
Working with the Gwydyr Forest Community

This summer at Caerdroia

Since the last newsletter in June we have staged several exciting events which have attracted a few hundred visitors, artists and performers to the site. Golygfa Gwydyr would like to thank all those who participated and made this summer, damp as it may have been, a fantastic season of inspiring and original community theatre.

Ysbrydnos – Spirit Night. The Community Arts Group Cynefin, who have been working on the performances to date, have now handed the mantle over to local producers and artists so the whole production is based in our community. The people involved, whose ages ranged from 10 to 60 years, were totally committed and received rave reviews. We hope that they will now go from strength to strength. Over seven nights the performance received record breaking audiences making the event a fantastic success. Our thanks to Jacqui Banks, Megan Broadmeadow and Ceri Rimmer for directing (this does not accurately describe the monumental effort they put in!), Menter Iaith for ticketing, and all volunteers.

Gwyl Gwydyr Festival was held at a number of locations in Llanrwst, Betws-y-Coed, Gwydir Chapel and the Caerdroia. There were two very atmospheric evenings in Gwydir Chapel and our thanks go to CADW for letting us use this unique venue. Through storytelling, music and guided walks artists from all over Wales enchanted audiences with tales of Welsh myth and legend. Workshops were also held and we hope that they will encourage others to keep up the storytelling tradition and have a go at storytelling in the next festival. Thanks to the following storytellers and musicians who took part: Esysllt Harker & Gwdihw the Bard, Pat Rowley, Cath Aran, Fiona Collins, Jem Hammond, Alan Collinson, Michael Diamond and Eric Maddern.

The Greatest Adventures of Don Quixote. This was arranged with Fools Gold Travelling Theatre Company using a different format to that of the normal Caerdroia as all of the audience followed the actors *en masse* from one scene to the next. It was a very funny production with great acting, much appreciated by the audience.

Taliesin Festival at Llyn Geirionydd. We were very lucky with the weather. We had hoped for more people but those that did participate enjoyed it tremendously. Alan Collinson held a drumming workshop and everyone then donned fancy dress and masks in order to enact the story of Ceridwen. The afternoon was spent around the Taliesin monument celebrating storytelling, poetry and singing traditions of Arwest. Rhys Mwyn, a well known Welsh musician and an expert on Gwilym Cowlyd and local history, enthused over the fact that we were celebrating in such an appropriate location. Our thanks go to Gwdhiw and The Celtic Cauldron who staged the performances which we hope to make into an annual event.

Caerdroia – next steps

Boardwalk - Golygfa Gwydyr is applying for funding to create a raised platform 'board walk', approx 55 x 4 meters, which is multi-use, multi-access and all weather operable. The platform will facilitate Golygfa Gwydyr with the engagement of local communities in promoting and providing services.

Using this facility, Golygfa Gwydyr will hold a variety of events in the forest promoting Health & Wellbeing and Sustainable Tourism, community theatre and other established projects. It will enable greater access to the current Caerdroia area by those with disabilities and provide a perfect platform in the forest where exciting events such as Fashion in the Forest, Feast in the Forest, may be staged.

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Caerdroia Environmental Project – this project has been developed with Making Tracks. It offers local unemployed and other disadvantaged people the chance to gain valuable skills helping make real steps on the way back to work by getting involved in conservation work in forest spaces.

Participants will be encouraged to make decisions about the management of the project, developing their sense of self worth and self confidence and, by helping create something that the whole community will value, the project will develop participants' self esteem and sense of local ownership. Combined with practical training in conservation (pond reclamation work and building compost toilets) the project will equip people with new potential for gaining future employment or further vocational training.

The project will run on Mondays for 16 weeks starting 7th January 2008. For more information or to register interest as a participant, contact Golygfa Gwydyr (see below) or Making Tracks on 07966 594042

Sustainable Tourism in Conwy
Golygfa Gwydyr are partnering with Conwy Council with a project to help stimulate the growth of a more environmentally aware local tourism industry. The project will stimulate tourism within rural Conwy to move to a proactive vibrant industry, with clear green and sustainable credentials to be proud of.

Some of the things we will propose doing include: creating a model destination where there is a balance between the environment, communities, industry and visitor; provide examples of how this vision works in practice; undertake a needs analysis to develop existing and new business to 'Green' status; and provide businesses with guidance; provide a promotional tool of increasing value in a marketplace of rising expectations of ethical responsibility.

Other Developments:

Gwydyr Forest Park Interpretation and Visitor Experience Plan. This plan was commissioned by Forestry Commission Wales and Conwy County Borough Council and published in 2005. Funding is being applied for in order to execute parts of the plan over a number of years. If anyone is interested in seeing the plan or would like to be kept informed as to developments please contact us.

Conwy Rural Partnership and Rural Development Plan. We are members of the CRP and have minutes of meetings. The partnership is presently applying to Welsh Assembly Government for EU funding and is in the process of considering applications for local projects. If you would like any more information please contact us.

Health & Well Being survey. The Conwy Rural Community Network (CRCN) of which we are a member, has recognised that health, care and well-being issues are central to solving some of the community's fundamental needs. CRCN have commissioned TJB Cymru to support the members of the Network to help to find answers to the above. The work is funded through the Rural Community Action Programme.

The main aim of this work is to support CRCN to establish a comprehensive and holistic framework in order to commence the process of improving the health, care and welfare of the people of the Conwy Valley. The most important result of the work will be to establish a strong foundation of information for planning strategies and long term plans to respond to the needs of local people.

Members of the CRCN are interviewing as many local people as possible to find out how they feel about their health and well-being. When the research is completed local meetings will be held in order to report back on the findings. This is a chance for you to have a say. If you would like to complete a questionnaire, talk to one of us about what you think or to be kept informed please contact us (see below).

Friends of Caerdroia

Supporters of the Caerdroia are increasing. We now have a number of people who are interested in keeping the Caerdroia tradition alive so we are hoping to develop a 'Friends of Caerdroia' group who will be kept informed of future productions and be able to contribute financially and/or practically in order to ensure continued use and development.

Contact details:

You can be kept up to date, send contact details or comments by logging on to our website at:
www.golygfa.gwydyr.org

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