



The Gwent Green Grid Partnership (GGGP) is a three-year project running from March 2020 to March 2022. Due to a significant delay due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the partnership received approval of funding from Welsh Government in May 2021, meaning that project delivery has been condensed into a two-year period. The partnership has been busy recruiting new roles within the project team and establishing work in each of the workstreams. This first Newsletter introduces the project and outlines the aims and objectives of each of the five workstreams.



The GGGP

The Gwent Green Grid Partnership aims to improve and develop green infrastructure - a term used to describe the network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect villages, towns and cities – as well as provide green job opportunities within the area. Green infrastructure has a crucial role to play in addressing nature, climate change and health emergencies.

Monmouthshire County Council, working with Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Newport and Torfaen councils as well as Natural Resources Wales, Forest Research and the Severn Wye Energy Agency, leads the partnership. The organisations will work together to ensure that the area's natural resources are healthy, resilient to pressures and threats and thereby better able to provide vital health and well-being benefits for current and future generations.

The Gwent Green Grid Partnership will bring to life the Gwent Public Service Board's commitment to implementing the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and the Environment (Wales) Act through improved collaboration with partners, involving local citizens and delivering across all seven well-being goals. It will also help act as a delivery mechanism for the South East Wales Area Statement working with Natural Resources Wales.

The project will deliver a range of well-being benefits for local communities and plans to make improvements to green spaces, urban and country parks, cycleways and public rights of way. It will facilitate better woodland management and creation and take action to protect and enhance vital habitats for pollinators. The partnership will also explore better management of natural spaces to provide opportunities which deliver preventative health-focussed activity.

The project is supported by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe Investing in Rural Areas and is funded by the Welsh Government's Enabling of Natural Resources and Well-being Grant.

A series of key programmes and associated projects will deliver opportunities and progress in each of these workstreams is outlined below.





WORKSTREAM 1: Regional GI Strategy and Partnership

The GGGP demonstrates a ground-breaking way of working collaboratively to deliver strategic and local outcomes to provide a regional approach to Green Infrastructure in Gwent. Through this collaborative working, the first workstream focuses on establishing a Regional GI strategy and sitting alongside it, a Regional Health Impact Assessment (HIA) and Mental Well-being Impact Assessment. With key roles within the GGGP partnership now being in place, work is underway to establish a wider partnership group and begin working on strategic outcomes.

WORKSTREAM 2: Gwent Green Corridors

The second workstream will develop a plan to identify missing links in the access network regionally and locally. This workstream also involves an educational aspect and access projects on the ground. This work stream will be managed by the Regional Access Coordinator.

This resulting practical components will be delivered through a ranger training scheme, overseen by a Trainee Ranger Coordinator. On the ground improvements will be implemented regionally and locally to enable people to lead active healthy lifestyles, provide economic opportunities and expand, where possible, the network available to cyclists and horse riders.

The partnership will establish a Regional Strategic access group that will feed into the local access forums and will develop a Regional Access Plan.

WORKSTREAM 3: Gwent i-Tree Eco Study Pilot Areas

An i-Tree Eco project is being completed as part of the Gwent Green Grid programme. The project will provide a detailed and statistically robust insight into the tree population of Chepstow and the surrounding towns & villages of Severnside and help those who look after these trees to make more informed management decisions. The i-Tree project required information to be collected from 200 locations chosen at random, and both professional tree surveyors and volunteers were involved. The volunteers were trained in the classroom and in practice plots at Caldicot Castle on July 21st (see photo) before being sent out in pairs to collect their data. In total, 12 volunteers visited almost a quarter of all the project's locations, representing a fantastic contribution to the project as a whole as well as providing them with a first-hand opportunity to learn more about trees, how to measure a tree's size, and how to record its condition. All 200 locations were visited by the end of August and the data is now being analysed by Forest Research. The Project's organisers thank all the homeowners and businesses who kindly granted surveyors permission to access and complete their surveys.

The project forms the second case study for the GGGP, the first being set in Newport. Following a review of the data from these sites, a key output will be a better understanding of the structure of the urban forest (including a model to roll out across Gwent) to enable better decision making in local and strategic management of trees. A full report, including a summary for non-specialist readers, will be ready in early summer 2022.

WORKSTREAM 4: Gwent GI Projects

Informed by the strategic outcomes of the partnership, the Green Infrastructure projects will deliver a range of practical landscape enhancements, development and implementation of GI management plans, implementation of Nature Isn't Neat outcomes, delivery of the pollinator friendly management approach, tree planting and access improvements. This will involve working with communities, seeking improvements across Gwent in green spaces, urban parks, country parks, along cycleways, PROWs, woodlands, and other land owned and managed by partner organisations, private businesses, and individuals where feasible.

WORKSTREAM 5: Pollinator Friendly Gwent

The work within this workstream is split into two elements: Nature Isn't Neat and Resilient Grasslands (Cut and Collect).

Nature Isn't Neat will engage with local communities across the Gwent Green Grid area raising awareness of pollinator decline and encouraging community ownership and empowerment to deliver actions that will help them recover. The project will establish a joined-up approach to management of Green Infrastructure, to create pollinator habitats across the region. An operator's code of action and training programme will be delivered, supporting effective pollinator management, the project will also contribute to the development of Pollinator Policies for local authorities, and relevant organisations to secure wide scale land enhancement for pollinators and create resilient ecological networks.

The Cut and Collect project will consider the mechanisms needed for the effective management of grassland addressing barriers and identifying different treatments to utilise grass cuttings. This will be delivered by Severn Wye Energy Agency, who in partnership with each LA, will identify at key locations/strategic sites/areas to improve grasslands for pollinators and design and assist in delivery of the trial. SWEA are currently gathering data from LA's on what level of cut and collect they are currently undertaking, machinery used and where arisings currently end up.



MEET THE TEAM!



HELEN FAIRBANK
GGGP
Collaboration Lead

My role as Collaboration Lead is to coordinate and manage the GGGP. Based in Monmouthshire County Council, I work with all project partners as well as Welsh Government, to ensure that the partnership delivers a series of programme outputs and to ensure legacy outcomes.



JAMES BOWER
Countryside Ranger
Trainee Coordinator

My role within the GGGP is to deliver a positive and worthwhile training program for the trainees across the 5 local authority areas, monitoring and assessing their progress while evaluating works completed. I will provide practical support and arrange training courses, equipping the trainees with the skills, knowledge, and confidence for future employment opportunities.



STACEY DELBRIDGE
Nature Isn't Neat
Project Officer

I'm Stacey and I will be coordinating the delivery of the Pollinator Friendly Gwent: Nature Isn't Neat project. I am looking forward to raising the awareness of the importance of pollinators within communities and supporting local authorities in making changes to management. The strategic approach the project will deliver is imperative for strong resilient ecological networks.



ELLIOT WATERS
Nature Isn't Neat
Implementation Officer

I'm Elliot and I will be delivering the Pollinator Friendly Gwent: Nature Isn't Neat project across the region. I'm excited to start engaging local communities about the amazing diversity of pollinators we have in Gwent and supporting local authority operatives to create areas of high-quality habitats and resilient ecosystems.



JADE JAMES
GGGP
Business Support Assistant

I'll be providing financial and administrative support for the project partnership. My role will be to gather and manage data, organise meetings and events and be a point of contact for enquiries about the GGGP.

What's next for the GGG Partnership?

The next six months will be extremely busy for the partnership. As the remaining roles within the GGGP delivery team are filled, work will progress across all workstreams. The trainee rangers will begin their induction and start delivering access projects. Green Infrastructure projects will see landscape improvements across the Gwent area and at a strategic level, the group will start working toward the Regional GI strategy and Health Impact Assessment.

Activities and events are planned for 2022, so follow us on [Twitter @Gwentgreengrid](#) for all the latest news and please re tweet and share as widely as possible.

For more updates please see the GGGP webpages:

www.monlife.co.uk/outdoor/green-infrastructure/green-infrastructure-partnerships-projects/