

# Parc y Bwlch

Community Consultation Report

Mynydd Llandygai

January 2009

# 1 Introduction

Our project was set up by community woodland group Coetir Mynydd, to see what uses the community of Mynydd Llandygai have for Parc Y Bwlch Forestry plantation, coniferous woodland which is next to the village on the slopes of Moel Y Ci Mountain (see map 1). We were told that the design plan for the forest is going to be reviewed and Coetir Mynydd decided it would be valuable to consult with the local community to find out how people in the area use the forest and how they would like the forest to be used in the future. The consultation's aim was to find out the views of the local community and present these views to Forestry Commission Wales.

**Coetir Mynydd, decided to ask us, the young people from the community, to help with the consultation.** Coetir Mynydd raised funding for the project from The Russell Commission, to help us get help and support to find out what people thought about the forestry.. Wayne Talbot of WTA Education was hired to consult on the project, delivering his expertise in 'Action Competence' methodology. Local youth workers Martin Daws and Kirsten Hails were hired to work with us.

Map 1 Location of Parc y Bwlch in relation to Mynydd Llandygai

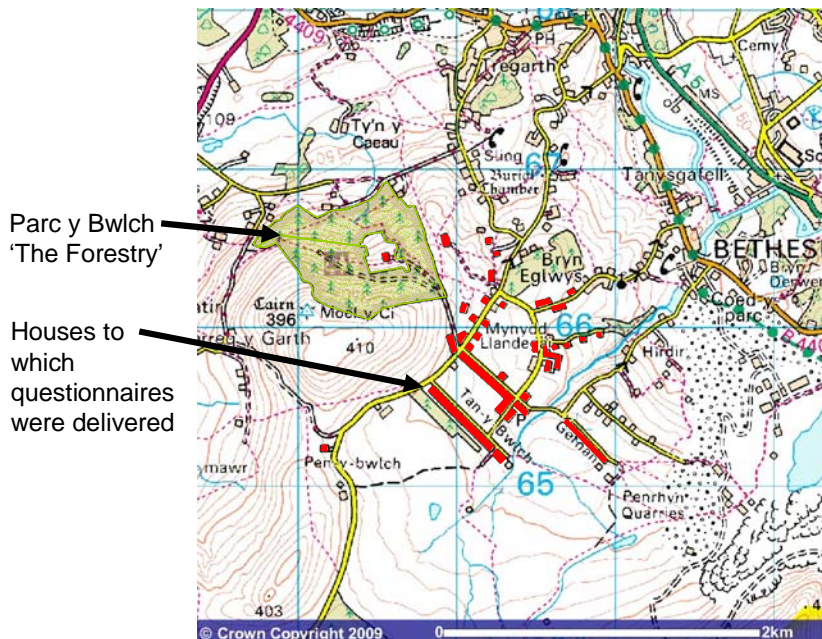


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# 2 What we did

The research was done by a working group of 12 young people meeting weekly in Mynydd Llandygai Youth Club. Our method was based on a 7 step process:

## Step 1. Research background information on the forest

We found that the working group had a very good knowledge of the geography of the forest and were regular users of the forest themselves. Through our research we found the Forestry Commission already have a set of clearly defined policy areas for community woodland use. We used these as a framework to begin with. These policy areas are:

- Access for all
- Arts projects
- Sports and recreation
- Training for work
- Woodland planning
- Forest Watch
- Forest gatekeepers
- Woodlands for learning
- Breaking barriers to involvement

We also found that there was little knowledge about the history of the forest, who owns it and its management.

### **Step 2. Choose our methods of consultation**

We researched the possibilities for delivering the consultation, so we could reach the whole community through a variety of means: public meetings, local press, word of mouth. We decided that a bi-lingual questionnaire delivered to all the houses in Mynydd Llandygai would be the best way to meet our aims.

### **Step 3. Draft our questionnaire and test it**

We decided to use coloured paper and a less formal language (and font) for our questionnaire. Our research showed that the people in our test group called the Parc y Bwlch plantation 'the forestry'. This is the name we decided to use for the forest. We wrote our questionnaire in English and translated it into Welsh (Diolch Brian Davies).

We delivered a test questionnaire to young people and adults in the Mynydd Llandygai youth club and to some of adults in the families of the working group. The test showed that we needed to improve the instructions for the questions that asked the user to give a score to different activities, as some users were scoring the activities in reverse order – giving the highest scores to the least popular activities. We made the changes to our final questionnaire.

### **Step 4. Delivery and collection**

We put two Welsh and two English copies in each envelope in the hope that as many members as possible in each household filled it in. The questionnaires were hand-delivered by some of the group, on foot, on bikes, some by car, and a note was enclosed with an explanation and when we'd be picking up the answers. We thought about different ways to get the questionnaire back: By post (enclosed S.A.E.), drop off at the memorial hall or by hand, and decided on the latter. This was not as straightforward as expected and was another good learning experience for us.

The delivery zone reached from Ysgol Bodfeurig round to the top half of Ffordd yr Ocar taking in Tan y Bwlch, Llwybr Main, Ffordd Hermon, yr Afon, Gefnan and the top of Bryn Allt Eglwys. We were aware that this was not a comprehensive delivery zone, but because Mynydd Llandygai is next to Sling and Sling joins Tregarth, there was no place where we could clearly draw the edge of Mynydd Llandygai. We were aware that areas we did not deliver to could be included in further phases of the project that could include a user survey in the forest and consultations with the residents of Tregarth, Rhiwlas and other areas close to the forestry.

### Step 5. Analysis

We analysed the results of the questionnaires first by inputting the data into an Excel spreadsheet and then by analysing the figures from the spreadsheet in Microsoft Access. This was done with the help of Bianca Ambrose-Oji and Jenny Wong.

### Step 6. Presentation and Report

We wrote this report to let people know what we have done and to publicise the results of the consultation. We organised a public presentation of the report in Mynydd Llandygai Youth Club on Feb 2nd 2009.

### Step 7. Evaluation

We evaluated the project with Wayne, who wrote an evaluation report, with the working group and the people who filled in the questionnaire through verbal assessment.

## 3 Results of the Questionnaire

### 3.1 Age and gender of people who filled in the questionnaire

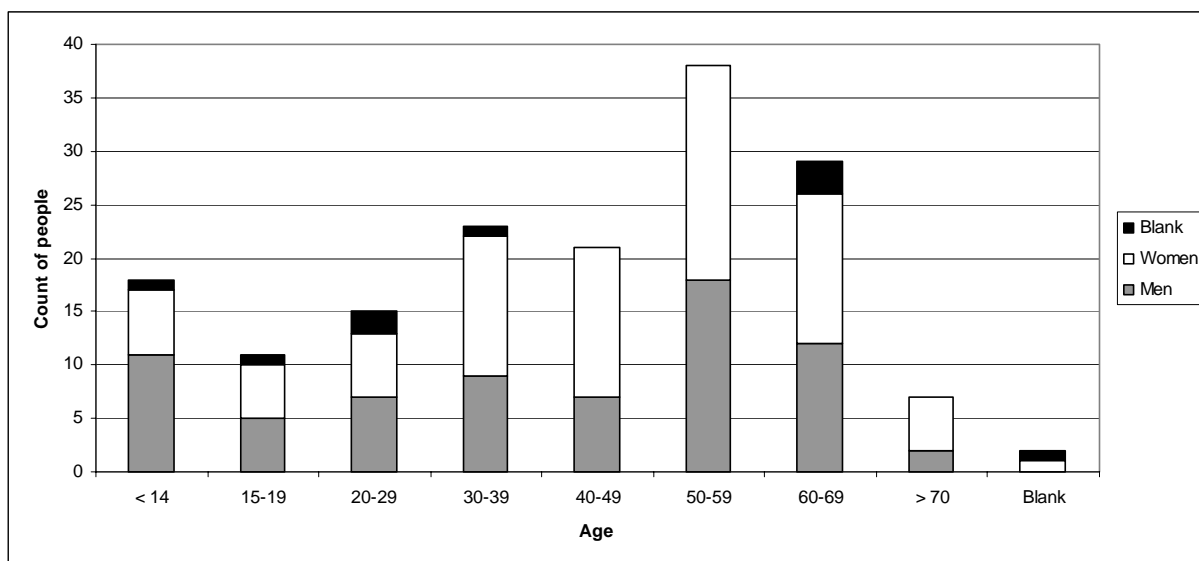
There was a very high level of uptake for the questionnaire from a wide cross section of the community. From the 172 houses we delivered to, we collected 164 returned questionnaires. Of those 164: 84 were filled in by women, 71 were filled in by men, and 9 didn't say whether they were a man or a woman. We turned these figures into percentages to get a better idea of whether these results really represent the people in the village.

#### Gender of people who filled in the questionnaires:

**51% women 43% men 6% who didn't answer the question.**

Figure 1 shows the very wide age range of people who filled in the questionnaire. As you can see, people of all ages responded; in fact, we have managed to work out that the ages ranged from 8 to 96! So we can proudly say that there is no major group of people who are not represented in this survey.

Figure 1 Bar chart of age and gender for people who filled in questionnaire



### 3.2 How many people visit the forest?

We asked people to tick boxes to indicate how often they visit the forest. The big news is that around nearly all the people who returned a questionnaire visit the forest. About half of the people said they visit less than once a week, a third visit every week and only a minority visit every day.

**Table 1 How often people visit the forest**

Number of visits	Number	As %
Daily	12	7
Weekly	52	32
Less than once a week	77	47
Don't visit forestry	11	7
Didn't tick any boxes	12	7
TOTAL	164	100%

This is pretty well everyone but are there any ages or genders groups that visit more or less frequently than others? Table 3 shows the percentage of each gender visiting the forest.

**Table 2 How often women and men visit the forestry**

Number of visits	Women %	Men %
Daily	5	11
Weekly	33	35
Less than once a week	56	49
Don't visit forestry	6	5
Didn't tick any boxes	2	0
TOTAL	100	100

So no real surprises here – the only new bit of information from these results is that twice as many men visit the forest every day compared with women. Here is a table of the proportion of people visiting forestry of different ages as percentage of total number visiting.

**Table 3 How often people of different ages visit the forestry ?**

		Daily	More than once a Week	Less than once a week
	Number of people	12	52	77
Age class	Less than 14	8	17	8
	15-19	-	6	9
	20-29	8	8	9
	30-39	17	15	16
	40-49	8	21	12
	50-59	42	19	21
	60-69	17	13	19
	More than 70	-	-	6

The first thing we noticed is that daily visits to the forestry are mostly by older people aged between 50-69, though there are also children who visit very day. There is not really anything to say about people who visit less than once per day as these proportions are very similar to the overall age breakdown we looked at earlier, except that people greater than 70 are only able to visit the forestry less than once per week and probably only a few times per year.

### 3.3 What makes the forest a special place?

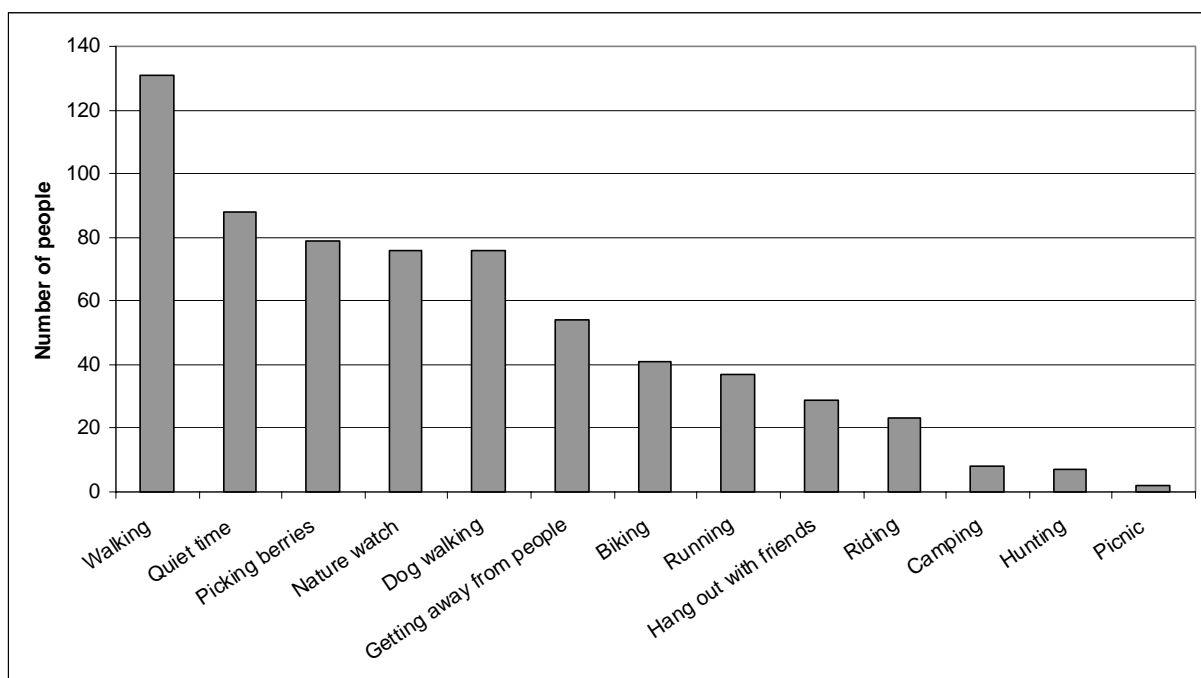
We asked people to write down what made the forest special for them. Of the 164 replies, 113 people wrote something. Three words came up most frequently, they were:

**Local**  
**Quiet**  
**Peaceful**

### 3.4 What do people do when they visit the forest?

We asked people to tick as many boxes as they wanted as well as giving them the opportunity to write down things we hadn't listed. This gives a lot of data and lots of questions which we could ask – e.g. do men aged 20-29 do more running in the forest than other age groups or genders? We didn't feel we needed to go into any of these questions at present but our data is now available and could be used at any time in the future by any other group. This next table gives the number of times each box was ticked. Ten people didn't tick any boxes or write anything and one person wrote to say they didn't visit the forest. The next graph shows what the 153 people who visit do when they are in the forest:

**Figure 2 Number of people doing different things in the forestry**



Other uses
Wide games
Hiking
Picking twigs & cones
Fishing
Exploring
Pull ragwort
Collect litter
Think
Building dens
Views
Looking for elves & fairies with the kids

People could tick more than one box. The great majority (145 or 88%) of people did more than one activity in the forest. This is not straightforward to analyse, but we can look at a breakdown of age range and activities.

**Table 6 What people of different ages do while in the forestry**

Activity	Age class							
	> 14	15-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	> 70
Quiet time	53	9	50	71	59	68	48	14
Picking berries	65	36	36	58	50	47	41	57
Dog walking	59	27	50	46	55	63	21	43
Nature watch	76		14	63	41	61	41	29
Getting away from people	29	27	21	50	41	32	31	14
Hang out with friends	53	27	14	17	14	8	14	29
Camping	6	18	7	4	5	5		
Hunting	6	9				3	14	
Building dens	12							
Picnic					5			14
Collect litter						3		
Exploring	6							
Fishing			7					
Looking for elves & fairies					5			
Picking twigs & cones								14
Pull ragwort						3		
Think							3	
Views						3		
Wide games	6							

These figures show that most people (except perhaps 15-19 years old) seem to enjoy the same things.

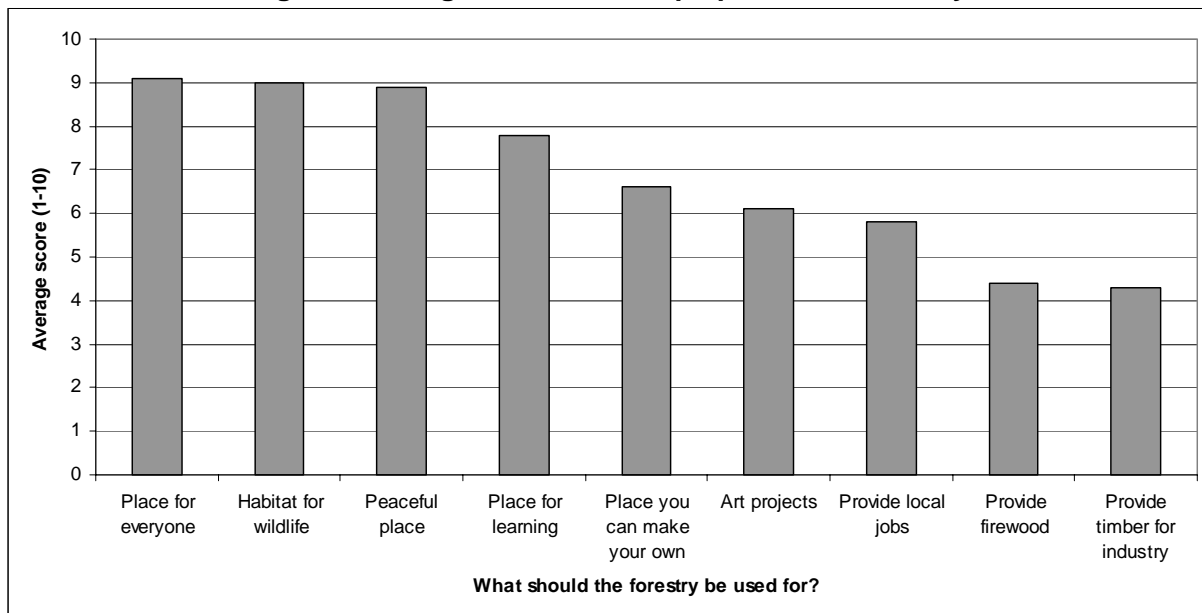
From the results it appears that there are some quite different ideas supported by different aged people. In particular the 15-19 age groups want quite different things from other people. Why is this?

There are also some different interpretations of what people mean e.g., CCTV and Nature cams are quite different things if one is for security and the other for watching wildlife. Are all the ages asking for the same thing here?

### 3.5 What do people think the forest should be used for?

People were asked to score from 1 to 10 for things we can consider purposes for the forest. Many people wanted to score 0 for things they really didn't agree with but we have had to rescore these as 1. The easiest way to look at the results is to average the scores provided as has been done in Table 7. However you look at the data, it is clear that everyone agrees that the forest is a place for everyone. The purpose for which the Forestry Commission planted the forest – as a place to grow timber - comes out bottom.

Figure 3 Average scores for each purpose for the forestry

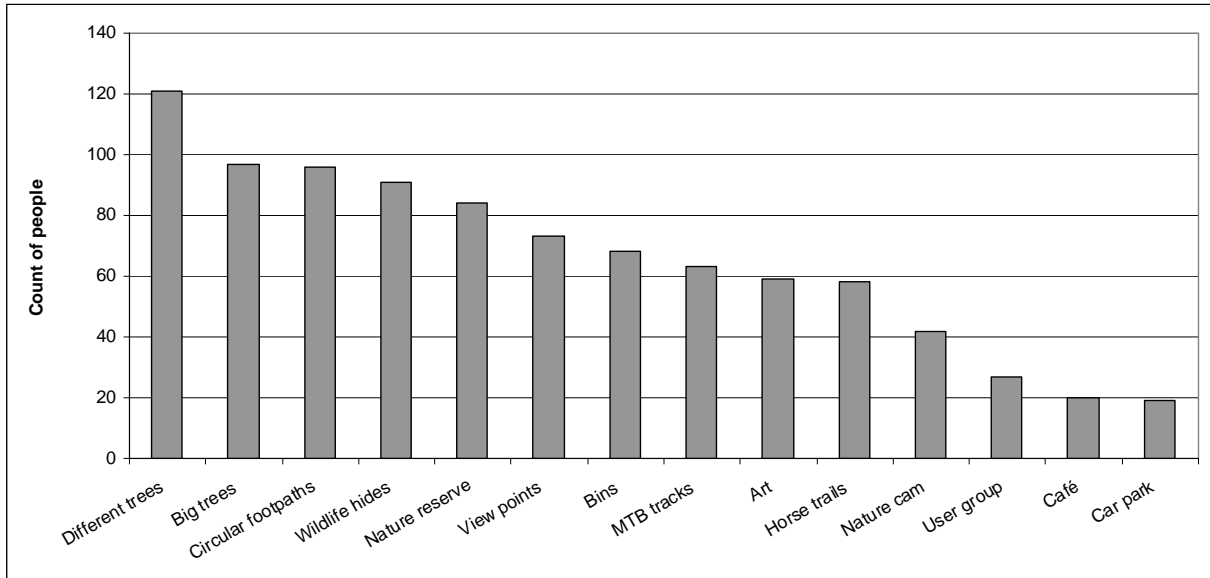


### 3.6 What would make the forestry a better place?

This proved to be our most controversial question. Some people were concerned that the consultation process could lead to change in the forest that could have impact they would think of as negative e.g. the forest becoming busier, or more littered. The point was also raised by some of the users that giving people options to choose from may lead them to choose options they would not have thought of otherwise.



**Figure 4 Number of people ticking boxes for a range of 'improvements' to the forestry**



## 4 Conclusion

### 4.1 What does the consultation tell us?

The obvious conclusion that we can draw from the consultation is that community interest in the 'forestry' is very strong. The fact that of the **164** people who returned a questionnaire only **11** said that they didn't visit the 'forestry' indicates very high usage of the forest by the community. These results could be used as evidence for the value of further project work involving the community in the management and planning of the forest.

Developing the wildlife value of the forest appears to be one of the main community concerns; there is a great deal of enthusiasm for increasing the variety of tree species and the age range within the forest, and this in turn will directly contribute to improving biodiversity and enhancing habitats available to wildlife.

Most of the community use the forest for walking and they would like a circular path. If this were to encompass one or two beautiful and tranquil viewing points, the value of the woodlands as a community resource would be enhanced without threatening the peace and tranquillity which many people love about Parc y Bwlch.

There is a great deal of interest in being involved in future developments in the forest from the young adult population who are keen to develop woodland skills and participate in any structural developments within the forest (such as building footpaths, benches, view points, bird and bat boxes etc) as well as improving their skills and work opportunities within this field.

The many different user groups involved in the forest also mean that opinions about the future use and changes to the present status are various. In some areas emotions run high and conflict could arise if the planning process does not offer clear opportunities for everyone to be involved.

The results from this consultation provide us with an excellent foundation to work from, because we have identified that the majority of the users of the 'forestry' share an appreciation of its natural and tranquil qualities, and want the management plan to protect and enhance its access, biodiversity and peace.

## **4.2 Outcomes**

- ✓ Improved skills base for the working group of young people
- ✓ Enhanced involvement in community issues for the working group
- ✓ Positive profile for the working group as the young people of the community
- ✓ Increased awareness of the uses, value and status of the 'forestry'
- ✓ Enhanced dialogue between the community and the Forestry Commission Wales