

SERVICE UPDATE

<u>Name of Cluster:</u>	Strategic Place Planning
<u>Date:</u>	2 nd February 2026
<u>Title of Update:</u>	Den Burn Restoration Project
<u>Author:</u>	Sue Cumming
<u>Chief Officer:</u>	Claire McArthur (Acting)
<u>Author email address:</u>	Sucumming@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Background:

The Den Burn Restoration Project involves re-naturalising a previously straightened section of the Den Burn, located between Den of Maidencraig Local Nature Reserve and Stronsay Park. This is to benefit people, nature and climate resilience.

The project was last reported to Aberdeen City Council's (ACC's) Net Zero, Environment & Transport (NZET) Committee on 10th June 2025. Due to receiving the news from the National Lottery Heritage Fund that ACC had been unsuccessful with their funding application, the report recommended indefinitely pausing the project and highlighted the challenges regarding external funding. However, the NZET Committee instructed the Chief Officer - Strategic Place Planning, following consultation with Chief Officer - Finance and Chief Officer - Capital to explore funding options which may be available to support the project, and report the outcome to the Finance and Resources (F&R) Committee on 6th August 2025.

On the 6th August 2025 the F&R Committee agreed the officer's recommendation to include the Den Burn Restoration Project in the General Grant Fund Capital Programme. Funding was to be provided by the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) via the Water Environment Fund (WEF), the Scottish Government General Capital Grant (Climate Emergency funding) and Bus Lane Enforcement funding. Full details are available in Appendix 5 of the officer's report (refer to background papers below). This multi-stream funding supports delivery of the project.

Progress updates since the F&R Committee:

- A new internal Project Manager has been appointed from the Structures, Flooding and Coastal Engineering team;
- An Outline Business Case has been approved by the Capital Board and the Project has been included on the Capital Plan and placed on the Capital

Board tracker. This means the project will follow reporting procedures for capital projects, including the F&R Committee, where appropriate.

- Project Steering Group and Project Board meetings are taking place to help guide the project through design and delivery.
- Work on a Communication Plan has started which will involve various project stakeholders. A Communication Plan will assist with a future public engagement event for the project to help raise awareness and engagement of the restoration work.
- Officers have worked collaboratively with SEPA to draft the tender specification documents for detailed design to ensure the project constraints and location are fully considered; and builds on experience from previous WEF projects.

Major next steps:

- To appoint a contractor for detailed design, expected in Spring 2026. Detailed design is estimated to be completed by end of 2026.
- Apply for Planning Permission in Summer 2027.
- Construction is anticipated to be phased over 2 years.

A further Service Update on the Project will be provided to NZET Committee after detailed design has been completed and approval granted from Capital Board.

Additional information:

Relevant and in addition to this Project work, ACC's Environmental Service has adopted a more natural approach to managing the Den Burn / Stronsay greenspace area in recent years. This change has been taken to mitigate against the impacts of climate change and to support the recovery of biodiversity. The Service has been reducing grass cutting, planting trees, shrubs, and wildflowers, thereby boosting habitats for many species.

Approximately 8,000 trees were planted in March 2022, and are growing well and adding to the area's landscape character. Natural routes / paths have also been cut through the area's greenspaces, linking between points of interest or access to the existing surfaced path network.

It is estimated that more than 80 species of wildflowers and plants have been planted. The flowers include northern marsh orchids, buttercups, hawkbits, dandelions, scentless mayweed, ox-eye daisy, meadowsweet, cow parsley, bugle, sorrel, red clover, white clover, and birds-foot trefoil. This has an obvious beneficial knock on effect for our pollinators.

Background papers:

Den Burn Restoration – Funding Update (CORS/25/181) Appendix 5 at Finance and Resource Committee 6th August 2025

http://councilcommittees/documents/s171579/6.%20Appendix_5_Denburn_Update_final.pdf

Den Burn Restoration - Funding Update (CR&E/25/061) at Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee 10th June 2025

http://councilcommittees/documents/s169975/Final_FundingUpdateProjectStatusDenBurnRestoration_June2025.pdf.

Den Burn Service Update at Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee 10th June 2024

<https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/documents/s158627/DenBurnRestorationJune24.pdf>

Den Burn Restoration – Funding Update (COM/23/175) at Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee 12th June 2023

<http://councilcommittees/documents/g8507/Public%20reports%20pack%2020th-Jun-2023%2010.00%20Net%20Zero%20Environment%20and%20Transport%20Committee.pdf?T=10>

Den Burn Restoration – Project Continuation (COM/23/024) at Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee 10th January 2023

<http://councilcommittees/documents/g8504/Public%20reports%20pack%2010th-Jan-2023%2010.00%20Net%20Zero%20Environment%20and%20Transport%20Committee.pdf?T=10>