

SERVICE UPDATE

<u>Name of Cluster:</u>	Strategic Place Planning
<u>Date:</u>	11/11/2024
<u>Title of Update:</u>	Update on Data Nature & Indicators
<u>Author:</u>	Sue Cumming
<u>Chief Officer:</u>	David Dunne
<u>Email address:</u>	Sucumming@aberdeencity.gov.uk

UPDATE:

The purpose of this paper is to provide a brief progress update on the Nature Data and Indicators Project.

Nature is increasingly under pressure globally, nationally and locally. It impacts not just wildlife but the ecosystems services that humans rely on, for example for our health and wellbeing, food, culture and economies. The Nature Data and Indicators project aims to better inform and strengthen local strategic direction and the approach to monitoring and reporting. It is a citywide collaborative partnership which involves gathering nature data to monitor and report on the state of nature locally and a range of local targets included within the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP), Regional Economic Strategy, Council's Climate Change Plan, Net Zero Aberdeen and Natural Environment Strategy, amongst others.

The project was previously instructed by Aberdeen City Council's (ACC) Net Zero, Environment & Transport (NZET) Committee on [31st October 2023](#) - the Chief Officer for Strategic Place Planning to lead and develop on a collaborative project to gather biodiversity and related data i.e. land managed for nature. Nature data will be used to inform the Council and City's strategic direction and required on the ground actions and investments, now and in the future.

Action To Date

Since October 2023 an internal Council project team has been set up, meeting monthly to share resources and updates that would be relevant to the project. Since then, the following has been carried out:

- Created a contact/partners list of landowners and organisations who have statutory reporting requirements or expectations to report on nature, sustainability and climate within Aberdeen City.
- Created a resource list of habitat data sets or tools that can be used and referenced in reports.
- Hosted an intern funded by the University of Aberdeen to find internal data sources held on Environmental Services central database for

grounds maintenance, and ongoing biodiversity data e.g. B-Lines and Spaces for Nature.

- Held a stakeholder workshop with attendance from NHS Grampian, University of Aberdeen, Robert Gordon University, James Hutton Institute, NatureScot, Aberdeen Roads Ltd and SRUC. Discussions included types of data that could be used at a national and local scale as well as considerations for data to be used for indicators to help create a resource list. This included both positive and negative indicators that cover habitat, connectivity and climate change.
- Invited partners to join a wider project team. This now consists of Aberdeen City Council, North East Scotland Biological Record Centre (NESBReC), NatureScot, James Hutton Institute, University of Aberdeen and Robert Gordon University.
- Met with NatureScot's Biodiversity Evidence and Reporting manager to discuss Ecosystem Health Indicators. This meeting shared knowledge on tools that are in development that may be of use to the project and will be explored further as the project progresses.
- Produced a list of drivers from legislation, strategies and plans that require nature data. This list will be reviewed regularly and shared with ACC colleagues who are involved in related strategies and natural environment/biodiversity reporting, as well as the wider project team.

Project Overview and Looking Forward

The project is progressing well - discussions with NatureScot highlighted that using detailed nature data in reporting is a under utilised and evolving area. ACC have been recognised by NatureScot as one of few local authorities looking at starting to report in this way.

The project team have identified new contacts who work towards similar goals and responsibilities on nature and biodiversity; and will be of value to the Council and partners going forward. Over time, the project may identify the need to work with ACC's Data Insights team to analyse the results and to work towards understanding trends in nature at a local level. Ultimately, specific local indicators will be identified and utilised through the Council's annual Natural Environment Report, and other relevant reports as data, tools and resources become available.

The project team are planning on meeting at least twice a year to review contact and resource lists for this project with the next meeting scheduled for February 2025. Based on the Tackling the Nature Emergency consultation that came out in September 2023, it is expected the forthcoming Natural Environment Bill will contain information on areas that will require monitoring and nature data. It is expected the new Bill will significantly influence outcomes and outputs of this project. New reporting requirements are likely to come from the new Bill and these will require staff time and resources on

existing tight budgets. Currently there is no date scheduled when this consultation will come out but is expected in first quarter of 2025.

Previous NZET Committee Reports

Biodiversity Duty Report October 2023, Agenda item 10.4, page 165

[\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee, 31/10/2023 10:00](#)

Useful links

[Explore ecosystem health indicators | Scotland's environment web](#)

[Tackling the Nature Emergency Consultation](#)

[Tackling the Nature Emergency - strategic framework for biodiversity: consultation - gov.scot](#)