

LEAF: Learning to Enable Achievement and Fulfilment

Spanning Mid and West Wales, the LEAF pilot project took place in Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion and Powys in 2017. The project piloted delivery of the well-established Tir Coed training and engagement model in Ceredigion whilst trialling the delivery of a brand new five-day intensive progression course, leading to certification for participants. This new programme developed on from Tir Coed's accredited 12-week training course, and was developed to offer progression training to beneficiaries who wished to increase their skills and progress into different woodland related industries. This included piloting the logistics of delivering, assessing and certificating brand new subject areas. Tir Coed also needed to make woodland sites 'fit for purpose' and so involved the building of facilities such as shelters, compost toilets and tool storage areas.

The training offered skills in woodland carpentry and sustainable woodland management, as well as providing a supportive environment in which people developed social contacts and increased their confidence and wellbeing. 10 outreach days were delivered for local community groups including 'forest school' sessions, making woodland musical instruments and tree identification. Participants included people from disadvantaged communities, who were disengaged from outdoor settings.



Outcomes

The project had social, environmental and economic benefits as well as improving wellbeing and mental health. The pilot was very successful in securing access to a number of woodland sites and helped Tir Coed to become more well-known and established in the county. This led to a bigger five-year project, funded by the Big Lottery, which began in early



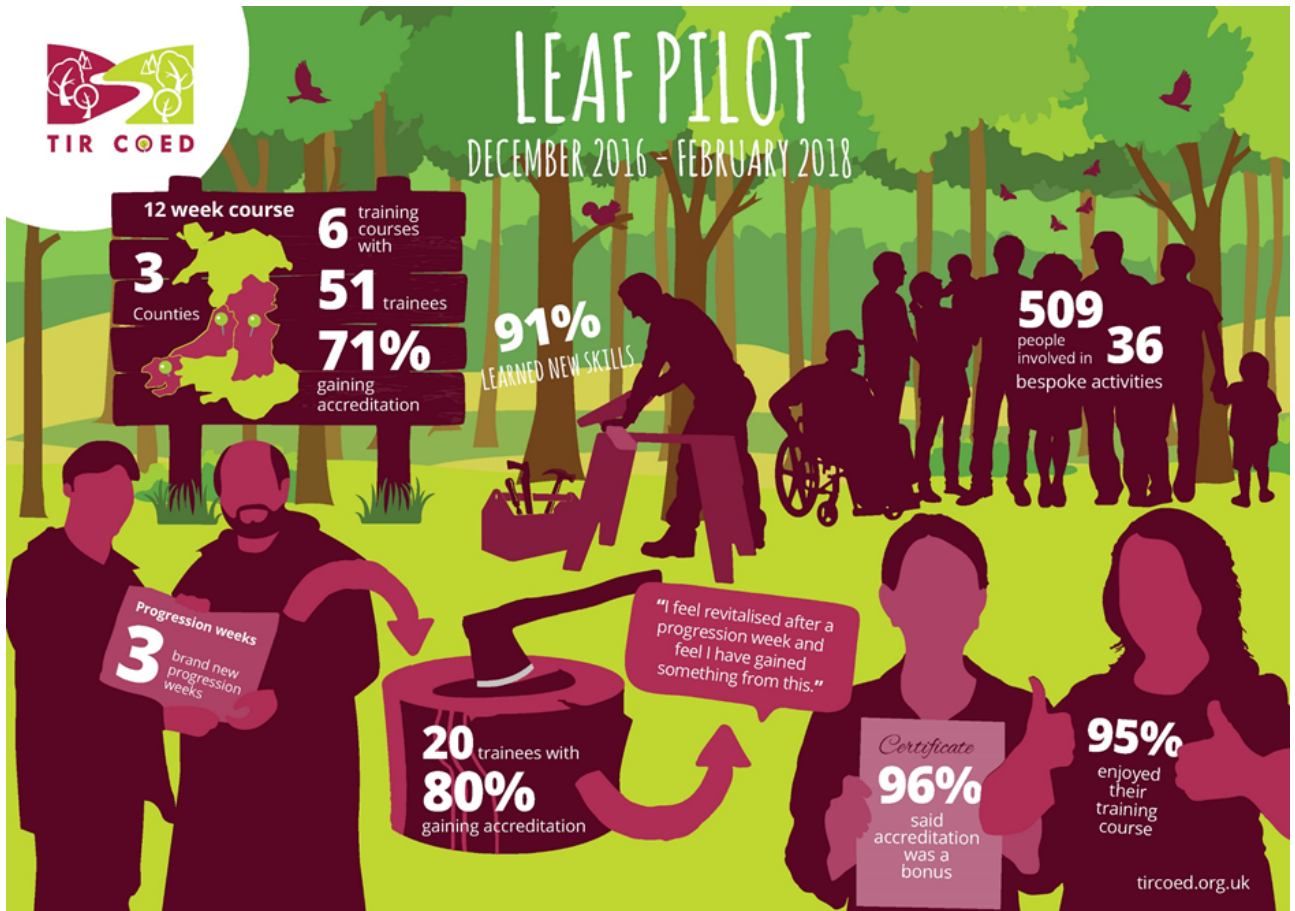
work of the pilot. Including the addition of one mentor per county to help participants progress through the Tir Coed programmes and to exit Tir Coed into apprenticeships, training and paid employment.

The pilot project provided evidence and learning that led Tir Coed to successfully secure £1.6m to scale up LEAF across Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion and Powys, with additional new pilot projects in Carmarthenshire. The Ceredigion element of this project is just under £500,000 with additional funding expected to be generated as additional programmes are developed over the life of the LEAF project. This five-year project is being developed further with additional funding sought to develop regular volunteering. Overall, the

whole Tir Coed training and engagement and LEAF project model has developed and progression routes have moved forward as a result of the pilot and the subsequent developments that it led to.

Key Learning

The LEAF project was funded by three separate LAGS and delivered in three counties, a single co-operation project across the counties may have been a more appropriate model.



Staff turnover during the project affected continuity of project delivery at times. This has led to improving the recruitment process, particularly in terms of advertising. A staff wellbeing policy has also been implemented. Note that there was significant under-staffing in the pilot project which has been rectified in the full LEAF project which is now in year 2 of delivery. The team has grown enabling additional support for the project coordinators and management team with roles such as administration, accreditation support and marketing, which reduces the work-load and stress level of project staff and retaining staff long-term,

The logistics of getting people across the County led to a number of new woodland sites being sought, A positive new relationship with the National Trust site- Llanerchaeron was established. The first 12-week training course took place there in 2018 as a result of the pilot. Tir Coed is also looking at ways to be more financially sustainable in the long term, since growing in confidence during the pilots with income generation strategies starting in earnest in 2019.