Alys Conran, Alun Pugh* (directw@snowdonia-society.org.uk), *Jamie AAC*
- Increase doorstep opportunities on people's own patch – *Martin Land*
- Increase of Welsh language in the sector/Cynydd defnydd o'r iaith Gymraeg yn y sector – *Guto Wyn*

Facilitator comments and recommendations

Based on the discussions at the review workshop I make the following recommendations for the Outdoor Partnership to consider.

The Outdoor Partnership should:

1. adopt a new name/title for the overall project since the Partnership is a mechanism for running and delivering the project,
2. devise a longer term plan than the immediate forthcoming 3 years leading to the ultimate goal of mainstreaming many of its activities into organisations' core work,
3. examine the barriers which need to be overcome in rolling out the project across other counties throughout Wales,
4. review the membership of the Outdoor Partnership, its structure and way of working to ensure it is suitable to deliver the next phase,
5. establish stronger internal communication mechanisms to ensure outlying organisations and establishments are kept up to date
6. appoint a strategic level officer with some promotional responsibilities
7. develop an external communication plan which makes use of various methods/media in order to target different audiences