

SERVICE UPDATE

<u>Name of Cluster:</u>	Strategic Place Planning
<u>Date:</u>	27/06/2024
<u>Title of Update:</u>	Aberdeen B-Lines, a project for pollinators
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UPDATE:



Above: Bumblebee feeding on viper's bugloss – Photo credit: Suzanne Burgess Buglife

Last week was National Pollinator Week (17th-23rd June), and in celebration of this we are highlighting the work being undertaken in the city through the Aberdeen B-Lines Project to improve habitats for pollinating insects. One out of every three mouthfuls of our food depend on pollinators, and it is almost impossible to emphasise the importance of the service pollinators perform for us.

The [Aberdeen B-Lines project](#) is a partnership between Buglife Scotland and Aberdeen City Council that aims to help pollinating insects survive and thrive across the city and beyond. Buglife is a conservation charity that focuses on the protection of invertebrates and works to halt the decline of these species in the UK by change through practical conservation, shaping policy, raising awareness and inspiring others.

The aim is to enhance, restore and create 20 hectares of Council owned land for pollinators. The B-Lines project delivers an imaginative solution to the problem of the loss of wildflower meadows and pollinating insects. B-Lines are a series of 'insect pathways' running through the UK, restoring and creating a series of wildflower-rich stepping stones. This will provide large areas of restored and better-connected habitat benefiting bees, butterflies, and a

range of other wildlife. In Aberdeen, the B-Lines project will focus on the wildlife corridors of the River Don, River Dee, and the coast.

The project is a joint Environmental Services and Natural Environment Policy Team initiative. Buglife has employed an Aberdeen B-Lines Conservation Officer for the duration of the project to plan and execute practical site work, undertake surveys, advise on habitat management, provide training and facilitate community events. Our B-Lines project is part of a [UK wide project](#) to allow pollinators to move throughout the country. It offers the opportunity for local communities, schools, and external bodies to get involved and create spaces for nature where they live and work.

Where will these works take place, and what are the proposed works?

Sites selected for habitat improvements: -

- TECA
- Riverview Drive
- Westfield Park
- Seaton Park
- Donmouth Local Nature Reserve
- Beach esplanade
- Duthie Park
- Riverside Drive
- Stonehaven Road
- Garthdee Road
- Deeside Way stations
- Torry Battery

This project focuses on choosing the appropriate native planting solutions for each site. This spring we focused on undertaking ground preparation, seeding and wildflower plug planting at four of the sites – TECA, Westfield Park, Beach esplanade at Fittie and Donmouth. All the seeds are from Scotia seeds, a specialist native wildflower seed producer from the east coast of Scotland. The seeds selected will vary depending on the site to fit in with the natural habitat around each site, to provide a solution that is tailored and sustainable for future years. It is important to note that some species of wildflowers are slow growing and are often not very visible in the first flowering year. Meadows in general take time to establish and more enhancement works may be required in the autumn, once the sites have been surveyed again.



Above: Ground preparation at Donmouth and TECA – Photo credits: Norman Adams ACC

At TECA, Donmouth (western end) and Westfield Park we have chosen a subtle wildflower and grass mix, which will remain very similar over the years and provide an attractive yet natural look with species such as ox-eye daisy, yellow rattle and vetches.



Right: Seed mix for TECA, Donmouth (western end) and Westfield Park – Photo credit: Scotia Seeds

At Donmouth (eastern end), we have chosen a coastal meadow mix which is appropriate to the coastal habitat and contains species of flower such as kidney vetch and common rock rose which are specific food plants for the Small Blue and Northern Brown Argus butterfly. The Northern Brown Argus butterfly is currently found along the coast to the south of Cove and by providing suitable habitat, it is hoped to increase the range of this species, enabling them to respond to climate change induced habitat fragmentation.



Above: Northern Brown Argus butterfly – Photo credit: Butterfly Conservation

It is important to note that whole areas will not be seeded. We are aiming to create a mosaic of habitats from short grass, newly created wildflower areas and existing long vegetation/ scrub to provide food and shelter to support all the life stages of the insects.

Wildflower seeding can take place in the autumn as well as the spring, so further work will be undertaken at that time. Wildflower plug plants will be planted on other sites, again this will be tailored to each individual site to ensure the species are suitable for the habitat.

The Council has recently received recognition in the [NatureScot Progress Report on the Pollinator Strategy for Scotland](#), which is published annually to highlight the wide range of projects helping deliver The Pollinator Strategy for Scotland 2017-2027.

There will be opportunities for Council teams to volunteer for 'team days' to plant seeds/plug plants and do other things for nature while getting together as a team. More information on this will be posted on Green Workplace in due course.

This project is externally funded with Buglife receiving funding from the Nature Restoration Fund, Milkywire, Hugh Fraser Foundation, J & JR Wilson Trust and an anonymous donor. This is funding a Buglife Officer to lead the project, undertake habitat creation, facilitate public engagement, install interpretation pieces and provide training. The current funding is in place until 31st March 2025, however Buglife are currently exploring additional funding options to undertake a separate but connected project at sites throughout the city.

Why is the Aberdeen B-lines Project important, and how will we ensure that the local communities are involved?

The Aberdeen B-Lines project is an important step towards protecting and promoting biodiversity in the city. With the help of the community and dedicated partners, we can work together to create a brighter future for our pollinators and the environment as a whole.

This will be a nature positive project and will further Council and citywide goals such as our statutory Biodiversity Duty, supporting the aims of the Natural Environment Strategy under Net Zero Aberdeen, and tie into the LOIP stretch outcome 15 – *Addressing the nature crisis by protecting/ managing 26% of Aberdeen’s area for nature by 2026.*

Spending time in greenspaces filled with wildlife improves health and wellbeing, combatting depression, anxiety, stress, and grief. The pandemic highlighted how many low-income families have less access to nature and greenspace, compounding social inequality. Increasing the amount of nature-rich greenspace and wildflower habitat for pollinators means people can have more access to wildlife, combatting ‘nature-deficit disorder’ and ‘nature poverty’.



Above: Friends of Westfield Park volunteer day – Photo credit: Norman Adams

Community-focused events will be run throughout the project, including pollinator-focused education sessions for school children, pollinator-focused events for community groups, community engagement events and walks, practical conservation volunteering sessions, and pollinator identification sessions.