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# Public Health Wales' Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty Report 2025

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# Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty Report 2025

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## Introduction

This report summarises the work undertaken by Public Health Wales (PHW) to support biodiversity over the last three years. Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 requires public authorities to 'seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems' ensuring biodiversity is considered in business planning, policies, plans and projects. Authorities are required to report on progress every three years. PHW has published reports in 2019 and 2022, and this report highlights progress made between 2023 and 2025.

Wales is known for the beauty of its landscapes, the deep connection that people have to the land and the cultural traditions that have been shaped by our connection to nature. However there has been an alarming and rapid change in biodiversity in recent years. The [State of Nature Report](#) published in 2023 highlighted the widespread loss and degradation of habitats across Wales since 1970. Welsh wildlife is in decline with one in six species at risk of disappearing.

This is bad news for the health and wellbeing of our communities in Wales. Our quality of life and very existence is dependent on nature. We need a rich network of plants, insects and animals to create a healthy environment which can support our food systems, sustain our air and water quality and help us adapt to climate change by protecting us from flooding and capturing carbon. The natural world provides us with the ingredients for many of our drugs and treatments that we use for multiple diseases and ailments. Our mental and physical health, identity and culture are also deeply connected to the natural world. However, people do not have equal access to nature with those living in more disadvantaged areas more likely to have less access to green space.

PHW is one of the 11 organisations which makes up NHS Wales. We are the national public health organisation with 2,400 staff based in 62 premises across Wales. We work to protect and improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities for the people of Wales. PHW is a public body under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WFG Act) and has 'Tackling the Public Health Effects of Climate Change' as one of its strategic priorities.



## Public Health Wales' Biodiversity Action Plan

PHW's first Biodiversity Action Plan, 'Making Space for Nature', was published in 2019 with five key areas for action. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on our capacity to deliver the commitments, however progress was made in several areas with the learning channeled into the creation of an updated plan.

During 2024, we worked with colleagues across the organisation and externally to develop a new biodiversity plan for 2024-27. This included a number of meetings, consultations and also an in-person workshop.



Drawing inspiration from the engagement work which took place during the [Nature & Us](#) National Conversation led by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) in 2023, colleagues were invited to an in-person workshop to explore the importance of nature to health and PHW's role in advocating for nature. The feedback from colleagues was used to develop the objectives of the plan.

Here are some thoughts from participants on what nature means to them...



Our Biodiversity Action Plan, [Championing Nature for a Healthy Future](#), has three objectives –

1. To support staff to reduce their environmental impact and take action for biodiversity
2. To demonstrate our commitment within planning, policy and service delivery
3. To work with partners and identify opportunities to contribute to wider work to support and enhance biodiversity

In 2027, a PHW committed to biodiversity would be one where –

- ✓ Staff feel inspired and able to take actions to reduce their impact on the environment and support biodiversity both as individuals and as teams.
- ✓ Spending time in nature is recognised as beneficial for the health and wellbeing of staff, and there are opportunities for this to happen on a regular basis.
- ✓ Access to biodiverse green and blue spaces are promoted and included within programmes focused on tackling health inequalities.
- ✓ We share good practice with the wider healthcare sector in Wales and help support and strengthen national networks with a focus on biodiversity and health.

## Progress and Activities

The current Biodiversity Action Plan's objectives have been used to structure this section of the report.

### 1. Supporting staff to reduce their environmental impact and take action for biodiversity

We are working to help staff understand the importance of biodiversity to public health and to take action to reduce their impact on the environment.

#### Key activities

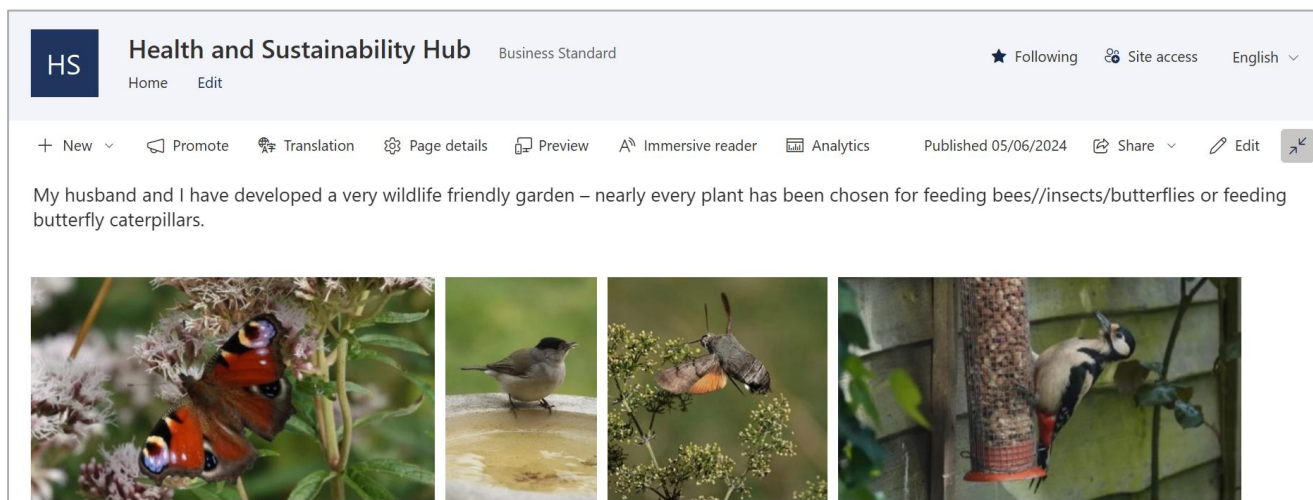
- Through the Green Advocates Network (PHW's sustainability network for staff) we have arranged a number of in-person and online sessions to enable staff to learn more about nature and the connection to our physical and mental health. These have included a workshop on wildlife gardening and a trip to the Heath Meadow Health Walk in Cardiff. We also had a special joint session with PHW's Welsh language network where we explored the link between the Welsh language and our connection to nature and landscape.

At the end of 2024 a review of the Green Advocates Network took place and feedback was gathered from members. The infographic below captures this along with a summary of last year's activities -



- Nature related activities have been shared with colleagues to encourage involvement. Two activities were included in our 2024 Sustainability Calendar encouraging staff to take part in 'No Mow May' and to consider ways to give nature a home in their gardens. Actions taken by colleagues during Wales Nature Week were shared via the Green Advocates Teams chat and channel.

Below is an example of part of a staff story shared on the Health & Sustainability Hub's Intranet pages –



- **Colleagues have been supported to choose more sustainable travel choices through a range of activities and communications as part of our focus on healthy travel.** 27 colleagues signed up for basic cycle training and bike maintenance training delivered by Sustrans and 10 have taken up the offer of a bike loan. We also offer a Cycle to Work Scheme where PHW pays the full cost of a bike and staff gradually pay it back via their salary. PHW and NHS Wales Executive have established a Bike User Group for staff interested in cycling to and for work and to plan social rides for staff.



The **Greener Meetings Challenge** was launched last year to encourage teams to make sustainable choices when planning in-person meetings. This included looking for venues with access to green space to allow breaks to be taken outside in nature.

The Health & Sustainability Hub shared their 'sustainable away day' to Shrewsbury with colleagues and highlighted the nature walk they chose from the train station to the venue and the wildlife garden they had lunch in.

- **The Quality, Nursing & Allied Health Professionals (QNAHPs) Directorate organise twice-yearly nature walks for staff, taking advantage of local routes to improve physical health and wellbeing.**

Feedback has been positive with staff reporting a boost in their mood and that they enjoyed doing a few hours of activity whilst exploring a new part of Wales.



- The [Healthy Environment Workshop Toolkit](#) supports teams to make sustainable changes in their home and work lives. Biodiversity is one of the three key themes, and the toolkit includes information about the nature emergency, the links to health and wellbeing and how we can support nature restoration. 80 staff from 22 teams have taken part in workshops since 2023 and 11 action plans have been created with actions including taking part in the Big Garden Birdwatch, and in No Mow May and installing ponds and homes for nature. A summary of actions and engagement can be found below -



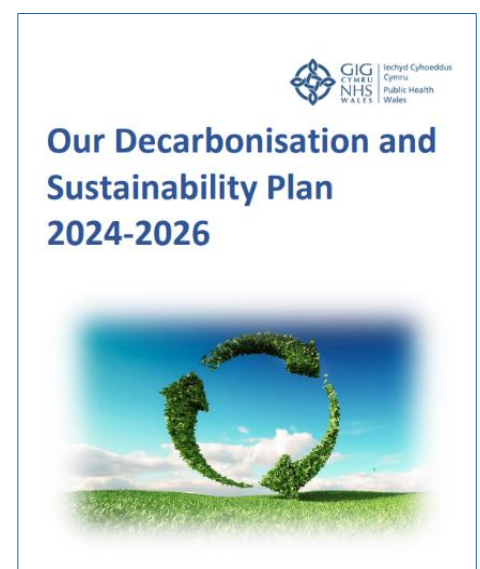


## 2. Demonstrating our commitment within planning, policy and service delivery

We are working to ensure biodiversity is a priority in planning and strategic decision making and promoted within appropriate service delivery.

### Key activities

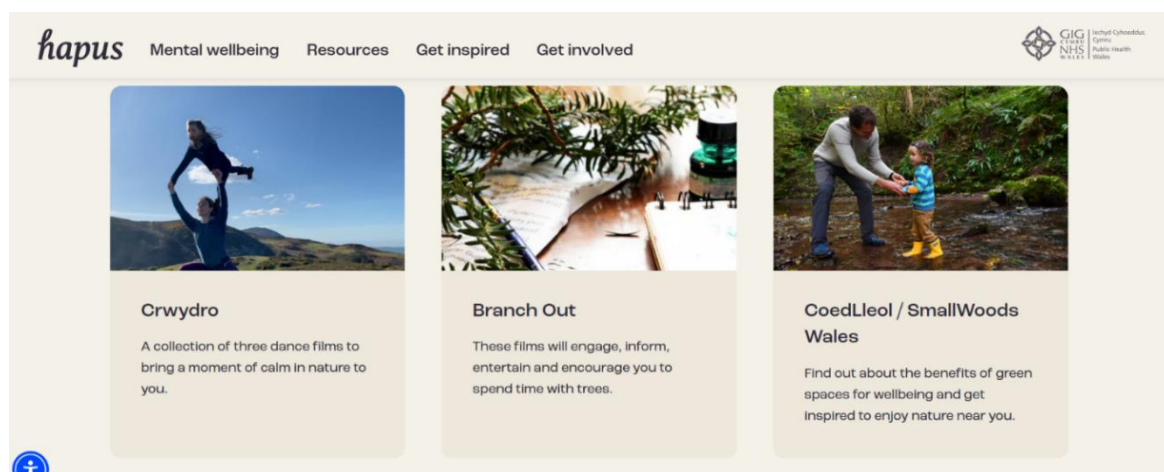
- PHW has committed to [‘Tackling the public health effects of climate change’ as a strategic priority](#) and has established the **Public Health Wales Climate Change Programme Board** which oversees our organisational approach to climate change. Our work on biodiversity is part of the Climate Change route map and we have highlighted opportunities for nature within other strategic priority route maps. This work also supports the [Well-being of Future Generations Act](#) and the seven Well-being goals, particularly ‘A resilient Wales’. We apply the five ways of working through the actions of our Biodiversity Action Plan.
- A second [Decarbonisation and Sustainability Plan](#) (2024-26) has been published outlining the commitments we are taking to reduce our carbon emissions across our buildings, transport and procurement. The Biodiversity Action Plan actions and Section 6 report are integrated into the plan. We have also published a new Business Travel Policy in June 2024. Progress made can be found on the [Decarbonisation and Sustainability](#) pages on the PHW website.



- As part of PHW's work supporting social prescribing in Wales, the Primary Care Division have collated a number of [case studies](#) including one focused on green prescribing. This case study describes the referral process and the impacts on health and wellbeing of people engaging in outdoor activities. The case study can be found in the Appendix.
- The [Greener Primary Care Wales Framework and Award Scheme](#) supports primary care contractors to improve their sustainability and environmental impact. This includes general practices, community pharmacies, community optometric practices and dental practices. There are a number of different actions teams can choose from including managing outside areas to be managed for biodiversity and supporting the benefits of green spaces to health and wellbeing. There is also another action GP surgeries can choose about referring patients to social prescribers. The scheme was launched in 2022, and since then 548 practices have signed up supporting 4,265 climate friendly actions.

Since the beginning of 2025, 20 teams have chosen the biodiversity action and 6 teams the social prescribing action. The case study in the appendix details a project undertaken by a dental practice to improve their outside space for local wildlife and the benefits for staff and the local community.

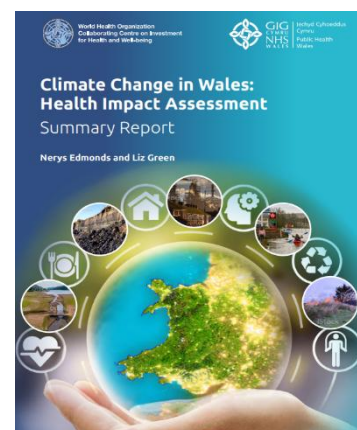
- Hapus is a programme which aims to inspire people in Wales to take steps to protect and improve their mental wellbeing. Nature is one of the eight wellbeing pillars within the programme. The [website](#) features stories from people sharing what they do to support their own mental wellbeing with a number focusing on the importance of spending time in nature. There are also tools in the resources section to inspire and signpost people, several of which are linked to the benefits of green space and outdoor activities (see website image below).



Hapus works with professionals to develop a common understanding of, and to promote, mental wellbeing. The importance of nature features strongly in the background information and conceptual framework. The programme has established a Hapus Supporter network connecting conservation organisations, community groups and public bodies and providing a space for sharing good practice and learning between sectors.

Hapus is also working alongside [Natur Am Byth](#), Wales' largest natural heritage and outreach programme which aims to save species from extinction and reconnect people to nature.

- **The Daily Active Whole School Approach to Physical Activity initiative**, a partnership between PHW, NRW, Welsh Government and Sport Wales, aims to support greater levels of physical activity in schools in Wales. A Deep Dive Assessment Tool for Physical Activity has been produced and will be launched in early 2026 to enable schools to self-assess across a range of indicators. They will then be able to access guidance and resources (to be developed) to support them to take action to improve their physical activity offer. This will include promoting the use of natural spaces for active lessons and outdoor learning.
- PHW's Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit (WHIASU) published a comprehensive [Health Impact Assessment of Climate change in Wales](#) (2023) highlighting the impacts of climate change on health and wellbeing. The summary report describes how ecosystems will be affected including biodiversity, water supply and soil quality causing not only direct physical impacts, but also wider social, economic and mental health impacts. It also discusses a number of practical opportunities for health that arise from climate change and its mitigation including nature-based solutions. The report includes an infographic on the health benefits of nature and the actions we can take to promote biodiversity (listed in the Appendix).



WHIASU are supporting Welsh Government to implement the regulations and will provide support for public bodies to acquire the skills to undertake Health Impact Assessments (HIAs). The Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 requires Welsh Government Ministers to make regulations specifying when public bodies in Wales must undertake HIAs, thereby making HIA a statutory requirement in certain situations. The assessment includes the impact of proposals on environmental determinants of health, such as biodiversity, in accordance with the new regulations.

WHIASU are also producing a document called 'Planning Healthy Places' for local authority planning officers to reference when they are developing local development plans. It contains evidence that demonstrates the links between planning and design of the natural and built environment and health and includes the importance of green space and biodiversity to health and wellbeing.

- '[The Best Start in Life: An Early Years Framework for Action](#)' was published in July 2025 and includes **access to nature** amongst the key components of a system that gives every child the best start in life. It states that families should have equitable access to quality green and blue spaces where children have the freedom to play and that children should be able to experience nature. PHW is currently working with Welsh Government to agree an approach to implementation that aligns with their priorities and ambition.
- The 'National Standards for Health and Well-being Promoting Schools in Wales' are due to be published this year and include standards around school environment. This section highlights the importance of regular access to natural spaces and recommends that schools provide opportunities for spending time outdoors for health, well-being and learning. Further guidance on this core component area is also being developed.



### 3. Working with partners and identifying opportunities to support biodiversity

We aim to advocate for biodiversity, share good practice with stakeholders and support relevant networks.

#### *Key activities*

PHW has played an active role within networks and events aimed at sharing good practice and supporting the Wales-wide call to halt biodiversity decline and support healthy eco-systems.

- The Natural Resources Wales [Nature and Us](#) event took place on World Environment Day in 2024 at the Senedd. PHW showcased a number of sustainability initiatives and shared plans for the new Biodiversity Action Plan. Attendees were asked for their views on the importance of nature to health and the role PHW should play in supporting biodiversity.



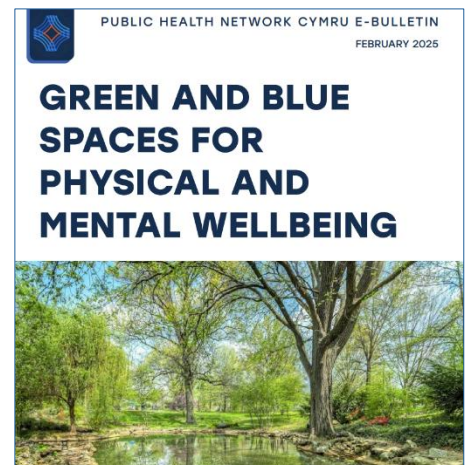
- PHW are members of the Welsh Government's Section 6 Working Group which brings together public bodies in Wales who have a duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. Updates on PHW's biodiversity work are shared with other organisations through the network, along with examples of good practice and case studies.
- PHW are part of the Welsh Government Climate Smart Education Task & Finish group which brings together representatives from Health Boards and Trusts in Wales to drive forward climate smart education across the health sector in Wales. The group is focused on mapping existing initiatives, identifying gaps and opportunities, and developing a core offer for climate education that covers adaptation, decarbonisation and also the nature emergency.
- A number of teams in PHW work closely with the Future Generations Commissioner's (FGC) Office to support the implementation of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Commissioner's Cymru Can strategy. A five-year partnership between PHW and the FGC was agreed in 2024 to outline our collaboration. A 'supporting organisations network' has been established for the Climate & Nature mission to bring together our two organisations along with NRW, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and Welsh Government to encourage collaborative opportunities. PHW also provided evidence for the [Future Generations Report](#), published in April 2025, with 10 recommendations for Welsh Government and public bodies to support the Climate & Nature mission.



• PHW also attended the 2024 and 2025 NHS Wales Sustainability Awards and Conferences. In 2024, a colleague presented PHW's work on the climate and nature emergencies and the [Greener Primary Care Wales Framework and Award Scheme](#) won the 'A Healthier Wales' award category. The Health & Sustainability Hub also had three projects shortlisted for awards in 2024: ['The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and shift to more agile working on Public Health Wales' carbon footprint](#), ['Addressing Single-use Plastic and Waste in Public Health Wales' Microbiology labs](#) and 'Creating a Community of Green Champions' in 2024. A joint project with Microbiology 'Reducing single-use plastic and waste from our labs' and our Biodiversity action plan were both shortlisted for awards in 2025.

- [Public Health Network Cymru](#) published a [bulletin](#) focused on **Green and Blue Spaces for Physical and Mental Wellbeing**. It showcased a number of initiatives from across Wales including RSPB's nature prescriptions work, the Hapus Programme, PHW's Biodiversity Action Plan and a number of outdoor activity projects.

As a follow up to this, an online event took place in autumn 2025 to explore the role biodiversity plays in creating a healthy, sustainable future. Through collaborative and partnership work we hope to raise the profile of biodiversity as one of the essential elements of a healthy, sustainable future and share inspiring projects and initiatives.



## Next Steps

The Biodiversity Action Plan 2024-27 sets out a pathway for PHW to make progress in its work around biodiversity over the next three years. Half yearly reports and regular monitoring will ensure achievements are recorded and learning is used to amend and shape the actions where needed.

A full review will take place in 2027 before the development of the next plan which is due to be published at the end of 2027.



## Appendices

### 1. Social Prescribing Case Study

#### Social Prescribing Case Studies

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### Social Prescribing: A green prescribing story

This case study is based on feedback from an Outdoor Project Manager. They work with local outdoor providers in Gwynedd to help them create wellbeing programmes. In this case study, we find out how they support people and organisations through green social prescribing.

#### Reasons for referral

People's needs vary, although most are referred for support with mental health concerns, bereavement, and social isolation.

#### Social prescribing pathway

Most people self-refer. Some are referred by NHS services, local support organisations, the Green Health Wales network, and through health professionals on the organisation's own outdoor network.

People find out about the wellbeing programmes through social media or through voluntary sector organisations.

Upon referral, a registration form is completed which documents physical capabilities and mental wellbeing.

Referrals are made easier by strong collaboration between the project and the referring organisations. Offering consistent, high-quality provision helps organisations feel confident that people will benefit from attending the wellbeing programmes. Gentle encouragement is key to helping people to access support. Ensuring the suitability of support for those accessing it is also important in fostering their engagement.

"[For] people from the psychosis unit, ... their practitioner knows about us... So, she refers and registers them, because a lot of people don't want to talk on the phone, and then she brings them along.... Another method is say someone has contacted...the Red Cross and [they] think our programmes will be beneficial, [they] then refer them to us...Then you've got the average person on the street who sees a poster and thinks, 'I need a bit of support with wellbeing', then...they just fill [the registration form] out and come along"

"Just no pressure and complete acceptance. I've got a girl who wants to come on to our bushcraft course. We're three weeks into the programme and she just keeps messaging me saying, 'I'm sorry, I'm having a really anxious day today. I understand if you want to give my place away', and it's like, 'No: this is your course and part of your programme and this is what you get out of it'. If the thing you get out of it is you turn up, then that's going to be a celebration"



## Social Prescribing Case Studies

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### Community assets

The project offers six-week outdoor programmes incorporating walking, gardening, and bushcraft. The programmes are offered in partnership with local community organisations which signpost people to various services.

*"We offer...programmes for those who are a bit nervous to go into the outdoors and meet new people. [They are] closed programme[s] just as a gentle introduction to getting out and about...Once they complete [a] six-week programme and they feel a bit more confident...they can then start to open themselves up to other opportunities with organisations in the area"*

### Impacts of social prescribing on health and wellbeing needs

The Outdoor Project Manager has observed the following impacts for those who have accessed their services and support. People also complete feedback forms after engaging with the programme which capture some of the impacts they have achieved.

- People have increased their physical activity levels through accessing walking groups. Some people have joined or set up new groups with others they have met on programmes, helping to embed and extend these impacts.

*"We've got a walking group, and there's a guy on there who didn't believe he could walk and just walked a very small amount of time...The woman running that programme is ace, and she's just been encouraging him and being playful. Now he walks a couple of miles every time he does it, and him and his friends that he's met through that programme have started a walking group"*

- The programmes have helped to reduce social isolation and have increased a sense of belonging for many people.

*"A [person] had a bereavement... just felt like getting out and connecting to other people has helped [them] to feel less isolated..."*







## Social Prescribing Case Studies

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- Feedback indicates that nearly everyone who engages with the programmes benefits from improvements in their mental health and wellbeing.

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*"I don't think there's a single group that hasn't had most of the people saying that their mental wellbeing has improved. One of them has fed back to me that she thinks it saved her life, and that she's now gone into music and dance...and she's really close to her community"*

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- Some people have gained skills, qualifications, and jobs through the programmes. Others have taken up training and volunteering opportunities.

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*"One of our volunteers...started off on the programme because of a bereavement, became a volunteer, and now they're a member of staff. We've had schemes like build a bench and woodland skills. We've got someone at the moment who has come on because of her wellbeing, but she's built quite a few skills now and she's wanting to do something around becoming an outdoor wellbeing practitioner herself. I think it's inspiring a lot of people"*

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## 2. Greener Primary Care Award Scheme Case Study

Greener Primary Care Wales 2022 Yearbook

Case Study: PRIMARY CARE DENTISTS

### Talbot Road Dental Practice, Port Talbot



#### CREATING AN OUTSIDE GREEN SPACE

##### WHAT WE DID

We wanted to create a green space where our team can go to relax at lunchtime, or just step out for a quick 'mask-free' break. Our practice is on an urban street, however despite this we felt we had some space to better utilise.

We wanted to use the gravel rear garden that the owners used for parking to create a garden to help insects and birds thrive and to be enjoyed by staff. The design had to allow space to park two cars.

##### HOW WE DID THIS

Our first step was to construct a gate at the rear of the property for privacy, to reduce litter from the lane blowing into the garden and to stop dogs using the area as a toilet.

We collected a top up of gravel from a staff member's garden who was also renovating their garden to increase wildlife and biodiversity at home. This would have otherwise gone in a skip.

One staff member introduced a bird feeder. Straight away, more birds were visiting. Unfortunately, we had to remove our bird feeder as squirrels were taking all the food and then they chewed through an electric cable! Unperturbed we installed a bird nesting box donated to us. We now have plans for a hedgehog house and a bug hotel.

Two old planters picked up from our local civic amenity site were painted with recycled paint providing some privacy. We have also reused planters that have been donated by the team.

We have asked friends and family for plants and have grown cuttings ourselves. We have tried to use plants that encourage pollinators. Another member of staff started planting a border with three trees; two of which were free from The Woodland Trust, and other shrubs that will provide plenty of berries for the birds and with a bit of luck some plums for us!

We have started a herb garden in recycled containers that the team are welcome to pick. Our tea brewed with our chocolate mint leaves is very popular.

Needing somewhere to sit, we were lucky enough to have picked up a free table and chair set, that otherwise would have gone to landfill. After a little TLC it provided a lovely area for the team to socialise.

We have installed a solar water fountain which also doubles up as a bird bath, however, we recognise that this is very much dependent on the local weather in Port Talbot!

We are really proud of what we have achieved so far and look forward to watching it grow. We are still using the garden every day.

##### WHAT DIFFERENCE CAN DOING THIS MAKE?

We have been pleasantly surprised by the effect the garden has had not just on our team, but also on our local community. We have had neighbours we have never spoken to stopping to chat.

The team were most appreciative of the space during the summer, especially in the heatwaves. Several team members are asking for garden advice and cuttings so that they can 'green up' their own space at home. Already team members are thinking creatively about the space and what they can bring to it.

Watching the wildlife from the practice windows helps us all de-stress during our busy working days. We are amazed by the amount of wildlife such as birds, bees and butterflies that visit our garden.



##### TOP TIPS

Make sure your team is on board as you can't do it alone and no-one wants to see a wilting, neglected garden every day.

Utilise friends and family for donations.

Be creative. You don't have to spend a lot of money to create a lovely green space.

##### TO FIND OUT MORE

Further information about The Woodland Trust and free trees for communities can be found [here](#).

##### CONTACT

talbotroadp@live.co.uk

##### FRAMEWORK ACTION

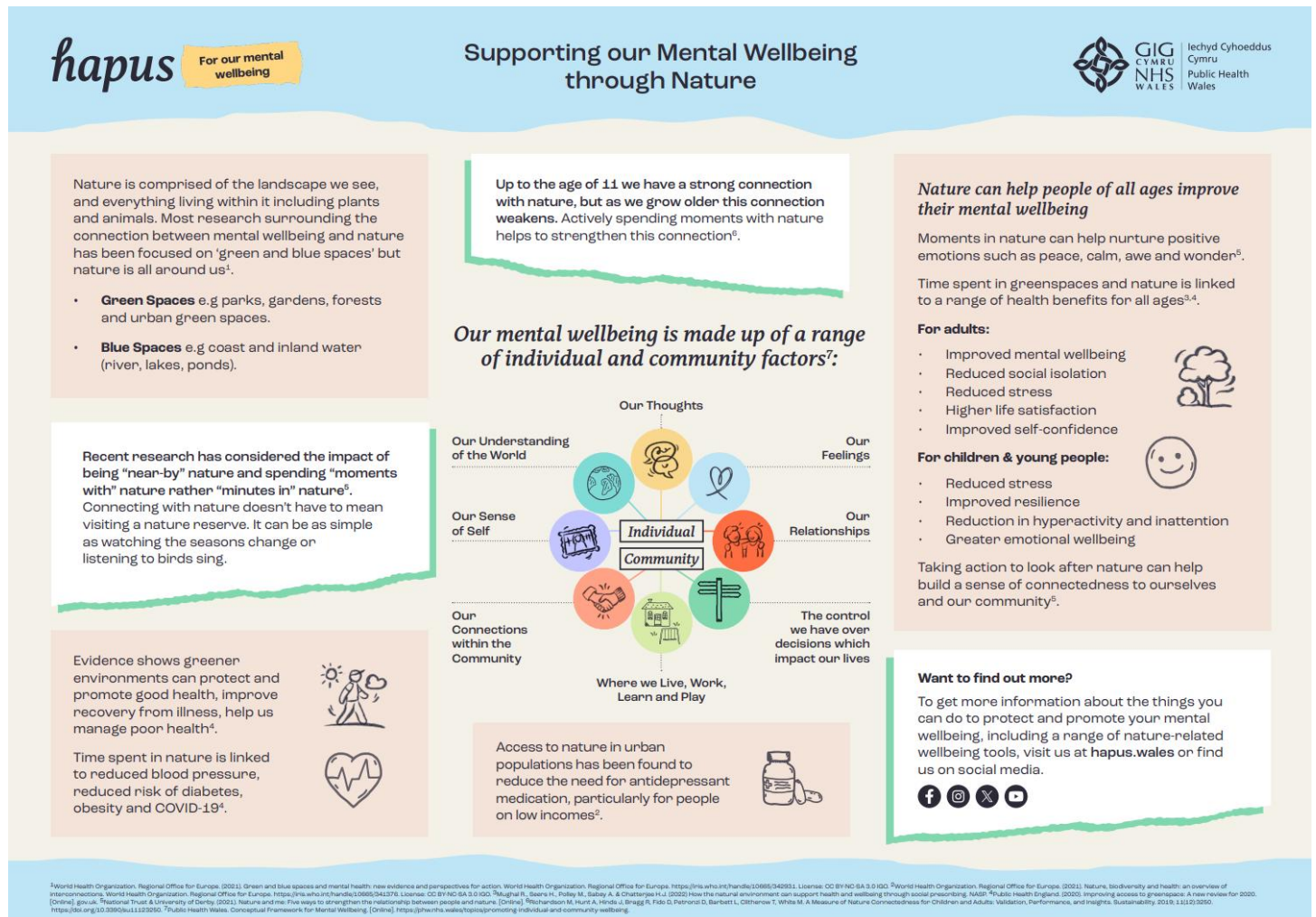
###### BUILDINGS & ESTATES

The practice has optimised its outside areas and green spaces for biodiversity and has increased the opportunities available for local wildlife to thrive, as well as supporting the benefits of green spaces to health and wellbeing.





### 3. Hapus Programme Infographic – Supporting our Mental Wellbeing through Nature



#### 4. Health Impact Assessment of Climate Change infographic on Nature and Health & Wellbeing

## Nature supports our health and wellbeing

### Physical wellbeing

Keeping active in green and natural spaces like beaches, forests, parks and the countryside by walking, running, cycling, conservation work and playing

✓ **Health outcomes:**

- General physical health
- Cardiovascular health
- Healthier immune systems
- Healthier weight
- Mental wellbeing





### Cut down on waste

Reduce, repair, reuse and recycle

🔗 [Reuse more | Wales Recycles](#)



### Switch to active travel

Walk or cycle for your short distance journeys instead of going by car. All local authorities in Wales are producing active travel maps to help people plan car free journeys



### Taking care of yourself and others

### Mental wellbeing

Peaceful places; keeping active; taking notice of nature; feeling connected to nature; appreciating beauty

✓ **Health outcomes of access to green and natural spaces:**

For children and young people:

- Better emotional wellbeing
- Reduced stress and hyperactivity
- Improved resilience

For adults:

- Lower stress, depression and anxiety;
- Higher positive emotions and mental wellbeing



### Reduce energy use

Save money on your bills at the same time as reducing your carbon footprint 🔗 [Nest Wales](#)



### Support nature and biodiversity

Make your garden wildlife friendly

🔗 [Nature on your Doorstep – Wildlife-friendly Gardening | The RSPB](#)



### Social wellbeing

Places to meet with others; shared activities and experiences

✓ **Health outcomes:**

- Reduce social isolation
- Sense of belonging
- Improved mental wellbeing



### Essentials for life

Clean air



Water



Food



### Volunteer for a local environmental charity

You could be food growing, fundraising, litter picking or conserving nature

🔗 [I want to volunteer - WCVA](#)



### Work together

Find out how communities across Wales are tackling climate change and helping nature together

🔗 [Renew Wales](#)



In the UK, **40% of species are in decline**, and **25% of mammals are at risk of extinction**



Taken from: Health Impact Assessment of Climate Change in Wales (Public Health Wales, forthcoming). Public Health England (2020) Improving Access to Greenspace: a New Review for 2020. JNCC (2021) Nature Positive 2030.



Gweithio gyda'n gilydd  
i greu Cymru iachach

Working together  
for a healthier Wales