**Case Study: Cae Bodfach**

 **Llanfyllin, Cae Bodfach March 2020**

**Background**

Cae Bodfach is a 10-acre site next to the Cain River, upstream of Llanfyllin town which was donated for community use. When the community took over management of the pastureland in 2014 it had relatively low biodiversity. A series of town council meetings were held to design a community growing space based on permaculture principles and examine previous barriers to utilising the site.

The community has strong ties through arts and music events, and the local high school is an Eco-school with many pupils coming from farming backgrounds. The group wanted to bring these different cultural and environmental aspects of the community together in a shared space to celebrate art, food and wildlife.

The development of the site into a community asset focused on the creation of a community garden, orchard, and communal seating areas to bring people together and improve the space for wildlife. These features have been developed whilst maintaining pre-existing site uses as a popular route for dog walkers and a source of hay stock for local farmers.

**Developing the site with the local community**

Over the last four years 100 fruit trees have been planted and managed; including apples, pears, quince, plums, and cherries. Support species, like briars, flowering currents, elder, blackthorn, and hazel, have been planted to add to the diversity. Summer activities have included scything to protect the trees from overgrowth and provides good mulch to feed the young forest garden. Volunteers have also defended the young trees from crafty sheep who have learned to ford the river in search of tasty saplings. Members of the local high school’s Welsh Baccalaureate as part of their curriculum installed a river gate to exclude our neighbouring “woolly nibblers.”

A wide selection of medicinal, native herbs and dye plants have also been introduced with the intention of propagating them around the field and surrounding area. To aid this process, part of the field has been sown with yellow rattle to weaken grasses and allow in more diversity. 80 meters of willow coppice has been added which serves as a wildlife corridor as well as an annual biomass yield for use on the land.

This year volunteers have used some of the willow to create a sheltered herb garden and a living willow dome. [View images of the site transformation here](https://youtu.be/PnyLyTCHVAo).

**How group got permission to be on the site**

Cain River Trust volunteers and members of the community under the leadership of Dewi Morris in 2014 (local volunteer and project coordinator) applied on behalf of the Cain Valley River Group for a Keep Wales Tidy Grant to get the project started. Permissions were obtained easily from Llanfyllin Town Council to work on the Town’s public open space.

Together with Steve Jones from the Cwm Harry Land Trust( seconded to the project for one day per month to help in its development) and members of the group and local community planted the backbone of what will become a food forest for the Llanfyllin community. It is an orchard garden of fruits, herb and berries. It will be a place for study, exploration, fun and leisure as well as providing hopefully a yield of fruits and berries that can be accessed by the whole community.

**Group aims**

Cae Bodfach Community Forest Garden Group’s members are a hard core group of no more than ten committed volunteers. They are inevitably involved with other like-minded and supportive organisations: Cain Valley River Group, Sector39, Severn Rivers Trust, Coed Cymru which has led to the development of Cae Bodfach being supported by grant making organisations which provide capital support for planting schemes in keeping with the perma-culture community forest garden’s principles.

The group have regular 2 monthly update slots at the Llanfyllin Town Council Meetings to keep everyone up to date.

**Main audience and volunteers**

Cae Bodfach Community Forest Garden Group’s members have worked with volunteers from the community, pupils from the local High school and Primary School and permaculture academy trained specialists to develop the forest garden.

Along the way members from Tan Y Fron housing co-operative (in Meifod), town councillors, permaculture-course students, local housing association residents, volunteers from the surrounding villages have lent a hand in planting trees or clearing scrub.

Severn Rivers Trust has also led volunteer groups conservation tasks focussed on the river Cain from partner organisations such as Severn Trent Water Authority and have had funded a SMS project about to start in March and will be carrying out many constructive activities to enhance the amenity use of the site and improve habitat and the wildldife value of the site. They will be working to improve the landscape resilience of the site to help it combat extreme levels of flood water.

Cain Valley River Group volunteers have helped plant over 1000 trees supported by Coed Cymru on half of the site ( Wild harvest mix.) They created an artificial otter holt and helped create a scrape to attract wading birds.

Community Pay Back teams have also helped maintain the Cae Bodfach: They recently coppiced and bundled up the field’s willow beds on site for later use as revetments in woody debris interventions on the river Cain channels sides : Slowing the flow and protecting rapidly eroding sections and providing habitat for riverine flora and fauna.

The development of the site has also helped future generations learn about sustainable management.

Llanfyllin High School Land-based studies students were taught permaculture and community gardening principles, and even designed their own fruit tree guilds (to support the planted apple trees) as part of their GCSE project.

**What the project is achieving**

Support from local and national organisations has been invaluable to the development of this project. Many of the trees have come from local nurseries and £100 worth of bee friendly plants were donated by the RHS. Some of the plants and tree-care advice has been supplied by Cwm Harry in Newtown, who have developed a nursery as part of their [Cultivate](http://www.cultivate.uk.com/) enterprise to support community growing across Mid Wales. Financial support and advice has also been given by other national organisations; such as Keep Wales Tidy, the Welsh Cider and Perry Association, Kew Gardens, National Lottery, and ARWAIN.

The project would not have been possible without the support and guidance of the local community. From the Llanfyllin Town Council and the Bodfach Trust who have granted permission for the project and kindly donated the space, to the Llanfyllin Green Hub initiative and Sector39 who have donated tools and much needed experience. The One School One Planet project has also involved local high school and junior school pupils, aiding the longevity of the community run site.

**Plans for the future**

The project has created a valuable and replicable model for community habitat restoration and diversity. Members want to develop incomes from the site resources; such as preserves from apples or baskets from willow. They are also talking to a willow specialist about increasing the biomass yield and value by selecting suitable varieties.

The group are open to suggestions for other elements to be included in the garden; for example, vegetable growing facilities like raised beds. For now they have concentrated on long term perennial plantings that will have a long life span and will also contribute to local food growing, wildlife and habitat provision.

**A quote from the group about how they enjoy managing the site/ working with people on the site/ Any support they have received, particularly if they have worked with the Community Land Advisory Service Cymru.**

“The evolution of how it came about is of particular importance: it was combination of the Newtown Based, Cwm Harry initiative to find a third site for a community garden; the delivery of Sector39 perma-culture classes and as a result of all of this involving many sections of the wider community of Llanfyllin. It is this origin story and the very special how it came about that has maximised its imputus in Llanfyllin. Such is the impact that it has extended the Community growing hub to another site in Llanfyllin situated behind the Public institute. Cae Bodfach Community Forest Garden has been a wonderful tool that has been a great help to interact with various sections of the community: Llanfyllin Town Council, Llanfyllin MENCAP, Schools, Community Pay back work teams and other groups and of course its faithful site users .The community management of Cae Bodfach, the investment in wildlife and diversity has benefited from multiple links to the community.”

**Steve Jones, Cae Bodfach Community Forest Garden Group**

**The future**

For more information about the Cae Bodfach project and advice on starting or expanding a community orchard or garden, visit the [Cultivate](http://www.cultivate.uk.com/) and [One School One Planet](http://llanfyllin.sector39.co.uk/cae-bodfach-update/) websites.

If you would like to volunteer with Cae Bodfach contact them via their [facebook](https://www.facebook.com/caebodfach/) and [twitter](https://twitter.com/cae_bodfach).

The group hope to achieve a Green Flag Community Award in the near future.