

# NHS Forth Valley Greenspace and Biodiversity Strategy 2026-2030



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## Foreword

I am delighted to introduce the NHS Forth Valley Greenspace and Biodiversity Strategy, an important component of our organisation's response to the climate emergency and our broader sustainability ambitions. This Strategy sets out how we will strengthen nature-based prevention and early intervention for the health and wellbeing of patients, staff and local communities, alongside our responsibility for sustainable estate management, biodiversity protection and climate resilience.

As the NHS Forth Valley Greenspace Champion, I am committed to ensuring strong strategic focus, providing oversight and assurance, and advocating for the value of this work across the organisation. By building awareness, influencing practice and strengthening collaboration, we can deliver meaningful and lasting change.

*Morag Farquhar*

Director of Facilities

### Overarching Ambition and Outcomes

NHS Forth Valley recognises the vital role that nature and biodiversity play in supporting health and wellbeing. Access to high-quality greenspace and thriving ecosystems is widely acknowledged as beneficial for physical and mental health, social connection and the recovery process for many patients.

The NHS Forth Valley Greenspace and Biodiversity Strategy seeks to enhance health and wellbeing for patients, staff and local residents while positively contributing to the interconnected challenges of biodiversity loss, poor health outcomes and the climate emergency.

#### Strategy outcomes:

- climate change mitigation and adaptation has increased, supporting a more resilient health service and estate.
- biodiversity has been protected and enhanced across NHS Forth Valley sites.
- health and wellbeing for patients and staff has improved through increased access to high-quality greenspace and nature-based interventions.
- community resilience has been strengthened through enhanced connection with nature and collaborative local action.



# Governance, Delivery and Reporting

## Governance

The NHS Forth Valley Climate Emergency & Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan 2023 – 2026 was adopted by the NHS Board in July 2023. To oversee implementation, an NHS Forth Valley Climate Emergency and Sustainability Board has been established. A Climate Emergency Response & Sustainability Team (CERST) is responsible for coordinating delivery of the Strategy's outcomes and monitoring progress across all workstreams.

The NHS Forth Valley Greenspace and Biodiversity Working Group is formally accountable to CERT and contributes to the delivery of the Board's response to the climate emergency.

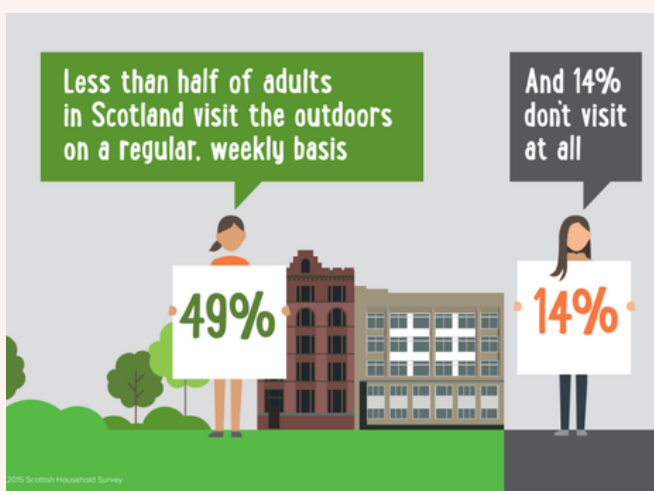
## Delivery Plan

Implementation of the NHS Greenspace and Biodiversity Strategy will be undertaken through a Delivery Plan aligned with the NHS Board's Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy (2023 – 2026) and subsequent updates.

Delivery will be guided by the principles set out in the NHS Forth Valley Greenspace and Biodiversity Framework (page six). These principles will guide decision-making, ensure alignment with the strategic vision, support consistent and effective use of resources, and foster a shared understanding of priorities. Actions will be delivered through the overarching themes outlined in this document and progressed within relevant workstreams.

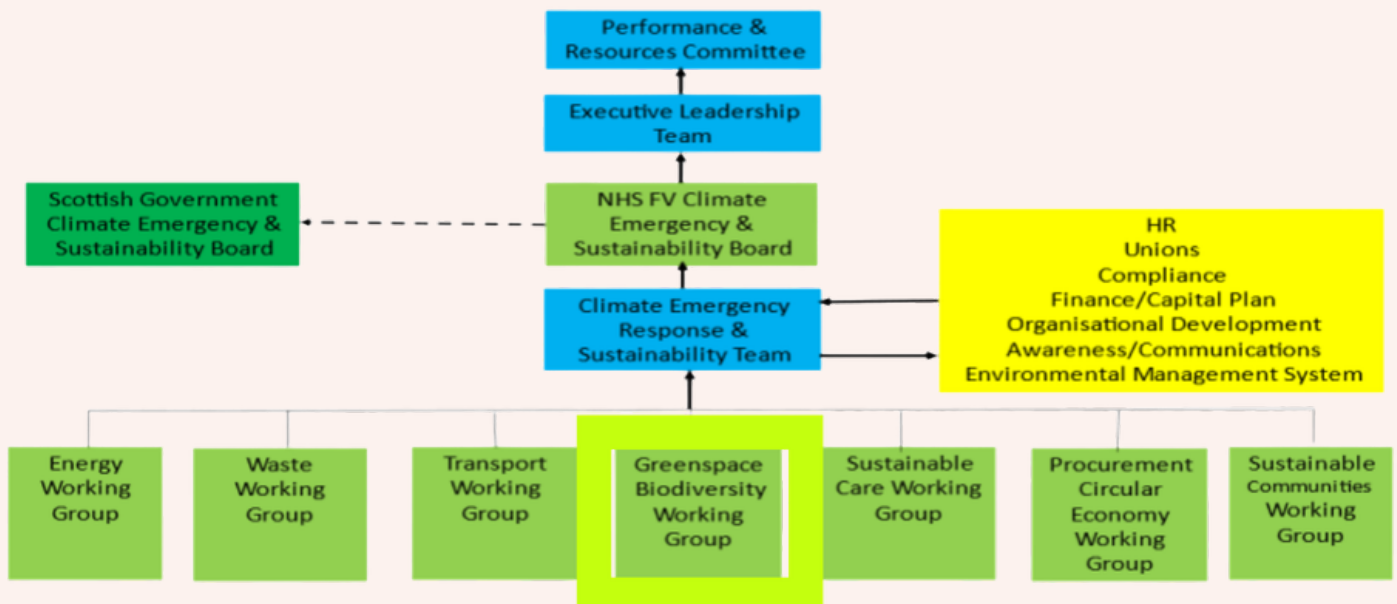
## Monitoring and Reporting

Reporting will be submitted to CERT through approved minutes, relevant data, and performance updates. An Annual Activity Summary will be produced to highlight progress, impact, and key achievements.



## Working Group Responsibilities

- set clear, aligned strategic goals and coordinate action planning for greenspace and biodiversity activity
- monitor, evaluate and report on delivery against outcomes
- collaborate with, engage and empower partners and stakeholders
- communicate and promote greenspace and biodiversity aims and activities
- advocate for policy and practice that integrates greenspace and biodiversity into core organisational functions
- seek funding and staff resource to support implementation



# Greenspace and Biodiversity Framework

This sets out how we intend to deliver on our outcomes.



## Local Evidence and Good Practice – Forth Valley Royal Hospital

NHS Forth Valley has worked with a range of partners to enhance the grounds of Forth Valley Royal Hospital (FVRH), developing them into a valuable asset that supports physical activity, mental wellbeing and community engagement. The local woodlands surrounding the hospital have been upgraded to create accessible greenspace for staff, patients, visitors, schools and the wider community.

Funding for the woodland improvements was provided through Forestry Commission Scotland's 'Woods in and Around Towns' programme, matched by NHS Forth Valley. The project offered a programme of activities - including bushcraft, guided walks and tai chi - to promote physical activity and encourage use of the outdoor environment for relaxation and therapeutic purposes. The University of the Highlands and Islands supported the programme by raising awareness of the site's potential and leading community and staff walking activities.

Evaluation through feedback from patients, staff and schoolchildren highlighted benefits including improved relaxation, enhanced recreational opportunities, mental health improvements and the conservation of local greenspace.

Forth Valley Royal Hospital and Larbert Woods were awarded the Gold Level National Award for Environmental Excellence (NAEE) - the first hospital in Scotland to achieve this standard. The assessment recognised strengths across the five core NAEE elements, including the external environment.

- the hospital grounds are widely used for walking routes and for outdoor learning by local schools and nurseries
- a range of health and wellbeing programmes operate within the woods, including 'Branching Out' for people using mental health services, the Woodland Activity Programme for individuals with early-stage dementia, and a Cardiac Rehabilitation project
- biodiversity is rich across the site, with species including moorhens, coots, dragonflies, frogs, deer, squirrels, bats and a wide variety of birds and insects
- wildflower meadows within and around the woods support diverse species and enhance local habitat quality.

The site was also awarded the 2020 Landscape Institute Building With Nature National Award and noted to represent an "exemplar in the design, delivery and maintenance of high quality green infrastructure, capturing the preventative health benefits of green infrastructure now and long into the future".

Further information about the outdoor facilities at FVRH is available from [NHS Forth Valley – Woodland](#).



## Local Evidence and Good Practice – Stirling Health and Care Village

In 2023 / 24, significant Scottish Government investment supported the enhancement of greenspace across the Stirling Health and Care Village (SHCV) site. The aim was to make outdoor areas more accessible, user-friendly and supportive of biodiversity. Over 40 organisations took part in an extensive consultation process, resulting in the creation of wildflower corridors, new and protected wildlife habitats, and the introduction of pollinator-friendly planting. Nature-based, accessible educational installations - including outdoor seating and shelters - were also added across the site.

This work was delivered collaboratively with the third sector and the local community, strengthening both the therapeutic and land-management aspects of greenspace and biodiversity. Staff wellbeing was prioritised, and partners contributed to the design and future vision for therapeutic spaces and sustainable community involvement.

There has been a notable increase in the number of staff, visitors and patients using the outdoor spaces for relaxation, movement and connection with nature. Services including Adult Mental Health, CAMHS, Keep Well, Bellfield, and Adult Psychology have engaged in a range of green health activities. Regular green health workshops are delivered on site through third sector partnerships, and the enhanced outdoor environment now provides a supportive setting for green social prescribing and wider health improvement activity.

Further information regarding the outdoor facilities at SHCV can be found on the intranet at: [Greenspace & Biodiversity](#).



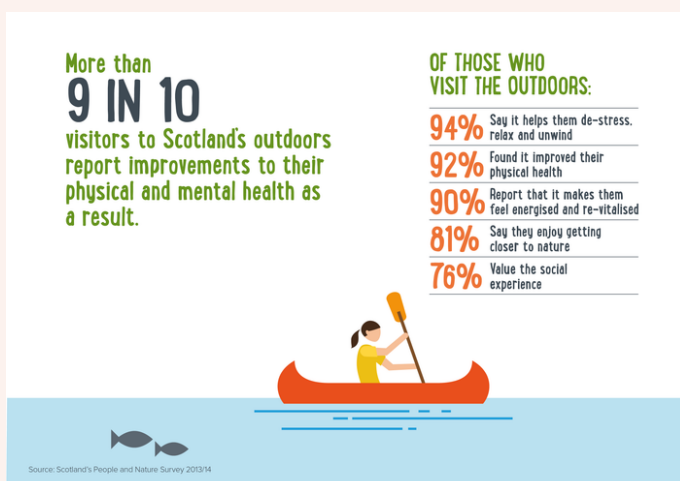
## Embedding and Sustaining NHS Greenspace and Biodiversity Action

Embedding greenspace and biodiversity within NHS Forth Valley requires sustained, organisation-wide commitment. This will be supported through:

- aligning all activity with national and local policy frameworks
- raising the profile and organisational value of greenspace and biodiversity work
- demonstrating visible leadership commitment
- building a network of advocates at all levels of the organisation
- connecting greenspace and biodiversity actions to wider organisational priorities, including prevention, values based health and care and sustainability
- evidencing meaningful change and measuring impact and outcomes
- communicating benefits clearly to staff, patients, and partners
- providing learning, development, and training opportunities for staff
- balancing cost-neutral quick wins with longer-term, funded initiatives

What will indicate we are on track:

- staff express increased confidence that the organisation supports action on greenspace and biodiversity as part of the shift toward prevention and early intervention
- the NHS Forth Valley Greenspace and Biodiversity Working Group can provide clear evidence of advocacy, influence, and impact
- greenspace and biodiversity activities are routinely publicised across internal and external channels
- knowledge into action can be demonstrated following workforce development
- a cross-organisation network of advocates for greenspace and biodiversity is established and engaged and external partnerships have been strengthened



## Contributing to Shared Outcomes and Maximising Resources

### Shared Outcomes

The NHS Forth Valley Population Health and Care Strategy 2025 - 2035 sets out our vision for improving the health and wellbeing of people across Forth Valley over the next decade.

"As a population health and care organisation, we aim to improve the health and wellbeing of everyone living in Forth Valley, by preventing people from becoming unwell, reducing inequalities and making the best use of the resources available to achieve better outcomes."

Our greenspace and biodiversity work can contribute directly to this vision by maximising the use of high-quality greenspace assets to support prevention and early intervention. This includes enabling activities such as green social prescribing, outdoor therapeutic programmes, and nature-based approaches that enhance wellbeing and reduce health inequalities.

### Anchor Institution Role

As an Anchor Institution, NHS Forth Valley has a responsibility to use its land, assets and influence to support local communities. Our greenspace and biodiversity activity can contribute to this by enhancing the social and environmental value of NHS-owned land, supporting opportunities for community access, engagement and wellbeing, and informing decisions around the future use or disposal of land for community benefit.

What will indicate we are on track:

- greenspace and biodiversity activity aligns with wider NHS Forth Valley and partner strategies
- strong links are established with strategic leads and we have a clear understand their long-term goals
- current practice has been reviewed with priorities for improved alignment identified and communicated
- we can demonstrate examples of how existing resources are being maximised across the different areas of this Strategy



## Valuing Nature and Biodiversity Across NHS Forth Valley Infrastructure and Sites

NHS Forth Valley has a significant land footprint, and how we manage our sites directly affects local ecosystems, community wellbeing, and our ability to meet national sustainability commitments.

The State of Nature 2023 report highlights the scale of biodiversity loss in Scotland, showing a significant decline in both the number of species and their geographic distribution over the past fifty years. The report identifies that 14.6% of plants, 8.6% of fungi and lichens, 36.5% of vertebrates, and 5.6% of invertebrates are now considered threatened. This demonstrates the urgent need for coordinated action across sectors, including the NHS.

Public bodies in Scotland have clear legal obligations to protect and enhance biodiversity. The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 places a statutory duty on all public bodies to further the conservation of biodiversity, while the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 requires public bodies to report on their compliance with this duty. These responsibilities apply directly to NHS Forth Valley's management of land, estates, and greenspaces.

Across Scotland, NHS Boards are encouraged to identify opportunities to shift low-value or low-biodiversity areas toward more diverse and connected habitats. For example, creating species-rich grasslands provides important homes for plants, pollinators, birds, reptiles, and mammals. In practice this could be through meadow creation, reduced mowing regimes, pollinator corridors and invasive species control.

In addition to environmental gains, enhanced biodiversity delivers wider benefits for NHS Boards and the communities they serve. As highlighted in Sustainability Action, improved land management can reduce grass-cutting costs, eliminate the need for synthetic fertilisers, and support better air quality. Biodiverse spaces also offer opportunities for therapeutic use, staff wellbeing, community engagement, and meaningful connections with nature for patients, visitors, and local residents.

What will indicate we are on track:

- meeting our statutory duties for biodiversity and reporting requirements
- actions to enhance greenspace and biodiversity are embedded as business-as-usual within grounds and estates management
- colleagues have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to take informed action that values and supports biodiversity
- collaborative working with partners and stakeholders across Forth Valley, supporting shared responsibility and accountability for biodiversity outcomes



## Increasing Green health knowledge and skills

To achieve our desired outcomes, we aim to strengthen both capacity and capability across the system. The development of high-quality greenspace and its effective use for therapeutic, preventative and wellbeing purposes depends on a shared understanding among public, private and third-sector partners, as well as our local communities.

We will:

- support workforce learning and development by promoting evidence-based practice and helping staff and volunteers access the knowledge and skills needed for green health approaches
- share learning through local, regional and national networks, including the Green Health Learning Network — a community of practice co-ordinated by Public Health Scotland (PHS). The network offers regular events and webinars and provides updates on the latest research on green, blue and outdoor health (for further information contact: [PHS.healthyenvironments@phs.scot](mailto:PHS.healthyenvironments@phs.scot))
- support other organisations to learn from our activities and identify and improve their own greenspaces.

What will indicate we are on track:

- training and learning opportunities on green health are available and accessed by our workforce including relevant TURAS modules
- requests or proposals for new or enhanced therapeutic greenspace projects across the NHS estate show an upward trend
- stakeholders regularly collaborate and share knowledge through events, networks or communities of practice focused on green health such as Public Health Scotland Green Health Learning Network.
- staff report increased confidence in using greenspace to support patient wellbeing, social prescribing, rehabilitation or recovery



## Increasing How and Where Patients, Staff and Communities Can Benefit from NHS Greenspace

Alongside major greenspace developments at FVRH and SHCV, a wide range of smaller-scale initiatives across our NHS estate have been developed.

Enhancements to local healthcare grounds, courtyards and under-used outdoor areas demonstrate how even modest spaces can deliver therapeutic, restorative and environmental value. The greenspace at NHS estate is a resource that can be used by individuals and groups of any age for fun, shared learning and relaxation and it can support inclusion. People can face barriers to accessing nature and greenspace and the opportunities offered by our NHS Estate can help towards overcoming these. ( [NHS Scotland's open space health benefits](#) )

To maximise the potential of our greenspace assets, we will:

- identify and develop outdoor areas to support patient rest, recovery and rehabilitation, ensuring they are accessible, calming and designed to promote contact with nature
- encourage active use of greenspace by creating more movement, active travel, outdoor play and nature connection opportunities that contribute to physical and mental wellbeing
- support the expansion of therapeutic outdoor programmes, including horticulture, nature-based group activities and other recognised green health interventions
- create high-quality outdoor rest and recovery spaces for staff, recognising the strong evidence that natural environments reduce stress and improve staff morale
- create and support opportunities for community-led growing projects and outdoor activities, strengthening social connection and increasing participation in nature-based health and biodiversity approaches
- enhance climate resilience and environmental quality across surrounding neighbourhoods through sustainable land management and biodiverse planting



## Increasing How and Where Patients, Staff and Communities Can Benefit from NHS Greenspace

What will indicate we are on track:

- inclusion of greenspace use in patient pathways
- an increase in proposals from staff or departments to create or upgrade therapeutic outdoor spaces
- more innovative approaches to increase active travel
- higher staff usage of designated outdoor space at work
- communities feedback positive views on the quality, safety and usefulness of NHS outdoor areas



Source: Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer 2011, Transforming Scotland's Health, NHS Scotland



## Adding community value to NHS Greenspace

We want our NHS greenspace assets to be used positively and proactively to support prevention, early intervention, and wider healthcare services. In doing so, we aim to promote an inclusive wellbeing economy, empower local communities, meet community aspirations, and contribute to climate action.

As an Anchor Institution, NHS Forth Valley has a responsibility to work with and contribute to the communities in which it is situated. Using a place-based approach, we can ensure our assets deliver meaningful community benefit. This strategy has already outlined some of the areas where this can be achieved and the indicators that will demonstrate progress.

Our NHS greenspace can support the health and wellbeing of individuals with diverse social needs, as well as their carers.

Through partnership working we will:

- increase awareness of and support development of green social prescribing
- support community food-growing projects that foster social connection and provide therapeutic benefits
- collaborate with third sector to support a variety volunteering opportunities and encourage participation in, for example, citizen science activities and supporting national campaigns around the natural world and national events.
- ensure that volunteering in the NHS is a positive and rewarding experience, encouraging best practice in volunteer management and our own Volunteer Framework
- explore further socially productive uses of NHS land and property.



## What Will Indicate We Are On Track

- Increased awareness of and development of models of green social prescribing
- Positive feedback from community groups and third sector partners on the opportunities available
- Clear evidence of collaborative working that adds community value, demonstrated through involvement in relevant forums and planning partnerships
- We can demonstrate that our actions align with and contribute to the outcomes in the NHS Forth Valley Anchor Institution Strategic Plan

