

Case Study



Yr Ardd - Community well-being & involvement through the lens of community ownership

Yr Ardd
Tyfu Cymuned Trwy Dyfu
Growing Community Through Growing

Key words: Community ownership, green space, food poverty, rural isolation

What is Yr Ardd?

Yr Ardd is a community gardening project based on the outskirts of Llandysul/Pont Tyweli. It aims to bring the local community together to face challenges such as climate change and cultural change, while also addressing social deprivation, rural isolation, and lack of local facilities. The garden provides space for food growing, socialising, skills sharing, and promoting the Welsh language.

Start date

2020

Key parties

- Local community members (across all ages, including school pupils, families, older people, and those experiencing isolation/mental health challenges)
- Ieuenctid Tysul Youth
- Tywi Gateway Trust
- Brechfa Forest West Wind Farm
- Capel Dewi Energy Local
- Five Star Polytunnels
- The Powerhouse
- Ffynnon Llandysul
- Llandysul Paddlers
- Social Farms & Gardens (support and recognition through CLAS Award)
- Carmarthenshire County Council (leased land at peppercorn rent)
- National Lottery Community Fund (major funder)
- Parc yr Esgob
- Welsh language initiatives: Mentrau Iaith Ceredigion & Carmarthenshire
- Other partners: Literature Wales, family centre, local schools, twinning groups, MENCAP





What has been done?

Since its beginnings during the pandemic, Yr Ardd has steadily transformed a disused allotment site into a thriving community garden. The group first secured a long-term lease on half an acre of land, divided into eight plots with water points and paths. With support from Ieuenctid Tysul Youth, they obtained a Community Growing Kit from Keep Wales Tidy and Social Farms & Gardens, which provided raised beds, fruit trees, seeds, a greenhouse, a shed, and the essential tools to get started.

The project has made significant and tangible improvements, such as accessible paths, mains water throughout the site, a functioning indoor growing space, more outdoor raised beds, an outdoor kitchen and a fenced off wildlife pond.

Alongside the practical gardening work, the project created a site resilience plan and established new social groups, including a Men's Shed that now meets fortnightly. Regular volunteer days bring people together to work on the site, while monthly open meetings ensure that decisions about activities and future plans remain rooted in community input.

Yr Ardd has also hosted a variety of courses and workshops shaped by local interests, from seed saving and composting, to herbal first aid and sustainable horticulture. These learning opportunities cater to all ages, including school pupils who are disengaged from traditional education. The community is struggling financially, and Yr Ardd were keen to ensure that all courses are inclusive. Courses are now free, with a suggested donation amount for those who are able to pay. This has led to much higher attendance rates, thereby involving more members of the community.

Families and toddlers use the site through the local family centre, while mental health services and dementia groups bring clients to take part in gardening and social activities.

Beyond gardening, the site has become a hub for cultural and social events. The team has organised intergenerational gatherings, twinning events with visitors from Brittany, and creative activities such as poetry sessions in partnership with Literature Wales. This blend of food, culture, and social connection has helped establish Yr Ardd as much more than a garden, it is a shared community space shaped by the people who use it.

Numbers

- Land: half an acre, divided into 8 plots
- 1 Project Manager appointed
- 2 new voluntary directors appointed in July 2025
- Community pizza oven installed on site
- Solar panels installed on community shed
- 47 different wildflowers found on site (unexpected rapid increase in biodiversity)

Case Study - Yr Ardd



Funding from

- National Lottery Community Fund (£140,000).
- National Lottery community green spaces fund (earlier stage).
- Keep Wales Tidy / Social Farms & Gardens (Community Growing Kit).
- Brechfa Forest West Wind Farm grant (wildlife and biodiversity courses).

Engagement examples

- Weekly volunteer days (10-14 regular volunteers)
- Fortnightly Men's Shed meetings.
- Regular open meetings with the community.
- Family Centre uses the site weekly in summer (often attracting up to 40 participants).
- Monthly newsletters
- Working with Parc yr Esgob to conduct a public evaluation & consultation of the project and its impact.
- Twinning event: 60 attendees, including 28 visitors from Brittany
- Multiple age groups involved, from toddlers to older people

Real impact

The impact of Yr Ardd reaches far beyond the garden. What began as a response to the pandemic has grown into a space that tackles some of the deepest challenges faced by the community, from social isolation to food insecurity. By transforming a disused piece of land into a shared resource, the project has created a place where people of all ages can come together, learn, and connect.

For many, Yr Ardd has become a lifeline. Weekly volunteer days give people experiencing bereavement, mental health challenges, or early dementia the chance to be active and social in a safe and welcoming environment. Families bring their children to explore and play, young people at risk of disengagement from school discover new skills and confidence, and older residents find new friendships through groups such as the Men's Shed. The garden's events and courses have helped to break down barriers between generations, with food and shared activities drawing people together.

The project has also given the community the tools to take ownership of their future. By working in partnership with local language initiatives, Yr Ardd is strengthening the use of Welsh and helping to keep cultural traditions alive. The emphasis on growing fresh, affordable food addresses the reality of living in a rural "food desert," while the regular open meetings ensure that the garden develops in line with the community's priorities. Members of Yr Ardd featured on BBC Radio Cymru's Tir, Pobl a Bwyd radio programme and S4C's Heno, talking about their work, vision & passion for what they do.

Perhaps most importantly, Yr Ardd has shifted the sense of ownership and identity within the community. As former Director, Andrea Sanders put it, Yr Ardd belongs to everyone. That sense of pride and investment has created a ripple effect, making the garden a place not just to grow food, but to grow connections, resilience, and hope for the future.



“Thanks to National Lottery players, this grant means that we can fulfil the aspirations of the community to have a pizza oven, a medicinal and culinary herb garden, a poly tunnel, an event space for outdoor activities and a growing space suitable for people with different health challenges, this will make a big difference to people’s lives.”

- Suzanne Hughes-Owen, Project spokesperson



Challenges

- Transport: limited public transport in the area, making access difficult.
- Rural deprivation: limited local facilities, food desert.
- Sustainability risk: recognition that without a dedicated paid role, projects like this can fail. The steady group of 10–14 volunteers is a promising foundation, but relying solely on volunteers doesn’t yet provide the resilience needed to ensure the project’s sustainability.
- Flexibility vs. expectations: balancing differing community needs, not all initiatives/collaborations succeed. The pace of change is also impacted by the time taken on the “background stuff”, like developing and implementing policies which aim to keep everyone safe and able to enjoy the garden.
- Risk of exclusion: ensuring all age groups and community groups and members feel included and welcomed to the site.

Why is this co-production?

Assets

Recognising and mobilising skills (gardening, seed saving, beekeeping, language. Volunteers and directors share expertise through workshops and mentoring).

Networks

Wide partnerships with youth groups, language initiatives, schools, cultural organisations. Twinning and external collaborations show openness to wider networks. Although transport barriers limit access, meaning networks don’t always reach the most isolated or less mobile. Exploring community transport or mobile outreach could strengthen this.



Case Study - Yr Ardd



Outcomes

Tackling isolation and food insecurity; promoting Welsh language and learning new skills. Regular open meetings keep outcomes aligned with community needs. Good intention set to attain meaningful impact data through a public evaluation & consultation of the project in collaboration with research partners, Tywi Gateway Trust.

Relationships

Clear emphasis on community ownership: "It's not our garden, it's the community's garden.", intergenerational connections fostered through events and volunteer days. Strong trust built with mental health services and schools. However, there's a need to ensure continuous inclusion of seldom-heard groups (e.g. older residents, people without transport).

Catalysts

Dedicated Project Manager role helps maintain momentum and sustainability; ongoing community meetings provide flexibility and openness to the project's work. The directors are currently considering whether the existing CIC (Community Interest Company) structure is right for the project. Due to slow progress in developing some activities and enterprises (e.g. running a stall to sell preserves and produce) the directors are reflecting on how they might better position themselves as catalysts for community change.

Yr Ardd is still relatively new but has made steady strides towards co-production. With a strong focus on outcomes, it is rooted in community consultation (via Rural Futures process) and continues with open monthly meetings where the community guides development. It is clearly community-owned in spirit but is a good example of how it takes time to build trust and work with the community to achieve a project's full potential.

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Rhwydwaith
Cydgynhyrchu
Cymru

Co-production
Network
for Wales

Developed & Designed by Dan Barnett

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Have a good case study example? Get in touch: hello@copronet.wales. For more tools & resources to support your co-production journey, including guidance for working with people in a wide range of settings, visit our website: copronet.wales

