



Tir Coed is a charity that connects people with Land (Tir) and Woods (Coed) for learning and wellbeing. With over 21 years of experience in designing and delivering outdoor education and wellbeing activities, Tir Coed is at the forefront of nature-based learning in Mid & West Wales.

Tir Coed is seeking financial support to establish and deliver Dysgu am Natur, an ambitious project that will reconnect Welsh school children with the natural world at a cost of £84K/year. We hope that you will invest in this project that we think is excellent value for money.

THE PROBLEM

1 in 8 children starting school in Wales is classified as obese¹. Three quarters of 8-12 year olds spending less time outdoors than prison inmates². At a time when society is more disconnected from the natural world than ever, the natural world is suffering destruction and the effects of climate change - 41% of species in the UK show a population decrease since 1970³. Young people are "frustrated and anxious about what's happening", with 1/5 reporting having had a bad dream about the effects of climate change⁴.

THE SOLUTION

Through the Dysgu am Natur project, Tir Coed will work with children and teachers to increase their awareness and understanding of the natural world and how to interact with it positively. Tir Coed will engage with them in their education setting to avoid exclusion on the grounds of health, wealth or environmental inequality and deliver specialist outdoor lessons linked with the new curriculum for Wales. The project aims to fast-track the development of quality outdoor education at this point of crisis for the environment, the economy and for the physical and mental health of people in Wales.

THE PROJECT

3000 Key Stage 2 pupils and 1500 staff from 100 schools throughout Dyfed Powys will be engaged in a sustained outdoor learning programme. Online and practical provision will also be available for schools from outside the project, widening its impact. By enabling schools to develop their outdoor provision, the legacy of the project will be long-lasting and sustainable, stimulating a culture shift towards the many benefits of nature education. By enabling teachers to develop their practice the benefits will be seen for the rest of their career.

THE BACKGROUND

Dysgu am Natur is built on Tir Coed's experience of developing and delivering the Dysgu am Goed project, a partnership project with the Royal Forestry Society of England that took schoolchildren into woodlands to learn about trees. The project was adapted in consultation with Ceredigion schools to meet the needs of the Welsh curriculum and delivery in English and Welsh. **32** Ceredigion primary schools took part in **41** sessions enabling **1186** children and **132** adults to benefit from the project. Developed over 2 years, delivered for a further 2 years and reviewed during the following year, it gives a firm foundation of 5 years' learning from which Dysgu am Natur springs.



Dysgu am Natur arises at a crisis point for the environment, for the economy and for the physical and mental health of people in Wales. It also addresses more local issues, relating to multiple deprivation, health inequalities, erosion of the Welsh language, access to green spaces and the outmigration of young people.

FUNDING

Tir Coed is currently looking for investors for this relevant and much needed project. We are approaching the Ernest Cook Trust that will invest in staff costs and are researching other charitable trust funders. The charity currently has an annual income of £400K for other successful projects including the LEAF project that offers nature based training and activities for disadvantaged groups. This income includes unrestricted funds from our self-generated income activities that we are committed to developing.

CONTEXT

The benefits outdoor learning are well documented but we are not seeing this knowledge translated into action in all of our schools.

Covid-19: the outdoor setting is ideal for reducing the risk of the spread of infection as the risk of transmission is greatly reduced in the outdoors. With more space it is also more simple to implement social distancing measures.

Environmental: in 2019, tens of thousands of schoolchildren across the UK left school to participate in climate strikes: "School is important but so is my future". Dysgu am Natur (Learning & Teaching about Nature) is, in part, Tir Coed's response to these calls for action from children. By connecting children with the natural world and helping them to understand its challenges and opportunities, we can give them the knowledge to deliver the change they want to see. We will empower them be part of the solution.

Educational: Wales is poised to introduce a new curriculum that focusses on experiential learning and life skills. The cross-curricular, real life nature of outdoor learning make it the perfect tool to bring the new curriculum to life. Effective outdoor learning is also strongly supported by ESTYN, the Welsh schools inspectorate.

Strategic: the aims and impacts of the project are in line with those of national policy including the Wellbeing for Future Generations Act and the Environment Act as well as local plans and outdoor education initiatives such as High Quality Outdoor Learning for Wales.

DEVELOPMENT

Dysgu am Natur is a partnership project, bringing key educational partners together to advise on, promote and assist with delivering the project. These include Natural Resources Wales, the regional education support organisation ERW, Urdd Gobaith Cymru, Volunteer Matters and the local authorities and National Parks in the project area. After careful review of previous projects and in the context outlined above, the project has been developed in consultation with these organisations. 52 local schools have also been consulted so far, with 100% of the staff spoken to expressing an interest in a project of this kind. Designed by experienced outdoor education professionals within the Tir Coed team, the project has a robust and detailed delivery plan, with measurable training outputs and longer term impacts encompassing attitudinal change, plus a clear plan for monitoring change and evaluating the project.



DELIVERY PLAN

STAFFING

1 Project Manager - fulltime
4 Learning Officers - 1.5 days/week
Existing core staff time e.g. Marketing & Finance

SCHOOLS

Meetings with senior staff
Whole school INSETs

Will receive tailored guidance on:

- identifying barriers to taking learning outdoors
- embedding an outdoor school ethos
- whole-school curriculum planning
- developing grounds for outdoor learning
- linking with the wider community
- communicating all of the above

SCHOOL STAFF

CPD sessions
Team planning
Shadowing opportunities

Will receive:

- understanding of benefits of outdoor learning
- increased confidence teaching in the outdoors
- knowledge and understanding of nature including the threats and opportunities
- skills and experiences for outdoor learning
- a range of ideas, resources and lesson plans
- support with planning for outdoor learning
- increased mental and physical wellbeing

PUPILS

1 group from each school will take part in a programme of 6 curriculum linked sessions (see page 4)

Will receive all the well documented benefits of learning in nature including (but not limited to):

- strong nature connection + nature knowledge
- increased physical literacy
- increased mental and emotional wellbeing
- social skills e.g. communication, team work
- personal skills e.g. resilience, self-regulation, risk mitigation, creativity, problem solving
- increased cognitive ability + wider vocabulary
- increased curiosity and passion for learning

DELIVERY PLAN

During the programme of 6 outdoor learning sessions children will reap the benefits of taking learning outdoors. The class teacher will be given opportunity to learn about planning and delivering effective, curriculum linked outdoor learning from Tir Coed staff whilst developing their own provision. The school grounds will also be developed. All sessions will span the curriculum but will also have a particular focus.

ACTIVITY	PURPOSE	LEARNING AREA	CURRICULUM LINKS
Nature Connection Mindfulness, physical literacy, team games, confidence building, explore, discover	Before children can develop a cognitive connection to nature, they must begin with an emotional one.	Health and Wellbeing	Developing physical health and well-being, process and respond to our experiences, decision-making, social influences
Mapping Identification, recording, plans, how could the site be improved?	Finding out about the flora and fauna of a site helps to understand it better and gives a sense of ownership.	Maths and Numeracy	Counting, comparing, classifying, sorting, sampling, measuring, patterns, reasoning
Developing for biodiversity Planting, habitat building, carbon literacy, food production	During these sessions the children and staff will explore the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature. They will develop new skills and begin to see the opportunities that nature has to offer. The activities will be inline with the needs of the site and	Humanities	Enquiry, exploration and investigation, our natural world is diverse and dynamic, influenced by processes and human actions, Informed, self-aware citizens that take considered and ethical action.
Developing for people Shelter building, paths, boundaries, gardens, benches		Science and Technology	Problem solving, innovation, being curious and searching for answers, creative design thinking, living things
Sharing Nature art, photography, poetry, role play, film	By sharing what they have felt with others, they will spread the message while embedding the ideas within themselves.	Creative Arts	Performing, presenting, responding, reflecting, developing artistic skills and knowledge, enabling learners to become curious creative individuals
Celebrating Safe fire lighting, foraging, cooking	As well as a time for reflection, this will be a celebration of what they have learnt and the connections they have made.	Literacy, Language & Communication	Recording, reflecting, story-telling, culture, connecting, communicating. Understanding languages is key to understanding the world around us.
Nature Ranger Award	Through out the programme children will work towards the Nature Ranger Award . This will serve as a point of reflection of their learning, a record of what they have achieved and link the activities carried out to professional opportunities in nature.		

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The effectiveness of the project will be monitored through comparing baseline tests and questionnaires completed by the staff and pupils with results after engagement.

The quality of the delivery will be evaluated through participant surveys, internal quality checks and output reports.

KEY POINTS

PROJECT VISION

To stimulate future generations with a love of the natural world and equip them with the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to enable them to become its guardians. To help them discover associated social, economic, cultural and environmental opportunities that can contribute to creating a healthier, happier, more prosperous, more resilient Wales.

- A 5-year project worth £421K
- Developed over the last 5 years by Tir Coed's experienced staff in consultation with 10 key partners and 52 schools
- Delivered across 4 rural counties: Powys, Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion
- 3000 school children engaged by the end of the project
- 2000 teachers engaged by the end of the project
- When 2000 teachers benefit, a further 60,000 school children indirectly benefit just within the first year after engagement with the project but because we're training the trainers, the legacy is long lasting
- Delivered by a respected organisation with 21 years' experience in connecting people with the natural world

Tir Coed is seeking to raise a total of £421K (on average £84K per year) for this 5-year project. At a cost of £84 per person directly benefiting plus the long-lasting legacy described above, we see this as excellent value for money.

Funding will be invested in: a full-time Project Manager, project animation, engagement and promotion, delivery staff salaries, development of outdoor learning resources and outdoor classrooms within schools, delivery materials, monitoring, research and evaluation, partnership development and a proportion of Tir Coed core costs and overheads.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask. I very much look forward to hearing from you,

Nancy Hardy

Education Development Officer