



We hope you're enjoying the summer as much as we are!

The Gwent Green Grid Partnership (GGGP) is buzzing with activity as we dive into the final year of our current phase, funded by the Heritage Lottery Nature Networks Fund and the Shared Prosperity Fund. With so many exciting projects underway and more on the horizon, we wanted to take a moment to share some updates and give you a sneak peek at what's coming up.

There's so much happening that we can't cover it all, but this newsletter will give you a snapshot, with a special focus on our engagement activities for this year.

Stay tuned for more updates and get ready to be inspired by, or even join in with, the incredible work we're doing together!



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GWENT GREEN GRID PARTNERSHIP: A RECAP

The partnership, which includes the five local authorities of Gwent, Natural Resources Wales (NRW), and other stakeholders, is working tirelessly to address the nature and climate emergencies. We're on a mission to improve the quality of green spaces in both urban and rural areas, making them more resilient for both wildlife and people. Our five GGGP regional officers, along with the Delivery Group and Steering Group, are bringing immense value to our communities across the region.





HELPING NATURE TO HELP US: THE BIOTAPESTRY



One of our most exciting and ambitious projects to date is the development of the BioTapestry. This incredible initiative celebrates the rich and interconnected biodiversity found across the Gwent region, showcasing how these ecosystems can help us tackle the challenges brought by climate change. The BioTapestry is part of the GGG Team's Nature and Climate Awareness work, running alongside school workshops. Our focus is on the positive impact of *How We Can Help Nature Help Us* with climate change.

When it's completed, the BioTapestry will take you on a fascinating journey through the diverse habitats, species, and landscapes of Gwent, all crafted by our local communities. Imagine a tapestry as long as the original Bayeux Tapestry – a whopping 70 meters! While it won't technically be a tapestry, it will be a stunning mixed textile media creation which brings to life the amazing biodiversity of the Gwent region.

GGG officers are collaborating with local artists, community groups, and volunteers to host workshops, encouraging individuals and groups to get crafty and contribute creatively to BioTapestry panels for their area. This initiative fosters a sense of pride and connection to our local natural heritage. The BioTapestry aims to weave together community stories and biodiversity conservation efforts into a vibrant tapestry that highlights the interconnectedness of our environment. We've seen remarkable participation from local communities who we have already worked with, enriching the project with diverse perspectives and contributions and we are looking forward to working with many more people as this project develops.

To celebrate the success of our BioTapestry project, we are planning events and exhibitions to showcase the tapestries created by community members. These will highlight the stories and efforts behind each piece, offering a visual representation of our collective commitment to protecting and enhancing the resilience of our ecological networks to address the challenges posed by species decline and climate change.



GWENT RESILIENT ECOLOGICAL NETWORK MAPPER

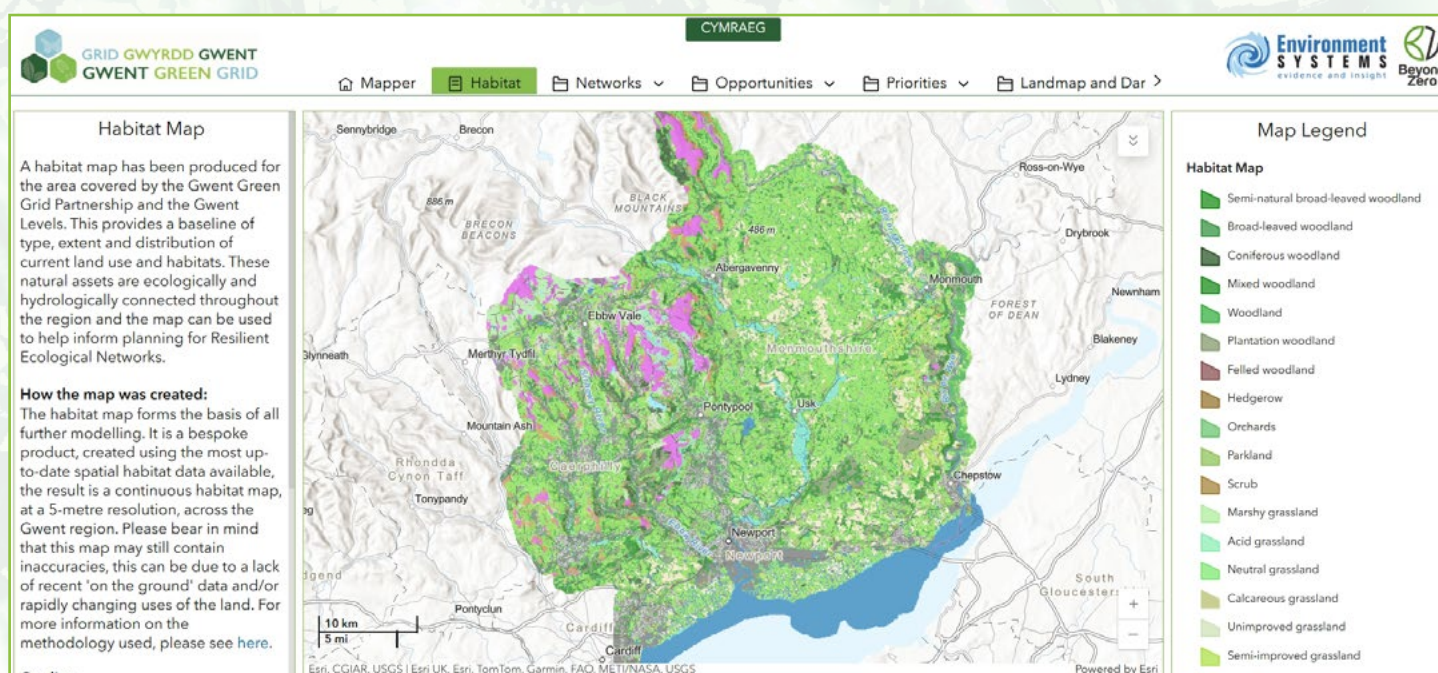


The [Gwent Green Grid's new Resilient Ecological Network Mapper](#) is now live! Developed by Environment Systems in collaboration with GGGP partners, this fantastic tool is designed to guide nature recovery efforts across Gwent. The mapper offers interactive maps that provide a detailed view of habitats and networks, highlights restoration opportunities, and identifies key areas for habitat restoration and connectivity improvements to enhance ecological resilience.

To celebrate the launch, a training workshop was hosted on 11th February. The workshop provided valuable insights and inspiration for developing new projects. You can rewatch the [training workshop here](#).

The mapper highlights opportunities for restoration and connectivity, including for priority habitats. For professional use, it aids in development planning, nature recovery projects, and landscape-scale initiatives aimed at enhancing ecological extent, condition, and connectivity.

For local people and community groups, the web mapper can help plan community projects, improve local biodiversity, and make informed decisions about the environment. If you have projects you'd like to explore with the mapper or need advice and training, please reach out to the GGGP.



Resilient Ecological Networks

The mapper is instrumental in our collaboration with NRW to develop Resilient Ecological Networks (RENs) and provides crucial evidence of habitat networks across Gwent. RENs offer a strategic approach to protecting and restoring Wales' biodiversity. By identifying, prioritising, and connecting key habitats, RENs create a robust framework to adapt, resist, and recover from pressures such as climate change and other environmental challenges, while aligning with local needs and opportunities.

The GGGP, in partnership with the Living Levels Partnership, NRW, and stakeholders, have led the first RENs pilot project in Wales on the Gwent Levels. This REN was co-designed through a series of workshops mapping core zones and nature recovery zones which will drive and guide local delivery. The Gwent Levels RENs project advances the Welsh Government's work on Policy 9 of the Future Wales Gwent Levels pilot project, aiming to integrate biodiversity, ecosystem resilience, and green infrastructure into planning policies in Wales. The RENs maps designed for the Gwent Levels will shortly be available to view and download on DataMap Wales.

We are now extending the development of RENs throughout the whole of Gwent, examining each Landscape Profile area in turn to map RENs and develop partnerships and action plans for nature recovery, alongside NRW. To support this effort, we have received funding from Nature Networks 4, coordinated by Blaenau Gwent CBC, to commission ecological services assessments for Gwent, which will provide evidence for the design process.

We will be organising workshops later this year where you will have the ability to feed into the RENs design process. We're looking forward to exploring the diverse communities and habitats of Gwent, as local knowledge and expertise are vital to designing RENs.



HEALTH & WELLBEING AND GREEN SKILLS TRAINING



Our **Green Skills Training Program** is thriving, offering exciting new opportunities for community groups and volunteers. These courses not only equip individuals with valuable skills but also boost health and wellbeing. We've delivered a wide range of courses from **first aid** and **brushcutter skills** to **walk leader training** and **plant identification**.

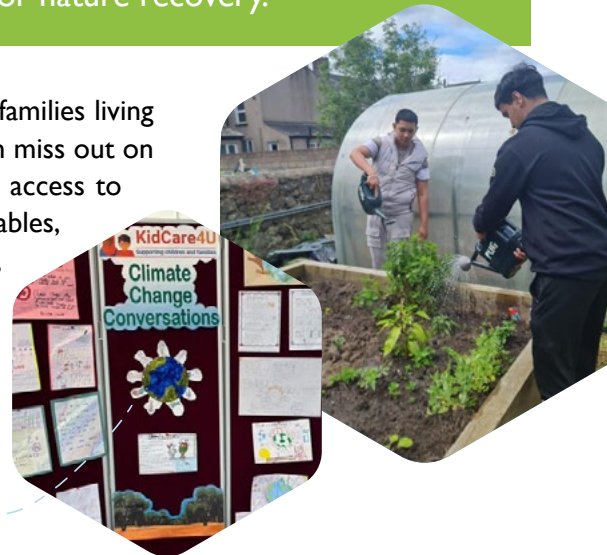
An enthusiastic group of eight volunteers from **Caerphilly Woodland Trust** recently spent two days learning the art of **green woodworking**. They crafted shave horses and stools, utilising heritage skills and local resources. One volunteer shared, "This has been the most enjoyable and rewarding course I've ever been part of, and the shave horses will be a game changer for us."



Meanwhile, a lucky group of walkers from the **New Tredegar Strollers** and the **Dicky Tickers** embarked on a **foraging adventure** at the Chepstow estuary with Chloe from **Gourmet Gatherings**. After gathering many edible plants, they savoured delicious treats like wild chestnut and root vegetable nutmeg-spiced creamy soup with freshly baked wild garlic focaccia, and wild rose, rosehip, hibiscus, cranberry and raspberry tea.

Over the past two years, we've had the pleasure of supporting more than **forty community groups** in delivering projects that promote health and wellbeing. These initiatives have made a significant impact on the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of residents, often bringing communities closer together. Designed to provide lasting benefits to individuals, these projects also enhance the natural environment and, in some cases, lay the groundwork for nature recovery.

In Newport, **Kidcare4u** has been making a big difference for diverse ethnic families living on low incomes. This fantastic enterprise works with communities that often miss out on the chance to enjoy green spaces due to barriers like language and limited access to technology. By involving these communities in activities such as growing vegetables, cooking together, exploring local green spaces like the wetlands, and going on walks, **Kidcare4u** aims to provide both immediate and long-term benefits to participants' mental health. This project is designed to ensure that those who have traditionally been excluded from such opportunities can now fully participate, helping not just individuals, but entire families, develop a positive and sustainable relationship with nature.



One of the groups we've recently supported is **The Gathering Community Group**. This wonderful organisation offers a safe and accessible space for adults with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, and mental health challenges. With ambitious plans for the future, they aim to enrich their social activities by offering a variety of gardening and growing experiences. We've been delighted to help them improve their outdoor environment.



WHAT'S COMING NEXT...



Nature Isn't Neat is back!

Are you passionate about supporting local wildlife and pollinators? Join us in the Nature Isn't Neat initiative and transform your green spaces into vibrant, wildflower-rich meadows!

What is 'Nature Isn't Neat'?

Nature Isn't Neat is an innovative approach to grassland management that encourages us to let our gardens, verges, open spaces, and parks grow naturally during the spring and summer. This creates meadow areas that provide essential habitats for pollinators and other wildlife.

The Nature Isn't Neat project is part of the Gwent Green Grid Partnership, working across the region to establish connected green spaces that are rich in wildflowers and beneficial to pollinators.

Follow us [@Natureisntneat](#) on Instagram and Facebook for the latest updates and to share your photos of wildflowers and wildlife in your area!



What are the benefits?

By allowing grasslands to grow, we encourage a greater variety of wildflowers to bloom for longer periods, providing food and habitats for pollinating insects like bees and butterflies. This approach not only benefits nature but also helps mitigate climate change by storing more carbon in the soil and reducing the impact of flooding.

Moreover, environments that support diverse wildlife improve people's health and mental wellbeing, offering a chance to slow down and enjoy the beauty of flowers, insects, and other wildlife.

How we will manage green spaces

This alternative management method is not about cutting costs; it's about enhancing our green spaces to meet residents' needs. Pathway edges and road junction verges will be cut frequently to ensure safety. Recreational areas and sports pitches will be maintained, and pathways will be cut through meadows to create walkways.

Brush harvesting

As part of Nature isn't Neat, we're looking to use more local provenance seed sources in our restoration projects and to help spread local diversity into our green spaces. So, this summer, we will be carrying out brush harvesting on species rich meadows which will be used to seed verges, parks and fields across Gwent.

Why not make your own mini meadow?

By allowing parts of your garden to grow naturally, you can create a haven for pollinators and other wildlife. Plant native wildflowers, reduce mowing, and let nature take its course. Every little bit helps in creating a network of green spaces that support biodiversity.



You can join the Nature Isn't Neat initiative by managing your own green space for nature. Request our new resource pack by emailing gwentpollinators@monmouthshire.gov.uk

