

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	Enterprise, Planning & Infrastructure
DATE	20 April 2010
CORPORATE DIRECTOR	Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	Local Designated Sites Review Project
REPORT NUMBER:	EPI/10/087

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to present the proposal for the non-statutory Local Designated Sites Review Project and seek its approval, plus, to request approval for the Council to become a UK partner in the 'International Year of Biodiversity: 2010' campaign.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:-

- a) Supports the aim of the project proposal;
- b) Notes the outcomes of the project proposal;
- c) Notes the project costs as outlined in section 13.0 of the project proposal;
- d) Gives approval for the project to take place; and
- e) Approves the request for the Council to be a UK partner in the 'International Year of Biodiversity: 2010' campaign.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Costs for the project, including savings, are predicted to total £6,100 and have been accounted for within the Environmental Planning budget which sits within the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure directorate. See following Table 1 for breakdown of costs (see also section 13.0 of the project proposal in Appendix A).

**Table 1: Project Costs**

Activity	2010/2011 (£)
Habitat Surveyors	4,000

IT - map preparation, data upload/download, GIS data editing	1,500
NESBReC manager - project management and participation in panels	900
Collate existing data	SLA
Input new data on to database	SLA
Create new GIS layer to replace old DWS layer	SLA
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,100</b>

Some costs for this project will be covered under the existing Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Council and the North East Scotland Biological Records Centre (NESBReC). The services provided through the NESBReC SLA include maintaining and managing a record database of habitats and species on behalf of the Council; providing advice on methodology on biological recording to the Council; providing training to assist the Council with biological recording; and providing biological data for the Council from NESBReC's database. The SLA, however, does not cover detailed site or species surveys and, therefore, costs for this part of the work will be covered separately within the Environmental Planning budget. Some relevant sites associated with this project are already included in the current Sites of Interest to Natural Science (SINS) Review Project which is being led by Aberdeenshire Council. This has reduced the number of sites to be surveyed within this project, thereby making further cost savings.

Costs incurred as a UK partner in the 'International Year of Biodiversity: 2010' campaign are anticipated to be included in the work linked to the tasks from the Implementation Plan for the recently approved and adopted Nature Conservation Strategy 2010-2015. These exact costs have not yet been established and will be identified during the development of the relevant project plans for these tasks. Costs and resources for this work will also be included in existing budgets within the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure directorate. Approval for these further projects will be sought from the appropriate committee at the appropriate stage.

#### **4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT**

The non-statutory Local Designated Sites Review Project and the International Year of Biodiversity: 2010 campaign have direct links with the Council's Vibrant, Dynamic & Forward Looking requirement to 'adopt and implement policies which safeguard Aberdeen's green belt and green wedges'.

The project and campaign will also assist the Council in delivering a number of Single Outcome Agreement National Outcomes including: -

- 1 – 'We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe';
- 10 - 'We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need'; and
- 12 - 'We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and enhance it for future generations'.

Both the project and campaign have direct and indirect positive impacts on the quality of life for the citizens of Aberdeen. The project has been borne out of the recently adopted Aberdeen City Council Nature Conservation Strategy 2010-2015 where an 'Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment' has already been conducted. The campaign is also linked to the recently approved strategy and a further assessment is, therefore, not required as part of this report.

## **5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 states that 'it is the duty of every public body and office holder, in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions.'

The Council's recently adopted Nature Conservation Strategy 2010-2015 has been developed to assist the Council in meeting its legal duty. This project is one of a number of tasks required to implement the Nature Conservation Strategy. If this project does not go ahead, the Council will not be able to fully implement the strategy and, therefore, will be unable to meet its statutory obligations.

Being a UK partner of the 'International Year of Biodiversity: 2010' campaign is an opportunity to show the Council's commitment to conserving nature for the benefit of biodiversity and our current and future generations. It will also help to support and strengthen the work that is planned for conserving nature within Aberdeen City through the adoption of the Council's Nature Conservation Strategy 2010- 2015.

## **6. REPORT**

### **6.1 Background**

Aberdeen City's natural heritage is a key element of the City's character and is vital to its citizen's enjoyment and quality of life. It helps create the City's identity and makes it a pleasant and attractive place to live, work and visit. It is important that we protect, preserve, enhance and promote the City's natural heritage in order to ensure a wildlife-rich environment for the benefit of biodiversity and our current and future generations.

At the Housing & Environment Committee meeting of 11 January 2010, the Council approved its new Nature Conservation Strategy 2010-2015. This strategy will help the Council, through delivering all its functions, comply with the requirements of the United Nations (UN) Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) 1992 which commits the UK to help protect and restore the functioning of natural systems and to halt the loss of biodiversity in the European Union. The Council will also be more able to comply with the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 which imposes a duty on every public body to further the conservation of our natural environment. This Strategy will also assist the Council deliver the requirements of the North East Local Biodiversity Action Plans which have been

developed to meet the commitment of the CBD by taking action to conserve locally important species and habitats.

## **6.2 Non-Statutory Local Designated Sites Review Project**

The proposal to review non-statutory local designated sites (Appendix A) is one of the tasks from the Strategy's Implementation Plan.

The need for the project is due to the fact that non-statutory local designated sites have not been reviewed since they were first designated in the 1990s. Changes may have occurred in the habitats and species present, plus, boundaries may have changed due to land use development. The criteria to assess such sites have also recently been updated through the Scottish Government's new Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) which was published in February 2010. Some sites may no longer meet the new criteria set within this SPP.

This project will assist the Council in establishing the current ecological condition of its non-statutory local designated sites and re-affirm their designation and boundaries. The outcomes of the project also include informing future land-use planning policies, plus, assisting planning officers in where appropriate justifying the continued protection of such sites from development through the Local Development Plan. The outcomes of this project will also provide baseline data for further tasks noted within the Strategy's Implementation Plan.

This project will focus on non-statutory local designated sites situated on both Council and privately owned land.

## **6.3 'International Year of Biodiversity: 2010' campaign.**

The Council has adopted its new Nature Conservation Strategy 2010-2015 at a time when the UN has declared 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity. This campaign, which is headlined with the 'Biodiversity is Life' logo, is linked to the UN's Convention on Biological Diversity. Roseanna Cunningham, Minister for the Environment, has recently launched the International Year of Biodiversity in Scotland and the Scottish Government has approached, among others, all local authorities including Aberdeen City Council, to request them to consider signing up as a UK partner during this campaign.

The Council's Nature Conservation Strategy, which refers to the International Year of Biodiversity: 2010, considers all the main points addressed in the Scottish Government's covering letter (Appendix B), such as the need to have healthy ecosystems and biodiversity to provide a platform for economic growth, plus, for our own health and wellbeing. The Council's strategy also promotes many if not most of the actions noted within the additional Key Messages Document (Appendix C) received along with the covering letter. These include actions to get others involved starting with the local council, businesses, schools and local communities; encouraging wildlife into gardens and allotments; to improving communication.

The Scottish Government has asked the Council to consider the following: -

- Signing up to the International Year of Biodiversity UK Partnership and consider where you can use the logo and messages [www.biodiversityislife.net](http://www.biodiversityislife.net);
- How biodiversity issues cut across a range of different activities and how they can be effectively integrated with other business or responsibilities e.g. grounds maintenance, land management, outdoor learning;
- Building the key messages and 6 'things to do' from the communications plan into existing or new campaigns and activities; and
- Playing a full role in Scottish Biodiversity Week (15-23 May, 2010).

A commitment to the 'International Year of Biodiversity: 2010' campaign will complement and further strengthen the work already planned for the City of Aberdeen (in this and the next five years) as part of the work associated with the Council's Nature Conservation Strategy 2010-2015.

## **7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

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## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Listed in Appendix A, 'Non-Statutory Local Designated Sites Review' project proposal;
2. Listed in Appendix B, the Scottish Government's covering letter; and
3. Listed in Appendix C, the Scottish Government's Key Messages Document.