

Tyfu Fyny

Final Evaluation Report



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Executive Summary

Tyfu Fyny March 2017 – March 2020



369

GROWING PROJECTS
SUPPORTED.



1,263

PEOPLE PARTICIPATED
IN TRAINING.



9,527

STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGED
WITH THE PROJECT.



199

TRAINING DAYS
COMPLETED.



91%

SAID THAT THEIR
KNOWLEDGE AND
SKILLS HAD INCREASED.



6

FEASIBILITY STUDIES
COMPLETED



88%

SAID THAT TYFU FYNY
HAD HELPED THEIR
GROUP TO IDENTIFY
FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES
AND ACHIEVE IT'S GOALS.

Key Learning

-  The community growing sector in Wales is vibrant and has huge potential to contribute to Welsh Government policy relating to the economy, cultural heritage, the environment and the health and wellbeing of communities.
-  The Covid-19 pandemic has presented significant opportunities for the sector to reaffirm the value of local food and to contribute towards food security in the future.
-  Despite the existence of a national community growing strategy there is significant variation about how this translates into support and action across different Local Authority areas.
-  The Tyfu Fyny delivery model of using experienced sector Development Workers who provide a gateway to specialist advice and support alongside specialist advisors is effective.
-  Tailored support which directly meets the needs of a group is the most effective and efficient form of support.
-  Networking and peer to peer learning is highly valued by groups and is more likely to lead to sustained change within the sector.
-  There is significant added value to bringing together different elements of the growing sector under one project and this has the potential to move beyond edibles in the future.
-  Social Farms & Gardens were able to draw on their experience and history of community based engagement work to provide multifaceted support to CSA's and Care Farms which extended well beyond industry specific advice.
-  The vibrancy of the sector varies geographically and there may be the need for market development in some areas.
-  Any future project should build on the wealth of knowledge and experience and networks developed through Tyfu Fyny
-  Sufficient capacity and resources should be allocated to any future project to ensure reach to all parts of the sector and all parts of Wales but also to combine on the ground approaches with strategic policy influencing.
-  Securing appropriate land and overcoming planning related barriers still remain key challenges facing the sector.
-  There is the need for specific support and/or training for groups to enable them to demonstrate their Social Value.

Introduction and Overview

Community growing brings together communities to actively engage in local food production, ecosystem management and social cohesion. Community growing organisations are most commonly found in the form of community gardens, city farms, community orchards and Incredible Edible style projects and allotments. The sector also consists of Care Farms and a relatively small but growing number of Community Supported Agriculture schemes. For a number of community growing projects, enterprise and job creation alongside social care and contributing to an increased sense of wellbeing is either at the heart of their mission or is becoming an increasingly important part of what they do.

Wales is currently the only UK country to have a specific community growing strategy, it has approximately 326 community gardens and 114 community managed allotment sites. In addition there are 24 community orchards, 47 CSA projects and 31 Incredible Edible style projects in Wales.

326

Community Gardens

114

Community managed allotment sites

47

Community Supported Agriculture projects

31

Incredible Edible style projects

24

Community Orchards

Tyfu Fyny was a Wales wide project which was funded through the Rural Development Plan for Wales and managed by Social Farms & Gardens. The aim of the Tyfu Fyny project was to support and increase the number and viability of community growing projects in Wales. Tyfu Fyny's focus was to work with the sector to increase their capacity to create both financially and environmentally sustainable projects.

Alongside Tyfu Fyny Social Farms & Gardens also manages The Community Land Advisory Service (CLAS) in Wales which helps community growing projects identify and secure land for growing. Many of the groups supported through Tyfu Fyny also received support through CLAS.

This is the final evaluation report for Tyfu Fyny. The report draws on evidence given by programme participants, key partners and project staff and sets out the key findings of the evaluation along with recommendations to help shape any future programme that may be developed in its place.

Overview

Tyfu Fyny was a programme run and managed by Social Farms & Gardens. The learning and support programme was funded by Welsh Government who awarded Social Farms & Gardens £629 000 over three years to support delivery. The programme started in March 2017 and ended in March 2020.

The main aim of the Tyfu Fyny Project was to support and increase the number and viability of community growing projects in Wales. Through its work supporting community food enterprise Tyfu Fyny aimed to develop a vibrant community food sector and engage more people in the sector resulting in stronger, healthier and more resilient communities across Wales.

The project focused on 5 key themes out of which the workstreams flowed. These were:



Support for Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)



Support for care farming



Supporting and developing enterprise activity



Community cohesion



Climate change and sustainability education

The project delivered support to the sector in a variety of ways which included advice and guidance provided by dedicated project staff; mentoring support from specialist advisors, training and networking events, peer learning through site visits and production of online resources. In addition, the project used its knowledge of the sector to inform government policy consultations and to represent the interests of the community growing sector on a number of strategic partnership groups.



Activities and outputs

Programme Targets

Whilst there were no specific outcomes set for the project, the success of the programme was measured against a number of key targets and project indicators:

-  Number of participants in training
-  Number of stakeholders engaged
-  Number of feasibility studies
-  Number of training days completed

In addition the number of projects supported was also monitored. The below illustrates how the project performed against these set targets.



As illustrated by the table above Tyfu Fyny far exceeded most of the targets that were set for the project. **This is a strong testament to the successful management and delivery of the project by Social Farms & Gardens.**

Final Evaluation Methodology

To assess how the programme performed against its targets and what difference it has made to those organisations supported, an interim evaluation and final evaluation of the project was externally commissioned. The interim evaluation was an opportunity to assess the progress of the project but also considered future delivery of support to the sector. A 'Future Options' appraisal was undertaken alongside the interim evaluation, outlining key elements to be considered in any future project aimed at supporting the community growing sector.

The purpose of the final evaluation is to assess the extent to which the project has been successfully delivered, gather the views of project beneficiaries and stakeholders and also explore the impact on the sector if Tyfu Fyny had not existed. The final evaluation also identifies key learning emerging from the project. The following activities were undertaken as part of the final evaluation:



Face to face interviews with the Programme Co-ordinator and project delivery staff.



Telephone interviews with a sample of the mentors that provided one-to-one specialist advice to groups.



Telephone interviews with key project partners.



An on-line discussion with project partners and stakeholders.



An on-line survey to all organisations that received support through the programme.

The final phase of this evaluation coincided with the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and as such some aspects of the proposed evaluation methodology were unable to be undertaken. Whilst the impact of this has been minimal in terms of the feedback obtained it does mean that there are some groups e.g. City Farms and Care Farms whose views are less represented than other types of groups.¹

¹ *There were no survey responses received from Care Farms and a low response rate from CSAs. The views of these two parts of the sector were mainly provided through discussions with external stakeholders and specialist advisors.*

Policy Alignment

The current policy environment presents many opportunities for the community growing and care farm sector in Wales. The sector can demonstrate alignment with the aims of a number of key acts which outline the general policy direction of Welsh Government. For example the **Environment Act (Wales) 2016** which aims to position Wales as a low carbon, green economy ready to adapt to the impacts of climate change. The act has resulted in the Natural Resources Policy which aims to underpin the **Well Being and Future Generations Act (2015)**. **The Wellbeing and Future Generations Act (2015)** aims to create a sustainable Wales through improving the four aspects of wellbeing; social, cultural, environmental and economic. There is strong alignment with community growing initiatives and the themes of this act and as such community growing projects have the potential to contribute at the local level to this agenda.

The Social Service and Well Being Wales Act (2014) also places emphasis on the importance of an individual's well being. The Act, specifically mentions the need to promote social enterprises and co-operatives which involve people who need care and support, as involvement with these is likely to enhance well being and act as a prevention to deteriorating health. Further, the growing emphasis on social prescribing as a way of improving health and well being and supporting the **Welsh Government's Primary Care Plan (2016)**, presents significant opportunities for the community growing and care farm sector. **Taking Wales Forward 2016-2021** further enhances the relevance of social prescribing by aligning it with the 'Healthy and Active' priority area for action.

In addition the implications of Brexit and its impact on future agricultural policy could present significant opportunities for the community growing sector and encourage more farmers to make land available to communities for growing edibles. Although implementation of Brexit is outside of the scope and timescales of Tyfu Fyny, it has acted as a driver in terms of raising the profile and potential of the community growing sector.

Overall, the community growing and care farm sector has the potential to contribute significantly to the 'green health' agenda which underpins strategies aiming to promote and support improved health and wellbeing. The sector also has the potential to respond positively to the challenges of Brexit by demonstrating the potential of local food production and how parts of the sector, for example CSAs may contribute to agricultural industry.

As mentioned previously this evaluation coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst the impact of this on the community growing sector in Wales is outside of the scope of the evaluation, we know that the pandemic forced a change of behaviour in people in how they sourced food and raised greater awareness of the importance of local food. As a result many community gardens and CSAs found themselves busier than ever before. The contribution that the sector made throughout the crisis, and potentially could continue to make, to supply chains should be carefully considered in relation to future policies which aim to make Wales more resilient and sustainable.

Reach and Impact

Tyfu Fyny successfully supported 369 projects. Beneficiaries, partners and stakeholders agree that the project had significant impact on individual organisations and the sector as a whole. If Tyfu Fyny had not existed it is likely that the sector would be less well developed and less well connected.

Feedback from all stakeholders involved in Tyfu Fyny clearly demonstrates that the project was extremely successful at providing effective reach and impact. The project supported over 369 different projects over the course of the projects lifetime with each of these receiving support that was relevant to their needs. Given the estimated number of community growing projects in the country this represents a significant proportion of the sector and highlights the project's success in engaging groups. The project's reach is further evidenced by the number of stakeholders engaged exceeding its original target by just under 4,000 people.



369

different projects were supported over the course of the project's lifetime with each of these receiving support that was relevant to their needs.

Responses to the on-line survey

A total of 35 organisations completed the on-line survey. The survey attracted a higher proportion of responses from community gardens (49%) and the remainder of responses came from a mixture of community orchards, CSA'S, market gardens and other organisations that were undertaking community growing as an aspect of their activity as opposed to their sole focus. No responses were received from Care Farms or City Farms.



Beneficiary Engagement

Findings from the survey show that the majority of organisations that engaged with the project did so on a number of different levels, with many of them accessing multiple types of support. The most common forms of engagement with the project were face to face support (77%) or remote support via telephone or email (69%). Just under half of survey respondents had attended training events (49%). Learning from other organisations formed a key part of the project and 40% of organisations had visited another project whilst a smaller percentage (17%) had hosted a project visit or had received support from a dedicated mentor.

Those organisations in receipt of more than one form of support were asked to identify what they felt had been the most beneficial aspect of the support received. A number of respondents felt that all aspects of the support they had received had been of value however the most valued source of support was the face-to-face support received from the project worker. Value was placed on the expertise provided by the worker, the personal nature of the support and that the advice given was specific and tailored.

“Face to face at project - allowed real time discussion with surety the staff knew what we were talking about.”

Survey Respondent

The next two most common responses which were given equal value were site visits to other projects and remote support. Specifically, people welcomed the opportunity to talk to organisations that were more established and had direct experience of delivering similar projects and having access to immediate and timely support when they required it.

“The support for our group to visit another site provided inspiration and ideas for volunteers involved in the project.”

Survey Respondent



“For us the best aspects of support were going to see another organisation and to learn how they do things and help with funding for a feasibility study for a social cafe idea”

Survey Respondent

Fewer respondents referenced workshops / training and mentoring support but those that did valued it highly.

Of those organisations responding to the survey, 74% had accessed support through the Community Growing workstream. Of the remaining 26% of respondents; 3 organisations did not know what workstream their support had come under, a further 3 received support through the Community Supported Agriculture workstream, 2 received support on Care farming activities and 1 received Enterprise/income support. The imbalance of data towards the Community Garden workstream reflects the higher levels of engagement and demand from Community Gardens across the project. However this also reflects the higher number of community garden projects in comparison to Care Farms, CSA projects and City Farms in Wales.²

A significant number of respondents stated that they had received all the support they had required through the project however where areas of outstanding support needs were identified the most common of these were:-

-  Legal advice on land ownership and planning
-  Advice on accessing funding or resources
-  Specific practical support across a range of specific subjects which included; concrete laying, permaculture, irrigation practices and glyphosate spraying.

Most organisations felt that the service did not require improving and were very satisfied with the support they had received.

“The advice and support was very good. The social farming team were very friendly and knowledgeable. Experts in this area.”

Survey Respondent

² In February 2020 Social Farms & Gardens submitted the results of research into Community Food Grown Sites across Wales. This indicated that there were much higher numbers of Community Gardens than CSAs and Care Farms. The research was commissioned by the Outdoor Recreation Department of Welsh Government.

“We are grateful to the Tyfu Fyny team for their input into our diverse and dynamic plan and for opening doors for us. We hope their funders continue to support them into the future. A great resource to any community growing project.”

Survey Respondent

Where suggestions for improvements were made they fell into two main areas;

-  Increased opportunities for networking amongst groups (both physically and virtually)
-  Increased capacity of support workers.

An impressively high 91% of survey respondents stated that their knowledge and skills had been increased as a result of their engagement with the project. Of these; 57% felt this increase has been ‘noticeable’ or ‘significant’. In addition, 88% said that the support they had received from Tyfu Fyny had helped their group to identify future opportunities and achieve its goals and 51% of these reported that this has been a noticeable or significant amount.



This feedback highlights the value of the support provided through the project and how it provided organisations with both the appropriate tools and the guidance to help them develop. A significant majority of organisations (86%) felt that the support they had received was of high quality with 63% rating it as very good or excellent.

In relation to what people perceived to be the biggest issues affecting the sector the most important areas, those perceived to be significant or extremely significant, were deemed to be:-

-  Access to funding and grants
-  Networking and learning from each other
-  Lobbying with local and national government to raise the profile of the sector.
-  Access to land

Those areas that were given slightly less weighting than the others were:-

- 🌀 Access to horticultural skills training
- 🌀 Business / income generation support
- 🌀 Support to recruit volunteers and
- 🌀 Advice on planning issues

These responses highlight the importance of both strategic level influencing work and on the ground practical support for groups. This approach ensures that the profile and value of the sector is advocated for with decision makers and that land is made available for growing, alongside the ground level practical support that provides groups with the skills and knowledge they need to run sustainable organisations.

Responses to what groups needs were likely to be in the future were varied and specific to each individual group depending on the nature of the group, however common themes were:

- 🌀 An on-going need for training and networking
- 🌀 Access to specialist advice.

“Firstly to always be a member of Social Farms & Gardens. Continue to develop, grow and change to provide what gardens are there for; to create belief in self-confidence, self-esteem and social inclusion for most of our volunteers and we successfully do this through the support Tyfu Fyny and growing with nature.”

Survey Respondent



“Developing social enterprise structures to support young people into employment. We hope to offer horticultural skills and catering skills but have no social enterprise experience.”

Survey Respondent

Most groups were not able to quantify the economic benefit of the support they had through the project as it had not directly resulted in additional income or cost savings. Where groups were able to measure this it was due to the support received replacing professional fees they would otherwise have had to pay for.

“Saved around £2000 in cost for the advice on land agreement and £300 for the feasibility study.”

Survey Respondent



What if Tyfu Fyny had not existed?

The majority of organisations felt that there would have been some impact on their group had they not received support from Tyfu Fyny. This was most commonly that support had made projects feel more connected and less isolated and that it had given groups the confidence to start up or try different approaches in delivery. Some groups stated that their engagement with the project had resulted in changes in working practices or had enabled them to develop new skills. For a smaller number of groups there was a perception that their project would not be in existence had it not been for support from Tyfu Fyny or progress in developing their projects would have been significantly slower and faced more potential setbacks.

“Tyfu Fyny plays an important role in connecting groups across Wales and the UK. It has given the community food growing sector a cohesive voice. Without it groups would have felt very isolated and unsupported.”

Survey Respondent

“We would have continued doing what felt comfortable and familiar rather than taking a leap, trusting and building confidence to try new things, be ambitious and connect with other projects that provide inspiration.”

Survey Respondent

“Might have ended up with unsuitable constitution and legal arrangements, paid more for planning applications; whole project could have taken a lot longer and got mired in disagreements.”

Survey Respondent

The responses to this question also indicates that support received from Tyfu Fyny had significant impact on project beneficiaries that were at various stages of development e.g. start up and business development. This further reflects the projects ability to respond to the unique needs of each group and offer bespoke and tailored support and expertise regardless of where the group was on its community growing journey.

The views of project beneficiaries were also corroborated by partners and stakeholders who felt that Tyfu Fyny had provided a mechanism through which groups could learn from each other and share resources and that this had resulted in a ‘more connected and strengthened’ sector. There was a sense that without the project this may have happened in pockets of the country but that the project had provided both the momentum and the resources to connect groups across Wales.

The four case studies below illustrate the positive impact that Tyfu Fyny had on organisations and groups.

CASE STUDY - Learn & Grow Community Project



The Learn & Grow Community Project is a supported training programme that uses the joy of growing fruit, vegetables, herbs and flowers to improve communication and to develop number and ICT skills. The project is aimed at young people aged 14-25 and blends learning with the practical experience of growing fruit, vegetables, herbs and flowers on a school garden or an allotment.

The aim is to cultivate a wide range of produce within a 12 week period that can then either be:

-  Sold through the Big Moose Coffee Co, with profits benefiting the homeless
-  Donated to a local foodbank

The Learn & Grow Community Project formed a partnership with Cardiff & Vale College in September 2018. The College has two allotments, one at its city campus in Dumballs Road, the other at its Barry Campus. The Learn & Grow Community Project also has a local authority owned allotment in Llanrumney. Since the partnership was formed the project has recruited groups of students from both campuses to work on the allotments. What became clear through this process was that although there was an interest in horticulture, students also had an interest in learning other practical skills and particularly became interested in making garden furniture.

The Project received the following specific support from Tyfu Fyny:

-  A visit from the Development Worker who carried out an initial diagnostic assessment
-  Support from the Business Development Worker who signposted them to UnLtd
-  Signposting to other specialist advice e.g. someone who specialised in making garden furniture from reclaimed wooden pallets.



The project also benefited from ongoing support and contact with Tyfu Fyny which provided them with invaluable information and opportunities for networking.

Following the support from the Business Development Worker the project was successful at receiving funding from UnLtd to participate in training and networking and further develop the project. The project went on to develop products and produce that were donated to the Big Moose Coffee Co.

In the future, in addition to making planters and shelving for sale the project hopes to be working with the Vale of Glamorgan County Council on a gardening scheme to reduce sickness absence rates from those employees suffering from stress. In addition, the project will continue to work with educational institutions to give a wide range of students the opportunity to experience the joy of gardening, designing and selling garden furniture.

“Without the support of Social Farms & Gardens, the Learn and Grow Community Project could not have developed as quickly or as positively as it has.”

Learn and Grow Community Project Co-ordinator



CASE STUDY - Banc Organics



Banc Organics is a Community Support Agriculture (CSA) project established in 2010. Until recently, it has been operating as part of Ty'r Eithin Farm Ltd, a charity which 'provides long term residential placement for adults with special needs and occasional day placements for others with special needs. Also, short and long-term placements for young people, introducing them to the organic farm life of caring for domestic animals and taking responsibility, i.e. learning management, of wild and traditional plant and animal communities.' The charity was wound up in October 2019, and Ty'r Eithin Farm was purchased by the Ruskin Mill Trust. A decision was made to set up Banc Organics as a separate organisation, independent of Ruskin Mill, allowing it to focus on its core objectives.

Tyfu Fyny working with other organisations as appropriate, is supporting Banc Organics to become an independent and financially sustainable Community Interest Company (CIC).

A key part of the support offered by Tyfu Fyny was to undertake a feasibility study to identify the steps that Banc Organics would need to take to be sustainable.

As part of this process the following business plan objectives were set for 2020 - 2024:

-  Relaunch Banc Organics as a separate business, independent of Ty'r Eithin
-  Expand the business significantly, increasing turnover by over 300% compared to 2018/19 and bring the business back to into profit, generating annual profits of between £4.5k – £7k per year
-  Refocus on the core activity of producing high quality, organic fruit and vegetables for the local community
-  Clarify its position on key issues including the role of livestock (if any) in the production system
-  Make the organisation more responsive to issues raised by the membership, e.g. use of plastics in the production systems and packaging

To underpin these business objectives work is being done in the following areas; market development, securing additional land, accessing new storage and packing facilities and increasing staffing.

Tyfu Fyny has provided an invaluable opportunity for impartial and independent support that will help move the organisation to a more sustainable footing.

CASE STUDY - Hafod Walled Garden Group



The Hafod Walled Garden Group first met informally in October 2018 and currently has 12 members who all share a commitment to environmentally friendly gardening and to increasing local biodiversity. Early maps show that the Walled Garden beside the river Ystwyth on the rural Hafod Estate near Aberystwyth has been cultivated for at least 200 years. The high stone walls contain 2 acres of flat land, remnants of box hedges, two large Victorian glasshouses and a substantial stone outbuilding. Much of the site had not been cultivated in recent years until the group took it on.

The Walled Garden is now being brought back into full use as a community growing project having gained initial permission from the owner of the Hafod Estate. Social Farms & Gardens offered support to the project through Community Land Advisory Service (CLAS) and Tyfu Fyny. CLAS helped draft a suitable licence in consultation with the landowner and testing has been done to establish that the presence of heavy metals in the soil and water run-off is within safe parameters. Tyfu Fyny advised on food plants and recommended use of raised beds containing clean soil for certain vegetables.

Further activity plans have been drawn up with plans for income to be generated from produce for sale, from a skills training programme and the continuation of the native-species tree nursery.

The landowner has recently carried out some maintenance on the glasshouses and re-roofed the outbuilding. When the tree nursery licence came up for renewal, he welcomed plans to develop further gardening activity with involvement from the local community. Much progress was made and within the first 3 months a draft lease agreement was ready for final review by both parties.

“[The landowner] was impressed at our horticultural knowledge and wish to involve others living on or near the Hafod Estate. I think this gave him confidence in the project and he’s already offered to contribute the irrigation system we’ll need.”

Hafod Walled Garden Group



CASE STUDY - Parc y Dderwen



The initial idea behind Parc y Dderwen was to set up a small holding in North Pembrokeshire that had fermentation as the core business — a hybrid Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model selling seasonal boxes containing a range of fermented vegetable products to ‘members’ alongside shops and markets.

With the help of Social Farms & Gardens the owners spent a day with fermentation mentors Aoife and Jon of Gut Instinct in Swansea to see what running a small scale fermentation business actually looked like. This experience gave them the confidence to go ahead and start their business in April 2018. They also received support from a series of other mentors:

Ashley Wheeler, of Trill Farm Garden, was assigned as the market garden mentor. Ashley helped them feel confident that the land and market garden would be capable of growing the ingredients they needed. Together they designed a detailed crop plan including different vegetable varieties, schedules of sowing/transplanting/harvesting, quantities needed for each of their products and an overall rotation for the garden.

Another mentor, Tom Clare shared his knowledge of agroforestry design, maintenance and selecting cultivars of trees to plant with them. The final mentor assigned to the project was James Adamson who guided them through the design of the bore hole and rainwater catchment systems and shared his experience of undertaking a similar project which was also off-grid.



Having successfully launched in April 2018, Parc y Dderwen are now running a small fermented food business. Having begun with a 30kg batch they scaled up production to 130kg and we are now at 190kg employing a third person for production days. They generate around 550 jars every month and stock 18 shops across West Wales. With their mentors help they were able to finalise designs, crop and business plans and submit their planning application which was granted in May 2019. Over the next five years Parc y Dderwen hope to get to the point where they are providing all the ingredients for their fermented products and want to launch the CSA for the local community to learn more about fermenting, vegetable growing and gut health.

“Social Farms & Gardens have been incredibly supportive. All of the support has been invaluable in helping us design our farm for our business as well as help us prepare documents for our planning application and business plan. The experience and wisdom of our mentors has enabled us to envision and clarify the picture we are learning to paint.”

Parc y Dderwen



Successes and Barriers

Successes

Key successes of Tyfu Fyny were; partnership working, the delivery model which ensured reach across the sector in Wales and the opportunities it offered for peer learning.

Partnership working

In addition to the work the project team delivered on the ground they also played an important strategic engagement role on behalf of the sector. During the course of the project, project staff worked with a diverse range of partners³ and developed credible and productive working relationships with them. Through their participation in a range of community land, food & growing networks, such as the Community Supported Agriculture networks, The Land Workers Alliance, The Open Food Network and the Ecological Land Cooperative the project was able to connect the organisations it worked with to other sources of help and advice outside of the project which added value to the support it provided. In addition it also provided the project with the opportunity to work closely with other key organisations from within the sector to develop a collective ‘community growing’ voice and identify areas for future collaboration. Feedback from partners engaged in the evaluation was exceptionally positive about the work of Tyfu Fyny. All partners felt that the project had had a clear identity and had adopted a genuinely collaborative approach to delivery.

Project staff also engaged in a range of strategic stakeholder groups, many of which were initiated by Welsh Government e.g. WG Controlled Environment Agriculture Policy working Group and WG’s Green Infrastructure working group. Representation on these groups enabled the project to use its first hand knowledge and understanding of community growing to inform and influence key policies and decisions affecting the sector.

Beyond this the team also worked in partnership with various organisations such as Housing Associations, Communities First Health and Wellbeing teams, Voluntary councils and their community connectors, local authorities and other third sector organisations to support the development of new community growing projects or to help existing projects. All of these different forms of partnerships helped to strengthen and add value to the project and the support it offered to groups and raise the profile of community growing across Wales.



³ A full list of these can be found in Appendix A

Delivery Model



A key strength of the project is that Tyfu Fyny built on the success and momentum of previous projects delivered through Social Farms & Gardens so staff were able to quickly access existing networks and organisations.

The Tyfu Fyny delivery model was successful in reaching large parts of the sector and offering appropriate and tailored support for groups at varying stages of their journey. A key strength of the project is that Tyfu Fyny built on the success and momentum of previous projects delivered through Social Farms & Gardens and therefore staff were able to quickly access existing networks and organisations. Social Farms & Gardens provided central co-ordination for the programme and a Development Worker for both the North and the South which provided Wales wide coverage. A Business and Marketing Advisor was also employed to work across Wales to provide marketing advice or support to those organisations wishing to become more enterprising. In addition, specialist advice for CSAs and Care Farms was also available through the project. By providing access to both generic and specialist advice and support the project was able to cross-refer groups within the project which provided them with a more joined up and coordinated service. This was further enhanced by the projects strong links with the Community Land Advisory Service⁴, with regular referrals being made to CLAS. This meant that the project was able to offer ‘wraparound’ support for groups at all different stages of development, facing different challenges.

“All of the advice was important and given at the right time from CLAS giving advice for the agreement of a growing space.”

Survey Respondent

The expertise and knowledge of staff was a key success factor of Tyfu Fyny. Collectively the staff team have decades of community growing experience. This experience ranges from specific parts of the sector to dealing with specific issues. It is also evident that the team are dedicated to supporting the community growing movement and believe strongly in its firm contribution to sustainability, community resilience and wellbeing.

As part of the delivery model a network of mentors from within the sector were also recruited to work with projects that requested specialist support. This enabled groups to receive one or two days of dedicated one to one support from an advisor that had direct experience and understanding of that specific part of the sector e.g. Care Farms, CSA, community gardens. Where possible a local mentor was allocated which brought with it the added value of their knowledge of local policy and existing local networks. This also reduced the time and expenditure associated with travelling to groups.

⁴CLAS CYMRU is the Community Land Advisory Service for Wales and helps community growing projects identify and secure land for growing. It offers specialist advice on lease agreements and planning advice.

Support from mentors provided groups with honest and impartial advice to help them at key points in their development. This enabled groups to make informed strategic decisions about their future direction and to receive practical support where it was required. To strengthen this aspect of any future project and to ensure that mentor time is used to greatest effect the referral system for projects requesting support should be reviewed and a pre-support diagnostic tool used. Consideration should also be given to how mentors could be better connected to provide each other with peer support.

“Mentoring from an experienced mentee provided us with confidence and tools to start delivering more family friendly workshops at the garden.”

Survey Respondent

This layered approach to delivery of the project i.e. generic, specialist and tailored one to one support meant that the support received by groups was more likely to be effective and have lasting impact.

Whilst the programme was designed to provide support for different parts of the sector in practice providing support for Care Farms and CSAs proved more challenging. This was in part due to staff changes but also is a reflection that the Care Farm sector and CSA's are less well developed in Wales than in other parts of the UK and therefore potentially a different type of support was needed to stimulate interest and raise awareness of the impact and scope of these aspects of the growing sector. In addition the process of setting up a CSA is a long and complex one which requires 'a special set of circumstances' to come together which means they move at their own pace and take time to develop. As such support is often intermittent and needs to span both the commercial and community space that CSA's occupy. In this sense Tyfu Fyny was able to successfully provide the niche support that CSA's require.



Support from mentors provided groups with honest and impartial advice to help them at key points in their development. This enabled groups to make informed strategic decisions about their future direction and to receive practical support where it was required.

Opportunities for learning

The fact that a common theme mentioned by survey respondents when asked about future support needs was an ongoing need for training and networking indicates a demand for opportunities for shared learning. This was also reported anecdotally by the project Development Workers who said that groups placed significant value on opportunities to learn from one another and network. The value placed on training is further supported through analysis of training feedback forms collected through the project which show that the training and workshops delivered as part of the project were highly valued by those that attended with 98% of people rating the training as very good. Project beneficiaries valued the events delivered through the programme both in terms of the relevance of the subjects covered and the format of the training which often combined training with opportunities

for peer learning and networking between organisations. Any future project should look to replicate this approach to learning and consider how networks could be sustained virtually to encourage the sector to become more self-supporting.

Barriers

Key Barriers faced by Tyfu Fyny were staffing changes, geography (i.e. the challenges of providing Wales wide reach with limited staff resources) and capacity.

Staff Changes

Considerable challenges were experienced early on in the project that related to staffing which had a direct impact on some aspects of delivery. Although Social Farms & Gardens successfully managed the loss and subsequent replacement of three members of staff, including the Wales Manager, it meant that the project was not operating at full capacity for some time. This particularly affected the Care Farm strand of delivery as the Wales Manager was also responsible for developing this strand.

At the later stages of the project uncertainty relating to the potential extension of the project also resulted in some staffing challenges which meant that at a time when demand for project support was rising staffing hours were reduced. Despite these challenges it is testament to the dedication and commitment of the staff team that they continued to deliver a high quality service and to exceed the project targets.



Geography

Although effective central co-ordination was provided by Social Farms & Gardens, there were a number of challenges relating to delivering a Wales wide programme, some of which were exacerbated by the budgetary constraints of the project. For example, demand in the South was such that the project would have benefitted from being able to allocate more Development Worker hours to that part of the country. These challenges were compounded by the practical challenges of having a dispersed team e.g. ensuring that the team were communicating effectively and identifying as part of a team rather than as lone workers. Also, the distance required for Development Workers to travel meant that often face to face meetings with groups were not feasible within the hours allocated to the project which resulted in more support being offered remotely via the telephone. Travelling distance was also a barrier in terms of bringing groups together to network. Networking although highly valued by groups is often seen as a 'luxury' due to other time commitments and priorities, therefore the fact that the project successfully undertook networking events that brought people together from across Wales is testament to the value that organisations placed on this aspect of the project.

There were also challenges relating to working across different counties. Whilst Wales has a national community growing policy at a local level each Local Authority has a variable commitment to community growing and its own policies in relation to planning etc... As such the project operated within an inconsistent framework which brought with it its own inherent difficulties. Whilst these issues made delivery more problematic challenging such inconsistencies and highlighting best practice from across the county played a key role in the strategic influencing work undertaken by the project.

Capacity

Despite the challenges the project faced in terms of staffing and geography the project successfully met or in most cases significantly exceeded all of its targets. There is a strong case however that an even greater impact could have been achieved had there been more capacity within the project team. This was certainly the case in the South, as mentioned above, but also potentially in terms of the Business and Marketing Support. Particularly given the increasing need for projects to move away from a reliance on grant funding and become more enterprising in their approach to generating income. In addition, as previously referenced the specific support needs of CSAs and Care Farms and the less established nature of these parts of the sector means that intensive and longer-term interventions are needed. If the potential of these two parts of the sector are to be fully realised in Wales more capacity may be needed to support their development in the future.



It could also be argued that more capacity is needed by Social Farms & Gardens to enable them to provide strategic leadership and develop further their policy influencing role in Wales. Whilst this formed a key part of the project the contribution of the sector to key Welsh Government policy and also the wellbeing of communities still requires greater amplification. Social Farms & Gardens wealth of grassroots experience combined with their knowledge of Welsh Government policy and strategies mean they are ideally placed to take on an enhanced strategic role.

Linked to this in the future there also needs to be a greater focus and investment in activity that facilitates partnership working. Although the project has been successful at working in partnership at the local and national level and is well regarded and respected by a variety of partners a greater emphasis and capacity to engage in partnership working would increase credibility at a national level as well as opening up opportunities for more collaborative working.

What should be done differently in the future?

One of the key benefits of the Tyfu Fyny project is that it has contributed further to learning about how best to support the sector in Wales in order for it to flourish. The following points are offered as suggestions of how the project could have been enhanced.

- Although climate change was a 'standalone' theme under this project, in the future it should be a cross cutting theme and considered alongside all other aspects of sustainability.
- There potentially needs to be greater flexibility to the allocation of Development Worker hours. This should be demand led, but in doing so the need to proactively stimulate interest in 'cold spots' should not be overlooked.
- There needs to be a more detailed understanding of the support needs of certain parts of the sector e.g. CSAs and Care Farms and how best these can be supported. It may be that a more strategic and co-ordinated response is needed.
- If resources and capacity allow, then a more detailed diagnostic of the needs of groups before a mentor is assigned would ensure that the mentor time can be used more effectively.



Future Support needs of the Community Growing sector in Wales

The future support needs of the sector depend very much on the individual circumstances of the group but also on the external operating environment. As indicated above, groups commented more on the type of support that would be most likely to be beneficial to them, i.e. one to one support and networking opportunities rather than specific needs. The discussion with partners suggests that there are three main issues that will impact on community growing in the future; the impact of Covid-19, the impact of Brexit **and the increasing importance of the health and wellbeing agenda.**

Impact of Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic has forced behaviour change in the way that many people access food which has stimulated demand and encouraged the buying of locally sourced food. Community veg box schemes have faced a significant increase in demand and despite the disruption to the 'norm' local and community based food producers have been able to supply and deliver high quality food reliably. This reinforcement and awareness of the importance of local supply chains and food security presents a huge opportunity for the edible side of the sector and it is essential that this movement to 'buy local' is capitalised on.

This could also be an opportunity to look more broadly at food production and work with livestock farmers. Currently the sector is very focused on horticulture but there may be benefits to work with livestock producers to both broaden the offer and assist these producers to respond to both the impact of Covid-19 and Brexit.

Impact of Brexit

Whilst the full impact of Brexit is yet to be understood there is a strong possibility that the export market will be affected and therefore producers may need to look at developing local markets. In addition, imported food may become more expensive and possibly less readily available, meaning that local communities are more likely to buy locally grown food. On another practical level, if farmers feel that food production becomes less viable then it may mean that more land becomes available for community use through lease agreements.

All of these scenarios present significant opportunities for the sector and as such it needs to be in a position to maximise any such opportunities as they arise. This requires on-going work both at a strategic level with key policy makers and partners and on the ground support to ensure that the sector is able to respond quickly to local circumstances.

Health and Wellbeing

There is strong evidence to demonstrate that the sector has a key role to play in contributing to the health and wellbeing agenda. Care Farms in particular, make a specific contribution to this agenda but volunteering and community engagement right across the sector also provide invaluable opportunities for people to improve their health and increase their sense of well-being. Specifically, through providing people with the chance to spend time outside in nature, involve them in growing or livestock rearing whilst giving them a sense of purpose and achievement, the sector is able to positively contribute to health and well-being initiatives such as Social Prescribing. If these opportunities are to be capitalised on the sector needs to better evidence the contribution it makes in order to strengthen its position.

For the sector and groups to be able to respond to these opportunities, partners felt that there needed to be specific support offered to groups in the following areas:

-  **Measuring social value** – this may be particularly important in terms of being able to demonstrate the impact on health and well-being. Typically, small organisations are not experienced at demonstrating social value and therefore training and examples of how different size organisations may be able to do this would be beneficial. Learning from existing social value projects such as that run by Mantell Gwynedd⁵ would be recommended.
-  **Securing land** – this continues to be the key issue for groups. Specialist advice and support to help groups navigate the difficulties of sourcing and then leasing/buying land is essential. The CLAS project is an excellent way of groups receiving this support. At a more strategic level, on-going work needs to be done with Local Authorities and local landowners to identify sites that could be released for community growing and to help groups to navigate local planning regulations.
-  **Becoming more financially sustainable** - groups need to be mindful of financial sustainability from the start. This may be essential for certain parts of the sector e.g. CSAs and Care Farms but is relevant to all parts of the sector. Business development / enterprise support should form part of any offer to the sector. However, the fact that the sector encompasses groups at variable stages of development and also with variable ambitions also needs to be recognised. Some groups will only ever wish to remain volunteer led and grow for their own purposes and enjoyment however for those groups who are more ambitious and wish to operate on a more commercial basis an appropriate level of support should be available.

⁵<https://mantellgwynedd.com/eng/social-value-cymru.html>

Conclusion

It is evident that Tyfu Fyny provided the Community Growing sector in Wales with an extremely valuable source of support and has resulted in tangible benefits for many of the organisations it has helped. Its strengths have been in its ability to deliver a programme that responded to the needs of the sector through providing a range of different support mechanisms in an accessible and flexible way. The provision of dedicated workers with direct experience and understanding of the sector to coordinate support and brokerage, alongside specialist support from advisors, has also been invaluable.

The project has made significant strides in representing the interests of the sector through its partnership work and its participation in key strategic stakeholder groups. This has enabled them to effectively represent the work of their members and reinforce the valuable contribution that the community growing sector makes to resilient, healthy and cohesive communities.

In order for the sector to make the most of the opportunities that the post-Brexit / Covid19 world presents it is essential that access to sector specific support and guidance is retained and that opportunities for community growing groups to network and share learning continue to be facilitated. And at the same time on-going influencing work must be undertaken to ensure that the value and contribution of the community growing sector is recognised by decision makers.



Recommendations

- 1 Any future programme should take account of the key learning points from Tyfu Fyny.
- 2 Key elements of the delivery model should be continued; one to one and tailored support, an initial diagnostic, the use of mentors and specialist advisors. Support should continue to be available for groups across the spectrum of development with more intense business support available for those that wish to become more financially sustainable.
- 3 To address the barriers around accessing land the CLAS programme should continue to work seamlessly with any other support that is offered to the sector.
- 4 The sector values networking and shared learning, this should remain a significant factor of any support offered in the future, with consideration given as to how this could be financially supported to enable more groups to participate.
- 5 Demonstrating social value is likely to become increasingly important for groups wishing to access grants and funding. Specific support is needed in this area to build the capacity of groups and enable them to better understand how to evidence their social value.
- 6 Social Farms & Gardens should continue to give emphasis, and enhance this if possible, to strategic influencing and partnership working. This will be particularly important in achieving the potential arising from the Health and Wellbeing agenda and specifically opportunities presented by social prescribing.
- 7 Any future programme needs to reflect the diverse needs of the sector and that parts of the sector e.g. Care Farms and CSAs need strategic development.
- 8 Research is needed to understand how the sector contributed positively during the COVID pandemic. The lessons learned from this should be harnessed and used to continue to grow the market for the sector in the future.



Appendix A

Partnerships and stakeholder groups attended by Tyfu Fyny staff

-  LANTRA's Horticultural Supply Chain group
-  Horticulture Wales's Stakeholder Steering Group
-  WG Action for Pollinators Task Force
-  WG Controlled Environment Agriculture Policy working Group
-  WG's Green Infrastructure working group
-  LEADER – Landbased Goods steering group
-  Community Supported Agriculture networks
-  The Land Workers Alliance
-  The Open Food Network
-  Ecological Land Cooperative

