**Y Bartneriaeith Awyr Agored/ The Outdoor Partnership**

**In conjunction with RPT Consulting**

**Background and Introduction to “Opening Doors to the Outdoors” Project**

**Funded by The National Lottery Community Fund (UK Portfolio)**

**Introduction**

The Outdoor Partnership (TOP) was formed in 2004 to address a disconnect in the North West Wales outdoor sector whereby there were limited opportunities for local people to take part in outdoor activities in their communities and as a result residents saw little value in either the health, wellbeing and employment opportunities. Initially TOP comprised a mixture of national centres, local authorities, education and local interest organisations, who agreed to work collaboratively to raise the profile of the outdoor sector by providing a continuum from primary education to employment.

In the first 8 years TOP provided over 30,000 participant opportunities; a competition structure for youngsters at KS3 and KS4; created 80 community clubs with 600 members; trained over 1000 qualified volunteers; developed 4 performance academies (in conjunction with NGB) and assisted 500 unemployed into employment, further education or work-related training. This success was underpinned by a series of grants. From a variety of local and national agencies.

By 2015 the work of TOP was recognised as an example of good practice and their help and expertise was increasingly in demand from other areas in Wales. In 2018 TOP secured a grant from The Big Lottery People and Places in Wales to extend its work in Wales. This followed in 2019 with a grant offer from the National Lottery Community Fund (UK Portfolio) to extend this work to other areas in the UK through the Opening Doors to the Outdoors. TOP will be supported by RPT Consulting in delivering this project.

**Aims of the Project**

The aim of the project is to inspire and support other communities in the UK to develop an operational model similar to that used by TOP to inspire local people to regularly engage in healthy activities outdoors to improve their sporting, educational, social, economic and community potential. This can be achieved by bringing together key delivery agents to work collaboratively to use resources effectively for maximum impact.

**The Outdoor Partnership Model**

Our model is based on a continuum that engages community participants (individuals, groups, interest communities and businesses) in a collaborative approach through outdoor activities. The continuum provides opportunities for local residents across the whole diversity spectrum to become involved with the outdoors through integrated school’s programmes, community clubs, volunteering and employability programmes. The project encourages social cohesion and allows participants to join or leave at a point suitable to their needs or, indeed, to reach and then remain at a level they feel comfortable at.

**Partner Communities**

Desktop research reviewed nine areas in England, Scotland and North Ireland, identifying similarities with North West Wales including natural resources, activity tourism, proximity to urban conurbations, employment profiles, levels of economic deprivation and outward youth migration.

A further review of each area was undertaken focusing on contacts and resources that already exist in those areas. Three areas were selected for detailed consultation and further discussion. These areas were **Ayrshire** in Scotland; **Cumbria** (Lake District National Park and western fringe) in England; **Newry, Mourne and County Down** in Northern Ireland.

Discussions with the areas revealed issues which have been successfully tackled by TOP including low community engagement (putting people in the lead); lack of equality and diversity (this Girl’s Adventure and Inclusive Adventure programmes); and low apprenticeship development (Pathways to Employment programme). Discussions also revealed a fragmented outdoor environment with plenty of opportunities and a willingness of those involved to work together.

**Delivery Programmes** The project is funded over seven years with the objective to begin work in Ayrshire, Cumbria and North Ireland in the first year with two or more regions being established from year four. TOP with the support of RPT Consulting will manage the programme through a development officer for each region. The regions will be expected to enter into a partnership agreement with TOP. A number of governance options have been identified for each regional project to consider and mould according to their local requirements.

The following key features are to be included in either the partnership agreements or the governance documents:

* Vision and objectives which are aligned to TOP’s vision and objectives, with a commitment to delivering sustainable outcomes
* A local board/stakeholder group – which has representation from local organisations within the outdoor recreation market who can support and drive the network, as in TOP
* Commitment to the overall ethos and values of TOP and the TOP ‘brand’, ensuring they support and deliver programmes in partnership as opposed to in competition with existing providers
* A not for profit organisation – in that any surpluses should be reinvested in the delivery and achievement of the objectives.
* Recognition of the intellectual property of TOP and agreement to the use of the toolkits, materials and approaches
* Agreement to the NCLF grant terms and conditions

The development approach for each area will follow the same pattern – identifying needs; establishing a stakeholder group; recruitment of staff; research and programme development; establish an organisation; launch, develop and deliver programmes; review and monitor. The development of TOP has taken 14 years to date but it is expected, from learned experience, the timescales to launch similar models elsewhere can be significantly reduced. The expected benefits for each area are on **Appendix 1.**

**Expected Outcomes**

The project is expected to deliver the following outcomes:

* Establish 3 partnership area across at least 2 countries in year 1 rising to 5 areas by year 4.
* Develop activities that contribute to improvements in health, social, environmental and economic well-being through outdoor activity.
* Each new partnership is expected to deliver generational change in social inclusion and community cohesion through: more participants; more education; more clubs; increased school club links; move volunteers; greater diversity engagement; moving unemployed people to education, training, volunteering or employment.
* Long term sustainability for TOP

**Finance**

This is a fully funded programme of £2.92 million over a seven-year period. Provision is made within the grant for the appointment of a full time UK Lottery programme manager; area development officers; TOP’s management, overview and support; project management and consultancy support; new initiative fund; activity programme support; administration and marketing costs.

As part of the project development, each region will be required to raise funds to ensure ongoing and future delivery for their region. The expected leverage for the project is an additional £1.612 million (in kind, people or cash) establishing a total value in the region of £4.533m.

**Appendix 1**

New areas will benefit from the following aspects, as opposed to simply funding a development officer in the new areas.

* New areas will get the benefit of a successfully tried and tested **development model based on a continuum** starting at school age through local clubs, volunteering, nationally recognised qualifications and training, which could lead to employment and/or life-long enjoyment of the outdoor environment.
* An ethos of **self-help and self-determination**. Development will be user led but TOP will be there to provide the key with ongoing guidance and support.
* Bring disparate members/ clubs/ organisations in the community to work together to produce **efficient and effective use of community resources** including equipment, facilities, manpower and knowledge.
* Increase opportunities at all levels but particularly **participation by underrepresented communities** (pan disabilities, young people, women and girls, BME and unemployed people).
* An **improved sense of community ownership**. Each development area will progress differently but determined by the community it serves.
* By engaging the community in determining its own direction of travel **common standards** will be adopted benefitting, for example, access, environment, leadership, care for vulnerable communities.
* TOP can demonstrate, through experience, all levels of interest and ability will be engaged. So often “outdoor activities” associated with a wild, frightening and extreme environment that is hard to get to and is time and money consuming. Much of the **development work will be based on easy to access, bite sized local activities** requiring little skill and knowledge but with a wide potential to develop and expand.
* **Inward investment**, often low cost/high benefit, through structured grant applications benefitting more than one interest in the community. For example, community equipment hubs benefitting schools and clubs.
* The formation of **strong school club links**. The everyday part of this work is done by the community, not the development officer.
* **Shared community experiences and knowledge transfer**.
* Increased participation leads to increased volunteering opportunities, increase employment opportunities, and **better health related benefits**.
* **Structured training for volunteers**. Much of the knowledge a volunteer is generic and transferable. So time spent training volunteers and structuring their contribution can be carried over to other aspects of community life. This increases confidence and purpose.
* Engagement in a cohesive way will **produce off shoot community benefit**s that are not directly related to the outdoors.
* Development areas, once established, could give rise to **exchange visits** (physical or knowledge based).
* **Improved governance, leading to greater community confidence and sense of place**.

*(Exert from Para 4.25 of the Application)*