

VALLEYS REGIONAL PARK AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR OUR COMMUNITIES



**MENTAL HEALTH
AWARENESS WEEK
(10TH-16TH MAY)**

VRP map including Discovery Gateway locations. Designed and illustrated by artist, Derek Bainton. Commissioned by Valleys Regional Park.

We are proud to support Mental Health Awareness Week and this year's Nature theme. During July-September 2020, we at Valleys Regional Park carried out our Green Spaces Survey, where people across the region told us how much they had relied on their local parks and natural spaces during the first months of the pandemic. Restrictions had changed relationships with our green spaces, both highlighting their value and introducing more people to their physical and mental health benefits. The past year has demonstrated in reality what studies have been telling us for some time, that being outside in nature supports us in all sorts of ways, improving conditions such as anxiety and depression as well as boosting 'feel good' chemicals. Over the past fourteen months, our natural environment has shown to be part of our essential infrastructure.

Parks and other green spaces like our 12 Discovery Gateways have shown to provide these essential services to hundreds of thousands of people across the Valleys, ultimately benefitting their health and wellbeing.

[Click to view to our Green Spaces Survey Infographic](#)



Nature Based Working Hubs

Working in partnership with our Discovery Gateways, from June 2021 we will have nature-based remote working hubs from Llyn Llech Owain Country Park and Parc Bryn Bach. In a time where more people are working from home and less people are returning to the office, the hubs will provide alternative options for remote working. Set within an environment which is known to support our physical and mental health, the nature-based working hubs will also showcase wider associated benefits including work-based productivity, reduce work-related stress and ultimately overall sick leave.

Nature Based Social Prescribing

Social prescribing (SP) is a term commonly used to describe a method whereby registered health practitioners can refer patients to non-clinical activities which assists to improve health, thus reducing the need for more clinical interventions, such as medication. Specifically nature-based Social Prescribing has increased in demand since the beginning of the Coronavirus epidemic in March 2020.

Now that restrictions are being eased, our Guardians Scheme, which provides community engagement activities and demonstrator projects, are continuing to work with our Discovery Gateways and the surrounding communities. They will be leading on social prescribing projects and activities in the Valleys, including areas that are in most need of this support. Whether it be a cuppa around a campfire, or gardening and growing crops of beautiful fresh fruit and veg, our Guardians will aspire to help many within the Valleys and ensure that social care providers know there is referral support available within the Valleys.

Through the investment in our Discovery Gateways, we will continue to develop healthy, vibrant places in which to work, explore, play, volunteer and meet up, while also helping to meet the challenges of the Climate and Nature Emergency.

