



## ***Llais y Goedwig AGM***

***Saturday 14th November 2020 4pm***

***ONLINE - Zoom***

**Chair:** Damian Assinder

### **Present:**

Maria Wilding (LlyG), Zena Wilmot (LlyG), Beki Price (LlyG), Sasha Ufnowska (LlyG), Lucy Kew (LlyG/DG), Liz Mutch (LlyG), Sara Wynne-Pari (LlyG), Cara Wilson (LlyG), Hywel Dodd (LlyG), Steve Chamberlain (LlyG), Jayne Hunt (LlyG Board), Chris Harris (LlyG Board/Coed Y Bont), Damian Assinder (LlyG Board/Sirhowy), Alison Ross, Bangor Forest Garden, Ceri Morris, David Jagger, David Williams (LlyG Board/Blaen Bran Community Woodland), Gretel Leeb (LlyG Associate), Ian Thomas (LlyG Board/Welcome to Our Woods), Janet Simpson, Leigh Forman (Bryngarw Park Volunteer), Linda Tame (Talley), Nancy Evans, Rob Weatherhead, Roger Davies, Roy Lynch, Sarah Finn, Susie Arnold (Sirhowy Hill Woodlands), Will Westwood (LlyG Board/LlyG/Moel y Ci), Jenny Wong (Coetir Mynydd/DG), Tina, Rod Waterfield.

### **Apologies:**

Fay Sharpley (LlyG Board / Pobl y Forest), Daerwynno and Babington Meadows

**Chair's Opening:** Damian thanked everyone present for attending and supporting this year's work, as well as thanking all the LlyG staff for sorting this event and all its successes.

**Minutes of the AGM held on 26th September 2019:** The minutes of the AGM held on *26th September 2019* at *CAT Machynlleth* were approved... some typos need to be fixed and Roy Lynch added to attendees... then will be signed off

Proposed: Ian, David

Seconded: Suzy

## **Llais y Goedwig Annual Report**

### ***Staff:***

It has been a crazy year, and nothing any of us could have predicted!

September to February was very much business as normal - We welcomed two new members of staff, made plans for the winter months and for events to come in spring and summer. We held a regional event in October and squeezed in a timber framing course just before lockdown in March, and our newest member of staff SC joined us just before lockdown. We managed to keep everyone working until the end of April, but after that, as the DO's were unable to fulfill their roles, we were forced to furlough them. However, we now have everyone back - which started on reduced days in August, working back to their normal hours where they are now, and now everyone is in the swing of full schedules and plenty to do.

### ***Llais y Goedwig membership:***

We now have 90 full members across Wales, and even C19 has not stopped groups wanting to use woodlands - people more than ever want to get out into their woodlands - so we are not only supporting our existing groups, but are also continuing to support newly formed groups.

### ***Llais y Goedwig Board:***

The Board are all volunteers, representing the diversity of members and supporters. It has been a challenging year, but through it all they have given their time, energy and commitment to steering LlyG during these difficult times, and helped navigate us through many difficult decisions in regards to the FH, furlough, and the shape of the future of LlyG's projects - we offer a huge thanks and appreciation to them for all the work they have done and continue to do.

If you feel you would like to play a part in steering LlyG through the next few years, please do get in touch to talk over ways you can contribute to the work of the board of directors.

### ***Encouraging networking among CWGs:***

Sadly, CV19 prevented us from seeing and interacting with groups this year in the ways we ordinarily would like - especially through events and socials, such as the Eisteddfod, The Royal Welsh and our regional events. However, we have made every effort to continue to deliver the vital contact LlyG offers, and whilst not the same as a 'face to face' Gathering, we believe we have managed to put on a pretty substantial and engaging virtual Gathering this year, hopefully providing a similar space for networking and contact for our groups. In total, this year's Gathering figures for attendance have been between 45-60 people per session per day, with a whopping 247 registered for the overall event, which is a very successful outcome.

### ***Thinking of the future:***

Over the course of the Gathering we have been collecting topics and themes for LlyG to take forward over the next year. Towards the end of the AGM today it would be good to discuss some of these priorities and to look at the future sustainability for Llais y Goedwig and what that might look like - looking at future income and whether we are looking to continue being grant reliant or whether we look to generate our own income in the future?

### ***Forestry Hub:***

LlyG has been managing the FH for 4/5 years now, which has been very successful and demonstrated continued growth during that period - so much so, that we outgrew U6 (with 28 desk users). But very timely for us, we discovered that U1 was partially empty and up for lease - which we have now taken on and moved into. The premises is a much bigger space, with better facilities to meet our needs. It did take a while to agree and finalise the move though, which meant we had only just completed the move when lockdown happened, meaning the facility is only now starting to build the same momentum as the previous space.

During lockdown we chose to keep the facility open to all users as many who work at the FH do not have reliable internet at home, so we did everything we could to accommodate those users and ensure regulations and guidelines were put in place to ensure a safe working environment was available to all. However, as a result of CV19 some organisations chose to move their workers to home working, so we have lost several desk users since, which has had an effect on us financially. But things are looking hopeful for the future, with several potential new users in the pipeline.

### ***Current projects:***

ENRaW - Due to CV19 we had to reprofile the project to accommodate the effect it had on delivery and to ensure the sustainability of the project. A 5% reduction reprofile was submitted and agreed, and although a smaller budget it has not affected delivery, and will end on time as planned.

DG - We were able to keep the same funding as we were able to extend the project to replace the seasons we lost due to C19.

Dewis Bedw - a project looking to extended birch tapping

FFF - training course development

## **Treasurer's report**

Delivered by Damian Assinder

*Please refer to the treasurer's report for the individual breakdown of finance.*

Sadly, CV19 has had a financial impact on us - we had hoped to increase our contingency by 7K this year, but due to things like topping up staff's wages on Furlough, whilst we haven't lost any of our existing contingency pot we have used up the money that would have been added, and therefore we have less money to add to the pot this year. Next year however, we are hoping to be able to contribute new funds of around 7-10K to the pot.

Contingency money is ring fenced from little projects etc., that has been put aside for eventualities such as redundancy or other financial emergencies should they arise. Our own funds are money that has been ring fenced from donations and people coming to events over the past 3-4 years, which is specifically kept to support CWGs. The Board decides where and how it is to be used, but for example it has been used in the past for travel subsidies and bursaries etc., for CWGs..

## **Election of Directors:**

During the last year we've been fortunate to have a great team of 9 directors in all – Each year according to our articles of association the two longest standing directors stand down, but can immediately restand as a director if they wish to continue as a Board member. This year it's the turn of Marit Parker and Ian Thomas. Marit is standing down and won't be rejoining us – we'd like to thank Marit for her hard work and commitment to LlyG over the past few years and wish her well for the future. Ian is standing down but restanding, so thanks Ian for putting up with us for another year – who is seconding Ian's renomination.

Seconded: David Williams

The new board member nomination for this year is for Joey Hughes from Machynlleth, who will be bringing a background in policy and orchards with him.

Nominated by: Ian Thomas

Board agrees.

## **Show us your woodpile competition:**

Nancy Evans

Stefan Jones

Maxine

*Bryan Dickinson - WINNER*

**Themes from the Gathering:** direction for moving forward

### **Thursday**

There was a definite groundswell of people wanting more research and development on woodland forest products, and a steer towards developing a trading arm to support brand development for woodland products. And there was also discussion on making sure we link in with other initiatives to make a critical mass for products and markets, with the potential for creating supply chains so that we are not competing for niche markets, but instead, are working together.

### **Friday**

We need to be strategic, and make sure we are working in the areas that will have the most impact for members, using the experience of the policy advisory group board. We need to look at helping member groups input into area statements regionally. We need to engage the National Forest and make sure we know what is going on, we let members know what is going on so that they can access the support. Keep working with Wellbeing and Future Generations Act, and providing resources, and continue working on raising the profile of CWG's at a Welsh Government level so that they know all of the amazing work going on, and keep supporting groups to continue that excellent work.

### **Saturday**

The health and wellbeing aspect was quite important today - looking at how people have coped during CV19, the increase in people using woodlands, and how we help groups to carry on and manage conflicting uses of woodlands. We also need to look at supporting groups with flexibility in a changing and unpredictable world.

### **Discussion:**

#### **Llais y Goedwig priorities for the coming year - *What do you/CWGs need LlyG to do?***

It was suggested that this event has been such a great couple of days, and that LlyG should continue developing this strand of work. It was expressed that it gave an entirely different experience, but a profound sense of community, and therefore this would be an excellent platform for us to reach a wider audience. However, it was also agreed that we should still maintain the 'in person' events where possible, as they also provide a strong sense of community for our groups.

#### **Sustainability - Income and future finance**

There are mixed responses about how LlyG should move forward to generate their own income, but it has been decided that we should not be solely grant reliant. There has been ongoing discussion about LlyG owning its own woodland to provide a training facility, example woodland etc.. but there are mixed feelings about whether as an umbrella organisation LlyG should be doing that. LlyG does need to become more sustainable and financially stable/self-reliant/more financially robust - a trading arm of some kind, so research and discussion must continue in this area. The more resources we have at our disposal, the more we can do for our CWGs.