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Community Action Machynlleth and District

Community Action Machynlleth and District, known for short as CAMAD, was formed in 1998 to provide some much needed community support and to act as a hub for volunteering in the area. “We see ourselves as being based in a community that is rich in history, tradition and resilience,” said Linda Hayward, Manager at CAMAD. “Local people have a strength of character and a supportive attitude which means that we benefit enormously from their desire to volunteer and ‘give back’ to the community they’ve grown up in.”

CAMAD is based in Machynlleth and covers the Dyfi Valley area in Powys, the most rural county in Wales with the sparsest population. “While we’re fortunate to have the most beautiful countryside on our doorstep,” said Linda, “rural life brings with it some challenges. One challenge is the ageing population as 26% of our community is aged over 65, compared to the UK average of 18%, with most living on their own. Our goal is to reduce loneliness and help people maintain their independence, health and wellbeing.”

“For all our passengers, living in rural Powys is a blessing in so many ways,” continues Linda, “but getting from A to B can sometimes prove difficult for people who live in one of the outlying villages where bus services are sparse, or where people have mobility issues which require specialised transport. Transport can make all the difference to helping someone feel connected to their local community and keeping them independent for as long as possible.”

CAMAD run a Volunteer Community Car Scheme where volunteer use their own cars to transport people to hospital appointments in Liverpool, specialist eye tests in Aberystwyth, or for other journeys such as visiting friends and relatives. There’s a small charge for this service but the costs are subsidised so that finances aren’t a barrier to those needing to use it. They also run a Taxi Card scheme which offers discounted fares over the course of a year and a reduced price travel to anyone with mobility problems. It’s a lifeline for people who don’t have their own transport. One service user explained how much of a lifeline the service is. “For just £9 per year,” they said, “I can get out and about, visit the shops, or just see my friends. It’s a wonderful scheme.”

“CAMAD may be a small charity but it has a big heart,” said Linda, “and we make every penny count, achieving a lot with what we have thanks to the commitment and generosity of spirit of staff, trustees and volunteers, as well as the assistance of colleagues in other organisations and our many supporters who all help to promote our work and encourage people to use our services. Our ethos is to support our volunteers rather than simply placing them as we want them to get the most from their volunteering and become an integral part of the CAMAD family.”

With support from the Connecting Communities in Wales project, who helped CAMAD put together a case for support, looking at how to promote the organisation with fresh eyes, Linda and her team secured £7,500 from the Garfield Weston Foundation. “This funding is incredibly helpful,” said Linda “because we’re able to spend it how we want. It arrived just when we were supporting people through the COVID-19 lockdown, so the extra income at that difficult time was appreciated.”

About Connecting Communities in Wales

The Connecting Communities in Wales project is run by the Community Transport Association and funded through the Welsh Government Rural Communities Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government, and aims to support community transport in Wales through creating new partnerships, bringing funding into the sector and creating new transport networks.

You can find out more about Connecting Communities in Wales at ctauk.org/CCIW.

