Partneriaeth Ogwen

Dyffryn Gwyrdd / Green Valley Project

A more sustainable future which sees the local economy thriving, and money reinvested back into the area for the benefit of the wider community, is something Meleri Davies believes in strongly. Chief Officer of Bethesda based social enterprise Partneriaeth Ogwen, Meleri has worked with Connecting Communities in Wales, Friends of the Earth, and local community groups, to develop a Dyffryn Gwyrdd / Green Valley project, which will include an electric community car scheme as part of an overall sustainable approach.

Meleri explains, "Our Dyffryn Gwyrdd project will help tackle poverty, address isolation and loneliness, and engage people in community-led projects. We will run an electric community car off locally generated renewable energy. We've been running a pilot community car scheme, and learnt a lot from this as the vehicle was used for different purposes, including food and prescription deliveries during the coronavirus pandemic where we adapted the use of the pilot community car, using it to deliver local produce. We set up an online platform and delivered the food to local households. The new scheme has been welcomed by our community as it helps reduce food miles, supports local produce, and reduces carbon emissions as the car is electric."

The scheme is focused on helping older and disabled people who may struggle to use public transport as well as younger people who can't afford their own car could use the car to get to work. There's also the hope that being able to experience an electric vehicle might encourage some people to buy electric cars themselves. Changing people's attitudes towards electric vehicles, and car ownership more widely, has to be an important part of encouraging low carbon travel, Meleri belives.

"The Dyffryn Gwyrdd project really developed from a community event we held back in 2018," said Meleri. "This was the starting point for finding out what people wanted to see happen in the area. Since then, we've had ongoing discussions with Friends of the Earth and the Connecting Communities in Wales team to develop the Rural Lottery project brief. I'm sometimes asked why the project is important – it's important because the actions we take now will have a significant impact on future generations. While there are different elements to the project – community transport, volunteering, apprenticeships, energy efficiency

and tackling fuel poverty – it's part of a whole different way of looking at how we use resources and harness people's energy and passion for leaving this part of our world a better place."

"We needed to secure capital costs for the purchase of our own electric vehicle," continued Meleri "as we return the pilot community car in October. As well as a car, we needed to cover running costs to employ a co-ordinator and a volunteer officer. These costs were part of the overall project proposal, so we worked with Friends of the Earth and Connecting Communities in Wales to develop the proposal in preparation for a Rural Lottery funding application. Having the support of both these partners made our application stronger and we secured over £490,000. This funding means we can make our Dyffryn Gwyrdd project a reality, and we have other plans for developing community transport over time."

Once the community transport element of the project is established it will mean better access to services and facilities for many local residents in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way.

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, brining funding into the sector and creating new transport networks.

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