

South Korea, Finland, and the United States, doctors are now issuing "nature prescriptions," formally directing patients to spend time in local parks and forests to combat chronic diseases and mental health issues.

Here in Dolwyddelan, we do not need a prescription; we live in the pharmacy. Nestled in the Lledr Valley and surrounded by the Gwydir Forest Park and the Moelwynion range, we have immediate access to some of the most restorative environments in the world. Whether it is a walk through the ancient woodlands towards Moel Siabod, or a quiet moment in Cwm Penamnen, the therapeutic benefits of nature are right on our doorstep.

Forest bathing is not about hiking for fitness or identifying flora; it is about slowing down and engaging all the senses. It is about noticing the dappled light through the canopy, the sound of the wind in the branches, and the scent of damp earth. As we navigate the stresses of modern life, we must remember to consciously utilise the incredible natural resource that surrounds our village. What the rest of the world is just beginning to prescribe, we have the privilege of living every day.

The Pub as Community Heartbeat: Y Gwydyr at the Centre

In rural Britain, the local pub has always been more than just a place to buy a pint. It is the original social network, the informal town hall and the barometer of village health. As national statistics show a concerning decline in rural pubs, with thousands closing over the last decade, the importance of preserving these vital community anchors has never been clearer.

Recent research by the not-for-profit organisation 'Pub is The Hub' quantified this impact, revealing that for every £1 spent investing in pub-based community services, an average of £8.28 of social value is created. Pubs combat social isolation, foster community cohesion, and provide a safe, neutral space where the overlapping circles of village life can intersect.

In Dolwyddelan, we are fortunate to have Y Gwydyr Hotel. A gem that grew alongside the village's slate quarrying expansion, Y Gwydyr is an unmistakable landmark. But its true value lies not in its history, but in its present role as a welcoming hub for locals, walkers, and travellers alike.

Under the stewardship of Namthip and Urien, Y Gwydyr has cultivated a character that is traditional, warm, and slightly quirky. It is a place where Thailand meets Cymru. This fusion reflects a modern, inclusive approach to rural hospitality, one that honours local heritage while embracing new flavours and ideas.

Whether it is hosting food nights, a wine tasting night or providing a friendly stop for cyclists tackling the mountain passes or simply offering a warm fire on a wet winter evening, Y Gwydyr exemplifies the 'proper local.' It is the place where news is shared, where newcomers are welcomed and where the tribal bonds of our village are reinforced over a shared meal. Supporting our local pub is not just about enjoying a good evening out; it is an active investment in the social fabric of our village.

Mike Hewitt