

The Sustainable Steps Series

Helping our staff to make the Well-being of Future Generations Act a positive reality



GIG
CYMRU
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Cymru
Public Health
Wales

Helping Nature to Flourish

“Supporting our ecosystems and biodiversity in the workplace”

Each and every one of us in the Welsh public sector has a part to play in making the Well-being of Future Generations Act and Environment Act a reality, and in *‘being the change’* towards the Wales we want for our current and future generations. Our actions today are already impacting on tomorrow; together, let’s make sure it’s a *positive* impact!



Partneriaeth **Bioamrywiaeth** Cymru
Wales **Biodiversity** Partnership

This e-guide has been produced by the Health and Sustainability Hub (Public Health Wales), in collaboration with the Wales Biodiversity Partnership, which brings together cross-sector organisations to promote and monitor biodiversity and ecosystem action.



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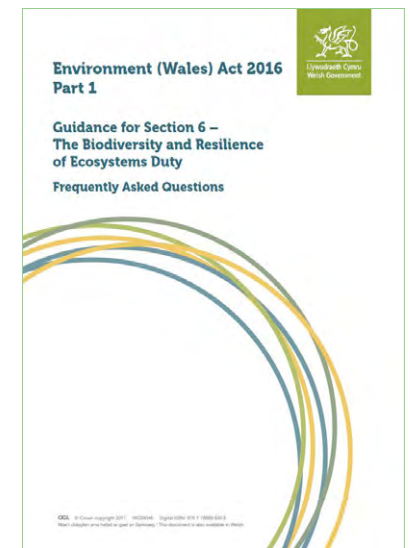
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Introduction

Nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history and the rate of species extinctions is accelerating, with grave impacts now likely on people around the world.

We must now urgently take action for biodiversity at every opportunity to reverse its decline in Wales and globally - for its intrinsic value, and to secure our own well-being.

The [Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016](#) requires public authorities to 'maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems'. This '[Section 6 duty](#)' will also assist public authorities to maximise their contributions to achieving the well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, in particular the goal for 'a resilient Wales', and the United Nations' Sustainable Development [Goals](#):



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Biodiversity means the variety of living organisms on Earth

Ecosystems are our plants, animals, air, water, minerals and soils, and how they interact

Our health and well-being depends upon a healthy environment, which includes using our natural resources in a sustainable way and supporting ***biodiversity***.

Ecosystems are vital for health and well-being providing our food, clothing and medicines, regulating our air and water and controlling disease. And, whilst healthy ecosystems allow us to flourish, nature also provides us with the means and inspiration for the many human activities essential for our cultural well-being, such as art, music and poetry.

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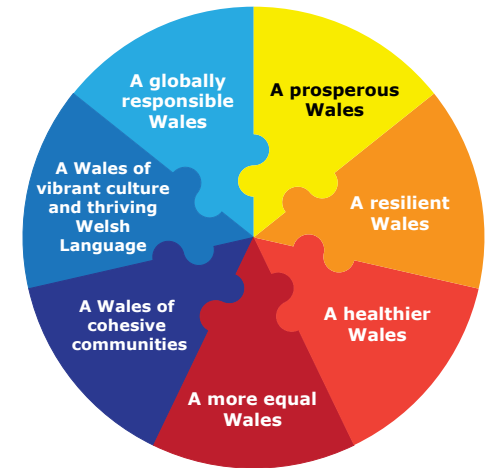
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Contributing to Wales' well-being goals

A resilient Wales: A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).



The sustainable steps in this e-guide support the following well-being goals, and in particular, 'a resilient Wales':



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The suggested actions also support the [United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals](#), including:



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'Helping Nature to Flourish' highlights some of the practical ways in which we can all contribute to a biodiverse, natural environment. Additionally, as biodiversity is threatened by climate change, some of these steps are also intended to reduce our individual carbon footprints in the workplace, reducing our negative impacts and maximising our positive actions.

- ▶ Become involved in the delivery of your organisation's biodiversity plan
- ▶ Buy organic milks (dairy or plant-based) for your tea clubs - this removes the use of synthetic pesticides responsible for the decline in pollinating insects
- ▶ Start or join a gardening club in your workplace, check with your building or facilities manager (see the Veg on the Ledge case-study on page 8)
 - 🌍 When sowing and planting use only organic, peat-free compost to protect vital habitat for rare plants and animals and reduce emissions
 - 🌍 Use diverse planting to help pollinating insects thrive
 - 🌍 Do not use pesticides as they persist in the environment for a long time and can devastate insect and animal populations
- ▶ Organise a plant or seed swap with colleagues to help others get started and use any excess seeds or cuttings
- ▶ Reduce food waste and add scraps or peelings to the food waste bin, so they can be converted to compost and used to grow more fruit and veg
- ▶ Reduce printing to protect our forests – these absorb and store carbon and provide vital habitat for many plants and animals. If absolutely necessary, print in black and white, on both sides with '2 pages per sheet'
- ▶ Change your search engine to Ecosia and help plant trees with your web searches. Find out more [here](#)

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▶ Be smart with energy-use to reduce the impact of our behaviours on our environment and help reduce global heating:

- Use water wisely in the workplace when filling kettles, washing-up and showering, and use only the amount of hot water needed
- Switch off non-essential equipment before heading home
- Unplug mobile phone and tablet chargers when fully charged
- Take the stairs instead of the lift
- Use heating wisely in the workplace, be conscious of the weather conditions and 'energy wasters' such as open and draughty doors and windows

▶ Organise a lunchtime group activity, such as a local litter-pick to help clean up the environment for the benefit of people and wildlife

- ▶ If buying a product for the organisation, try to procure goods made from re-used/recycled materials and reduce consumption where possible
- ▶ Adopt re-useable items in place of (single-use) plastic items, such as cutlery, bottled water and stationery items, e.g. pens and poly-pockets
- ▶ If items have to be single-use, look for compostable alternatives and check with your Facilities team on the correct method for disposal. Ask Procurement colleagues for advice where necessary
- ▶ When travelling to and from work, meetings and events, prioritise active travel and public transport to help reduce carbon emissions



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- ▶ Ensure that the meetings and events you organise are sustainable, covering travel, venue and catering
- ▶ Organise a 'swap-shop' of pre-loved items, for example clothing, shoes and books, to reduce pressure on natural resources – see Swap-not-Shop case study on page 9
- ▶ Check whether your organisation supports volunteering and find out how you can get involved
- ▶ Hold a walking meeting to enjoy a local park or green space
- ▶ Keep office plants to purify the air and help improve mental well-being. Top air purifiers include, the snake plant, spider plant, English ivy and gerbera daisy
- ▶ Add supporting biodiversity to your team away-day agenda and include a nature-based activity
- ▶ Organise a workplace fundraising event to support wildlife conservation charities, such as the [WWF](#), [RSPB](#) or [Wildlife Trusts Wales](#)
- ▶ Share your caring for nature actions on social media to educate, inspire and involve colleagues, for example '[Wales Nature Week](#)'



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'Veg on the Ledge', Public Health Wales

Staff in Public Health Wales' office in Capital Quarter, Cardiff have set up a gardening project named 'Veg on the Ledge'. The group aims to:

- Create a green haven for staff, visitors and wildlife on the 6th floor balcony
- Improve the mental well-being of staff and visitors by providing a pleasant environment to clear heads and connect with nature
- Plant flowers and plants to attract local insects and wildlife, including bees and other pollinators



Using a small employee well-being grant, seeds and soil were purchased with the emphasis on plants that are multifunctional and low maintenance: aromatic herbs, edibles and attractive plants which provide food for pollinators.

With a focus on sustainability, the group have used donations of pots and equipment from colleagues across the organisation, as well as making the most of sites like <https://uk.freecycle.org> and holding internal fundraising sales.

Early successes have seen courgettes, strawberries and tomatoes grown from seed. Staff have enjoyed picking lavender and mint for herbal teas and having a scattering of fresh herbs on their salads. The group are also working in collaboration with 'Food Cardiff' as part of work to make Cardiff Wales' first 'Veg City'.

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Swap-not-Shop, Public Health Wales

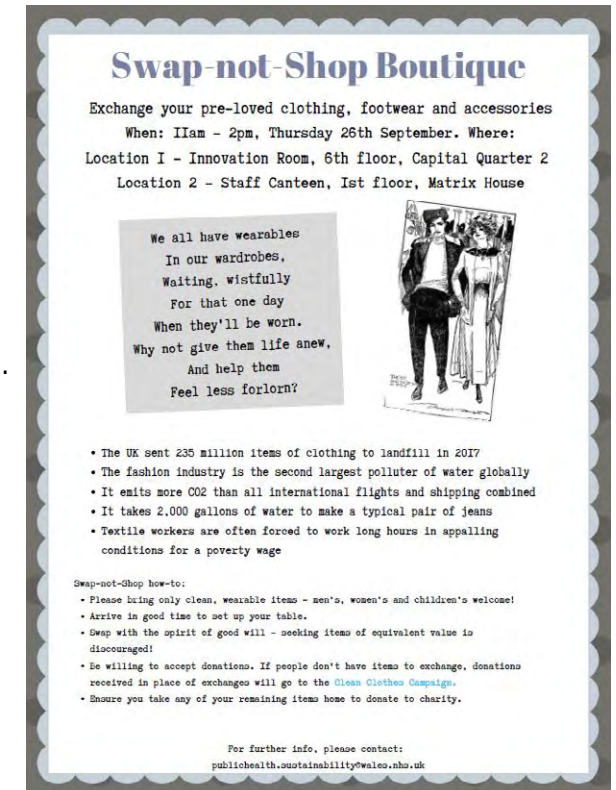
The Health and Sustainability Hub (Public Health Wales) teamed up with colleagues in Capital Quarter and Matrix House to organise Swap-not-Shop boutiques. Colleagues were invited to exchange unwanted items of clothing and accessories for some new, 'pre-loved' items with women's, men's and children's items encouraged.

The aim of the event was to:

- Raise awareness about the social and environmental impacts of fast fashion
- Promote the concepts of slow fashion and circular economy
- Demonstrate how we can alter our shopping habits to reduce our individual carbon footprints and reduce pressure on natural resources

For those who wanted to take part, but didn't have anything to exchange, there was the option of leaving a donation for the Clean Clothes Campaign, which exists to improve working conditions in the global garment and sportswear industry.

Encouraged by the positive responses they received, the Hub has identified the potential for these events to be held throughout the year, as people refresh their wardrobes in line with the changing seasons.



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You can watch this animation on ecosystem services:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCH1Gre3Mg0>

You can read more here:

Art of the Possible, A journey to '[A Resilient Wales](#)'

[Bee Friendly](#): a co-ordinated national scheme to support pollinators in Wales

['Essentials Guide: Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and our Well-being'](#)

[Soil Association: Organic farming](#)

RHS Plants for Pollinators [guide](#)

[United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals](#)

Volunteering:

- [Helping Wildlife \(Wales Biodiversity Partnership\)](#)
- [Wales Council for Voluntary Action](#)
- [Wildlife Trusts](#)
- [Volunteering Wales](#)

[Wales Biodiversity Partnership](#)

Section 6 Biodiversity Duty Reporting (find guidance and read your organisation's [report](#))

['Why peat is good for the climate and nature'](#)

[State of Natural Resources interim report 2019](#) (Natural Resources Wales)

[State of Nature: A Summary for Wales 2019](#), State of Nature Partnership

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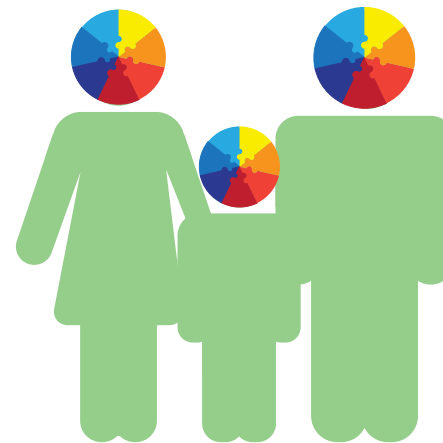
Join the conversation

We would like to hear about your individual actions that help nature to flourish, and see some photos! You can share on Twitter using: #bethechangewales

You may also be taking action in the workplace which is not mentioned in this e-guide; we'd like to hear about this too!



Simple **acts** can have big **impacts**



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