

Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Part 1 - Section 6
The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty
Report – December 2025

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board



Foreword

“This report outlines our progress since 2019 in meeting Section 6 requirements, highlighting initiatives completed and further initiatives aimed to advance biodiversity. These efforts deliver immediate benefits and, more importantly, create lasting healthier habitats and more resilient biodiversity alongside healthcare. The Health Board upholds sustainability as a core principle, with the environment a key theme in the 2025–28 Integrated Medium-Term Plan (IMTP). The drive on biodiversity also reinforces the Health Boards commitment to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. The Health Board is fortunate to have natural surroundings and green spaces in some of the estate, which we strive to preserve through careful planning and habitat improvements. Though the work can be hard, it is also exciting as staff and volunteers continue their efforts to reduce our impact on biodiversity. There is still much to be done on this but the foundations are in place to continue this journey.”

Jamie Marchant, Divisional Director Estates & Facilities.

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Introduction and Context

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) has a duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity and, in doing so, to promote the resilience of ecosystems when exercising its functions. This includes ensuring that biodiversity considerations are integrated into estate management, procurement, planning, healthcare service delivery, and policy development.

The Health Board's land, buildings, and green spaces can contribute to local biodiversity enhancement—supporting pollinators, improving habitat connectivity, and promoting the health and well-being benefits of access to nature for patients, staff, and communities.

ABUHB operates across five local authority areas (Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport, and Torfaen), covering a diverse landscape from urban centres to rural environments. Actions to support biodiversity are therefore applied across this regional scale, aligning with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) Area Statements for the South East Wales region. Collaboration with local authorities and community partners ensures biodiversity measures are relevant to local environmental priorities and spatial contexts.

As a Welsh public body, ABUHB is subject to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WFG Act). Its biodiversity duty complements the WFG goals — particularly “a healthier Wales,” “a resilient Wales,” and “a globally responsible Wales.”

ABUHB contributes to Public Services Boards (PSBs) across its area, embedding biodiversity and environmental resilience within local well-being plans. By aligning its environmental management, health promotion, and sustainability strategies with NRW's Area Statements and national nature recovery priorities, ABUHB ensures that its operations and partnerships deliver both biodiversity benefits and well-being outcomes for current and future generations.

Enhancing biodiversity supports Aneurin Bevan University Health Board's (ABUHB) core objectives of improving health, well-being, and sustainability.

Biodiverse environments promote physical and mental health, aid recovery, reduce health inequalities, and contribute to climate resilience. The Health Board integrates biodiversity into estate management, service delivery, and partnership work, aligning with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act goals — particularly a Resilient Wales and a Healthier Wales.

Through the five ways of working, ABUHB takes a long-term, preventive, and collaborative approach, embedding nature-based solutions into health planning and involving staff and communities in creating healthier, more resilient environments.

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, extends across the old geographical boundary of the preserved county of Gwent – this area of approx. 1,500sq.km now covers the unitary authorities of Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Newport, Torfaen and Monmouth. The Health Board currently occupies a large property portfolio with a large land holding and serving a population of 650,000.

Within our geographical boundary there are exceptionally rich and diverse range of habitats and species. In Torfaen alone there is heather moorland on the uplands and ancient woodlands. In the south, wild flower meadows supporting many key species such as red grouse and horse-shoe bats including a landscape of industrial legacy.

In contrast, Monmouthshire is a typically rural county, rich in forestry and agriculture, with the rivers of the Usk and the Wye dissecting the county boundary. In the south, the unique man-made habitat of the Gwent levels with Special Area of Conservation (SAC) status.

The Gwent area contains many ecologically important sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and examples of Local Nature Reserves (LNR).

Highlights & Progress:

The Health Board launched its Decarbonisation Programme Board in 2022, which includes initiatives to enhance and promote biodiversity through targeted projects and structured reporting mechanisms.

In 2023, ABUHB, in collaboration with Powys Health Board, commissioned Mott MacDonald to evaluate five sites across the Health Board estate, providing recommendations for biodiversity enhancements. The resulting reports offer valuable insights into understanding the existing ecology and presents opportunities for promoting biodiversity on key sites.

From the inaugural Biodiversity Position Statement published in 2019, a recommendation was to enhance ecological understanding of the existing estate. The Health Board obtained funding from the Health & Social Care Climate Emergency Programme (HSCCEP) to undertake Biodiversity Enhancement Assessments. These were conducted at St Cadoc's, Nevill Hall, Maindiff Court, Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr and Serennu Children's Centre. The outcome was a series of Biodiversity Enhancement Reports that provided detail on existing habitats and species and recommendations to improve biodiversity and the experience of being in these spaces.

St Cadoc's Hospital

Many discrete habitats were identified, including deciduous woodland, modified grassland and streams. Whilst recommendations for improvement included hedgerow and stream restoration, providing bat roosts and bee nesting sites. Also, the removal of non-native species and the creation of wildlife well-being walks.

Nevill Hall Hospital

The site is designated locally as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and supports a wide range of ecological habitats and existing potential for wildlife, most notably of value are the stream leading to the River Usk, two ponds, veteran trees and areas of woodland. Specific recommendations included pond and orchard enhancements as well as the planting of early season wildflowers for meadow creation.



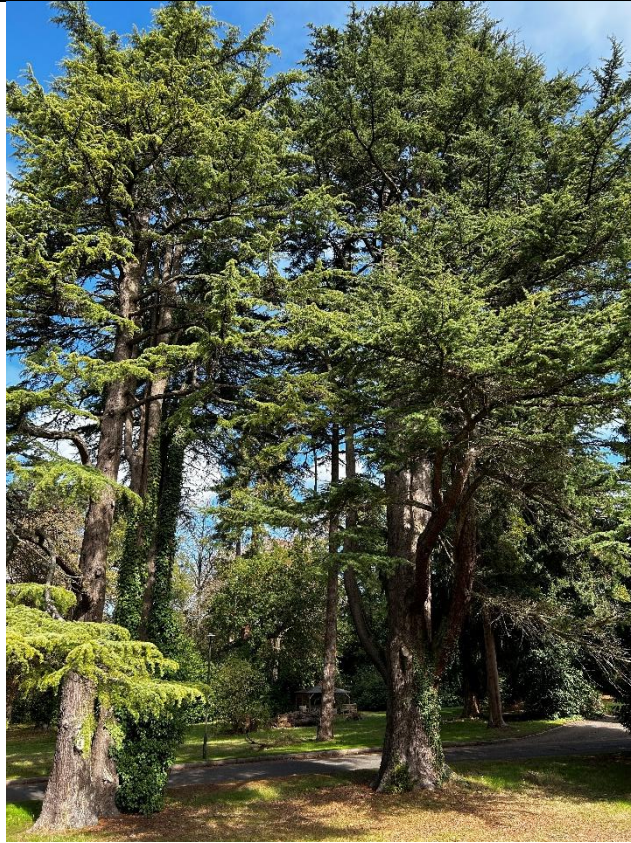
Millennium Woodland, 2025

Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr Hospital

Part of the sites shares similar SINC designation (Rhymney River corridor) as well as areas of neutral grassland and woodland which also provide existing potential for wildlife and habitat creation. Ecological improvement concentrating on wet woodland management and grassland rotational management as well as the provision of reptile and species boxes were key at this site.

Maindiff Court Hospital

For its neutral grassland and parkland habitats, the hospital site is also designated as a SINC. Additional ecological value is afforded by areas of lowland deciduous woodland and areas of restored ancient woodland. There is also the presence of several veteran trees scattered across the site.



Veteran Black Pine trees, 2025

Here, recommendations included wildflower meadow creation along with woodland glade enhancement and the installation of log and grass piles for reptiles and amphibians.

Serennu Children's Centre

At the children's centre, ecological value already exists in the presence of hedgerow and young woodland, species-rich grassland and shrub. There is also a stream and pond. Opportunities to improve the habitats centred on improving aquatic environments, tree planting and wildlife boxes.

In summary, there were emerging themes coming from the surveys undertaken that could be expanded and replicated across other sites, or undertaken as a larger project across the hospitals surveyed. Themes such as wildflower planting, tree planting, wildlife boxes, aquatic habitats and the restoration of existing habitats. Across hospitals where there are residential patients there was also a

focus on improving the outdoor spaces for well-being. Also developing public engagement through information boards and nature walks.

A notable example of community and staff engagement is the Walled Garden at Llanfrechfa Grange, which, through the dedication of volunteers over the past decade, has been transformed into a flourishing area of plants and trees. This space supports the wellbeing of patients, visitors, and staff, who regularly use the garden for breaks and recreation. Activity in this area exemplifies the integration of biodiversity, public health, and outdoor wellbeing, in alignment with principles set out in the Future Generations Act (Wales). The project is now run as a registered charity.



Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden, 2025

Our executive director of allied health professionals is leading a similar group to develop a “Wild Flower Garden” at Nevill Hall Hospital in Abergavenny, learning from how the Llanfrechfa Walled Garden has been developed over the last decade. This is an exciting opportunity for the volunteers and patients/staff to be involved from the start of this development. We will report the progress made with this development through our quarterly Decarbonisation Programme Board.

Other successes include;

Wild flower growing development at Trethomas General Practice & Community premises and community orchard with the planting of 14 fruit trees with help from the local community, school children & staff volunteers.

“The Bees” project at Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr hospital is continuing to develop, and the group are now able to sell the wares that are produced from this plot.

Grange University Hospital opened in November 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic. It incorporated carefully planned outdoor areas designed for staff, patients, and visitors. These spaces provide both recreational and restorative opportunities while supporting biodiversity objectives.

The Millennium Woodland at Nevill Hall Hospital continues to provide a tranquil green space for patients, staff and visitors.



Millennium Woodland, Nevill Hall – 2025

The wider benefits of the work undertaken (and the work that could be undertaken) is the progression towards net-zero as more diverse habitats sequester more

carbon from the atmosphere, thus enhancing resilience against climate change. Being able to spend time in, or connecting to, nature can greatly enhance well-being. This is especially important for staff, patients and the public who work, stay and visit our hospitals.

Work also undertaken during 23/24 was to retender the Grounds & Gardens maintenance contract. Work now carried out by Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) on behalf of the Health Board. The specification of the new contract now allows for Section 6 biodiversity obligations. MCC work closely with the Health Board to ensure all preventative and reactive work is sympathetic to the use of public grounds, whilst taking account of the principles of “nature isn’t neat” and re-wilding. Grassland areas are not mown throughout the late spring and summer and grass is not mown under tree canopies. There is also a horticulture element to the contract that allows for aspects including flower planting and flower bed maintenance and control of weed species.

Progress Report against the Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) - Wales Biodiversity Strategy 2015 objectives:

In summary, the production of our five Biodiversity Enhancement Reports form the basis of the Health Boards progress on meeting the NRAP objectives. The greater knowledge and understanding we now have will allow us to develop suitable action plans when funding and resources allow to progress these.

NRAP Objective 1: Engage and support participation and understanding to embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels.

The establishment of the Decarbonisation Programme Board in 2022 is the forum for matters and decisions relating to biodiversity, informed by the Estates Subgroup.

NRAP Objective 2: Safeguard species and habitats of principal importance and improve their management.

The implementation of the revised Grounds & Gardens Contract allows for greater safeguarding of species and habitats through changes to mowing regimes and the

active consideration of re-wilding and “nature isn’t neat” principles when work is undertaken.

The provision of the five Biodiversity Enhancement Reports now provides valuable information on these particular species and habitats, which allow more informed decisions and projects to be formulated in the future.

NRAP Objective 3: Increase the resilience of our natural environment by restoring degraded habitats and habitat creation.

The examples highlighted in this report demonstrate positive progress in restoring and improving the resilience of habitats. Development of the Walled Garden, wild flower planting and the management of the Millennium Woodland show how degraded habitats can be improved.

In addition, the new Grounds & Gardens Contract contains elements of allowing nature to “re-wild” and changes to mowing regimes are sympathetic to habitat creation.

NRAP Objective 4: Tackle key pressures on species and habitats.

The provision of the five Biodiversity Enhancement Reports now provides valuable information on these particular species and habitats pressures, which allow more informed decisions and projects to be formulated in the future to identify and reduce pressures.

NRAP Objective 5: Improve our evidence, understanding and monitoring

The successful funding bid to the HSCCEP in 2023 allowed the Health Board to make significant progress against one of its initial actions, documented in the first Section 6 report in 2019. That was to undertake work to improve understanding and build a knowledge base around the natural assets across its property portfolio. The Biodiversity Enhancement Reports for the hospitals detailed above now provide a basis to undertake biodiversity enhancement should funding and resource be made available to undertake projects.

NRAP Objective 6: Put in place a framework of governance and support for delivery

Biodiversity, climate change and adaptation work carried out by the Health Board is reported through its various working sub-groups to the Decarbonisation Programme Board, established in 2022. The PMO function is undertaken by the Clinical Futures Programme Team. Advice on the suitability, location and scale of projects is sought and approved via the Estates Division.

Conclusions & Recommendations:

In recent years some positive action has been taken in relation to biodiversity enhancement. The creation of the Decarbonisation Programme Board designed as the governance and reporting forum will allow decisions around biodiversity to be made. There has been some small but positive projects in the intervening years around improving biodiversity and community engagement, ongoing projects such as the Llanfrechfa Walled Garden. Changes to the Health Boards Grounds & Gardens Contract now contains conditions to promote biodiversity and ecosystem resilience; and the knowledge and learnings we can glean from our Biodiversity Enhancement Reports will provide a solid basis on which to build momentum and take positive action.

Future action will be dictated by available funding and resource in order to manage packages of work relating to biodiversity enhancement. Future work will be shaped by the recommendations identified in our Biodiversity Enhancement Reports,

conducted by consultants Mott MacDonald in 2023. Any actions or projects the Health Board is able to undertake will be aligned to the NRAP objectives. Below are the recommendations made to the Health Board that will make a practical and real impact in improving our natural estate. Initially these are aimed at the main 5 hospital sites of St Cadoc's, Nevill Hall, Maindiff Court, Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr and Serennu Children's centre, but could be replicated at smaller scale across other hospital and community clinic settings:

1. Lowland meadow creation
2. Wildlife boxes (including the provision of bee nesting sites)

3. Species-rich hedgerow creation
4. Stream and pond restoration and enhancement
5. Tree line enhancement
6. Grassland and hedgerow ecotone (for more shade tolerant species)
7. Bat roost protection and enhancements
8. Wildlife walks and community outdoor therapy spaces / wildlife gardens
9. Enhancement of field and woodland habitats
10. Habitat mosaics (creating areas of grassland and scrub)
11. Wildflower meadow creation & planting of early season species
12. Orchard enhancement and public engagement
13. Installation of log and grass piles (for reptiles, amphibians and pollinators)
14. Native tree planting
15. Rotational management of any meadows and grazing land

When resources allow, action plans will be drawn up to package together similarly themed recommendations common to the five hospitals and develop up into workable projects. Where further survey work or specific species work is required, a suitably qualified and experienced third party will be contracted with in order to progress. Funding may be via internal discretionary capital bids, charitable funds, revenue budget or targeted external funding. Management and implementation of any projects that are able to proceed will be owned and managed by the relevant department. Progress reporting shall be to the Decarbonisation Programme Board.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:

IMTP – Integrated Medium-Term Plan

WFG – Well Being of Future Generations

PSB – Public Service Board

NRW – Natural Resources Wales

ABUHB – Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

SAC – Special Area of Conservation

SSSI – Site of Special Scientific Interest

LNR – Local Nature Reserve

HSCCEP – Health & Social Care Climate Emergency Programme

SINC – Site of Importance for Nature Conservation

MCC – Monmouthshire County Council

NRAP – Nature Recovery Action Plan

PMO – Programme Management Office