

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM

1 AUGUST 2022

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES

CWM TAF NATURE NETWORK – ENABLING NATURAL RESOURCES AND WELL-BEING GRANT

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Town and Community Council Forum regarding the Cwm Taf Nature Network Project which is an initiative funded by the Welsh Government as part of the Enabling Natural Resources and Well-Being Grant (ENRaW) and, to provide updates as to project progress and impact during phase 1 of project delivery.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:

- **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
- **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** – taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
- **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Cwm Taf Nature Network Project (CTNN) has been successful in obtaining a grant from Welsh Government's Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing (ENRaW) Fund. The Cwm Taf Nature Network aims to form a collaboration of organisations in the Cwm Taf Health Board region to manage the green infrastructure of the region for the benefit of people, businesses, and communities. The project is split into three themes that align with the Cwm Taf and Bridgend Well-Being Plans with the themes of action for the ENRaW Scheme. The CTNN project will focus on:

- Developing, regenerating and broadening access to sustainable green infrastructure;
- Improving the quality of the urban and rural built environment; and

- Developing resilient ecological networks, areas and nature based solutions.

- 3.2 The grant focusses on delivering the cross cutting ambitions of Prosperity for All and the Natural Resources Policy. It encourages collaboration from the outset with new partners *outside* of traditional areas (e.g. business, health, tourism, etc.) and the project based funding is for two years. It is focused on outcomes and multiple benefits across the well-being goals and WG are looking for continuous improvement in light of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) and Environment Acts.
- 3.3 The project aims to use the opportunity of Bridgend joining the Cwm Taf Health Board as a catalyst to share green infrastructure good practice across the Public Service Boards (PSBs) brought together by this merger. Building on the Bridgend PSB and Cwm Taf PSB Well-being Plans, and other evidence bases, such as the Local Biodiversity Action Plan / Nature Recovery Plan, Biodiversity and Ecosystems Resilience Forward Plan and green infrastructure mapping, the Cwm Taf Nature Network aims to form a collaboration to better manage the green infrastructure of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board Region. BCBC will be the lead body delivering the project across Bridgend, Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) and Merthyr (MCBC) County Borough Councils.
- 3.4 There has been considerable consultation and outreach to develop this collaboration. This started in 2018 during the first ENRaW round, where Local Authority officers from Biodiversity Action Groups across South Wales were meeting to coordinate ENRaW projects as they were developed to avoid conflict or duplication. There were three green infrastructure projects being developed across South Wales, a South West project, a pilot project for South Central in Bridgend and a South East project. At the time of that first ENRaW window there was only capacity to apply for a pilot in Bridgend looking to the wider collaborative working across the South Central area in the future. Since then the Bridgend PSB and Cwm Taf PSB have been working together to develop a new bid for a pilot that takes in the whole Cwm Taf Region.
- 3.5 At a local level, partner organisations involved with the Public Service Boards (PSB) have been engaged to bring cross sector organisations into the collaboration.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 Cwm Taf Nature Network aims to form a collaboration of organisations in the Cwm Taf Health Board region to manage the green infrastructure of the region for the benefit of people, businesses and communities. The project is split into three themes that align with the Cwm Taf and Bridgend Well-Being Plans with the themes of action for the ENRaW Scheme.
- **Enable** - Increasing access to green infrastructure.
 - **Empower** - Improving environment quality for thriving communities.
 - **Unite** - Creating a connected network of green spaces.

Enable - Increasing access to green infrastructure

- 4.2 This focuses on ENRaW Theme 1 - Developing, regenerating and broadening access to sustainable green infrastructure through nature based solutions. The project aims

to develop, regenerate and increase access to 20 high quality green spaces across the Cwm Taf region.

- 4.3 This aligns with the well-being plans aim of: “Working with communities we will seek to further strengthen and expand our community infrastructure to improve support for children, families and communities, with the long term aim of improving wellbeing and resilience to deal with the challenges of life”.
- 4.4 The project will improve access to green space for all. An audit of Local Nature Reserves and other significant green spaces will be undertaken and used to implement access improvements across those sites.
- 4.5 Four flagship sites will be developed, and each of these sites will be themed as an example of best practice in unlocking green space. These themes will be:
- Increasing access for parents with early years’ children.
 - Increasing access for older people.
 - Providing a space for mindfulness.
 - Increasing access for the partially sighted.
- 4.6 Focusing on “the best start if life” aim within the well-being plans, the project will look to improve access to green infrastructure for children in the “first 1000 days” of life. The aim is to improve the educational outcomes for these children and improve their early years’ experience. The project will signpost schools and nurseries to local green space and the resources that will be developed for education in that space.

Empower - Improving environment quality for thriving communities

- 4.7 This focuses on ENRaW Theme 2 – Improving the quality of the urban and rural built environment. It will align this theme with the well-being plans’ objectives of supporting “Thriving Communities” to be “safe and cohesive”, contributing to: “We will work with communities to help them improve the local environment and increase opportunities to come together to promote a sense of ownership and security”.
- 4.8 This theme will contribute to the following well-being goals:
- Communities place a greater value on their environment and more people get involved in local issues and recognise the importance of green space in wellbeing and as a prevention factor.
 - Recognising that communities are becoming more diverse. Addressing barriers that some groups have in feeling part of communities.
 - Diverse, confident communities are resilient to change. Promotes a better knowledge of different cultures and a better knowledge of the local environment.
- 4.9 This will be done by engaging community members to use their local green space, develop a sense of ownership of that green space and foster behavioural change so people have less negative impact on our green space.
- 4.10 The project will promote educational activities, recreational activities and countryside volunteering. It will include consultation with local communities and working with them to improve their green spaces. Friends groups for our Local Nature Reserves

will be formed and work will be undertaken with the and countryside volunteers in habitat management to promote biodiversity and create high quality green space that will maximise our natural resources and contribute to the wellbeing of our communities.

- 4.11 The well-being plans state that “Collectively public sector PSB member organisations account for around a third of working people. Improving the lifestyles of our workforces and promoting a healthy workplace would not only benefit them and our business, but also encourage healthier lifestyles in their families”. It aims to “investigate how we can act to improve workplace culture to promote better health for staff. We will learn from our investigation to enable a programme of coordinated health and wellbeing activities at the workplace and in communities to improve the health of the public sector workforce and their families”.
- 4.12 This project aims to contribute to this programme by developing a 30 minute green space walk from key PSB buildings so that staff can do a health and well-being walk during their lunchtime.
- 4.13 This theme will contribute to the well-being goal of “Healthy active people in resilient communities, volunteering, keeping young people in the local area, reducing travel to work, increased use and awareness of green spaces”.

Unite - Creating a connected network of green spaces.

- 4.14 This focuses on ENRaW Theme 3 - Developing resilient ecological networks and Nature Based Solutions. It will look at the 20 green spaces improved in theme 1, as a connected network of green space across the Cwm Taf Health Board Region. The 20 sites within the project will be uniformly spaced across the region to achieve three goals:
- All residents will have access to a high quality local green space.
 - The sites will form an ecological network focused on biodiversity connectivity through the movement of birds and managing the spaces as meta-population sites for bumblebees and butterflies.
 - The sites will be improved to form a network of green spaces that can be accessed easily on foot or by bike encouraging active travel.
- 4.15 This theme will address the steps outlined in the well-being plans to encourage healthy choices in a healthy environment. These steps include:
- We will build on the evidence base, e.g. the Cwm Taf counties’ Nature Recovery Plans, to identify opportunities to improve the quality and extent of natural assets available and develop a programme to take forward these opportunities in collaboration with local communities and business.
 - We will improve the public estate and green spaces, in urban areas, by encouraging award of green flag status and through community involvement.
 - We will promote the use of the Welsh language when accessing our natural, cultural and historic assets.
 - We will promote awareness and understanding of the multiple benefits of the use of these assets by making sure that people know where they can go and what they can do to use these assets and encourage them to use footpaths and cycle paths to get there (active travel) which is good for them and for the environment.

We will explore how we can use these assets to provide opportunities for GPs and others to direct people to activities that will help improve their health and wellbeing (social prescribing).

4.16 This will in turn contribute to the following well-being goals:

- Protect assets that support rural businesses and tourism.
- Preserve and protect habitats, promote sustainable management of green spaces, prevent loss of assets. Mitigate against climate change, biodiversity decline and flood risk.
- Promote physical activity, social and supportive networks, reduce car use to reduce carbon air emissions.
- Provide safe and accessible cultural and green assets for older people, carers, disabled people, young families and children.

4.17 The project will promote walking and cycling as well as exploring safer cycle storage for people visiting our green spaces. This will encourage a lower carbon economy.

4.18 The project will focus on sustainable management of green space to reduce invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam to protect habitats, increase biodiversity, reduce soil erosion and flood risk from the fast runoff associated with these species.

4.19 It is currently anticipated that the following sites in Bridgend County Borough will be supported:

- Frog Pond Wood
- Tremains woodland
- Brackla Hill
- Maesteg Welfare Park
- Ogmere Washeries
- Aber Fields/Planka
- Craig y Parcau
- Parc Calon Lan
- Park Ti'r Iarll
- Wilderness Lake
- Bedford Park

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 There is no effect upon the Council's policy framework or procedure rules as a result of this report.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

6.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on

socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal at this stage.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with five ways of working to guide how the Authority should work to deliver wellbeing outcomes for people. The following is a summary to show how the five ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been considered in this report.

- **Long Term** – The project will foster a longer term understanding of green space and well-being, as well as a sense of ownership between communities and green space. The habitat management works will also enable the green spaces to be more resilient to long-term change.
- **Prevention** – The aim of the project is to promote use of outdoor space and well-being by focussing on access to and management of green space under the themes of Enable, Empower and Unite. All of these themes are based upon the well-being plans in Bridgend and Cwm Taf with a view to tackling and preventing identified problems with health, community cohesion and the environment.
- **Integration** – The project will contribute to the well-being goals:
 - Protect assets that support rural businesses and tourism.
 - Preserve and protect habitats, promote sustainable management of green spaces, prevent loss of assets, mitigate against climate change, biodiversity decline and flood risk.
 - Promote physical activity, social and supportive networks, reduce car use to reduce carbon air emissions.
 - Provide safe and accessible cultural and green assets for older people, carers, disabled people, young families and children.
- **Collaboration** – The project will bring together a wider stakeholder group to lead the project, with a smaller steering group of core partners that will manage the project. Local Authority officers from Biodiversity Action Groups across South Wales have been meeting to coordinate ENRaW projects as they are developed to avoid conflict or duplication.
- **Involvement** – the project has been developed in close partnership with a wide range of local stakeholders including a number of bodies with an interest in well-being goals including members of both PSBs. These are widespread across the three counties, and the range of sites currently suggested for inclusion in the project include a relatively equal spread of rural and non-rural areas. The stakeholder groups will be involved in monitoring and supporting the delivery of activity during the project.

8. Financial implications

8.1 The project started in September 2021 and will be ending in June 2023.

8.2 Grant funding of £580,585 has been approved by Welsh Government, at a rate of 100%. A breakdown of the funding package, as currently agreed, is presented below.

Capital	£229,600
Revenue	£350,985
Total Funding	£580,585

8.3 All procurement processes will be in line with BCBC policies and procedures, and support will be provided by BCBC procurement department.

9. Recommendation

9.1 That the Town and Community Council Forum notes the report

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