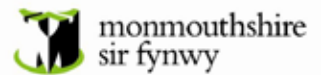




As we move into the summer months, the Gwent Green Grid Partnership (GGGP) is excited to share our progress and achievements with you through this newsletter.

Supported by the Heritage Lottery Nature Networks Fund and the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF), the GGGP includes the five local authorities of Gwent, Natural Resources Wales (NRW), and other stakeholders. Through a wide and varied programme of activities and projects, we are addressing the nature and climate emergencies by improving the quality of green spaces in urban and rural areas and enhancing the environment's resilience for both wildlife and people.

The GGGP regional officers have been working with the Delivery Group and Steering Group to bring value to our communities across the region. There is so much fantastic work going on that we cannot cover it all in this newsletter, but we hope to give you a snapshot of the diverse work being delivered.



Funded by UK Government  Wedi ei ariannu gan Llywodraeth y DU

NATURE NETWORKS MAPPING

A major project for us is creating Nature Networks maps. These maps will give complete spatial data that can help with decision making, by finding and ranking areas for possible nature recovery, habitat restoration, and green infrastructure development in the Gwent region. Based on four habitat types (woodland, wetland, heathland and grassland), the system can find areas of land that could be enhanced to connect habitats and increase resilience. As we face the nature and climate crisis, it is crucial that we look for ways to help nature and species to become more resilient and focus our efforts on the most appropriate locations. The maps are being made using a Geographical Information System (GIS) and will be accessible to all users through an easy-to-use web portal.





The GGG Team is working to raise awareness about the Nature and Climate emergency, supporting and encouraging individuals and communities into action, focusing on the positive work being delivered by partners across the Gwent region. We can all be involved in helping to reduce our impacts on the environment and to contribute to enhancing ecosystem resilience and biodiversity.

This engagement work is diverse and focuses on nature-based solutions to help address the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. Developing resilient ecosystems can help practically with adaptation, whilst simultaneously providing numerous wellbeing benefits.

The Gwent Green Grid Partnership Team is working with partners across the county, engaging with school and community groups in a variety of projects, including public events and delivering nature and climate workshops and resources such as:

- **Helping Nature to Help Us Interactive Boards**

This eye catching and interactive resource illustrates the interconnectedness of grassland, woodland, aquatic and urban ecosystems across Gwent. It shows how each ecosystem contributes positively to climate adaptation, personal/ community wellbeing, biodiversity and provides ecosystem services. The resource enables people to find out what they can do to help nature to help us with climate change.



- **Nature and Climate Resource Packs and Workshops are being prepared for delivery to schools and community groups across the region**

In a pilot workshop a school group explored how rivers and their biodiversity are being affected by climate change. A visit to a local river afforded youngsters the opportunity to discover how the invertebrates they found act as indicator species, reflecting the health of the river. They also considered the impact of flooding on these and other riverine species and considered how we can use natural flood management techniques to help slow the flow of heavy rain into streams and rivers, to benefit both people and wildlife.



HEALTH AND WELLBEING



A key aspect of the GGGP Health & Wellbeing work has been the creation of a sustainable support network for community groups. Following on from the first 'Wellbeing Network Meeting' which took place at Newbridge Memo in November 2023, we worked collaboratively with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board to facilitate the second 'Wellbeing Network Event' in Gilfach Fargoed Community Centre in February this year. The event was attended by 25 practitioners from a range of community groups and partnership organisations. The purpose of the event was to share best practice and disseminate information with a specific focus on exploring funding opportunities.



The number of community groups receiving GGGP funding and/or support has continued to grow. There are now 33 community groups across Gwent that have/are receiving support and funding from GGG. The emphasis in the current phase of the programme is to support smaller community groups, for whom small amounts of funding can make a big difference. These are just a few examples of the impact of this work strand:



In Blaenau-Gwent we have been working with 'Growing space' at their Terrence Gardens site to support the enhancement of the site, to enable the engagement of a range of community and special interest groups.

In Caerphilly, we have commissioned Gwent Wildlife to deliver an Agored Cymru Accredited, Level 2 'Curriculum Based Outdoor Learning Course' to 12 teachers. The course will start in June 2024.



We are also piloting a project in which a group of pupils from Heolddu Learning Pathways Centre are visiting the 'Equine Therapy Centre' in Mamhilad, Monmouthshire for a series of sessions aimed at improving their confidence and self-esteem as well as giving them strategies to deal with stress, anxiety and anger.

In Monmouthshire, we have been working with 'Friends of Llanishen Village' to enhance the Glebe Field site to encourage biodiversity through restorative land management. We have also supported the commissioning of a local graphic artist to create information boards describing the flora and fauna of the area.

In Torfaen we are working with a cluster of churches to enhance the green spaces surrounding them as habitats for nature and installing raised beds which will serve as edible growing spaces for local residents.

We continue our approach of carrying out health impact assessments before project activities are undertaken to ensure that our activities are reaching a wide range of people and community groups, to maximise the impact of our projects on the physical and mental health and wellbeing of our communities.

OUT AND ABOUT ACROSS THE REGION



In addition to the grants for community health and wellbeing and the opportunities for green skills training, the partnership has helped organisations in other ways. GGGP officers have offered direct practical help, advice and guidance on habitat and biodiversity, and information sharing through presentations and engagement events in the community.





TRAINING/VOLUNTEERING

As we look towards meeting the needs of a future green economy and decarbonisation targets, it is recognised that the UK is facing a green skills gap across these vitally important sectors. The GGGP is continuing its work providing green skills training to volunteers, community groups and officers. Working alongside the Regional Health & Wellbeing Officer, our Regional Landscape & Countryside Volunteer Coordinator has been able to direct training opportunities to the community groups and volunteers that we are already supporting. Examples of some recent training opportunities include:



- A **QGIS course** at Talgarth for ecology and countryside staff from NCC. This 2-day course provides a good solid introduction to GIS mapping and is highly recommended by those who attended.
- An **emergency outdoor first aid course** was attended by volunteers from Grosmont Path Group. The training gives them the skills to deal with incidents in remote locations should the need arise.
- A **coppicing course** for volunteers was held at Bedwas Riverside Parc. Volunteers enjoyed this day which combined practical sessions with a history of coppicing, providing information about the environmental benefits of this ancient woodland management technique.
- An **orchard training day** was run at Glebe Field Llanishen. Volunteers attended for the day which included a talk on orchards and their history, followed by practical pruning and tree care activities on the Glebe Field.
- **Brushcutter courses** for volunteers from Llanishen and Llanbadoc path care groups. This two-day course covers all aspects of use and maintenance of petrol and electric brushcutters, the various cutting heads and appropriate guards, PPE, health and safety and environmental considerations.

COMING SOON!



The Partnership's work will continue to improve green spaces in the region during the summer. The team will join events to share and discuss their work with communities.

BioTapestry

One of our more ambitious ideas for engagement is making a BioTapestry, based on (and a playful pun on) the Bayeux Tapestry. The Gwent BioTapestry will show the intricate and interwoven tapestry of Biodiversity that exists in our beautiful region, and the ways that our strong ecosystems can help us cope with the challenges that climate change is bringing. The BioTapestry will take people on a journey through the amazing habitats and species, of Gwent. It will be created by our communities, working with a local artist.



As the planting season progresses, our Regional Nature Isn't Neat Officer is offering tools, advice and support to our local authorities and communities to make sure that the message and spirit of Nature isn't Neat (NiN) keeps growing. NiN promotes the benefits of letting nature do its thing in green spaces across Gwent, by reducing mowing and letting wildflowers grow. Gwent local authorities have been pioneering this pollinator-friendly management of green spaces for several years with encouraging results. Meadows are vital for addressing biodiversity loss and the decline of plants and pollinators. They also enable more people the chance to experience nature. Our NiN areas aren't just great for wildlife; by letting the grass grow longer it stores more carbon in the soil and helps increase our resistance to drought and floods.

Local residents, community groups and businesses have a vital role in supporting wildflower and pollinator conservation across the region. To help people to create their own meadows, the NiN project has launched a new resource pack filled with lots of guidance and tips. This is available on our website. We will also be encouraging more businesses and organisations to gain Bee Friendly Accreditation. There will also be opportunities for local people to become involved through a citizen science scheme called 'Wildflower Watch'.



Engagement Events

Over the summer months the project team will be attending community events across the region. Please keep an eye out for us at events including **The Usk Show, Go Wild in Pontypool, Machen Show and Maindee Festival.**