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# Cynnal y Cardi: Legacy Evaluation of the Ceredigion LEADER Programme between 2007 and 2020

Final Evaluation Report

Ceredigion County Council

Final version, March 2021



Cyngor Sir  
**CEREDIGION**  
County Council



Cynnal y Cardi Legacy Evaluation Report

## Cynnal y Cardi Ceredigion LEADER Legacy evaluation: Final Report

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## Glossary

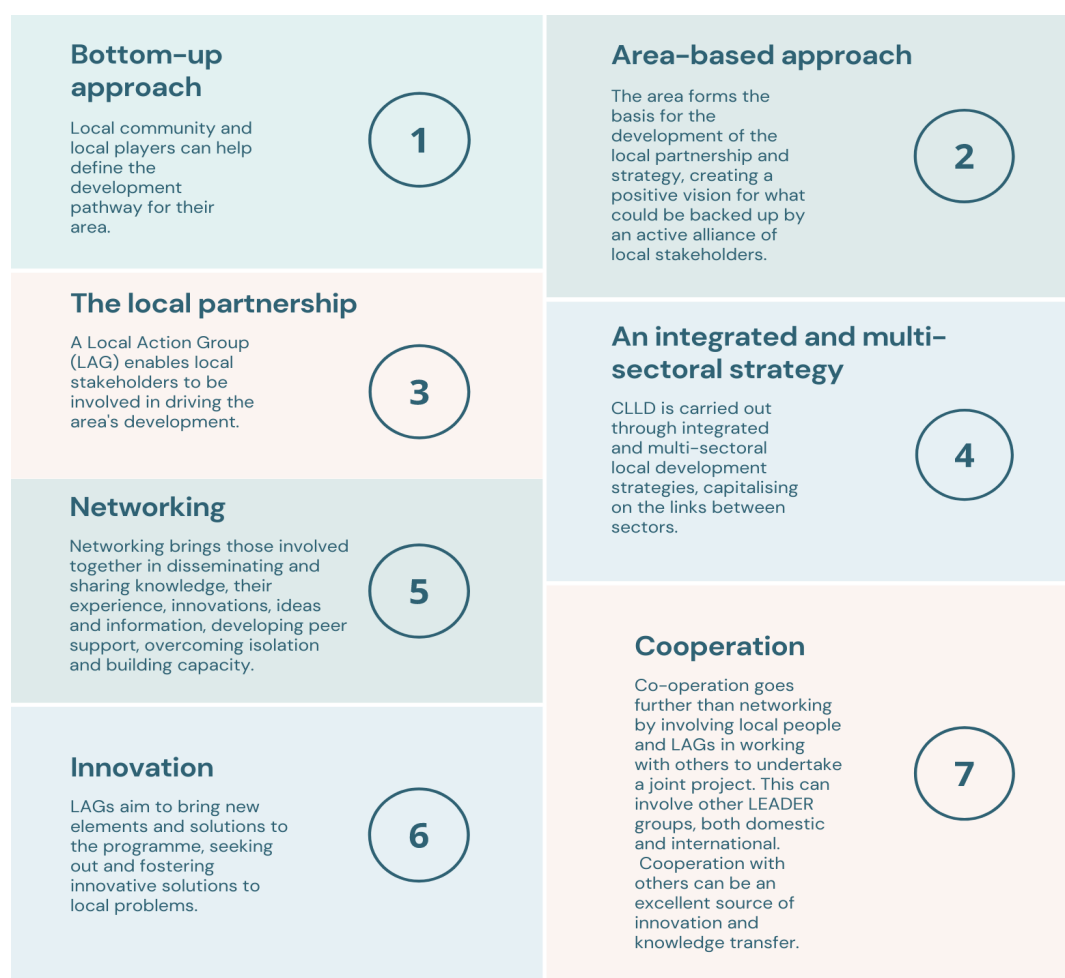
Acronym/Key word	Definition
CLLD	Community-led local development
CyC	Cynnal y Cardi
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
LAG	Local Action Group
LDS	Local Development Strategy
RDP	Rural Development Programme
WEFO	Wales European Funding Office

## Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the legacy evaluation of Cynnal y Cardi, the LEADER programme in Ceredigion which ran as two separate programme periods between 2007-2013 and 2014-2020.<sup>1</sup>

### About LEADER

The LEADER programme is an EU initiative to support rural development, co-financed by each EU member state and the EAFRD. Encompassed by the Rural Development Programme (RDP), LEADER aims to combat rural inequality through supporting local development projects.<sup>2</sup> The programme places a strong focus on innovation, the piloting of new approaches, networking, and bottom-up community working. The LEADER approach is characterised by the following characteristics:



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cynnalycardi.org.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rural-development-policy-figures/priority-focus-area-summaries\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rural-development-policy-figures/priority-focus-area-summaries_en)

## Case Study

**Aber Food Surplus are an Aberystwyth community and volunteer led group that aims to reduce food waste in the town.**

Cynnal y Cardi funded the pilot in 2019, which supported the organisation to pilot areas of activity including waste management innovation, community engagement, and campaigns, marketing, and promotion. Over 37,000 meals were redistributed in the period funded by Cynnal y Cardi.

The pilot successfully enabled the organisation to grow, test new ideas, and establish a sustainable presence in Aberystwyth, with the group having around 60 volunteers at present.

Aber Food Surplus has developed significantly since the funding from Cynnal y Cardi and have been able to secure other sources of funding to enable them to thrive.



### *Cynnal y Cardi*

LEADER in Ceredigion has been led since 2007 by the Cynnal y Cardi Local Action Group (LAG). The LAG is made up of a representation of three sectors – private, community and public. The purpose being to ensure a well-balanced representation of interests.

For the 2007-2013 RDP, the Ceredigion Economic Regeneration Partnership (CERP) successfully applied to establish a LEADER programme in Ceredigion, securing £2.5 million in funding. Ceredigion County Council was chosen as the administrative body for the programme. A Ceredigion Local Action Group was formed, and a Local Development Strategy (LDS) was produced to guide the LEADER programme.

For the 2014-2020 RDP programme period, the Cynnal y Cardi LAG secured £3.45 million in funding to deliver the LEADER programme up to 2020. An updated LDS was developed for the 2014-2020 LEADER Programme, and it was once again administered by Ceredigion County Council. A total of 54 projects, 9 cooperation projects, and various animation activities have been funded during the programme period to date, with work ongoing with until the end of the programme period. A range of projects funded as part of the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 programme periods were assessed as part of this evaluation, with the main body of the evaluation report providing case studies of 12 Cynnal y Cardi implementation and cooperation activities.

### *Impact and Legacy of Cynnal y Cardi*

Cynnal y Cardi, over its two programme periods, has had a positive and lasting impact on the county, addressing a diverse range of sectors including the local economy, the environment, culture, heritage, the Welsh Language, skills and education, and health and wellbeing.



## Case Study

**Ysgol Fenter y Cardi was a Cynnal y Cardi scheme that provided bursaries to Ceredigion residents with an aspiration to start a new business or community enterprise. It worked with a total of 53 businesses within the 2007-2013 Programme Period.**

As a part of this evaluation, four recipients of the scheme were spoken to. Two of the recipients were still running their businesses which the scheme helped to develop, whereas another two recipients had run their businesses for several years until retirement and a job change respectively.

All recipients spoken to stated that the bursary had been invaluable to the establishment of their businesses, with three of the four adding that they would not have been able to pursue their businesses without the support received.

Two of the businesses, a wedding photography business and a gardening business, both received bursaries which enabled them to invest in the necessary equipment to make their business ideas a reality.



Cynnal y Cardi has developed a lasting legacy through providing funding and support to develop the capacity of a number of community organisations, individuals, and businesses. Many of the recipients of LEADER support have established themselves as providers of valuable services, or continue to deliver a range of social, environmental, and cultural goods within their communities. Businesses created through support from Cynnal y Cardi continue to operate today, and communities and organisations continue to utilise assets and infrastructure that were secured through support from Cynnal y Cardi.

### *Cynnal y Cardi Case Studies*

The Cynnal y Cardi Legacy Evaluation Report sets out a range of case studies, covering projects supported in both 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 programme periods. These case studies also include cooperation projects delivered in conjunction with other LEADER programmes in Wales.

A number of innovate projects have been funded and supported, with some of the projects reviewed as part of the evaluation providing valuable examples of innovative action that could inspire similar actions elsewhere. These include Aber Food Surplus, Here for You (Area 43), Compassionate Communities (Arts4Wellbeing), Tregaroc, and Academi'r Dyfodol (Coleg Ceredigion). Many funded projects have therefore provided valuable blueprints that can aid innovation in future.

Video case studies were also produced as part of the evaluation<sup>3</sup>. These present the legacy of three Cynnal y Cardi projects: Ysgol Fenter y Cardi, Ceredigidol, and the projects that stemmed from the Aberarth Community Action Plan. The video case studies include interviews with beneficiaries of the funding and support.

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<sup>3</sup> Video case studies can be found at: <https://www.cynnalycardi.org.uk/evaluation/> (for English page), and <https://www.cynnalycardi.org.uk/gwerthuso/> (for Welsh page)

### *Cynnal y Cardi and the LEADER Approach*

The projects supported by Cynnal y Cardi have adhered to LEADER principles, with evidence supporting the bottom-up approach and collaborative nature of very many projects. Bottom-up working is evident within a great deal of the projects assessed, with the impetus and ideas for projects often coming from community organisations, and the involvement of a significant number of volunteers and members of the community in delivering the project. Projects such as Cyswllt Amaeth, Aber Food Surplus, Compassionate Communities, Cambrian Futures, and Tregaroc demonstrate this principle very clearly. Project coordinators across a range of projects spoke of the added value that a grass-roots or bottom-up approach can provide to the delivery and success of a project.

Innovation is a key element of LEADER. The funding of pilot projects that propose innovative solutions to problems is at the heart of its ethos, and as a result, LEADER programmes are empowered to take risks. A key added value of the LEADER approach for a number of the project leads interviewed for this evaluation was this willingness to take a risk in funding a pilot that was novel or innovative. Some of the successful and innovative projects reviewed as part of the evaluation were considered somewhat risky by their coordinators, but the success achieved by projects such as Compassionate Communities and Tregaroc demonstrate the dividends that investing in innovation can deliver.

### **Recommendations for future CLLD**

- i. **Recommendation 1** – The collection of evidence for social benefits arising from interventions is challenging, but innovative and brave options to measure social benefit must always be explored. This applies especially to LEADER, as it often funds interventions with difficult-to-measure outcomes with potentially significant “soft” consequences, outcomes, and impacts.
- ii. **Recommendation 2** – Ensure that the lessons learnt from the most innovative projects are suitably disseminated both within Ceredigion

and with other LAGs across Wales and beyond. Projects like Academi'r Dyfodol, Compassionate Communities, Here for You (Area 43), and Aber Food Surplus are well placed to inspire similar initiatives elsewhere that can continue develop innovative solutions to the problems facing various communities.

- iii. **Recommendation 3** – Ensure that the LAG is used not only for the scrutiny and selection of projects, but also as a forum to develop ideas for projects either in development or already underway. Ensure that the LAG's time is used most efficiently to provide the space for engagement with projects. Regular progress reporting to the LAG on projects underway and sufficient time for LAG members to discuss projects can provide the space for LAG members to feed back into projects with ideas and guidance.
- iv. **Recommendation 4** – Some projects relied heavily on additional time put in by the lead organisers beyond the core hours or roles for which they were funded through Cynnal y Cardi. There were some instances where the paid-for hours of project facilitators or coordinators were supplemented by many additional hours volunteered. It is recommended that in reviewing applications for projects, consideration is given to how realistic the proposed funded roles are, and whether additional money needs to be allocated to suitably compensate individuals for their labour.
- v. **Recommendation 5** – Ensure that support provided to project administrators addresses their training needs. There was minor criticism that the administrative support from Cynnal y Cardi was too focused on improving the evidence collecting of the organisation. It is recommended that opportunities are capitalised on to provide the necessary training to project leaders, so as to add additional value to the funding and support provided by Cynnal y Cardi, and to maximise the capacity of the funded community organisations.
- vi. **Recommendation 6** – Build on the experience that Cynnal y Cardi staff have developed over the past two programme periods and

ensure that any future CLLD initiatives are able to capitalise on the expertise that has been developed through the delivery of LEADER.

## Introduction

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of Cynnal y Cardi, the LEADER programme in Ceredigion which ran as two separate programme periods between 2007-2013 and 2014-2020. The evaluation reviews the impact and legacy of Cynnal y Cardi.

## About Cynnal y Cardi

### *The LEADER Programme*

Cynnal y Cardi is the LEADER Programme in Ceredigion. Cynnal y Cardi was the name given to the Local Action Group (LAG) in Ceredigion, which became the brand developed for the Ceredigion LEADER programme at the outset of the 2007-2013 programme period.

The LEADER programme is an EU initiative to support rural development, co-financed by each EU member state and the EAFRD. Encompassed by RDP Priority 6 – Social Inclusion and Economic Development – LEADER aims to combat rural inequality through supporting local development projects.<sup>4</sup> The programme places a strong focus on innovation, the piloting of new approaches, networking, and bottom-up community working. The characteristics of the LEADER approach are set out in figure 1.1 below.

LEADER originated in 1991 as part of the Common Agricultural Policy. It has been through a number of iterations since then, but the 2007-2013 Rural Development Programme saw LEADER become ‘mainstreamed’ as a compulsory element of the RDP, comprising one of its four axes (Axis 4).

LEADER is led and delivered by Local Action Groups (LAGs), which represent local public, private and third sector socio-economic interests, with no group holding more than 49 per cent of the voting rights.<sup>5</sup>

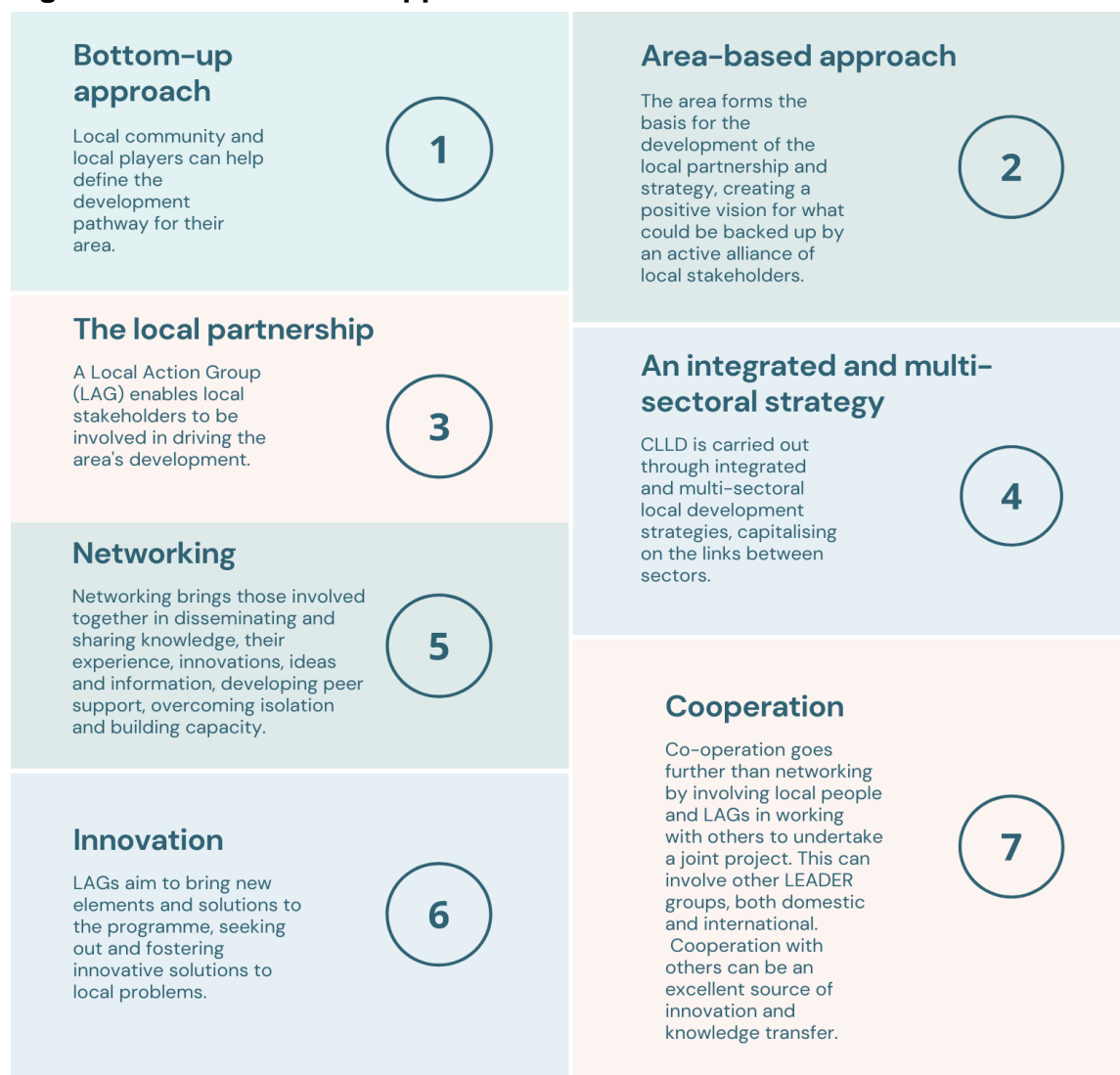
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<sup>4</sup> [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rural-development-policy-figures/priority-focus-area-summaries\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rural-development-policy-figures/priority-focus-area-summaries_en)

<sup>5</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32013R1303>

The 2014-2020 LEADER programme in Wales consisted of 18 LAGs covering the eligible 21 local authority areas including Ceredigion.

**Figure 1.1: The LEADER Approach: Seven Characteristics**



Source: LEADER / CLLD explained<sup>6</sup>

### *LEADER Ceredigion 2007-2013*

The 2007-2013 RDP saw Axis 3 (Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy) and Axis 4 delivered together. The proposal for delivery of Axis 3 and 4 of the RDP 2007-2013, submitted in 2006 by the Ceredigion Economic Regeneration Partnership (CERP), led to the establishment of a LEADER programme in Ceredigion for the 2007-2013

<sup>6</sup> [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld/leader-toolkit/leaderclld-explained\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld/leader-toolkit/leaderclld-explained_en)

programme period. Ceredigion County Council was chosen as the Administrative Body for the programme. The programme secured over £2.5 million to deliver both Business Plans 1 and 2, with over £2 million provided through the RDP.

A Ceredigion Local Action Group was formed through re-tasking the Stronger Communities Thematic Group to act as the LAG, with changes made to the composition of the group in order to take on the needs of the LAG. The LEADER programme was developed in the context of an overall Local Development Strategy (LDS), which was written primarily by the County Council with input from the LAG. The LDS provided the context for the delivery of Axis 3&4.

The LDS was developed to address six strategic issues:

- Encouraging a broader range of better paid employment opportunities;
- Actions to raise economic activity rates here;
- Encouraging services that support the wider rural economy;
- Co-coordinating the development of new infrastructure and services to support business growth, including tourism and craft activities;
- Improving the physical environment of settlements and conserving the rural and natural heritage so as to support and safeguard local businesses;
- Supporting community cohesion by ensuring that every Ceredigion resident has equal opportunities to access services, make the most of their talents to the full and contribute to improving Ceredigion's economic performance and contribute to social life in the community.

The 2007-2013 LEADER Programme in Wales was split into two periods, with Business Plan 1, which ran from 2007 to 2011, and Business Plan 2, which ran from 2011 to 2014.



The LDS was refreshed for the Business Plan 2 period in 2009, and became the LDS to which the Axis 4 projects worked for the remainder of the period. Business Plan 2 had two components, the Enhancing the Quality of Life, Cynnal y Cardi project, which was aimed at enhancing the quality of life in Ceredigion, and GwarchodNi, a cooperation project with Gwynedd and Powys LAGs which explored innovative solutions to childcare. In all, the Business Plan supported 22 community projects, and included the Ysgol Fenter y Cardi Bursary Scheme, which supported 53 individual businesses with business start-up assistance.

### *LEADER Ceredigion 2014-2020*

Certain changes were made to the LEADER Programme in Wales for the 2014-2020 period. Axes 3 and 4 were no longer combined, with Cynnal y Cardi now delivering only Axis 4 – LEADER. The Cynnal y Cardi LAG secured £3.45 million in funding to deliver the LEADER programme up to 2020.

The 2014-2020 LEADER Programme Period in Wales had five themes, developed by the Welsh Government. These were:

- Adding value to local identity, cultural and natural resources
- Facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains
- Exploring new ways of providing non-statutory local services
- Renewable Energy at Community level
- Exploitation of digital technology

An updated LDS was developed for the 2014-2020 LEADER Programme in Ceredigion, developed by the Cynnal y Cardi LAG. The LDS followed Ceredigion County Council's Economic Strategy Themes, which was based on the needs of Ceredigion. The LDS follows five themes, which align broadly with the five national-level LEADER themes outlined above:

- Utilising the Natural Environment & Landscape
- Building a Knowledge Based Economy

- Making the Most of Our Culture and Heritage
- Adding Value to Our Primary Products
- Developing Our People and Organisations

The LDS was updated in 2020 to address new contexts caused by Covid-19, with this new LDS to guide the delivery of Cynnal y Cardi in its final years.

The Ceredigion LEADER 2014-2020 programme was once again administered by Ceredigion County Council, and was again implemented by the Cynnal y Cardi LAG.

Cynnal y Cardi has implemented 54 projects to date which sit across the five LEADER themes.

Cynnal y Cardi has been involved in animation activities. Animation activities are an important feature of the LEADER programme, providing the support that develops the capacity of groups to design and deliver projects. Animation activities take a number of forms, such as signposting groups to other sources of funding, assisting in organising and hosting events, providing capacity building support to enable groups to better deliver and monitor their projects, and supporting communities and groups with consultation activities such as community meetings and questionnaires. Animation activities play a key role in developing the capacity of groups delivering projects, as due to the nature of some organisations that receive LEADER funding, they may not have experience in delivering projects.

Cynnal y Cardi has implemented nine cooperation projects with neighbouring Local Authorities and other partners, including the Dyfi Biosphere Cooperation Plan with Gwynedd and Powys, and the Cambrian Futures Project with Powys and Carmarthenshire. LEADER Cooperation projects are intended to encourage rural areas to work together on projects with mutual benefits for participating partners. LEADER Programmes are able to cooperate with other domestic or international LEADER groups, with the benefits of the cooperation

scheme including widening local perspectives in order to improve local strategies, and learning from other regions or contexts to improve innovation.

### *Ceredigion Context*

Ceredigion is a county of around 73,000 on the west coast of Wales. While all of its wards are classed as rural, around 75 per cent of its population live in rural areas, a significantly higher proportion than the Welsh average of 33 per cent. Ceredigion had the second lowest population density of any Welsh county in 2011.<sup>7</sup>

Ceredigion has an ageing population, with a quarter of the population in 2018 estimated to be aged 65 or over. The outflow of young people was identified as a concern in the 2014-2020 LDS and in the 2020-35 Strategy for Action, with the creation of opportunities in order to retain young people noted as a concern. The working age population has declined by 14 per cent since 2001, with a large increase (29.5 per cent) seen in the 65+ age category.

The county has traditionally had low levels of unemployment (3.3 per cent, compared to 3.6 per cent for the Wales average<sup>8</sup>), but relatively high levels of under-employment. There is a high reliance on the public sector for employment, with the service sector dominating the economy, employing over 74 per cent of the workforce.<sup>9</sup>

A declining number of businesses was identified as an issue facing Ceredigion in the 2014-2020 LDS. “Business births” in the years leading up to 2014 outnumbered “business deaths” considerably. The great majority of businesses (92 per cent) in Ceredigion are micro-enterprises, employing fewer than 10 people. This over-dependence on micro and small-sized

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<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/2011censuspopulationandhouseholdestimatesforwales/2012-07-16>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157390/report.aspx>

<sup>9</sup> Boosting Ceredigion’s Economy: A Strategy for Action 2020-35, Ceredigion County Council, 2020.

enterprises was noted as an area of concern in the Ceredigion County Council's 2020-35 Strategy for Action, with Ceredigion sharing in a trend seen across rural Wales of a "missing middle" of medium-sized enterprises.

Weekly gross wages lag behind the Wales average (£504.4 per week for Ceredigion versus £541.7 for Wales<sup>10</sup>) but has improved in recent years. By place of work, the Ceredigion workforce earns 84 per cent of average earnings in Wales.<sup>11</sup>

## About the legacy evaluation

LAGs are encouraged by the Evaluation Guidance for LEADER LAGs to commission external contractors to undertake project evaluations of LEADER in their area.<sup>12</sup>

Whilst there was no contractual obligation during this evaluation to look at the LEADER programme over the 2007-2013 programming period, the Cynnal y Cardi LAG felt it would be of benefit to conduct an analysis of the impact of LEADER activity over these two periods. Two evaluations have been carried out previously; a final evaluation of the 2007-2013 programme period, and an interim evaluation of the 2014-2020 programme period.

In the summer of 2020, Ceredigion County Council conducted a competitive procurement process and commissioned Miller Research to carry out the legacy evaluation of Cynnal y Cardi, which included the production of a legacy report, and the filming of three short case study videos showcasing Cynnal y Cardi funded projects.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/Imp/la/1946157390/printable.aspx>

<sup>11</sup> Economic Baseline Report, Ceredigion County Council, 2020

<sup>12</sup>

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/sites/walesruralnetwork/files/documents/LEADER%20Evaluation%20Guidance%20EN.pdf>

### *Report structure*

This report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 sets out the methodology used for this final legacy evaluation of Cynnal y Cardi.
- Section 3 provides an assessment of the administration and governance of Cynnal y Cardi, with a review of progress made against target indicators.
- Section 4 explores the delivery of the 2007-2013 LEADER Ceredigion programme period, and features a number of case studies of LEADER funded projects from the period.
- Section 5 explores the delivery of the 2014-2020 LEADER Ceredigion programme period, also providing a number of case studies of projects.
- Section 6 provides an assessment of the legacy and impact of Cynnal y Cardi since 2007, and also reviews the degree to which its activities were delivered in line with the LEADER Approach. The section concludes with a series of recommendations for future CLLD<sup>13</sup> programmes within Ceredigion.

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<sup>13</sup> Community Led Local Development is a term used by the European Commission to describe bottom-up development, in which communities and local partners drive forwards local development strategies.

## Methodology

This section sets out the method used in the research and production of the legacy evaluation report for Cynnal y Cardi.

### *Review of Documentation and Data*

Following an inception meeting and the production of an inception report, a desk-based review of LEADER documentation and data was carried out. This involved a review of quantitative data held for all project activities, applications for LEADER funding from community projects, monitoring reports for all LEADER projects, Cynnal y Cardi business plans, any progress reports for WG, and minutes of LAG meetings. Documentation from both programme periods were reviewed.

### *Fieldwork*

The fieldwork component collected valuable qualitative data from a range of individuals involved in the LEADER programmes, whether as members of the LAG, project officers, stakeholders, or beneficiaries.

This engagement work involved speaking to those involved in the 2007-2013 programme period as well as the 2014-2020 period to ensure the comprehensiveness of the evaluation.

Due to Covid-19, all interviews were conducted over telephone or Zoom/Microsoft Teams.

### *Interviews with stakeholders*

The key stakeholders selected were determined in conjunction with the client, and included a Project Officer, a key Welsh Government stakeholder, and a LAG member.

### *Interviews with Beneficiaries (x18)*

A key part of the fieldwork carried out were interviews with project deliverers representing groups or community organisations, and individual beneficiaries of Cynnal y Cardi support. This will include beneficiaries of projects from both the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 programme periods.

In all, eleven in-depth interviews were held with project deliverers, with a further seven interviews with individual beneficiaries of Cynnal y Cardi funding and support.

### *Final Legacy Report*

Findings from the fieldwork and desk-based review of Cynnal y Cardi have been brought together in the production of this evaluation report.

### *Legacy video Case Studies*

In order to provide a widely accessible and engaging output that can demonstrate the legacy of LEADER activities in Ceredigion, alongside this report, Miller Research, in conjunction with our associate Nanette Hepburn, will deliver three video case studies showcasing Cynnal y Cardi projects. These video case studies will be around five minutes in length and will feature interviews with beneficiaries, exploring the impact and legacy of Cynnal y Cardi for them. A link to the videos can be found here:  
<https://www.cynnalycardi.org.uk/evaluation/> (for English page), and  
<https://www.cynnalycardi.org.uk/gwerthuso/> (for Welsh page).

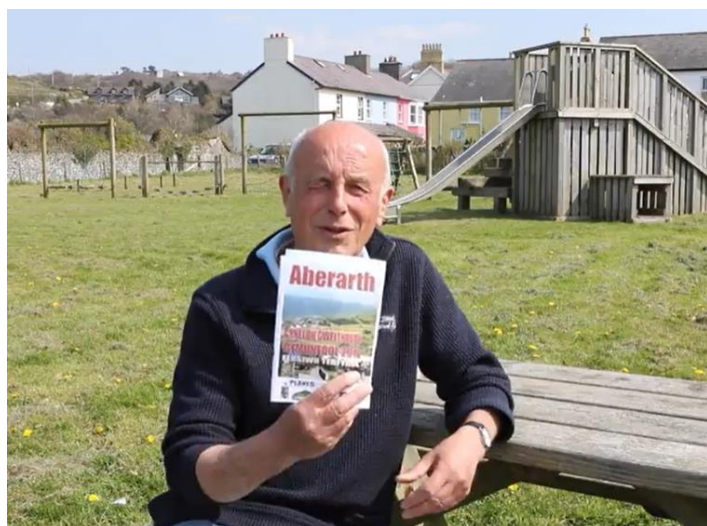
The video case studies cover the following projects:

#### *Ysgol Fenter y Cardi*

This video features interviews with two Ysgol Fenter y Cardi bursary recipients whose businesses benefited from the support provided (see case study 2 below).

### *Aberarth Community Action Plan*

This video case study provides an account of the outcomes gained from the support provided to the village of Aberarth to develop a Community Action Plan, which led to, among other things, the construction of a children's play area for the village. The video features interviews with three members of the community who were involved in securing support from Cynnal y Cardi.



### *Ceredigidol – Ceredigion YFC*

The Ceredigidol project, which involved the development of a series of training videos for YFC members, is spoken about in this video case study by two former YFC officers who were involved in the project.





## Programme Administration and Performance

This section of the report presents the findings of the evaluation regarding the delivery and management of Cynnal y Cardi, and its performance against targets agreed with Welsh Government.

### Cynnal y Cardi Management and Governance

Cynnal y Cardi is Administered by Ceredigion County Council, with the Cynnal y Cardi Local Action Group providing the steer for the planning and implementation of the LEADER programme. The LAG is a key element of the LEADER programme. Its purpose is to provide opportunities for local stakeholders to become active partners and drivers of their area's development.<sup>14</sup> The LAG makes decisions on the project to be funded, it commissions and proposes projects, and is involved in the continued scrutiny of funded projects throughout their lifecycle.

Representation on the LAG changed slightly between the two programme periods, with one stakeholder noting that representation improved for the 2014-2020 programme. More time had been spent scrutinising the composition of the LAG, which led to a more balanced representation of the three sectors (public, private and community sectors).

The approach taken to running the LEADER Programme in Ceredigion also changed between Business Plan 1 and Business Plan 2 in the 2007-2013 programme period. Under Business Plan 1, projects were contracted out to LAG members to administer. Administration was bought in house for Business Plan 2. A stakeholder noted that this was an improvement, as it meant that projects were less likely to be initiated by the "usual suspects." This led to an "opening up" of the programme.

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[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld/leader-toolkit/leaderclld-explained\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld/leader-toolkit/leaderclld-explained_en)

At the outset of the 2014-2020 programme period, the LAG consisted of the following members, comprising representation from the public, private and community sectors:

### Public

Economic Development, Ceredigion County Council

Aberystwyth University (IBERS)

University of Wales Trinity St David

Natural Resources Wales

### Private

Antur Teifi

National Farmers Union

Farmers Union of Wales

Menter a Busnes

Teifi Valley Local Growth Zone

Cantref

Twristiaeth Ceredigion Tourism

### Civil Society

Ecodyfi on behalf of Dyfi Biosphere Partnership

Whilen y Porthmyn/Drovers Wheel

RAY Ceredigion

Menter Aberteifi

Young Farmers Club

Llandysul & Pont Tyweli Ymlaen Cyf

CAVO

Cwmni Theatr Arad Goch

Cambrian Mountains Community Investment Company

Cardigan Bay Fisheries Local Action Group (F.L.A.G.)

Stakeholders and project coordinators spoken to as part of the evaluation noted the LAG as a strength of the programme. LAG members were active in

developing and leading projects. The Cynnal y Cardi LAG was described as great forum to openly discuss Ceredigion's communities, and a great platform to encourage people to come forward with ideas.

There was some criticism from the coordinator of one Cynnal y Cardi funded project that the LAG could have been used as a greater source of ideas for guiding projects. The stakeholder noted that LAG members were constrained for time, but had the LAG been encouraged to take a greater degree of ownership over the direction of projects, then more ideas may have flowed from the group.

#### *Administration Team*

The Cynnal y Cardi administration team was spoken of very highly by stakeholders and project coordinators spoken to, with their dedication to the LEADER vision commended. A common theme was their keen engagement with projects, even attending a number of events held by various projects. The on-the-ground presence was greatly appreciated by a number of project coordinators.

The administration team provided valuable animation services for a number of projects interviewed, assisting in activities such as community consultations, and supporting project coordinators with administrative tasks.

Their willingness to co-produce and provide input was also commended, with a number of project coordinators having valued their input and guidance on the delivery of projects.

Staff changes among Ceredigion County Council Officers and administrators were noted by two project coordinators as having caused some disruption and inconvenience, but this was not noted as having been an especially serious issue. A stakeholder and LAG member had noted that a strength of the 2014-2020 programme had been that the administration team had also been

involved with LEADER since the previous 2007-2013 programme period, which led to a beneficial depth of experience and knowledge among the staff.

A stakeholder noted that the Cynnal y Cardi team had grown significantly in confidence by the 2014-2020 programme period. Building on the experience that they had built up during the previous funding programme, they were described as more confident in what they could deliver.

Some criticisms were made of the bureaucracy and paperwork that came with LEADER funding. One particular issue that was raised was that that a burdensome amount of paperwork was required due to having to re-design elements of the project due to Covid-19. The point was made that the amount of paperwork required was inappropriate as the project coordinators were already facing increased demands on their time dealing with the implications of Covid-19.

Another minor criticism from one project representative was administrative support provided by the Cynnal y Cardi team was too focused on getting organisations to meet evidencing needs, as opposed to providing more substantive training in administrating a project. It is understood that evidencing requirements are imposed on LEADER administrators as part of the Rural Development Programme, but to narrow a focus on evidence collecting results in missed opportunities for broader capacity building.

Due to the wide range of projects funded by Cynnal y Cardi, and the grass-roots and pilot nature of many of the projects, project delivery teams have needed different levels of support. Some projects were delivered by individuals or groups with little or no previous experience of running grant funded projects, with many having to learn as they implement the project. The value of the LEADER approach is that groups and individuals with little previous experience are able to access funding support to implement riskier, but often innovative ideas. However, this places additional requirements on administrators of LEADER programmes to work more closely with inexperienced project teams in order to ensure a smooth delivery.

## Progress made against targets

The table below contains data on the performance of the 2014-2020 LEADER Ceredigion programme period against targets that were agreed with the Welsh Government.

**Table 3.1: Performance against target indicators**

Performance Indicator	Target	Achieved to date
Number of jobs created	1.5	1.5
Number of feasibility studies	4	2*
Number of networks established	8	2
Number of pilot activities undertaken/supported	25	14
Number of community hubs	0	0
No of jobs safeguarded	2	0.8
Number of information dissemination actions/promotion	122	183
Number of stakeholders engaged	650	1,292
Number of participants supported	750	2,166

Source: Cynnal y Cardi Delivery Team, May 2021. \*Further nine feasibility/scoping studies produced that do not necessarily meet the requirements from Welsh Government.

**Table 3.2: Performance against indicator targets: Cooperation Projects**

Performance Indicator	Target	Achieved to date
Number of networks established	2	0
Number of information dissemination actions	10	19

Number of stakeholders engaged	40	114
Number of participants supported	60	98

Source: Cynnal y Cardi Delivery Team, May 2021

In the 2014-2020 Programme period, Cynnal y Cardi has performed well against target indicators, though it is important to note that the outputs recorded above do not fully capture the successes and impact of a programme such as Cynnal y Cardi.

While some targets have so far not been met, these are in some instances due to Cynnal y Cardi activities not meeting the indicator guidance requirements set out by the Welsh Government. For example, Cynnal y Cardi has facilitated a number of informal networks that do not meet the formality required in order to satisfy the *number of networks established* indicator.

Similarly, in addition to the two feasibility studies recorded against the number of feasibility studies indicator, a further nine have been developed through Cynnal y Cardi that do meet the requirements from Welsh Government.

Further outputs will be recorded in the final stages of Cynnal y Cardi in 2023.

## Delivery of the 2007-2013 Ceredigion LEADER Programme

The proposal for delivery of Axis 3 and 4 of the RDP 2007-2013, submitted in 2006 by the Ceredigion Economic Regeneration Partnership (CERP), led to the establishment of a LEADER programme in Ceredigion for the 2007-2013 programme period. The 2007-2013 LEADER Programme in Wales was split into two periods, with Business Plan 1, which ran from 2007 to 2011, and Business Plan 2, which ran from 2011 to 2014.

The LEADER programme was developed in the context of a Local Development Strategy (LDS), which was written primarily by Ceredigion County Council with input from the LAG. The LDS provided the context for the delivery of Axis 3&4, and was updated in for Business Plan 2, which covered the period between 2011 to 2014.

The LDS was developed to address six strategic issues:

- Encouraging a broader range of better paid employment opportunities;
- Actions to raise economic activity rates;
- Encouraging services that support the wider rural economy;
- Co-coordinating the development of new infrastructure and services to support business growth, including tourism and craft activities;
- Improving the physical environment of settlements and conserving the rural and natural heritage so as to support and safeguard local businesses;
- Supporting community cohesion by ensuring that every Ceredigion resident has equal opportunities to access services, make the most of their talents to the full and contribute to improving Ceredigion's economic performance and contribute to social life in the community.

The CERP developed the LDS based on four objectives which targeted key needs in the county. These were:

- Strategic Objective 1: Ceredigion as an attractive community in which to invest and work;
- Strategic Objective 2: Knowledge and innovation for growth;
- Strategic Objective 3: Creating more and better jobs;
- Strategic Objective 4: Focusing regeneration.

The LDS was refreshed for the Business Plan 2 period in 2009, and became the LDS to which the Axis 4 projects worked for the remainder of the period from 2011 to 2014. Business Plan 2 consisted of two components, the Enhancing the Quality of Life, Cynnal y Cardi project, which was aimed at enhancing the quality of life in Ceredigion, and GwarchodNi, a cooperation project with Gwynedd and Powys which explored innovative solutions to childcare.

### **Business Plan 1: 2007-2013 LEADER Programme Period**

A wide range of projects were delivered as part of the 2007-2013 funding period. Business Plan 1 involved the significant involvement of third parties, who proposed and were awarded contracts to deliver projects funded through Cynnal y Cardi. Projects included Gwyliau i Geffylau, a project to encourage tourists to bring their horses along on holiday to Ceredigion, Ceredigion Tourism Clusters, a project to develop sustainable tourism clusters centred around particular themes, and the Transition Town Lampeter Initiative, a project to move forwards the Transition Town initiative in Lampeter.

Included below is a case study of the Cyswllt Amaeth project, delivered by Menter a Busnes as part of the Cynnal y Cardi 2007-2013 LEADER Programme.



## Cynnal y Cardi, Case Study 1

# Cyswllt Amaeth

*Business Plan 1, 2007-2013 LEADER Programme Period*

### *Overview*

Cyswllt Amaeth was a Ceredigion LEADER-funded project from the Business Plan 1 period of the 2007-2013 RDP. It was developed and operated by Menter a Busnes, who had a great deal of experience working with farmers in Ceredigion. Cyswllt



Amaeth was a project to support Ceredigion farmers to implement innovative ideas that were developed by the farmers themselves. In total it worked with five clusters in order to develop five different ideas.

### *Background*

The rationale behind the project was that there were many ideas within the rural sector, but help was needed in order to turn these ideas into reality. Cyswllt Amaeth would provide the support needed to see ideas implemented. Meetings were held across Ceredigion with farmers and interested parties, with ideas arising from these meetings.

Clusters included a cooperation project between farmers to band together to collectively negotiate better prices for organic food for livestock. Another was developed with farmers in Devil's Bridge to explore the feasibility of hydro-electric schemes on their land.

A cluster was developed in conjunction with a Dunbia slaughterhouse in Llanybydder. Cyswllt Amaeth coordinated the provision of laptops to farmers in 2008 in order to improve their digital skills, primarily to train farmers in using systems linked with the slaughterhouse.

*Project Impact and Legacy: The Welsh Black Cattle Society Cluster*

One such cluster was driven by three farmers from Talybont, who asked for support to work with the Welsh Black Cattle Society to develop the Welsh Black breed. The farmers, who ordinarily met once a year as part of the society, decided that they should do something more proactive to develop the breed. With support from Cyswllt Amaeth, they engaged in a range of activities inspired by what had been done elsewhere to develop cattle breeds. Having put a case together with help from Cyswllt Amaeth, the cluster secured funding for a field officer to assess cows, focusing on the mothers of bulls, in order to better improve the breed. A web-based registry was established in order to record data that could be accessed by members. The registry is still in use today.

The cluster also secured funding through a joint bid with IBERS to develop a bull performance centre. Over three years, 10 bulls were assessed and studied in order to identify good genetic stock.

A representative of the cluster stated that he had been “looking to do these things, but had no way to deliver them ... so [Cyswllt Amaeth] gave them a chance to explore and do this – and they wouldn’t have done it without it.”

Cyswllt Amaeth embodied the principles of LEADER through its focus on developing ideas that farmers themselves wanted to pursue. The open meetings provided the forum for ideas to be raised. A Cyswllt Amaeth facilitator noted that farmers often have things “forced upon them,” and this project was a completely different way of operating to what they had become accustomed to. The support provided by Cyswllt Amaeth was non-financial. Menter a Busnes would carry out the background work to realise the ideas and turn them into reality, negotiating with the farmers to develop the clusters that they wanted to see come to fruition.

## **Business Plan 2: 2007-2013 LEADER Programme Period**

- 1.1 Business Plan 2, which ran from 2011 to 2013, was operated differently by the Cynnal y Cardi LAG. Instead of focusing on having external bodies deliver the LEADER projects, it was decided that the Cynnal y Cardi team within Ceredigion County Council and the LAG would take the lead on delivery, with officers designated towards certain themes. This meant that project managers and community groups leading LEADER-funded projects would liaise directly with Cynnal y Cardi.
- 1.2 The Business Plan 2 period saw over 30 project activities supported, with many community projects developed through the support provided. In addition, this period saw the Ysgol Fenter y Cardi Bursary Scheme in operation, which supported 53 individual businesses with business start-up assistance (see case study 2).
- 1.3 The project supported spanned the Strategic Objectives and Themes set out in the LDS, and involved funding and support for projects such as the development of the Sea 2 Shore Seafood Festival in Aberystwyth, the construction of a children's play area in Aberarth, and the refurbishment of the Aberystwyth Market Hall (see Case Study 4).

## Cynnal y Cardi, Case Study 2

# Ysgol Fenter y Cardi

*Business Plan 2, 2007-2013 LEADER Programme Period*

### *Background*

Ysgol Fenter y Cardi was a Cynnal y Cardi scheme that provided bursaries to Ceredigion residents with an aspiration to start a new business or community enterprise. It ran during the Business Plan 2 Phase of the 2007-2013 LEADER Ceredigion Programme Period, working with a total of 53 businesses to provide support in order to grow their business ambitions.



The bursary was available to help people to implement their ideas through providing expert advice, equipment, or other necessary support or resources. Up to £1000 was available to applicants from certain target groups, such as young people (11-30), Welsh Speaking Communities, the under-employed, and those not in education, employment, or training.

### *Project Legacy*

Four recipients of Ysgol y Fenter funding were spoken to as part of this evaluation. Of the four, two of the individuals were still running the businesses which Ysgol Fenter y Cardi helped to develop, while the other two had ran their businesses for a period of several years before either moving jobs or retiring.

The two ongoing businesses are a gardening service and a wedding photography business. Both received the bursary in order to purchase the

necessary equipment to set up their businesses. The owner of the wedding photographer business had received the bursary to purchase improved equipment to better enable her to carry out her work. In an interview, she stated:

“When I first started my business, I was working on a tiny little laptop, and I couldn’t really edit properly because I just didn’t have the equipment. So, I applied for the grant with Ysgol Fenter y



Cardi and they kindly gave me the money then to be able to buy a proper big Apple Mac, which was just amazing because it meant that I could edit my photos the way I wanted to, and it really helped me progress with my business. When the bride and groom come and see some of the photos, it’s just big beautiful and the colours are gorgeous.”

The owner of the gardening business was, at the time of the application, a single mother looking for an income, and had no funds with which to buy the initial equipment needed to set up the businesses. Ysgol Fenter y Cardi was therefore integral to helping her establish the business. In an interview, she stated:

“I had no money sitting there in a nest egg, no family to help fund it, and to actually buy good quality machinery, to be able to run a business, and to do the work that I was taking on ... I couldn’t have done it without [Ysgol Fenter y Cardi].”

One of the recipients spoken to had operated a bike tour business, and received funding to undertake training in order to be able to lead bike tours. The business was successful for some time before a job change meant having less time to run the business. All recipients spoken to stated that the bursary had been invaluable to the establishment of their businesses, with

three of the four adding that they would not have been able to pursue their businesses without the support received.

Cynnal y Cardi, Case Study 3

# “Bees are Beautiful” Project – Lampeter Bee Keepers Association

*Business Plan 2, 2007-2013 LEADER Programme Period*

## *Overview*

The Lampeter Bee Keepers Association received funding from Cynnal y Cardi during the Business Plan 2 period of the 2007-2013 LEADER programme in Ceredigion. The Association, ran entirely by volunteers, had been in existence for over 40 years, and came to Cynnal y Cardi



for support with setting up an apiary, a demonstration hive that can be transported to shows and events, and the purchasing of safety equipment that can be used for training members or for educational events. Equipment included the purchasing of a honey extractor for members to use, an item which is an expensive piece of equipment for beginners.

## *Project Legacy and Impact*

The apiary has been essential to the Association’s teaching for members to achieve a high standard of bee husbandry, providing mentoring and guidance to those starting out or developing their bee keeping skills. The funding and equipment also enabled the Association to deliver taster days to those



interesting in exploring bee husbandry. As part of a broader outreach, the funding enabled the Association to develop a new logo, a bilingual website,

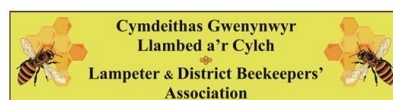


and information leaflets.

The Association, as a not-for-profit organisation, had found it hard to make progress with providing practical training for their beginners. Their training, as well as their presence at shows and events, relied entirely on members volunteering or loaning their own equipment. Cynnal y Cardi funding has made a significant difference to the capacity of the Association to engage in outreach and train its members. In an interview for this evaluation, a

representative stated that they would not have been able to afford the set up that they now have without the funding. In addition, they noted that the apiary that Cynnal y Cardi funded has become a social hub for the members, a focal point for the Association where members come to meet up.

The Lampeter Bee Keepers Association has, since the funding, provided six-week bee keeping training courses, and have seen the number of attendees grow significantly. While Covid-19 has disrupted training possibilities for the past year, the Association still have around thirty people at present signed up for training once conditions improve. The Association are hopeful that there will be continued interest post-Covid-19 from new members.



Am ddarganfod rhagor am wenynd?

**Sesiwn Blasu - 12 Ebrill, 2014**

**Cwrs i Ddechreuwyd/Beginners Course — 5 Sesiwn**

**Yn dechrau ar 27 Ebrill, 2014**

Am ragor o wybodaeth am gyrsiau a sesiynau blasu

neu i gofrestru i fynychu'r uchod

Cysylltwch â Gordon Lumby drwy ffonio:-

**01570 480571**

Drwy e-bost:- [secretary@lampeterbeekeepersassociation.co.uk](mailto:secretary@lampeterbeekeepersassociation.co.uk)

[www.lampeterbeekeepersassociation.co.uk](http://www.lampeterbeekeepersassociation.co.uk)





Cynnal y Cardi, Case Study 4

# Aberystwyth Market Hall Incubator Spaces

*Business Plan 2, 2007-2013 LEADER Programme Period*

## Overview

As part of Business Plan 2 of the 2007-2013 Ceredigion LEADER Programme, the Aberystwyth Market Hall received funding from Cynnal y Cardi to assist in regenerating economic activity



through re-developing the historic Market Hall building. The aim of the project was to attract more visitors to the Market Hall, and to assist local entrepreneurs to develop businesses using the space. As part of the project, four incubator spaces were created. These were made available to individuals who were looking to establish retail businesses, and offered an opportunity to test an idea.

## *Project Legacy and Impact*

A wide range of individual businesses selling a variety of products have taken residency in the incubator spaces. The spaces were provided for a period of one year, and were free for the first six months, with the remainder of the time requiring only a small rental fee.

Former residents of the incubator spaces spoken to as part of the evaluation spoke favourably of the initiative, with one describing the experience as an ideal situation that worked fantastically, as they didn't want to commit to a business without knowing if it would be successful. The incubator space gave

them the knowledge that they had a customer base in the town. Another individual spoken to stated that they would never have started their business had they not chanced upon the opportunity. They had been looking for work, but decided to try out an idea for a business.



Two of the three individuals spoken to have since moved their businesses into the main Market Hall building, with one, a seller of sustainable products, looking to also open a shop in the town of Aberystwyth. For the three businesses spoken to, the

incubator spaces had led to the development of one full time role, and one part time role suited to the individual's need for flexibility due to childcare.

In addition to the creation of a number of small businesses and jobs, the Incubator Spaces project has provided Aberystwyth with valuable facilities that can continue to be used into the future to encourage the development of enterprises in Aberystwyth.

## Cynnal y Cardi, Case Study 5

# Tregaroc

*Business Plan 2, 2007-2013 LEADER Programme Period*

### Overview

Tregaroc is a Welsh Language music festival that takes place in Tregaron on the third Saturday in May each year. The first Tregaroc was held in 2014, and saw tickets sell out within two days. It was started by five local women who lived in Tregaron, which has since become a team of 6. The group was comprised of individuals from a range of backgrounds, consisting of a Young Farmers organiser, a teacher, a bank employee, a theatre worker, and a grants officer.

### Background

The organisers had all been concerned that Tregaron was suffering from a steady decline. Tregaron had previously been a hub for the local area, describes as “the place to be” in a very rural area. However, the town library was closing, banks in the town were closing, and there were talks of closing the 6<sup>th</sup> form in Tregaron Secondary School. The organisers decided to put on an event, both to attract people to the town, and for the people of Tregaron. They

**17<sup>th</sup> MAI 2014**  
**17<sup>th</sup> MAY 2014**  
 DYDD SADWRN ~ SATURDAY  
 3PM TAN HWYR ~ UNTIL LATE

**Tregaroc**  
 Tre fach a sarn mawr

**Gŵyl Gerddoriaeth Gymraeg 1<sup>st</sup> Tregaron**  
**Tregaron's 1<sup>st</sup> Welsh Music Festival**

<b>3:00 Talbot</b> Gwibdaith Hen Frân	<b>7:30 Clwb Rygbi</b> Ian Rowlands
<b>4:30 Y Llew Coch</b> Paul Dark	<b>9:00 Pabell y Clwb Rygbi</b> Ifan Jones Evans Gwibdaith Hen Frân
<b>6:00 Clwb Bowlio</b> Meinir Gwilym	<b>Newshan</b> Sŵnami

**TOCYN**  
**£10**  
 TICKET

**Prynwch eich tocy'n heddiw**  
**Buy your ticket today**

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decided on a music festival, and following an exercise in speaking to people in the town, decided to go ahead with Tregaroc. The intention, according to a representative of Tregaroc spoken to, was to “create a buzz and some fun, and help the Welsh language, as well as advertise the town.”

### *Project Impact*

Tregaroc consists of a main stage in a marquee in the town centre, with free performances taking place in pubs around the town. Tickets enable around 500 people to view the performances in the Marquee, but around 1000 people come to the town for the festival each year. The festival is well integrated into the town, with businesses from takeaways, food shops and hairdressers offering deals on the day, and merchandise for the festival being sold in local shops.

The Tregaroc organisers also put on free events throughout the year, putting on Welsh Language gigs for the people of Tregaron in local pubs and sports clubs.

Tregaroc aligns well with LEADER principles. It is organised by local people in order to provide a boost to local people and the local economy, while promoting the Welsh Language. It involves local volunteers, with the organisers volunteering their



time each year, and local people volunteering to help out on the day. Tregaroc provides a valuable case study of bottom-up, community led action to promote local economic development and support for the Welsh Language and culture. The lead organiser has since appeared on many panels talking about the success of Tregaroc.

Tregaroc is an ongoing sustainable enterprise. The initial funding support from Cynnal y Cardi gave the organisers the confidence to take a risk in organising

a large event for the town. Each year that the festival has taken place, ticket sales have enabled them to break even. The initial funding from Cynnal y Cardi has enabled the organisers to access a float each year, ensuring that there are funds each year to rent the marquee and book the bands.



Without funding from Cynnal y Cardi, the organisers would not have been able to organise Tregaroc to the scale that it has reached. While there was the possibility of doing something smaller, it is likely that it would have taken years to build Tregaroc from scratch into the festival that it is today. Without the initial injection of support to pilot the event provided by Cynnal y Cardi, each year would have felt like a gamble.

Tregaroc has been a great and enduring success, adding life to a town that had faced a sense of decline. The event has brought a lot of publicity for the town. Having set out to “create a buzz,” the representative spoken to was sure that Tregaroc helped to bring the National Eisteddfod to the town. Tregaroc brings many people to the town from surrounding areas and from further afield, with holiday lets and guest houses filling up quickly around the time of the festival.



## Delivery of the 2014-2020 Ceredigion LEADER Programme

The LEADER Programme within the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme in Wales had five themes. These were intended to act as a framework for Local Authorities and covered key areas relevant for rural Wales. They were:

- Adding value to local identity, cultural and natural resources
- Facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains
- Exploring new ways of providing non-statutory local services
- Renewable Energy at Community level
- Exploitation of digital technology

For the 2014-2020 programme period, an updated LDS was developed for Ceredigion. The LDS follows five themes, which align broadly with the five LEADER themes outlined above, but also focus on the needs specific to Ceredigion:

- Utilising the Natural Environment & Landscape
- Building a Knowledge Based Economy
- Making the Most of Our Culture and Heritage
- Adding Value to Our Primary Products
- Developing Our People and Organisations

The Ceredigion LEADER 2014-2020 programme was once again administered by Ceredigion County Council and the Cynnal y Cardi LAG.

A significant area of difference between the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 programme periods is the change in state aid regulation between programmes.<sup>15</sup> This affected the ability of Cynnal y Cardi to fund businesses and in a way that was in keeping with LEADER principles, as was done in the

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<sup>15</sup> State aid is any advantage granted by public authorities through state resources on a selective basis to any organisations that could potentially distort competition and trade in the European Union.

previous funding period with initiatives such as Ysgol Fenter y Cardi. The inability to provide state aid was described by one key stakeholder as the biggest weakness of the 2014-2020 LEADER programme, and a missed opportunity to develop the Ceredigion economy. However, changes in circumstances since the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a new capacity to support the economy of Ceredigion, with Cynnal y Cardi approved to provide support de minimus aid to businesses and organisations.

The 2014-2020 nonetheless engaged with an impressive range of community organisations that have delivered impactful projects addressing pressing issues for Ceredigion. Cynnal y Cardi has implemented 54 projects to date which sit across the five LEADER themes, and which address the five themes of the Ceredigion LDS for 2014-2020. The projects have addressed a range of practical issues and concerns for Ceredigion's communities, from well-being and mental health to food waste.

Cynnal y Cardi, Case Study 6

# Aber Food Surplus

*20014-2020 LEADER Programme Period*

## Overview

Aber Food Surplus is an Aberystwyth community and volunteer led group that aims to reduce food waste in the town and surround areas. Its main activities include collecting waste food from different shops around

Aberystwyth, mostly

supermarkets, and either redistributing the food to the local community or turning the food into compost. The food is redistributed to charities, groups, families, and individuals, with the delivering of food carried out often by using bicycles and trailers. The organisation also run an organic food co-operative.



## Background

Cynnal y Cardi funded the pilot for Aber Food Surplus between April 2018 and May 2019. It provided funding for two Project Managers, employed at 30 hours per week, and an additional staff member at 5 hours per week. The funding gave the group the opportunity to develop the organisation, giving them confidence that they could run the project, and let the community know what was possible to achieve around food waste. The pilot year was described as very foundation, with the organisation having developed



significantly since this initial period of funding. It provided the confidence and skills to go on to win further funding to sustain the operation. Cynnal y Cardi also provided support by helping with administration and paperwork.

The group first started engaging in food waste redistribution in late 2016, spurred to action by seeing the amount of food wasted by the supermarkets in the town. Initially, the group attempted to facilitate cooperation between supermarket and existing charities to tackle food waste, but with this failing to develop, they took on the task themselves. Ran entirely by volunteers in their spare time, Aber Food Surplus operated a 'pay as you feel' system to raise the funds to operate. In 2018, the group were awarded funding for two full time and one part time role to develop the organisation through a pilot.

### *Project Impact and Legacy*

Aber Food Surplus demonstrates very well the bottom-up, grass roots working that LEADER aims to foster. The enthusiasm around the initiative demonstrated what the community could achieve by working together. The organisation is locally-focused, and aside from the small number of paid positions, is ran by volunteers.



Aber Food Surplus have around 60 volunteers at present, with a long list of further individuals wanting to contribute. Due to popular demand for volunteering opportunities, an application process had to be developed. Aber Food Surplus stress that they aim to make volunteering as meaningful to individuals as possible, and provide training in food safety to all members. Empowering volunteers is at the heart of their ethos, with training provided aiming to empower volunteers to take on decision-making and exercise agency.

The organisation has also worked cooperatively with other local and regional charities such as the Borth family centre and the Salvation Army. During the period funded by Cynnal y Cardi, Aber Food Surplus carried out school engagement activities, reaching a total of 700 pupils based in five schools, educating children on food waste.

The pilot successfully enabled the organisation to grow and to establish a sustainable presence in Aberystwyth. Within the period funded by Cynnal y Cardi, over 37,000 meals were distributed within the community of Aberystwyth.

Aber Food Surplus has developed significantly since the funding from Cynnal y Cardi and have been able to secure other sources of funding to enable them to continue. This has included funding from the National Lottery Community Fund in 2019 which led to the purchasing of a 400-litre compost bin, acquired after the pilot year. Certain parts of their operation, such as the redistribution of food, are fully sustainable and self-funding, but the organisation aim to become engaged in broader projects to find and encourage new systems for food waste.

Cynnal y Cardi, Case Study 7

# Small Steps, Strata Florida – Strata Florida Trust

*2014-2020 LEADER Programme Period*

## *Overview*

Small Steps is a community engagement project that began in 2018 to teach local people about the heritage of the Strata Florida Abbey site, and to develop the capacity of the local area to further develop the site. It has involved the creation of



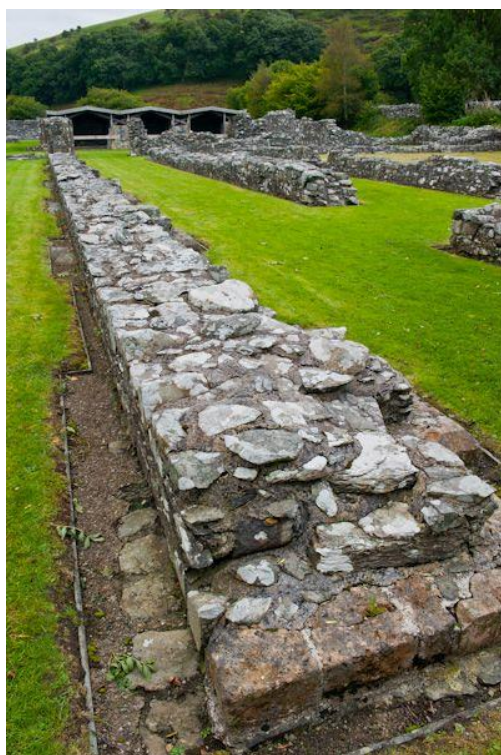
a Community Engagement Officer post to run and co-ordinate a series of activities with the local community in Pontrhydfendigaid using and promoting skills centred on heritage.

Small Steps is a key activity for the Strata Florida Trust as it works towards developing the Strata Florida Centre. Their long-term aim is to create a public exhibition on the site, which came closer to being reality when recently acquired the farmhouse and buildings adjacent to the site.

## *Project Impact and Legacy*

Small Steps came out of previous work by the Trust to encourage the local population to become more involved with the site, and a community liaison

group was established for this purpose. The Cynnal y Cardi funding enabled the Community Engagement Officer post to drive forward engagement efforts. The funding from Cynnal y Cardi has led to further funding being secured from three different sources to develop other community projects, such as a textiles project with the local community, and a song composed for the site by Ty Cerdd, which was due to be sung by the local primary school until plans were put on hold due to Covid-19.



While much of the engagement work has been with the town of Pontrhydfendigaid, the project has enabled engagement from further afield. Eleven students from Aberystwyth University Archiving Masters course volunteered their time to study and archive documents from the acquired farmhouse. The first online workshop held by the Small Steps project had 50 people in attendance, including individuals from Scotland and the US.

The Cynnal y Cardi funding has added value to the work of the Strata Florida Trust through enabling the community

engagement side of their activities. It was described as an essential component of their plans to restore the farm buildings and create an exhibition, as without community engagement, there would have been less impetus for people to interact with the project.

Covid-19 will have had an impact on the plans for Small Steps, but the project has achieved its aims and goals. Engagement events were very well attended, and a volunteer cohort has been established, with some opportunities such as volunteering for on-site gardening being very popular. The events held offered topics that piqued interest, such as workshops on dating houses and needle felting. The Cynnal y Cardi support has also

secured further funding from other sources, and provides a platform for the Strata Florida Trust to build towards future plans for the site.

## Cynnal y Cardi, Case Study 8

# Compassionate Communities

*2014-2020 LEADER Programme Period*

### Overview

#### Compassionate

Communities is a Cynnal y Cardi-funded project, ran by Arts4Wellbeing, that aimed to create compassionate, creative, and co-productive community hubs in eight<sup>16</sup> village halls across Ceredigion. The community hubs were to be developed



through offering weekly arts and crafts sessions. Through initiating arts and crafts hubs, the organisers, Sara Wentworth and Mike Hotson used art to bring communities together to tackle loneliness, isolation, and a lack of empowerment. Participants were often facing personal challenges, such as caring for a partner with dementia, experiencing bereavement, or undergoing treatment for cancer, and the groups provided an opportunity to address accompanying challenges such as isolation.

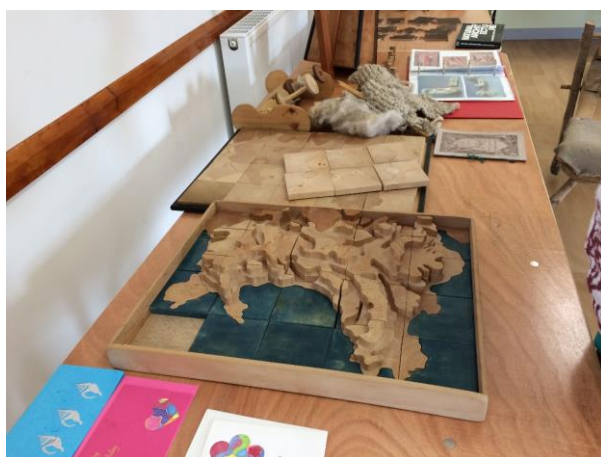
By providing fun and engaging art-based activities, and by offering tea, cake, and the opportunity to meet up with neighbours to socialise and do activities with, Compassionate Communities aimed to enable participants to develop deeper connections with those in their community, as well build confidence and resilience. The creative process helped to facilitate conversations and

<sup>16</sup> Eight hubs were condensed into seven over time, with two groups being merged.



connections on a deeper level, as participants came to sessions with open minds, ready to learn together as they explored different crafts.

Compassionate Communities aimed to develop self-sustaining community hubs. The initial sessions are facilitated by the organisers for the first 26 weeks, in which the underlying aims of the sessions were to work on the sense of self, then the sense of others, and the sense of community, before preparing the groups to take over the facilitation of the sessions. Volunteers come forward during these 26 weeks and they are prepared for taking over facilitating the groups.



Cynnal y Cardi funding enabled the project to go ahead, and true to the LEADER ethos, there was a willingness to explore and develop the Compassionate Communities pilot despite the risks involved in funding projects at the forefront of experimenting with promoting well-being. The

funding paid for the arts and crafts supplies and for the face-to-face time that the two organisers put into the sessions. There was, however, a considerable amount of volunteer time put into the project by the organisers, with sessions requiring hours of preparation.

The project demonstrated LEADER principles as the idea for the project came out of extensive community consultation, carried out by the Compassionate Communities organisers previously. Thirty-two taster days had been previously held with thirty-two different communities, funded by the Dr Dewi Davies Foundation. The information gained from these consultations shaped the design of the Compassionate Communities project.

### *Project Impact and Legacy*

Compassionate Communities builds upon a developing understanding of the social and economic value of tackling issues around well-being at the

community level. The Compassionate Communities hubs have developed links with health professionals, and participants have included individuals referred to them through social prescribing. The organisers were keen to develop this project into a flagship for social prescribing. Strong links were forged with the South Ceredigion Falls and Frailty Team, who signposted individuals to Compassionate Communities. Connections were also made with third sector mental health organisations such as Mind, who have attended sessions.

The success of Compassionate Communities lies in the organisers making themselves redundant. Many of the groups had become self-sustaining and were continuing to meet even after the Arts4Wellbeing coordinators had handed over responsibility for running the group to the communities. Covid-19 has since impacted the running of the self-sufficient groups, with lockdowns during much of 2020 impacting the running of the hubs that were started latest by the organisers. The Compassionate Communities organisers have however been supporting the community hubs to carry out activities online and were optimistic that the groups supported will continue post-Covid-19.

The project greatly surpassed its target indicators, with over 400 people engaged, including 65 young people, 140 elderly people, and 100 people with disabilities. Its key successes, however, lie in the connections that the project has forged within communities, with the project aiming to unlock the potential for community building and the development of strong relationships that is lost when people remain isolated behind locked doors.



Cynnal y Cardi, Case Study 9

# “Here for You” Online Counselling Services – Area 43

2014-2020 LEADER Programme Period

## Overview

Area 43 are an Independent Cardigan-based charity that offers free drop-in counselling services to people aged 10-30. They have been operating since 1996, and aim to provide a safe, fun, informative and inspiring environment to enable young people to access support. They serve those young people who perhaps do not have access to the support that they need for a range of problems that they may face.

## Background

“Here for You,” the Cynnal y Cardi-funded project ran by Area 43 came about due to the realisation that many people in need of counselling do not always have access to the town. These may be isolated young people such as farmers and those living in more rural areas who are at risk of depression and suicide. As Area 43 operated out of a physical centre, there were access issues for these at-risk individuals. Building on improvements to the broadband coverage in



Ceredigion, they decided to pilot an online bilingual counselling service for those in rural areas. The LAG was enthusiastic about the pilot, and understood the need for such a service.

Funding was secured from Cynnal y Cardi to pay for staff time, equipment, and promotional work to advertise the service. The people they were trying to reach were individuals who would not necessarily reach out to a service such as this, which required a great deal of promotional work, including having a presence at agricultural shows.

### *Project Impact and Legacy*

The project was very successful, and it engaged with over 80 young people who have each received over ten sessions. Engagement was a trickle at first, but once word of mouth spread, the numbers grew. The young people receiving support came with a range of issues, such as anxiety and stress, family issues, suicidal thoughts, and depression. Some stated in feedback to the organisation that they wouldn't have been able to have this type of service without their intervention, or that they had been waiting for a long time for similar services from the NHS. Area 43 were able to signpost individuals who needed longer-term counselling on to other more suitable services or on to GPs.

The Cynnal y Cardi-funded pilot project led to the securing of further grants from the National Lottery. The pilot let Area 43 develop the idea and show that it could work in practice. It gave the organisation confidence that the approach would work, and that it could be successful. Building upon the success of the project, Area 43 have been able to secure funding from three GP clusters and to extend their services into Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire. An unexpected benefit of the project was that when Covid-19 hit, the charity already had a team of councillors that were ready and trained to work remotely in an ethical and safe way. A significant legacy of the project, then, is that within a week of the first lockdown in 2020, all of their services had adapted from being face-to-face to being online.

Cynnal y Cardi, Case Study 10

# Academi'r Dyfodol – Coleg Ceredigion

*2014-2020 LEADER Programme Period*

## Overview

Academi'r Dyfodol is a Cynnal y Cardi funded pilot project to deliver practical workshops, led by local entrepreneurs and business leaders, that provide opportunities for young people to receive hands-on vocational experiences. The project commenced in 2019,



but its Phase 2 was unable to go ahead due to Covid-19. Operated by Coleg Ceredigion, the purpose of the project was to make training opportunities exciting, and to encourage and promote entrepreneurship, passion, and purpose within the target demographic. Its aim is to give young people inspiration as to what their choices regarding qualifications can lead to in the future. Academi'r Dyfodol operates within four areas: food, performing arts, video and photography, and art.

It intended to work with two cohorts, the 14-16-year-old age group, and young people not in education, employment, or training (NEETs). The intention had been to pilot the project with 14–16-year-olds, then apply the lessons learned to the +16 NEETs group, however phase two was not able to take place due to Covid-19.

These two groups were chosen as targets as Coleg Ceredigion run many vocational courses, and this project provided an opportunity to promote their benefits to these two groups and encourage engagement with vocational training opportunities.

Academi'r Dyfodol recruited participating young people from local schools to take part in the workshops. Entrepreneurs and business leaders came in to provide hand-on coaching and lead "Ted Talk" style workshops. The entrepreneurs were from local businesses and were selected to provide a realistic and relatable role-model to demonstrate a potential future, and a training pathway to get there.

Coleg Ceredigion were able to draw on their own connections with business leaders to recruit the entrepreneurs. It was important for Academi'r Dyfodol to involve bilingual entrepreneurs in order to value of operating bilingually for businesses in Ceredigion.

The Cynnal y Cardi funding provided enabled Academi'r Dyfodol to support the Project Manager role, pay for the specialists to engage with the project, and fund transportation for the participating young people. The full-time management role was vital to getting the project set up, without which the project would not have been feasible. Cynnal y Cardi also provided practical support to the pilot, holding regular project meetings with the delivery team, supporting the branding exercise and marketing, and putting the delivery team in contact with people that could support the project. The Cynnal y Cardi team were described as instrumental to the pilot's success, providing guidance and ideas to the project.

### *Project Impact and Legacy*

Academi'r Dyfodol was successful in encouraging a number of young participants to engage with vocational training. Out of the 11 participants that were eligible to apply for courses at Coleg Ceredigion, 8 of the participating pupils having since started at the college. The key to this success was letting the participants experience what college was like. The four thematic areas were also selected to build on assets that the Coleg possessed, such as high-

quality kitchen, media, and performance facilities. These enabled the delivery of high quality and engaging sessions. Through the hands-on approach, the participating young people “threw themselves into the project,” and were able to create something – working towards an end project.



The pilot project demonstrates the LEADER approach through its bottom-up inception. Coleg Ceredigion designed the project based on past experience, and were successful in securing funding and support from Cynnal y Cardi. Working with local entrepreneurs and business leaders further strengthens partnerships between Coleg Ceredigion – as a provider of vocational training – and the local business community. The project therefore supports the Cynnal y Cardi

LDS and its theme of “Developing Our People and Organisations.”

Another beneficiary of the project has been the parents of the participating young people. Parents had been concerned that their children did not know what they wanted to do – a fact that was communicated to the Academi'r Dyfodol Organisers. Through the project, as well as the young people involved, parents became aware of different vocational training routes that their children could pursue.

While phase two of Acдеми'r Dyfodol pilot was disrupted by Covid-19, the delivery team now have a blueprint that can be followed in future with other similar projects.

## **Cynnal y Cardi LEADER Cooperation Projects**

In addition to the projects that sit within the county of Ceredigion, Cynnal y Cardi has implemented nine cooperation projects with neighbouring Local Authorities and other domestic and international partners, including the Dyfi Biosphere Cooperation Plan with Gwynedd and Powys (see Case Study 11), and the Cambrian Futures Project with Powys and Carmarthenshire (see Case Study 12).

LEADER Cooperation projects are intended to encourage rural areas to work together on projects with mutual benefits for participating partners. The cooperation projects assessed below were varied out in partnership with neighbouring Local Authorities, thus enabling a LEADER-funded project to encompass a specific geographical area which is spread across multiple authorities.

Cynnal y Cardi, Case Study 11

## Dyfi Biosphere Cooperation Plan

*2014-2020 LEADER Programme Period, Cooperation Project*

### *Overview*

The Dyfi Biosphere is the only UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in Wales. The Dyfi Biosphere is managed by a partnership whose members are drawn from the statutory sector (including Ceredigion County Council), voluntary, farming and community organisations and businesses. EcoDyfi, a local development trust based in Machynlleth, currently acts as a secretariat for the partnership. The key mission of the Dyfi Biosphere is to connect people with the nature, culture, and heritage of the Dyfi Biosphere area.

The Dyfi Biosphere Partnership receives no core funding, which makes developing practical collaborative programmes difficult, with projects delivered through partners who secure their own grants or contracts.

### *The Dyfi Biosphere Cooperation Plan*

The Dyfi Biosphere Cooperation Plan is a cooperation project funded and supported jointly by Gwynedd, Powys, and Ceredigion LEADER programmes. Ceredigion County Council is the lead body for the project, with the County's Rural Communities Coordinator leading the Steering Group. The plan involved employing a development officer to create capacity in the region through supporting community actions. Its objectives are to explore ways that the Dyfi Biosphere brand can deliver economic and other benefits, and to encourage engagement by children and young people with the Dyfi Biosphere.



The development officer that was recruited left after some months in the role, and subsequent attempts to recruit another development officer have been unsuccessful. The two strands of the Dyfi Biosphere Cooperation Plan were therefore both put out to tender for external contractors as two separate work packages. Jane Powell, an independent consultant, was appointed to work to find new ways to engage young people in discussions about energy, food, jobs, and culture in the Dyfi Biosphere region. EcoDyfi won the food and drink work package at the second round.



The food and drink objective of the Cynnal y Cardi funding aims to strengthen the cluster of food and drink businesses who use or want to use local produce, and who want to promote that to their customers. The cluster is promoted and marketed within the context of the Dyfi Biosphere as a sub-brand – Blas Dyfi Taste – which includes a toolkit to help businesses promote produce from the Dyfi Biosphere area. As part of this work, two ‘showcase’ events have been hosted in order to bring

together hospitality businesses and producers.

The LEADER approach has been embedded in the delivery of the Dyfi Biosphere Cooperation Plan. Engagement with the grass roots has taken the form of engagement with local businesses that resonate with the ambitions to drive forwards local food. Their input has led to a co-designing of the Blas Dyfi Taste scheme. It was noted, however, that co-producing the scheme with businesses also placed expectations of an input beyond what many businesses were willing to give, and that many would have preferred to be presented with a ready-made package. It is hoped, however, that the degree of co-production will provide a greater longevity to the brand as it better fits the aspirations and expectations of businesses in the area. Under the engagement with children and young people strand, cooperation has also taken place with schools and teachers, with Ysgol Bro Hyddgen winning an



UNESCO award based in part on their work with the Dyfi Biosphere Cooperation Project.

The Dyfi Biosphere Cooperation Plan has faced certain challenges. The departure of the Development Officer led to a piecemeal and intermittent approach, and presented the greatest challenge to the project. The role demanded an individual with experience and a capacity to drive the project forward, and it was noted that perhaps the salary and short-term nature of the role was an impediment to attracting the right applicants to the role. The Partnership were, however, able to re-structure the Cooperation Plan project to find a workable solution to the challenge faced.

### *Project Impact and Legacy*

The true legacy of the two strands of the Dyfi Biosphere Cooperation Plan will be known in some years. The longevity of the Blas Dyfi Taste brand will depend on its take-up by local businesses, but work is currently ongoing to pursue engagement with the business community in the Dyfi Biosphere, with the Partnership having secured new funding through the Welsh Government and National Lottery Heritage Fund's Green Recovery Capacity Building Scheme.

## Cynnal y Cardi, Case Study 12

# Cambrian Futures

*2014-2020 LEADER Programme Period, Cooperation Project*

### *Overview*

Cambrian Futures is a LEADER-funded cooperation project supported by the Local Action Groups in Ceredigion, Powys, and Carmarthenshire, and led by Powys. The five-year project is being delivered by the Cambrian Mountains Initiative and commenced in early 2017. Beyond the funding received through LEADER, Cambrian Futures has been able to secure match funding from a wide range of further partners, including Aberystwyth University, the Elan Valley Trust, and the Cefn Croes and Brechfa wind farms.

Cambrian Futures aims to empower communities in the Cambrian Mountains and the three Local Authorities to take a more strategic and cooperative approach in addressing the future of the region. Among the activities of Cambrian Futures is engagement work with local communities and business to build the economy of the Cambrian Mountains area, as well as to protect and enhance the natural, social, and cultural environment.

This strengthening has been achieved through capitalising on the distinct cultural and natural assets of the communities and landscape of the Cambrian Mountains, with Cambrian Futures forging formal and informal networks between food and drink producers and businesses in the region, and working towards developing the Cambrian Mountains brand.

### *Project Impact and Legacy*

Cambrian Futures has worked towards building up the Cambrian Mountains as a tourist destination by developing the Cambrian Mountains brand,

strengthening the Cambrian Mountains Tourism Network, and developing more integrated working practices across regional organisations with a tourism. The aim has been to develop a more cohesive tourism offering within the Cambrian Mountains.

A key activity of the Cambrian Futures project has been the commissioning of a number of feasibility studies and research projects. There have included studies into barriers for upland farm diversification, and the development of brand guidelines for the Cambrian Mountain brand.

One such feasibility study was an investigation with communities in the area of the feasibility of establishing the area as a 'Parc Natur', based on the French model of Nature Parks. The designation would raise the profile of the area, as well as acting as a vehicle to encourage greater cooperation across the area, fostering more integrated working. The designation would rely on communities opting in or out of the park, enabling communities within and at the fringes of the Cambrian Mountains to choose to be included in the scheme.

The project has embodied the LEADER approach throughout, focusing on community engagement in order to make collective decisions that reflect the voice of the communities of the Cambrian Mountains. According to one organiser:

“[Cambrian Futures] is truly a project that is driven by the people for the people – we never profess to have answers. We don't come up with the ideas, we just find the solutions.”

Successful initiatives have emerged from Cambrian Futures, such as the Astro-tourism Trail, a series of dark sky sites across the area that have garnered much attention, including being featured in National Geographic.

A key outcome of the project has been a greater strategic and cooperative approach in addressing the needs of the region. The success of the project has led to further LEADER cooperation project funding for an additional one-year project, *Gweithio Gyda'n Gilydd*, which aims to further assess how to overcome barriers to joint working between the three Local Authorities, and

put in place the best possible structures and mechanisms to achieve joint working.

Another outcome that was more unexpected is the development of a stronger sense of place among some within the Cambrian Mountains, with businesses in the area having campaigned to have the Mountains recognised as a distinct area by bodies such as VisitWales.

The Cambrian Futures project leaves the area with strengthened networks, new mechanisms, and avenues for cooperation between bodies such as businesses and Local Authorities, and a range of studies that can guide the development of the area into the future. Among the legacies of project will be the strengthened community organisation across the area, as different villages and towns have built up links through cooperating on the range of activities facilitated by Cambrian Futures. The communities will have been left with a stronger sense of place, and a framework to further develop the Cambrian Mountains area.

## Legacy, Impact, and the LEADER Approach

In this section, conclusions as to the legacy and impact of Cynnal y Cardi will be considered, as well as an assessment of the extent to which Cynnal y Cardi has made contributions to the needs of Ceredigion as set out in the Local Development Strategies.

### Cynnal y Cardi and the LEADER approach

Cynnal y Cardi has, over the two programme periods assessed, embodied the LEADER approach in its delivery. Many projects assessed have demonstrated communities being supported to develop their capacity, with a sustainable legacy evident. Some of the assessed projects have been innovative, embodying the LEADER approach through a willingness to take risks to experiment with delivering novel solutions to the problems faced by communities.

Cynnal y Cardi has also addressed Priority 6 of the RDP under which the LEADER Programme sits, which addresses social inclusion and economic development, with a particular focus on fostering local development in rural areas. The range of projects assessed have made positive contributions that align with these priorities. Positive economic impacts have derived from a number of projects that have supported the birth and development of new businesses and community initiatives like festivals and events. Many projects have fostered greater social inclusion through involving their local communities in grass-roots projects, often aimed at addressing particular issues in their local community such as social isolation or food waste.

#### *Bottom-up / grass-roots working*

Cynnal y Cardi has performed well in aligning its activities and funding decisions with this LEADER principle. Bottom-up working is evident within a great deal of the projects assessed, often with the impetus and ideas for projects coming from community organisations, and the involvement of a

significant number of volunteers and members of the community in delivering the project. Projects such as Cyswllt Amaeth, Aber Food Surplus, Compassionate Communities, Cambrian Futures, and Tregaroc demonstrate this principle very clearly.

In projects that are led by more established organisations, such as the Dyfi Biosphere Cooperation Plan and Cambrian Futures, co-production and engagement with the community remains a significant pillar of their operations. For example, the development of the Blas Dyfi Taste brand through the Cooperative Plan involves engagement with local businesses in order to co-develop the brand. Barriers to engagement and grass-roots involvement have been encountered due to businesses often being unwilling to devote the necessary time to engaging with the initiative.

Some project coordinators spoke of the added value that a grass-roots or bottom-up approach can provide to the delivery of a project. The Compassionate Communities coordinators, for example, were keen to emphasise that this way of working is essential to the empowerment of the people being supported through the programme. Co-production was an essential element in enabling everyone who came along to their community hubs to have an equal role and a say in the project.

A representative of one of the clusters supported by Cyswllt Amaeth stated that the bottom-up nature of the project was integral to its success. They stated that an initiative such as his cluster had to be bottom-up; and as opposed to schemes that get money then look to do things, this project gave them the opportunity to overcome the lack of money and leadership that grass-roots groups lack, enabling the ideas to come from the ground up.

### *Innovation*

Innovation is a key element of LEADER. Funding pilot projects that propose innovative solutions to problems is at the heart of its ethos, and as a result, LEADER programmes are empowered to take risks. While some funded

projects will fail, it is the willingness to take risks that provides the opportunity to explore untested solutions to issues faced by communities.

A key added value of the LEADER approach for a number of the project administrators interviewed for this evaluation was this willingness to risk funding a pilot that was novel or innovative. For example, Compassionate Communities takes an innovative approach to addressing the issue of rural isolation, with the project administrators themselves admitting that they were not sure if it would be successful, despite the consultation ground-work carried out beforehand. The success of this particular project is a testament to the LEADER programme's willingness to experiment to encourage innovation.

Tregaroc similarly provides an example of funding for a project which enabled the organisers to take a risk and to be ambitious with the scale of their project. This, again, was very successful, with the representative spoken to praising the extent to which Cynnal y Cardi enabled them to attempt a project that they would not have been able to otherwise.

Some projects were more innovative than others. Some were more conventional in their scope and approach. For example, projects such as Small Steps – Strata Florida delivered its outcomes while following tried and tested methods.

### *Building capacity and networking*

Many of the projects reviewed demonstrate capacity building. For example, Area 43 received funding and support which enabled the organisation to develop important new services, improving the charity's reach and enabling it to engage with vulnerable people outside of its existing capacity. Aber Food Surplus provides another example of how Cynnal y Cardi funding and support has enabled a popular community organisation to carry out valuable work in relation to food waste and sustainable food consumption.

Perhaps the most apparent demonstrations of capacity building are those projects reviewed where the Cynnal y Cardi support had led to the securing of further funding from other sources. Projects like Aber Food Surplus, Here for You (Area 43), and Small Steps, Strata Florida have been able to build on the support from Cynnal y Cardi to secure new sources of funding.

Capacity building has also been evident with Cynnal y Cardi's support for individual businesses in the 2007-2013 programme period and its support for community organisations such as the Lampeter Bee Keepers Association. The equipment purchased for the Association, and funding for the website and other engagement tools has improved the capacity of the group to train new and existing members, engage with their community, and provide education on bee keeping through attendance at shows and events. The relatively small amount of money provided has enabled the Association to strengthen and grow. Similarly, Ysgol Fenter y Cardi provided funding for the initial training or equipment needed to get businesses off the ground. The same effect was achieved by the Aberystwyth Market Hall incubator units, whereby the opportunity to occupy a unit for a small fee provided the initial impetus for a business to grow.

### *An integrated and multi-sectoral strategy*

The Ceredigion LAG is itself a multi-sectoral body, with representation from the public, private, and third sectors. This multi-sector approach and composition is itself important, as it bring together varied groups in developing a combined strategy to address Ceredigion's challenges.

The Ceredigion LDS has taken a multi-sectoral approach to developing a development strategy for Ceredigion. It has worked to address the five LEADER themes within the Rural Development Programme in Wales, as well as the needs identified in the Ceredigion LDS. Cynnal y Cardi has therefore worked to address needs across a range of areas, including health and wellbeing, the environment, the local economy and local businesses, digital



skills and infrastructure, poverty and deprivation, skills, training and education, heritage, culture, and the Welsh language.

A stakeholder spoken to that also sat on the LAG noted that the five LEADER themes had been helpful for both assessing projects submitted to them and for identifying areas of weakness within the delivery. For example, they stated that while language and culture-based projects were easier to come by, the themes would be a reminder of the need to proactively seek out initiatives within the digital and environmental spaces.

### *Cooperation*

Cooperation projects with other LAGs and partners adds value to the delivery of a LAG within a Local Authority, and enables partnerships to tackle issues that span multiple geographic areas. For the 2014-2020 programme period, Cynnal y Cardi had decided that the Dyfi Biosphere and Cambrian mountains were particular priorities for cooperation projects with neighbouring LAGs. To date, the 2014-2020 period has seen Cynnal y Cardi participate in nine cooperation activities with partners.

Representatives of cooperation projects that were spoken to as part of this evaluation spoke positively of Cynnal y Cardi's contributions. For example, it was clear that Cynnal y Cardi plays a pivotal role within the Dyfi Biosphere Cooperation Plan in leading the partnership between the three Local Authorities involved.

The majority of the cooperation projects in which Cynnal y Cardi has participated were carried out with neighbouring LAGs as they are focused on geographic activities with specific geographic areas that transcend county borders. The cooperation projects have enabled neighbouring Local Authorities to address common issues, and have importantly fostered a more strategic approach to addressing the challenges and opportunities of particular regions that sit across different Local Authorities.

A representative of Cambrian Futures praised the inter-working of the three Local Authorities working together to support the project, with Powys, Ceredigion, and Carmarthenshire assisting greatly through their roles on the Monitoring Committee and through animation support that they engaged in. As a result of this cooperation project, the tourism leads for all three Local Authorities have begun regular joint meetings due to the opportunities that strategic coordination across the area can bring.

## **Impact and Meeting the Needs of Ceredigion**

An assessment of outcomes and impacts made against the specific needs of Ceredigion will be provided here.

### *Health, wellbeing, and an ageing population*

Ceredigion has an ageing population, which puts a strain on health and social care services. Its rural nature also makes the delivery of services more challenging, with a dispersed elderly population more likely to live in rural parts of the county. Some projects assessed have made positive contributions to the health and wellbeing of Ceredigion, in some cases working with elderly and vulnerable people in the community.

Compassionate Communities stands out as an innovative means to address issues affecting elderly and isolated individuals in rural communities. It proactively engaged people in rural communities that are at risk of isolation, and who would benefit from the kind of hands-on, community-led support that the Compassionate Communities sessions offered. As well as giving rise to sustainable community arts and crafts hubs, this pilot has provided a valuable blueprint for actions that can be developed across Ceredigion's communities to drive up the wellbeing of those who might otherwise suffer from isolation.

Funding for Here for You (Area 43) has made a positive contribution to tackling mental health issues within more isolated rural communities in Ceredigion. The funding from Cynnal y Cardi led to a significant increase in

the capacity of the charity to deliver valuable services by encouraging online counselling services.

### *Ceredigion Businesses, the Economy and Employment*

Cynnal y Cardi has had positive impacts on businesses in Ceredigion, and has laid foundations for local economic growth in the future. The 2007-2013 programme period, due to different regulations regarding state aid, was more able to provide support to nascent businesses in order to run business ideas into a reality. Ysgol Fenter y Cardi and the Refurbishment of the Aberystwyth Market Hall both led to the creation of new businesses and employment opportunities for the individuals engaged.

In addition, both the Dyfi Biosphere Cooperation Plan and Cambrian Futures have made a contribution to developing the local economy through the development of the Dyfi Biosphere and Cambrian Mountains brands respectively for local food and drink produce.

A significant and positive economic impact has derived from Tregaroc, which provides an annual boost to the businesses of Tregaron, especially local pubs and food retailers, through attracting around a thousand people annually to attend the Welsh Language music festival.

### *Ceredigion's Environment*

Cynnal y Cardi has funded projects to tackle environmental issues, including two renewable energy projects: Pweru'r Dyffryn, a feasibility study and community engagement project for the production of renewable energy in the Aeron valley, and South Ceredigion Energy Local, a project to pilot Energy Local clubs in two areas.

The Aber Food Surplus pilot made a significant contribution to addressing food waste in Aberystwyth. This grass-roots initiative to tackle food waste has established a successful and highly valuable service which redistributes large

volumes of food waste to charities, families, and individuals. It has developed an extensive volunteer network which supports its activities, and has engaged in a great deal of community engagement and education to raise awareness of the issue of food waste.

### *Culture, Heritage, and the Welsh Language*

A number of projects have made positive contributions to the culture and heritage of Ceredigion, and to the Welsh Language. Tregaroc stands out as having had a significant impact on the Welsh Language, as it has become an important event on the Welsh Language music calendar, attracting a great deal of attention within and Beyond Ceredigion.

Gŵyl Hen Llinell Bell (Far Old Line Festival), a large-scale community project that involved a series of artistic performances and events across Aberystwyth, made a significant contribution to Aberystwyth's cultural scene. Drawing inspiration from the legend of Cantre'r Gwaelod, it worked with local schools, businesses, clubs, and societies to create the calendar of events, which included gigs, workshops, and performances. Arad Goch, the theatre company that delivered the festival, won a Wales Theatre award for their work on Hen Llinell Bell.

The development and protection of Ceredigion's heritage has been contributed to by project such as Small Steps and the Pen Dinas Hill Fort Project. These projects aim to develop community engagement with these historically significant sites. Small Steps is part of larger effort to build new exhibitions and further develop the Strata Florida site.

### *Skills, Training and Education*

A number of projects have contributed to the skills base of Ceredigion. Academi'r Dyfodol, for example, engaged young people through interactive workshops with entrepreneurs and business leaders to encourage them onto vocational training pathways. Engagement with NEETs was disrupted by

Covid-19, but the Cynnal y Cardi funded pilot has provided a valuable blueprint to encourage more young people into the vocational training opportunities already available in the county.

Some skills-based projects were also funded, such as Academi Arweinyddiaeth Gymunedol<sup>17</sup> and Ceredigidol. Ceredigidol was an initiative to develop the YFC's current training programme through creating training videos on a range of topics, and training videos for individuals who would hold key positions within the organisation, such as Chair, Treasurer or Secretary. The project will leave a lasting legacy that can ensure that individuals within the YFC are able to develop the necessary skills to lead the organisation.

## **Long-term Impact and Legacy of Cynnal y Cardi**

A number of Cynnal y Cardi-funded projects have developed into sustainable projects or organisations, with other, shorter-term projects, or projects with a limited time-scale, still having an impact today.

A number of the reviewed Cynnal y Cardi funded projects and activities have left a clear ongoing legacy. These include Aber Food Surplus, Tregaroc, Compassionate Communities, Cyswllt Amaeth, and the Lampeter Bee Keepers Association. The funding received has played a key role in the ongoing activities that initially derived from LEADER funding.

A number of beneficiaries of the Ysgol Fenter y Cardi scheme and the Aberystwyth Market Hall Incubator Spaces project are also still running businesses that these initiatives helped to get off the ground.

The incubator spaces have the potential to continue offering valuable opportunities to start-up businesses. The capital investment in their construction has provided Ceredigion County Council with a long-term asset that can continue to be used.

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<sup>17</sup> Community Leadership Academy

A number of ongoing projects have the potential to leave a lasting legacy. For example, the Dyfi Biosphere Cooperation Plan has some time yet to run, with the Blas Dyfi Taste brand offering a potentially valuable vehicle to add value to products from the area. Small Steps – Strata Florida is a project that sits within a wider and longer-term initiative by the Strata Florida Trust to develop the site. In that sense, Cynnal y Cardi makes a contribution to a broader heritage project that will contribute significantly to a key heritage site within the county.

Some projects are more difficult to assess for impact, with the counterfactual scenario being less clear. For example, Academi'r Dyfodol was successful in encouraging a significant proportion of the young people engaged to enrol for vocational training courses at Coleg Ceredigion, yet it is unclear the extent to which the intervention influenced young people that would otherwise have made different decisions.

The clear legacy of this particular project, however, lies in the blueprint that was developed for methods of engaging with young people. While Covid-19 disrupted the planned engagement with NEETs, the work carried out provides valuable lessons for similar future projects, and compliments other initiatives taking place across Wales that draw on local industry and business expertise to inspire young people, such as STEM Gogledd in North Wales.

Similarly, many Cynnal y Cardi funded projects and activities provide blueprints for innovative projects that can be further developed in different communities across Wales and in different sectors. A number of the reviewed projects can be held up as innovative solutions to problems that communities may face, and can be disseminated in order to inspire similar actions elsewhere.

## Recommendations

Included here are a series of recommendations for future CLLD programming, deriving from the lessons learnt that emerged through this evaluation.

**Recommendation 1** – The collection of evidence for social benefits arising from interventions is challenging, but innovative and brave options to measure social benefit must always be explored. This applies especially to LEADER, as it often funds interventions with difficult-to-measure outcomes with potentially significant “soft” consequences, outcomes, and impacts.

**Recommendation 2** – Ensure that the lessons learnt from the most innovative projects are suitably disseminated both within Ceredigion and with other LAGs across Wales and beyond. Projects like Academi'r Dyfodol, Compassionate Communities, Here for You (Area 43), and Aber Food Surplus are well placed to inspire similar initiatives elsewhere that can continue develop innovative solutions to the problems facing various communities.

**Recommendation 3** – Ensure that the LAG is used not only for the scrutiny and selection of projects, but also as a forum to develop ideas for projects either in development or already underway. Ensure that the LAG's time is used most efficiently to provide the space for engagement with projects. A key mechanism to ensure this is substantive feedback to the LAG on projects, and perhaps consideration should be given to how progress reports and presentations and interactions with project coordinators are used in order to, firstly, ensure that the LAG is kept up-to-date enough to be able to make contributions to project delivery, and secondly, provide the space for LAG members to feed back into projects with ideas and guidance.

**Recommendation 4** – Some projects relied heavily on additional time put in by the lead organisers beyond the core hours or roles for which they were funded through Cynnal y Cardi. While volunteering is integral to the running of community groups and projects, if individual coordinator or project manager roles are created through Cynnal y Cardi funding, there does need to be a willingness to suitably compensate these individuals for their time and input. There were some instances where the paid-for hours of project facilitators or coordinators were supplemented by many additional hours volunteered. It is recommended that in reviewing applications for projects, consideration is



given to how realistic the proposed funded roles are, and whether additional money needs to be allocated to suitably compensate individuals for their labour.

**Recommendation 5** – There was minor criticism from one project administrator spoken to that administrative support from Cynnal y Cardi was too focused on improving the evidence collecting of the organisation, and opportunities for broader training in administration and organisational management were missed. These, it was felt, would better build long-term capacity. It is recommended that opportunities are capitalised on to provide the necessary training to project leaders, so as to add additional value to the funding and support provided by Cynnal y Cardi, and to maximise the capacity of the funded community organisations.

**Recommendation 6** – Build on the experience that Cynnal y Cardi staff have developed over the past two programme periods and ensure that any future CLLD initiatives are able to capitalise on the expertise that has been developed through the delivery of LEADER.