



Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Part 1 - Section 6

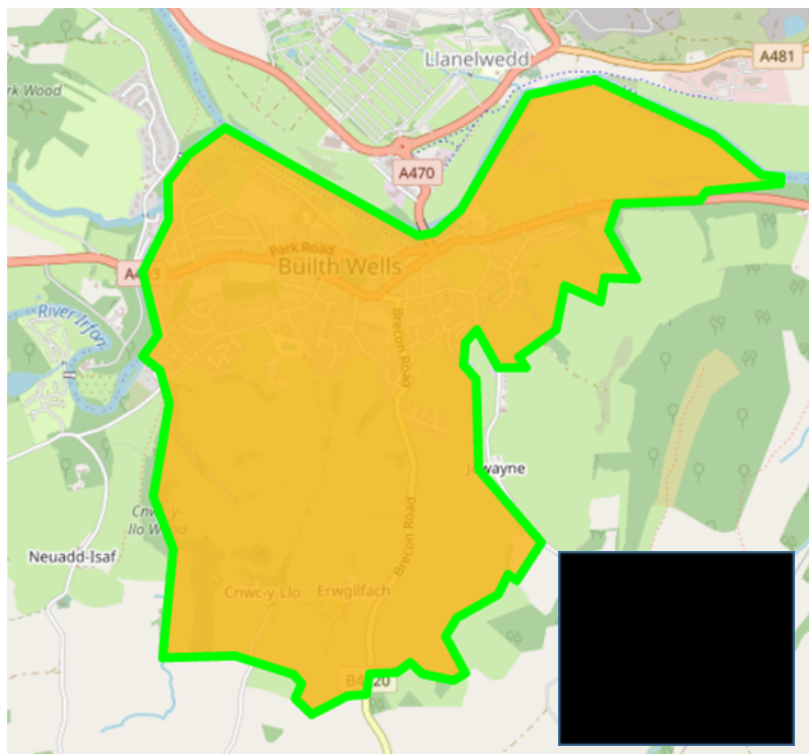
The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty Report December 2022

Submitted by Cllr Mark Hammond on behalf of Builth Wells Town Council

The Town of Builth Wells has an estimated population of 2800 and covers an area of just over 3 square kilometres.

The Town Council has 12 elected Councillors, who are responsible for representing the interests of individual members of the public and the wider community.

The Council also has a responsibility for supporting /encouraging members of the community to improve the local environment and services within the community, using its available powers and resources.



The precept request for the 2022 to 2023 period was £106,000, and whereas the Town Council is not subject to the annual reporting requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations

(Wales) Act 2015, the Town Council has developed a 3-year strategic plan which takes into account relevant objectives of both the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Powys Public Service Boards plan “Towards 2040”, whilst also being realistic in relation to the Town Council’s budget and the limitations the law places on it in relation to what the Council is allowed to do financially.



The Town Council’s 3-year strategic plan which is available on our website

Expenditure is closely monitored by the Town Clerk and the Town Council and uses its finances in a number of ways. For example:

- It owns and manages the Strand Hall and the attached public toilets.
- It leases and maintains the public toilets & shower room on The Groe from Powys County Council.
- It owns and maintains the War Memorial.
- It owns part of The Groe itself; between the Rhosferig (“Swingy”) bridge and the Irfon bridge.
- It also has a Bee Garden on this land, as part of its commitment to biodiversity.
- It also provides the dog “poo bags” and dispensers throughout The Groe.
- It has a number of public benches in the town, as well as flower tubs.
- The hanging baskets which adorn the shop fronts during the summer are also provided and hung up by the council.
- The council funds the Summer Children’s Fun Day on The Groe, as well as the Christmas Grotto each year. Both these have been great successes.
- It is also responsible for the Christmas lights display that make the town such a magical place during the festive period.

- By way of its budget allocations, and particularly through its grant scheme, the Town Council has been able to provide financial support to a number of community initiatives and organisations over the years.

Builth Wells is incredibly lucky in that it has a wealth of natural beauty, being mainly rural and nestling on the Wye. We are fortunate enough to support many different species of wildlife, along with fauna and flora.

We have a mixture of trees, including semi-natural broad-leaved woodland and parkland trees. Along the Groe area (runs adjacent to the rivers Wye & Irfon) we have at least 3 species of bat (Natters, Daubenton's and Noctule).

Otter, Badger, and Hedgehogs are also found here, as are Kingfishers, Dippers, Heron, and varieties of Duck and Geese.

Our stretch of the Wye is noted for the Atlantic Salmon, Grayling, Brown Trout, Allis & Twaite Shad, as well as for the river-jelly lichen.

Action Report

Town Council-owned land on The Groe

Overview: The Town Council-owned land on The Groe is a valued open space, and it aims to keep it maintained to a high standard, as it provides quiet, contemplating areas close to the Town centre and have been appreciated and well used by the members of the Community during the period of the Covid Pandemic.



In 2020, in order to support the aspirations and goals of the Welsh Governments Bee Friendly Scheme, we started work on our Butterfly and Bee Garden.

We identified an area of unused land close to the river Wye, which was being used as a dumping ground for dog waste bags and other items as being suitable to be the perfect place to start work on our project, as it would also enhance the beauty of this area.

We began by clearing the area as much as possible, including the removal of a few dying Ash trees, then started to clear away the rubbish and mess which had been left over a number of years, and then began planting a variety of plants and flowers on the site. These included:

- 500 “Bee Bombs”
- Buddleias, Lavenders, and Geraniums
- Californian Poppy’s and other Poppy’s
- Bio-friendly compost was used in the planting process

This was undertaken by Town Councillors and Community Volunteers; the area was then fenced off in a manner that was in keeping with the surrounding environment.



Initial work carried out on the Butterfly & Bee Garden by Councillors & Volunteers

3-year plan:

Butterfly and Bee Garden:

The Butterfly and Bee Garden has a yearly budget agreed for improvements, planting, and maintenance. We have estimated that the development of the Garden will take two to three years. It will be regularly monitored by the Council, with any necessary steps being discussed and actioned where agreed, in order to make it a successful project well into the future. This will be reviewed on a 12 monthly basis.

Open Spaces & Trees:

A yearly grass cutting plan has been put in place and a contract to a reputable grass cutter issued. This will be monitored on a 12 monthly basis. A tree monitor plan is in place and includes dealing with Ash Dieback. The budget for all this is decided by the full Council at its budget meeting every November and coordinated by the Open Spaces Working Group.

The River Wye & River Irfon

Overview: The Town Council has voiced its concerns to National Resources Wales, MP Fay Jones, MS James Evans, and Powys County Council regarding the pollution levels in the rivers Wye & Irfon, and also concerns over the regular flooding that the Town has to endure.



Photos of the river Wye floods in 2019 & 2020 adjacent to The Groe.

The Council has supported other Council areas, in Wales and England, that cover the Wye in relation to water quality. The Council has recently passed a resolution calling on the relevant authorities to declare certain areas of the Wye as bathing sites.

This was not because the river is necessarily suitable for bathing, as in many places it is far too shallow and in others there would be safety concerns at the higher levels of flow, but to ensure that the necessary action is taken to keep it clean.

3-year plan: The Council will maintain an active role with regard to the water quality of the river Wye, together with the issue of flooding.

We will link in with relevant agencies and organisations to this effect.

Review of S.6 duty

The creation of the Butterfly & Bee Garden has been a success, especially as it has been positively commented on by members of the Community and has been used to engage with local school children.

However, the recent extreme dry weather has proved a challenge in respect of keeping it watered. The Council has now agreed to look at a system to ensure water is more obtainable in a manner keeping to its biodiversity aims.

The Council is also working to ensure that hanging baskets and planters are filled with native pollinator-friendly flowers as far as is practicably possible.

The S.6 duty will be monitored through the Open Spaces Working Group, which will be reporting back to the Council on the success or otherwise of the actions taken via the monthly full Council meeting.

The S.6 plan will be reviewed as necessary in line with the observations of the Working Group. Any strategic changes will be discussed during the annual review of the 3-year strategy and updated / actioned accordingly.

The Council will continue to use its website and Facebook pages to promote what it does in respect of the matters discussed in this report, in order to encourage more engagement with and from the wider Community.

Therefore, the Town Council believes that at the present time, we are achieving / on the way to achieving the Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales 6 objectives:

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

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

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

Objective 4: Tackle key pressures on species and habitats

Objective 5: Improve our evidence, understanding and monitoring

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

Welsh language policy

Builth Wells is a very cosmopolitan and welcoming Town, which has attracted a large number of predominately English-speaking residents to the area over recent decades. Therefore, English is the principal language of the Town. This is not an unusual situation in Powys, as approximately 78% of the County's population are recorded as not being able to speak Welsh.

At present, all Town Council documentation is in English only (although the Town Councils name on document headings are bilingual). Full translations of Town Council documents are not automatically produced, but the Council will make every effort to provide these on request. The Town Council is happy to receive correspondence in Welsh. However, it will need to be noted that the Council has only one full time employee (The Town Clerk), who is not a Welsh speaker. Therefore at the present time the Council would need to engage a translation service. Any initial reply to the sender of correspondence in Welsh would be in English, to acknowledge receipt of it.

All Council meetings are currently only held in English, and the Council's Website and Facebook page are also only available in English at this time. However, Builth Wells Town Council recognises the importance of the Welsh language, and in particular the relevance of the Welsh Language Act 1993 and Welsh Language (Wales) Measures 2011 and will look to develop, over time, its business accordingly.

Mark Hammond

Councillor

Builth Wells Town Council

December 2022