

Variety of walking activities
case study

A greater variety of walks
with Camu Allan, more
people walking.



Dewch i
Gerdded
Let's
Walk

cerdded am oes
walk4life

sportwales
chwaraeoncymsu

Noddir gan
Lywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
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Introduction

Camu Allan was set up in 2003, as part of the Countryside Council for Wales and British Heart Foundation sponsored Walking the Way to Health scheme for Anglesey. Camu Allan continues to offer health walks but has also developed to offer a wide range of walking opportunities for all age groups and abilities. There has been a particular focus recently on groups with special needs, such as adults and young people with learning difficulties, people with visual impairments, wheelchair users and people recovering from alcohol and drug addiction. The staff have also been encouraging improving walkers into a programme of development walks, on more challenging terrains and in new places.

There is a team of three paid part-time staff, hosted by Anglesey County Council's Sports Development Unit and supported by a multi-partner steering committee. The staff place a high priority on taking a very hands-on approach, taking part in walks and supporting individual group development. However, they also have particular areas of responsibility. The co-ordinator leads on funding and reporting and he represents the scheme externally; he also helps to arrange the tutoring for walk leaders. Another team member leads on developing walk routes and recruiting volunteers, and on the scheme's work with special groups; the other team member takes the lead administrative role, specialising in arranging events, activity monitoring and statistics.



Community based walking groups tend to approach Camu Allan, who then offer start-up support (e.g. leading walks for the first month, insurance for the groups and walk leaders) and facilitate the group's progress towards running things themselves. As part of this, it is essential that the group has volunteers who can be trained as walk leaders and to run the group e.g. arranging the walk leader rota and the walks programme. For the special groups, Camu Allan staff work in partnership with other local organisations to provide ongoing support, e.g. working with Coleg Menai to support a group of young people with learning disabilities, working with various local primary and secondary schools and Age Well centres to support inter-generational walking.



Benefits and achievements in relation to the variety of walking activities



The co-ordinator comments that “the biggest thing we’ve achieved is managing to work in a very fun, enjoyable way so that people want to come on a walk”. However, there is more to it than that.

Camu Allan now supports a tremendous variety of walks, ranging from easy 20 minute walks on flat terrain, to middle distance walks on more varied terrain, Nordic walking, power walking and walking with buggies, to low level mountain walks in nearby Snowdonia. Most groups meet once a week, some more or less frequently, and a few stop during the winter (although they often continue to meet on a social basis). There are now 35 active groups, with more than 1000 registered walkers, around 90 active walk leaders and around 125 walks offered each month.

- It is possible for people to progress in the type of walking they can do through Camu Allan as their fitness, abilities and confidence grows. As the co-ordinator puts it, they are “allowing people to spread their wings”. The landscape and environment of Anglesey provide all sorts of different places for walks, so that there is something for everyone. The programme offers walks on local streets, local parks, nature reserves, footpaths, cycle tracks, the coastal path, and through the progression walks offered on the Step Out Further/Camu Ymhellach, more challenging parts of the coastal path and further afield on the lower levels of some of Snowdonia’s mountains.

- The variety of walks is intended to make Camu Allan as open and inclusive as possible, so that “there is something for everyone”. For example, the low level mountain walks have proved particularly popular with middle aged men. The aim to be open and inclusive was the driver for developing the walks with special groups who might be more likely to be excluded from this sort of activity.

The variety of walking has brought benefits for everyone involved.

For the **walkers**, the opportunity to choose a walk to suit their own ability and interests has been very important.

The variety has helped **volunteer walk leaders** to maintain their interest and motivation, as they have explored new walks to lead, such as walks with a local history or natural history theme. There have also been opportunities for their own personal development, including training for the more advanced qualifications needed to lead the progression walks. Four leaders recently received special awards at the Anglesey Sports Awards ceremony.

Camu Allan and the staff are proud that through their special group work, they have been able to develop the programme to be more inclusive, offering many people a chance to go out walking that would not otherwise be there.

For the **host organisation**, Anglesey County Council, there have been benefits in terms of running a high profile, successful and “good news story” project.

Success Factors



The staff identified a number of key factors that they think have contributed to Camu Allan's success in developing the variety of activities:

- ↘ The staff team themselves, who are committed to making walking open and accessible to all. They also feel that their team's mix of skills, experience and ways of working is very helpful.
- ↘ The in-house tutoring for walk leaders, which makes the scheme very cost-effective. This includes current work so that they will also be able to offer the more advanced qualifications, such as BELA (Basic Expedition Leadership Award).
- ↘ The number of volunteer leaders who between them can lead such a variety of walks, making use of their own interests and areas of knowledge.
- ↘ There can be problems with maintaining motivation. As walkers become more experienced, they want longer and more challenging walks; the scheme's development walking programme, Camu Allan Ymhellach/ Step Out Further, has helped to meet this demand and is very successful.

Challenges

There are challenges to deal with and overcome when providing this variety of walking activities:

- ↘ Funding is a perennial problem, with the coordinator needing considerable perseverance to make applications to numerous small funding sources, including the Sustainable Development Fund, Anglesey's Improvement Agreement and community chests. However, it was the availability of specialised funding that made it possible for Camu Allan to first develop their work with marginalised groups.
- ↘ The introduction of progression walks has created the need for additional walk leader qualifications. Although Camu Allan's affiliation to the North Wales Outdoor Partnership means that the scheme can buy the training at a discounted price, staff are making preparations to be able to offer in-house tutoring so that it is affordable over the longer term.



Self-sufficiency and looking forwards

Above all else, Camu Allan's aspiration is for the scheme to survive; with the pending local authority and public service cuts, the scheme and its staff are at risk. The team have taken a number of steps to make the scheme as self-sufficient as possible, including:

- Encouraging community based groups from the earliest possible point to be self-sufficient. This means that they have their own volunteer walk leaders, and organise their own programme of activities. Groups are also given support to constitute themselves as independent groups, so that they can raise funds and make their own linkages e.g. with the British Mountaineering Council's insurance scheme.
- A Volunteer Leaders Group has been set up as a separately constituted organisation, so that there is a vehicle for continuity if the Let's Walk Cymru programme or Anglesey County Council support ceases. It also enables the leaders to apply for grants.
- Camu Allan is affiliated to the North Wales Outdoor Partnership, which gives the scheme access to lower cost training for volunteers.
- The co-ordinator is continually seeking new sources of funding for the scheme. Although this is often through small grant funds, there is a significant application in place at present for a European Interreg grant.
- The team is also exploring the opportunities for social enterprise. They have applied for a Council economic development grant to establish a tourism-related service, offering walks, bike rides and baggage transfer on the island.

The co-ordinator notes that the greatest challenge in moving towards self-sufficiency has been the lack of long-term funding available and the need to apply for innovative work. He talks of

the "dead time" used to make numerous funding applications, and that their greatest need now is to consolidate on the successful parts of the innovative work that they have already done.

The Let's Walk Cymru programme has been important for Camu Allan. It gives the scheme a national identity, and provides core support, not just through funding but also the website, insurance, guidance materials etc. The co-ordinator sees great value for a national walking programme to reinforce the message about "how important walking schemes are for the health of the nation".

The most significant difference this scheme has made

We asked the co-ordinator to complete the following sentence,

"In my view, the most significant difference that this scheme makes for the people who take part is.....the opportunity to walk in locations that as visually impaired people they wouldn't be able to access on their own".



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