



WINTER WELLBEING TOOLKIT

*A simple Living Lab guide
for community
organisations*

Free to use | Adapt locally

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

This work was developed through the Take the Lead programme, funded by Health Data Research UK (HDR UK).

We applied for this funding because the programme aligned closely with how we like to work — engaging communities to shape practical, locally relevant solutions for health and wellbeing.



CONTENTS

- Why winter walking matters
- What we did and the approach we took (a simple Living Lab model)
- A step-by-step guide: engaging communities in creating winter walking routes
- A step-by-step guide: how to create route maps



Walking the routes together — testing accessibility, clarity, and overall experience.

WHY WINTER WALKING MATTERS

Winter can be a difficult time for many communities with shorter days, colder weather, and fewer opportunities to get outside and connect.

But walking is one of the simplest ways to support wellbeing.

53% of people visit green spaces for physical health

41% for mental wellbeing

85% say being in nature makes them feel happy

We wanted to explore a simple question: Can locally designed walking routes help people stay active, connected, and well through the winter months?

DOLGELLAU CONTEXT: WHAT WE HEARD

Through our focus group and conversations, several distinct rural challenges and preferences came through clearly:

A. Mobile connectivity is limited

Phone signal is patchy outside the town centre

People are reluctant to rely on apps or live navigation

This creates anxiety about getting lost or stuck without access

What this meant in practice: We prioritised downloadable PDF maps and optional GPS files that could be used offline, rather than app-based solutions.

B. Winter conditions are a real barrier

Mud, uneven paths, and reduced daylight affect confidence

Safety concerns increase in quieter, less populated areas



What this meant in practise: Routes needed to be clearly described, realistic about conditions and suitable for different confidence levels

C. People value familiarity and reassurance

Preference for known routes or well-explained paths

Interest in shorter, manageable walks

What this meant in practice: we focused on clear, simple route design and gradual engagement rather than long or complex walks.

D. Social connection matters

Many people are more likely to walk if there's a social element

Informal, low-pressure activities are preferred

What this meant in practice: testing walks in small groups helped build confidence and gather insight.

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE: ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN CREATING WINTER WALKING ROUTES

STEP 1: TALK TO PEOPLE.

Ask: What would help you walk more in winter?

What puts you off?

STEP 2: SKETCH A ROUTE

Use local knowledge

Use a hard copy map to scribble on!

STEP 3: TEST IT IN REAL CONDITIONS

Walk it with a small group

Pay attention to safety, navigation, and experience

STEP 4: GATHER FEEDBACK

Keep it simple:

“How did this feel?”

“Would you do this again?”

“What would you change?”

STEP 5: REFINE

Make small, practical improvements:

Adjust directions

Clarify difficult sections

Adapt length or difficulty

STEP 6: SHARE IT

Create simple, reusable outputs:

PDF maps (key for low-connectivity areas)

Optional GPS files

Short guidance notes





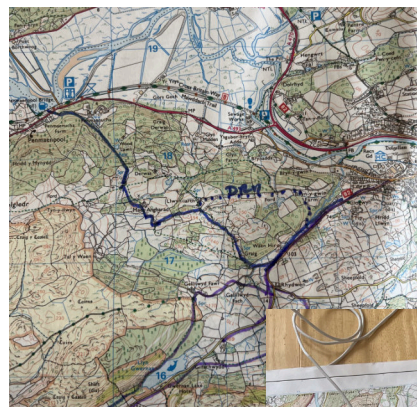
A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE: HOW TO CREATE ROUTE MAPS

STEP 1: USE AN ONLINE ROUTE PLOTTER

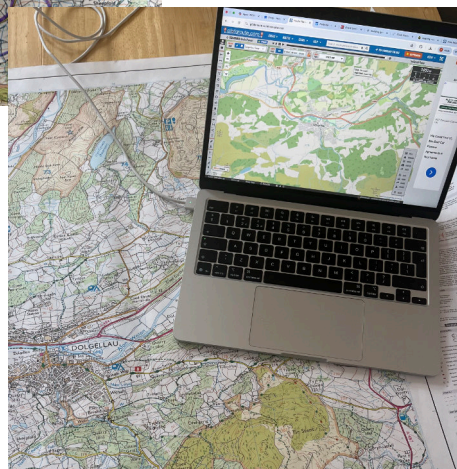
Once you have a refined route that works in real life, use your notes and annotated maps to create an online map. (We used PlotaRoute). Save your routes so you can download them later.

STEP 2: DOWNLOAD THE MAP

Download the online map you created. There should also be some statistics about your route that the plotting tool has calculated such as distance & ascent. You can also save the links to the GPS file that can be directly uploaded to a smart device.



Using our annotated maps and notes to plot our finalised map onto Plot a Route.



STEP 3: CREATE YOUR OWN VERSION

You may want to tailor the downloaded map to your own brand or visual preferences. Try using Open Street Map layers to create a map that works best for you. You can then trace your route map onto whatever map style you have chosen. You may wish to use different colours for different types of terrain, or utilise dotted or dashed lines.

STEP 4: ADD THE DATA

Create a simple 'key' that includes information about the route and the map.

STEP 5: BRING IT TO LIFE

Once you have created a complete route map, save it as a pdf. This means that it can be opened on most devices and saved.

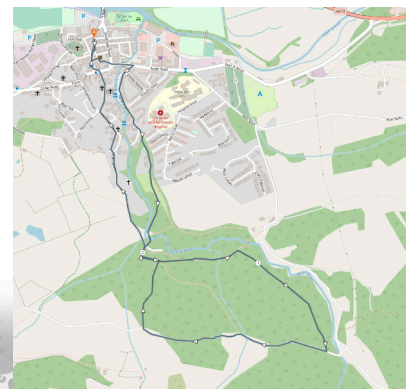
STEP 6: SHARE IT

Print physical copies of your map to share within the community. Add the PDF maps to a page on your website so that people can download and print them. You might also like to create a QR code using something like Adobe Express that links to the webpage for use on posters.

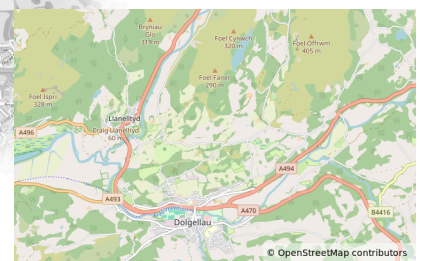
ROUTE LENGTH: 6.3 MILES
ASCENT: 823 FEET
APPROX TIME: 2.5 - 3 HR

— ROAD
- - - - UNPAVED TRACK

Include useful information on your map



A route mapped on the Plot a Route website.



Using Open Street Map and digital design software to customise our maps.



USE OUR ROUTES

You can download and adapt our routes here:

- MAWDDACH
- PEN Y CEFN
- LLYN CYNWCH
- CADER ROAD
- COED Y PARC

(Each available in Welsh, English, and GPS format)

Scan the QR code with your smartphone camera.

