



## **THE BIODIVERSITY DUTY REPORTING TEMPLATE: LEVEL ONE ORGANISATIONS**

**Public bodies that own or manage land, regulate land use, or have responsibilities linked to biodiversity**

### **Report Outline**

- Section 1: Introductory information about your public body
- Section 2: Actions to protect and enhance biodiversity
- Section 3: Mainstreaming biodiversity
- Section 4: Nature-based solutions, climate change and biodiversity
- Section 5: Public engagement and workforce development
- Section 6: Research and monitoring
- Section 7: Biodiversity highlights and challenges



## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR PUBLIC BODY

**Please describe your organisation's role and purpose, including any particular environmental responsibilities**

Aberdeen City Council (the Council) is a local authority which covers an area of 185.7 km<sup>2</sup> and on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021, [National Registers of Scotland](#) estimated it has 227,430 residents. Many internationally, nationally and locally protected areas fall within the Council's boundary, most prominently the River Dee Special Area of Conservation (SAC), designated for its Atlantic salmon, freshwater pearl mussel and European otter. But perhaps more importantly, the city has a diversity of public green and open spaces for people and wildlife; enabling climate adaptation and the mitigation of climate change and also to support people's wellbeing.

As a local authority, our services are diverse and wide-ranging. The Council is a landowner and land manager, a planning authority and a provider of education and social care services. Inevitably, the Council has a broad regulatory remit that can have impacts on biodiversity. The Council is responsible for the management and maintenance of all Council buildings, associated grounds and public open spaces such as parks, woodlands, cemeteries, school grounds, road verges and play parks. The Council also manages blue infrastructure around the city, such as burns (open and culverted), some Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS), stretches of beach and coastal engineering structures. The Council works to both alleviate and improve resilience to flooding of all kinds.

Our Countryside Ranger Service manages 25 countryside sites across Aberdeen City for biodiversity, education and public access. These sites total more than 1,000 hectares and include one Site of Special Scientific Interest, four Local Nature Reserves and fourteen Local Nature Conservation Sites. In addition to this the Council manages 350 hectares (ha) of woodland and 1,450ha of parks and other greenspaces.

The internationally recognised Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) [Global Assessment of Biodiversity](#) (May 2019) report identified 5 main drivers of biodiversity loss globally. Alongside the twin crises of climate change and nature loss, one of the major pressures on biodiversity in Aberdeen is the increasing requirement for land for housing and industrial development. Another key threat to biodiversity in the city area comes from invasive non-native species (INNS). In this report we will outline some of the many ways the Council protects and enhances biodiversity whilst still delivering vital services to the citizens of Aberdeen City. This report demonstrates how Aberdeen is working towards delivering the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) locally, especially SDGs 13, 14 and 15. This report covers the period from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2023.



## SECTION 2: ACTIONS TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE BIODIVERSITY

Please describe and explain any actions that your organisation has undertaken alone or as part of a partnership to benefit biodiversity directly, to tackle the main drivers of biodiversity loss, or to achieve wider outcomes for nature and people

### Climate and Nature Emergency Declaration

In March 2023, Aberdeen City Council added its voice to the growing number of local authorities around the world to have responded to the global climate change and nature loss crises by declaring a climate and nature emergency. Details of the declaration are available in the [minutes of the full Council meeting of 22 February 2023](#) (see item 18).

### North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership (NESBiP)

Aberdeen City Council remains a key partner of the North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership (NESBiP) and believes that the partnership approach to tackling threats to biodiversity and facilitating conservation action is key to achieving outcomes reported under the Biodiversity Duty. NESBiP's Strategic Delivery Plan and actions complement the Council's environmental, community and land-use planning duties and objectives.

During the reporting period, despite impacts of the Covid-19 lockdown, the partnership has continued in delivering positive benefits for biodiversity. Unfortunately, NatureScot removed funding to all biodiversity partnerships from 2021 onwards, and the partnership's coordinator moved on to a different role in early 2022. The coordinator role was however filled again in mid-2023. The partnership spent most of the past year seeking funding from private companies, inevitably taking time away from its core functions.

The main highlight for the reporting period is the partnership's 'Developers Hub', featured in our previous Biodiversity Duty Report 2020, which has been [mentioned by Scottish Government as a good example](#) for local authorities on how to implement the new policies relating to biodiversity in the National Planning Framework 4.

### North East Scotland Biological Records Centre (NESBReC)

Aberdeen City Council is a partner with the North-East Scotland Biological Records Centre (NESBReC) who collect, store, manage and disseminate biological data for various organisations including local authorities. Through a Service Level Agreement (SLA), NESBReC provide information to the Council to assist it in making decisions relating to nature conservation, land-use planning and site management plans. NESBReC also engages directly with residents of Aberdeen, as well as across North East Scotland, to increase awareness of biodiversity and to encourage participation in biological recording. Records of any species can be submitted to NESBReC by the general public for inclusion in the database (after necessary validation and checking procedures) and for future use by the council.

Finishing in 2022, NESBReC carried out habitat mapping in sites across Aberdeen City to build up a profile of habitat types and plant species. The data was used to inform decision-making in development management and various internal strategic planning initiatives such as the

review of Local Nature Conservation Sites. The data can be compared to older habitat data to highlight any changes, whether natural or man-made, and to assess any losses or gains in biodiversity value.

NESBReC continues to manage a database of biodiversity data and receive records from the general public to add to the database. NESBReC has continued to hold an annual Recorders Forum event every March to an audience of around 80-100 attendees. In 2021 and 2022 these were online events due to Covid restrictions but in 2023 an in-person event was held at the University of Aberdeen. At Recorders Forum events people who are active in biological recording enjoy a day of presentations and discussion focussed on recording the wildlife of North East Scotland.

During the reporting period, Covid restrictions impacted on the way that NESBReC delivered their public training events on identification skills for different wildlife species. This meant that eight events had to be delivered online during 2021 and were available free of charge. In 2022-2023, a mixture of seven online and nine in-person events were delivered with four of them taking place in Aberdeen City. Of the events held each year, the subjects covered in each of these online training sessions were: amphibians & reptiles; bumblebees; mammals; fungi; invasive non-native species; swifts; bats; and an introduction to biological recording. The aim is for attendees to build up their identification skills to feel more confident to record these species in their local area and to submit records to the NESBReC database.

In order to increase awareness of the biodiversity of Aberdeen and to encourage participation in biological recording within the city, NESBReC has given presentations to a range of local groups such as to Scotland's Rural College students and at the University of Aberdeen Environmental Careers Fair. NESBReC's participation in events run by other organisations was limited due to Covid restrictions but they were able to raise awareness of local biodiversity in Aberdeen City and North East Scotland at these events: [Duthie Park and Seaton Park Bioblitz](#); Aberdeen Science Centre Discovery Day and [North East Scotland Climate Action Network \(NESCOAN\) Climate Week](#).

### **Dee Catchment Partnership (DCP)**

Aberdeen City Council is a funding partner to the Dee Catchment Partnership (DCP), and believe that the river restoration work, research and monitoring carried out by the organisation is beneficial to understanding how the River Dee functions. As a major wildlife corridor within the city, the River Dee has always played a significant role in Aberdeen's identity and will continue into the future as Aberdeen tries to adapt to climate change. River restoration work carried out within the catchment, such as the Cairngorm National Parks' initiative '1 million trees', provide benefits for the river downstream. Some restoration work can provide flood alleviation downstream preventing river flooding within the city. Knowledge contained within this partnership on river restoration will be vital, to helping the Council working with Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) to restore a section of the Den Burn.

### **Sustainable Food Place Partnership Aberdeen (SFPPA)**

The Sustainable Food Place Partnership Aberdeen (SFPPA), also known as [Granite City Good Food](#), was co-founded by the Council in 2017, hosted by CFINE and is chaired and part funded by the Council. The partnership has successfully taken Aberdeen from the bronze award



status of the Sustainable Food Place initiative in 2018 to achieving silver in 2022. The current [action plan](#) is organised around six overarching objectives one of which describes tackling the climate and nature emergency through promoting sustainable food and farming and another focuses on putting an end to food waste.

### **Impacts of Storms Arwen, Malik and Corrie in 2021**

On 26 November 2021 Aberdeen experienced a severe storm, [Arwen](#). The severity of the storm and the direction of the wind saw widespread damage to the Council's tree population and had a significant impact on Aberdeen's open spaces. All types of trees were affected. A substantial number blew down, many uprooted, branches and limbs snapped off, and several trees were left in a precarious and dangerous position. Trees in schools, parks, play areas, open spaces, streets, and woodlands were equally affected.

Storms Malik and Corrie followed and although not as severe as Storm Arwen, their impact saw more damage to Aberdeen's trees and woodlands. The number of incidents recorded resulting from the storms was over 500. Thousands of trees in Aberdeen were affected and some areas completely changed in character, with resulting impacts on habitats and biodiversity.

The recovery work which is still ongoing took up large parts of the Council's arboricultural services as well as the wider Environmental Services teams. This means that resources have been diverted from other projects and work that those services provide.

In February 2022 City Growth and Resources Committee agreed to set aside a sum of £500K from the General Fund Contingency budget, for the Council to deal with the storm damage caused by Storms Arwen, Malik, and Corrie. This additional funding has made an enormous difference to the recovery work. The funding has allowed for additional resources to be brought in to help repair the devastation and tree loss caused by the storms. It has allowed woodland devastated by the storms such as Carnie Woods and Hazlehead, to be clear felled and restocked, ensuring the habitat is being restored.

### **Creation, enhancement and protection of wildlife and natural habitat**

#### **Aberdeen Flagship Parks for Pollinators**

In early 2023, the Council partnered with Buglife to complete a project to boost habitat features for pollinators within two city parks; see Case Study 1 in Section 7 of this report for more information.

### **Addressing key drivers of biodiversity loss**

#### **Invasive non-native species**



The internationally recognised Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) [Global Assessment of Biodiversity](#) (May 2019) report identified 5 main drivers of biodiversity loss globally, one of which was invasive non-native species (INNS). This is also one of the main threats to biodiversity within Aberdeen's local authority area. The Council's Countryside Ranger Service (CRS) has taken the lead in managing invasive non-native plant species across the city. This has focussed on giant hogweed, Himalayan balsam, American skunk cabbage and Japanese knotweed. These are mainly found along the main river and burn corridors but also in areas away from these usual transmission routes. An emerging issue is New Zealand pygmyweed, which has been identified in ponds within a Local Nature Reserve. In 2021 to 2023 the CRS spent 32 person days controlling INNS. In 2023 the CRS has also worked on controlling invasive species like gorse and bracken; working with corporate groups and Robert Gordon College for a total of 57 person days.

In addition to efforts to control the above INNS plant species within the area, the Council remains a strong supporter of the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrel (SSRS) project in their efforts to control grey squirrel in Scotland. In the reporting period, the Council have provided officer time to identify Council owned sites for SSRS to monitor and control grey squirrel. SSRS have reciprocally provided their officers' time and species records to the Council's review of Local Nature Conservation Sites. SSRS has been working locally with Aberdeen City Council and wider project partners since 2011 to reduce grey squirrel density and distribution in the North East. The work to date has been very successful, and SSRS are now aiming to completely eradicate grey squirrels from the North East of Scotland.

Being innovative with how we manage INNS, using the small staff resource we have available within the Council, working with partnerships and with multiple landowners, is key to successfully tackling this main driver of biodiversity loss.

### **Integrating multi-functional green infrastructure**

#### **Sedum roofs and solar panels on bus shelters**

As part of the Council's drive to provide a more sustainable and climate neutral public transport network, a programme of bus stops topped with sedum roofs and solar panels is being rolled out. These will also support the Council's work on Nature Networks by providing 'stepping stones' for species across city greenspaces. See Case Study 2 in Section 7 of this report for more information.

### **Providing opportunities for young people and learners to connect with and understand nature through Learning for Sustainability, Outdoor Learning and through STEM subjects**

#### **Countryside and Park Rangers**

The Countryside and Park Rangers services are vital to delivering the biodiversity message to the wider public and to education services. In the reporting period they provided;

Educational events: 151

Practical events: 112

In addition to delivering the practical aspect of nature conservation and biodiversity information, the Rangers have provided Council officers within the Natural Environment Policy team with information for planning applications and strategies and policies affecting Council assets.

### **Schools and early learning**

Many schools in the city have an Eco Group or Climate Change committee. The groups are involved in a variety of activities within schools to consider their local environment and make decisions that will improve the school and its locality. The activities that young people are involved in within pupil groups help to increase their awareness of climate change both for themselves and through the sharing of their activities with peers.

A yearly summary is created highlighting activities that schools undertake around Net Zero and other environmental concerns within Aberdeen City Council. Other activities also take place, like regular litter picks, which have been promoted through the school's individual social media channels. The engagement from Aberdeen's young people around environmental topics has been clear from pupil surveys that were undertaken in 2021 and in 2022. The surveys led to the Youth Climate Change President, and two Vice Presidents, being appointed in March 2022. Monthly meetings are held during the school term with interested young people and the Council gave the group funds to spend on environmental projects which they feel are important.

There is an expectation in all schools that they cover climate change and the environment as part of the curriculum from Nursery to the end of S3. All pupils from Level 1 onwards as part of the Curriculum for Excellence must demonstrate an understanding of their own climate impacts. The impact of climate change forms a larger part of the curriculum as pupils progress through secondary school. A range of improvements have been made to the natural environment both in school grounds and in the local community through the Eco Groups. Initiatives include:

- Tree and bulb planting
- Planting of a hedgerow to link a wildlife corridor
- Planting and selling of flowers from the school and wildflower planting
- Extending biodiversity in school grounds and bird feeders being installed
- Bug hotels and improvements or establishment of school wildlife gardens to encourage pollinators.
- Gardening group established
- Planting vegetables and creation of a market garden
- Creation of sensory gardens
- Visits to a school allotment



This work includes the development of school gardens, planting of orchards and redevelopment of outdoor courtyards as positive spaces for learning. School groups have designed and displayed planters and invested in outdoor picnic tables as well as purchasing resources to support learning outside.

Hazlehead Primary have updated their pupil-created Eco Code, which is central to the environmental values of the school:

#### **Hazlehead Primary School's ECO Code**

Everyone is **responsible** for looking after our planet  
Cycle or walk when you have the **opportunity**  
Only use or eat as much as you need – always recycle  
Care for and **respect** our plants, trees and wildlife  
Only use water and energy when you need it  
Do be **fair** to the environment and put your litter in the bin  
Everyone should have the **courage** to follow our Eco Code

#### **Wider community benefits and biodiversity action**

##### **Countryside and Park Rangers**

The Countryside and Park Rangers service is vital to delivering the biodiversity message to the wider public and educational settings. In the reporting period the service provided 151 educational events and 112 practical events.

In addition to delivering the practical aspect of nature conservation and biodiversity information, the Rangers have provided Council officers within the Natural Environment Policy team with information to help inform planning applications and strategies and policies affecting Council assets.

The Countryside Ranger Service works with a number of community groups and horticultural therapy projects to develop a small area at the Council's former plant nursery at Hazelhead to create an area for groups to use who find outdoor learning in publicly accessible places more challenging due to their physical or mental capacity limitations or issues around social interaction. An area of existing young woodland has been extended, with a wildflower area and a small pond. 'Discovery Woodland' areas have been created for 'leave no trace' campfires, with bird feeding stations, minibeast hotels and many other features. The area is extensively used by Ranger-led "Branching Out" programmes where adult clients are referred by medical practitioners as an alternative to drug therapy for some mental health conditions. It has proved very successful with many clients getting in to work for the first time or being able to return to work after a period of poor mental health when they have been unable to work. The area has also been used by the Family Learning Team working with families affected by autism; by the Play Forum and as a venue for woodland craft and fire training for adults. The area is also used daily by the Hazlehead Outdoor Nursery staff and pupils.

### **Food Growing and Allotments**

The biodiversity value of food-growing spaces is expressed throughout 'Granite City Growing', Aberdeen's food-growing strategy, which was featured in the Council Biodiversity Duty Report 2020. Outcome two of the strategy is to 'increase biodiversity, contribute to a Low Carbon Scotland, encourage climate change adaptation and mitigation (through changed behaviours) and improve the condition and carbon retention in the soil'. The supporting objective is to 'Embed the requirement to increase biodiversity and climate change adaptation and mitigation within growing spaces through the choice of plants, heritage varieties, site design and management'.

Baseline data was created in 2020 in a partnership project with an MSc student from the University of Aberdeen. A questionnaire targeting local allotment-holders and community food-growers found that 70% of 99 respondents were not only aware of the need to encourage biodiversity but they actively made efforts to do so. Furthermore, 69% of respondents followed organic principles in their approach to food-growing. Implementation of the food-growing strategy is overseen by a steering group which sits within the Sustainable Food Places Partnership Aberdeen (Granite City Good Food) governance structure.

Allotments are prime places for biodiversity and important as 'stepping stones' within habitat networks in the urban environment. Whilst allotment rules mean that a plot should mainly contain edibles, they have a significant role to play in boosting biodiversity.

In an effort to improve allotment sites for pollinators, bulbs were purchased, and a selection has gone to each site. The Council's Allotment Project Officer purchased various homes for nature using funding secured during the reporting period. These have been evenly distributed amongst the 21 Council allotment sites too and include:

Amphibian Homes	2
Bee Barn	45
Birch Log Open Nest Box	45
Washington-type Nest Box	30
Blackbird Nest Box	30
Wooden Hedgehog Nest Box	20

### **Aberdeen Archives, Gallery and Museums**

Aberdeen Archives, Gallery and Museums (AAGM) looks after the local archives, art collections and museums. Biodiversity and environmental improvements in and around some of the AAGM buildings have been achieved in the following ways: .

- A wild flower meadow is currently progressing at the [Aberdeen Treasure Hub](#) in partnership with CFine, Earth & Worms and the University of Aberdeen. “No Mow May” has been observed at Aberdeen Treasure Hub to encourage growth and flowering for pollinators.
- Aberdeen Treasure Hub and Crombie Road both have solar panels on the buildings.
- Aberdeen Art Gallery balcony planters have been left to flower and seed to encourage bees.
- Aberdeen Art Gallery and Aberdeen Maritime Museum can be explored digitally using the Bloomberg Connects free app and therefore reducing the visitor carbon footprint. AAGM currently donate coffee grounds from our cafés at Aberdeen Art Gallery to the community gardening group Earth & Worms . The coffee grounds are collected by Earth & Worms on bike carriers and used to create natural fertilisers.
- Several AAGM storage crates were repurposed for use as planters as part of the Countryside Rangers project ‘Crates to Plates’. (see page 25)



## SECTION 3: MAINSTREAMING BIODIVERSITY

Please outline any steps your organisation has taken to incorporate measures to protect biodiversity into its wider policies, plans or strategies. This should include decision-making structures and staff and organisational roles and responsibilities.

### Regional Economic Strategy

The 2023 [Regional Economic Strategy](#) has been drafted where one of four work programmes, which supports the overall vision and high level objectives of the Strategy, is 'An outstanding natural environment'. It states that '*Our natural environments and biodiversity will be preserved, protected and restored, to ensure we retain their value and integrity, allowing them to continue providing all the essential services we need to support and strengthen our economy, people and places*'. Building biodiversity and the natural environment into this key, high level, document sets the context for the region and helps to ensure that biodiversity and the natural environment are properly considered going forward.

### Local Outcome Improvement Plan stretch goal 15: Addressing the nature crisis by protecting or managing 26% of Aberdeen's area for nature by 2026

Community Planning Aberdeen (CPA) is the strategic partnership for public services in the city, working to deliver the [Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan](#). The LOIP was first published in August 2016 and is refreshed every two years to ensure it reflects current circumstances and that the Partnership remains focussed on the priority issues for the city to achieve the vision of Aberdeen as 'a place where all people can prosper'. In the 2021 refresh stretch goal 15: *Addressing the nature crisis by protecting or managing 26% of Aberdeen's area for nature by 2026* was added.

<b>Total area for Aberdeen</b>	<b>18750 hectares (ha)</b>
<b>Total area protected</b>	<b>3191.6 ha</b>
<b>Total percentage of Aberdeen protected (2021)</b>	<b>17%</b>

### Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2023

The Aberdeen Local Development Plan (LDP) 2023 was formally adopted by Aberdeen City Council on 19 June 2023. The most notable inclusion following the review of the prior Draft LDP by the Scottish Government Reporter, was the revision to Policy NE5: Trees and Woodland. The policy now includes an additional sentence advising that: "*Particular emphasis is placed on the protection and ongoing management of Ancient Woodlands*". The inclusion of this minor alteration will better enable the protection of not only woodlands containing ancient trees, but the preservation of long-established woodlands that have been sustainably felled and replanted over hundreds of years.

Aberdeen Planning Guidance (APG) has also been drafted to provide further advice and guidance on the interpretation of the policies within the LDP, and these were adopted as Interim Planning Advice on the same day. The APGs have been through a period of public consultation and are anticipated to be accepted and adopted by the Council prior to the end of 2023.

The APG for Landscape includes an extensive list of appropriate native species planting as part of the landscaping scheme for a development. This includes a breakdown of species of plants, shrubs, trees and climbing plants that may be incorporated into a scheme in order to provide biodiversity enhancements for a site.

The Natural Heritage APG now includes a statement on the Precautionary Principle which requires “*close adherence to nature conservation principles on all development sites, particularly where there is uncertainty about the impacts on internationally or nationally important habitats and species.*”

In addition to this, there is a dedicated section focusing on ‘Enhancements and Overall Biodiversity Gain’ which outlines that all development proposals should make provision to achieve an overall biodiversity gain on site. Aberdeen City Council also clearly expresses that in instances where a potential development site is deliberately pre-emptively cleared of trees or habitat, that the Council’s position will be to view the site as if this had not taken place. Such an approach would prevent the undervaluation of a site’s existing biodiversity value and ensure that the enhancements obtained are relative to the prior condition of the site, and not relative to a subsequently cleared and vacant brownfield site.

The Food-growing Aberdeen Planning Guidance makes considerable reference to biodiversity, signposting to examples of best practice and encouraging space to support pollinators and other wildlife. An appendix to the planning guidance lists types of fruit trees which developers could seek to include in their landscaping plans to maximise their biodiversity value.

The Aberdeen Planning Guidance for Open Space and Green Infrastructure further supports the policy by providing guidance on how developments will be expected to assess and demonstrate their compliance with policies and deliver Open Space and Green Infrastructure.

### **The Beachfront Development Framework**

The Beachfront Development Framework was approved as an Aberdeen City Council Strategy in May 2023. This is a high level strategy which shows the aspiration to improve biodiversity at the historic beachfront area. The Development Framework states:

*“With the ‘working with nature’ approach we can truly integrate sustainable drainage systems that become part of the landscape. ‘Working with nature’ will showcase the Beachfront concept masterplan as a working example of how to work harmoniously with our environment.”*

The enhanced green network within the site will play a key role as a habitat for wildlife and increasing biodiversity. Landform mounding will provide shelter to form microclimates and grow a variety of plant species.

### **Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee**

After the latest local government elections, the Council put a new committee structure in place. One major element of this was a new Committee called the Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee. The remit of this Committee is to monitor the delivery of all services and functions relating to net zero, the environment and transport; to scrutinise performance and approve options within set budgets to ensure



best value and delivery of the Council's agreed outcomes; and to ensure that the Council has robust arrangements for the delivery of its environmental targets and related statutory obligations including the Biodiversity Duty Report.

### **Climate and Environment Policy Service restructure**

In late 2022 the Environmental Policy Team at the Council was restructured as the Climate and Environment Policy Service (CEPS). It contains two teams: the Natural Environment Policy Team and the Climate and Sustainability Policy Team. This restructure has raised the Service's profile within the organisation, giving biodiversity and natural heritage an increased profile. CEPS has a Service Manager, two Team Leaders and four Senior Officers improving the Service's resilience and progression opportunities with a more balanced structure in place.

### **Nature Networks and 30x30**

The Natural Environment Policy team, which is part of the wider Climate and Natural Environment Policy Service, provide specialist advice to other departments within the Council on topics such as nature conservation, biodiversity, tree protection, outdoor access, open space, climate change and sustainability to ensure legislation and best practice is covered in decision making. The team is working to improve the level and type of advice associated with developer contributions which could help to further conserve biodiversity.

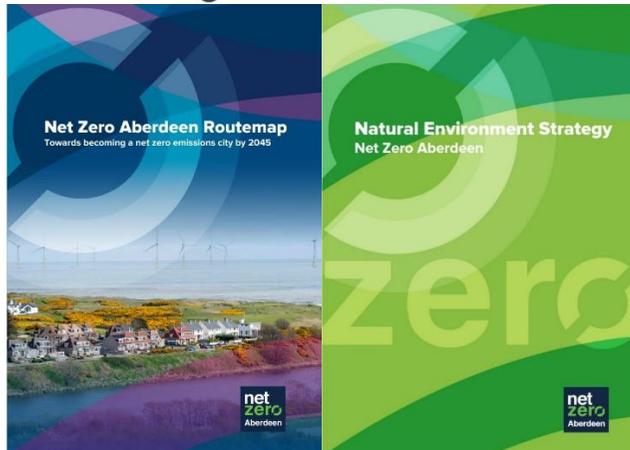
The team is currently working on strategies and policies relating to the emerging [Nature Networks and 30x30 guidance](#). The policies coming out of this will be supported by early work from a larger project called Aberdeen B-lines, run in partnership with Buglife. This project has helped to deliver habitat management on the ground, community engagement on biodiversity and assist grounds maintenance teams to better realise biodiversity benefits which are cost effective within land management practices.

### **The Net Zero Routemap**

The [Net Zero Aberdeen Routemap](#) was developed in partnership with 24 city organisations. The routemap sets a pathway for Aberdeen achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2045. It is supported by six enabling strategies covering key themes; [Natural Environment Strategy](#), [Mobility Strategy](#), [Buildings and Heat Strategy](#), [Circular Economy Strategy](#), [Energy Supply Strategy](#) and [Empowerment Strategy](#)

The Natural Environment Strategy aims to protect and expand nature across Aberdeen; enhancing its integrity, managing it to contribute to an overall reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, and reversing the nature decline for the multiple benefits nature gives to societal and economic needs.

The [Aberdeen Adapts Framework](#) (originally published in 2019) was refreshed alongside Net Zero Aberdeen to show synergies and interdependencies between the two. Aberdeen Adapts is the climate adaptation framework for the city, developed collaboratively with the University of Aberdeen, with support from Adaptation Scotland and participation from communities and city organisations. The Net Zero Aberdeen Routemap, enabling strategies, and refreshed Aberdeen Adapts Framework were approved at Full Council in February 2022, with design versions of these documents being created and published on the website by November 2022.



### **Open Space Audit and Strategy**

The [Open Space Strategy](#) is one of the key ways for the Council to deliver on its biodiversity duty. It contains high level aims and objectives and an action plan, setting various tasks and resources required for its delivery. There are eight objectives in the strategy and 33 actions identified by partners, stakeholders, and the public who contributed towards its development. Open space land use types are defined by Planning Advice Note (PAN65) 'Planning and Open Space'.

Audits of Aberdeen's open spaces have recently been completed with early analysis of data underway which will provide the evidence base for a revised audit report. This included a public consultation on open spaces and a map based survey where residents could feedback on spaces important to them and also help identify spaces that might have potential to be managed for wildlife. The updated audit findings will inform a future revision of the Natural Environment Strategy.

[NESBRc](#) applied a biodiversity scoring system for habitat compartments within the city to help assess sites for the Open Space Audit. The data is held in a digital format for multiple use and cross referencing with other data. The scoring system identified areas that contained priority habitats and also highlighted areas that might benefit from future biodiversity improvement. Input into the audit ensured that biodiversity was accounted for as part of the overall process. In addition, individual audited areas were scored for future use to inform planning application assessment and other decision making on land use and development.

As part of the Open Space Audit, habitat connectivity scores were also collected for sites to which capture how well connected they are to the wider green space network and citywide green infrastructure. This will allow staff to identify opportunities to improve the connectivity of habitats and reduce habitat fragmentation through project work and by working with developers.



Ecosystem services data has been gathered for open space sites to estimate the potential benefits and nature based solutions a site delivers. The percentage of tree, shrub, grass, water and impervious surface cover for each site was collected as well as the percentage of the site which could benefit pollinators. This data can be used to estimate the benefits and ecosystem services sites are providing, these include air purification, carbon storage and sequestration, water run-off reduction, temperature regulation, noise reduction and benefits to pollinators.

One of the key actions to deliver the biodiversity duty is enhancing and protecting the green space network across the city to avoid habitat fragmentation and link various habitats and species together. We use a [Green Space Network GIS](#) tool on an ongoing basis to assist with protecting, enhancing and managing green spaces across the city. This tool is used to promote biodiversity through the planning process as well as supporting blue green infrastructure policies in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan. The [Aberdeen Planning Guidance for Open Space and Green Infrastructure](#) further supports the policy by providing guidance on how developments will be expected to assess and demonstrate their compliance with policies and deliver Open Space and Green Infrastructure.

As part of Aberdeen City Council's Participatory Budgeting programme, known as UDECIDE, the Council's Natural Environment Policy team identified £25,000 for projects that engage young people with nature, tackle climate change and make positive environmental changes in Aberdeen.

The Fairer Aberdeen Board steering group worked in partnership with the Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership's Health Improvement Fund and Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations (ACVO) Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund to allocate funds to a wide variety of initiatives which otherwise may not have received funding.

Organisations and the wider community were supported with funding for innovative projects to improve the natural environment and encourage young people to engage with outdoor spaces. These included community gardens, food growing, coastal learning activities, outdoor cooking facilities, event shelters, litter clean ups and native tree planting along the banks of the rivers Dee and Don.

### **Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan**

The Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan was approved by the former Operational Delivery Committee in June 2022. The plan sets out the vision, priorities and an action plan for the stewardship and expansion of Aberdeen's urban, street trees, rural trees and woodlands. It provides a long-term framework for ensuring that the qualities of trees and woodland are measurable, recognised, properly valued, protected, and permanently enshrined in the fabric of the city.

### **Local Transport Strategy**

The Council is currently drafting its next Local Transport Strategy and plans to consult on it during the Autumn 2023. The draft LTS (2023-2030) considers both climate change and biodiversity and how they will impact and be impacted upon by the transport network. Both have their own topic areas, policies and actions within the draft strategy.

Of particular note to biodiversity are the following objectives;

- TPO1 – Climate and Environment - Reduce the negative impact of transport on the climate and the environment in Aberdeen
- TPO6 – Resilience – Ensure the Aberdeen transport network is more resilient and can react to unplanned circumstances and extreme weather
- TP08 – Modal shift – Reduce the need to travel and reduce dependency on the private car in Aberdeen.

Below these objectives sit a series of topic areas, each with their own policy. All of these will help to reduce the environmental impact of transport on biodiversity.

### **South College Street Junction Improvements project – providing additional positive effects for biodiversity**

Following the adoption of the Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan, the impact of the proposed changes on the city's road network was assessed. This identified a number of transport network changes to enable the implementation of public realm enhancements. including wildflower and tree planting along Guild Street and Union Street. The project will enhance infrastructure for walking and cycling along its length and provide positive effects for biodiversity and increased resilience to climate change effects. The project is jointly funded by Aberdeen City Council and a grant from the Scottish Government's Bus Partnership Fund.





**Food Growing Strategy**

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 gave local authorities the duty to prepare a food-growing strategy for their areas. Granite City Growing was approved at committee in February 2020; the culmination of nearly three years of work. Food-growing has many co-benefits and, in Aberdeen, making strong links to health and wellbeing as a therapeutic activity and in providing fresh edibles has been locally important. Embedding it within local spatial and community planning has underpinned the strategy throughout. As well as alignment to the Local Development Plan, Granite City Growing has also sought to fit in with the governance of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan and the Sustainable Food City Partnership Aberdeen vision and action plan.

**Environmental Services grounds maintenance management plans and policies**

Aberdeen has a long history of horticultural excellence resulting in many high quality greenspaces. With the twin crises of climate change and nature loss, the need to take action to manage greenspaces more sustainably, to mitigate and build resilience to climate change *and* support biodiversity is required.

Reduced grass management is not only better for biodiversity generally but it also reduces the Council’s carbon emissions by requiring less movement of staff and machinery to sites in order to cut the grass. .

As reported in the previous Biodiversity Duty Report 2020, the Council has implemented changes in management regimes in some parks and greenspaces. In several areas a matrix of management types has been trialled; some areas are only cut once at the end of the summer and all the cuttings removed, other areas are cut two or three times a year. Areas are still maintained with more frequent cuts where there is a need for areas for informal or formal recreation activities.

***Matrix style management***

Where the vegetation is allowed to grow longer, paths are mown through the areas to maintain public access and to allow people to get closer to nature in their local area. Some areas where we do management such as this are;

Stonehaven Road  
 Garthdee Road  
 Riverside Drive

Culter Bypass  
 Skene Road verges  
 Raeden Park

Riverview Drive  
 Fernielea Park  
 Eric Hendrie Park

***Existing wildflower rich areas***

Existing species-rich grassland areas, managed for biodiversity, need to be maintained with low fertility and to be cut at the end of the flowering season, once the wildflowers have set seed. For most areas this will be from late September to the end of October but can vary depending on the weather conditions during the summer months.

***Annual cut not primarily for biodiversity***



Some areas of grassland have been identified for one or two cuts per year to encourage longer grass growth for its biodiversity benefits even though the area is less likely to develop well for wildflowers. Longer grass supports other biodiversity such as insects, small mammals and birds who benefit from the shelter and food source.

### ***Biodiversity areas in formal parks***

The last 12 months have been rewarding for everyone involved in Aberdeen's parks and green spaces.. At the Beautiful Scotland 2022 Awards the city was named joint first in Scotland and awarded the Beautiful Scotland's prestigious Rose Bowl. This is the top award presented by Keep Scotland Beautiful each year and is awarded to the entrant that is best in terms of horticulture, environmental responsibility and community participation. At the awards, Aberdeen was also the winner of a Gold Medal and crowned Best City. To top things off Aberdeen also won the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society Award for its horticulture displays in city parks and green spaces.

The Council recognises that whilst some parks require a more formal approach to planting and management for heritage reasons, there is scope for some wilder areas within parks. The Council has roughly 45ha of formal parkland across the three parks of Duthie, Seaton and Victoria Parks, and of this approximately 2.4ha or about 5%, is more naturalised.

### ***Communication with staff, the public and Elected Members***

Key to the success of changing the grassland management regimes is communication with staff, senior management, the public and elected members. A consistent and accurate message is essential across the organisation but presented in a way appropriate to the different groups. Starting this before the work changes on the ground is essential as local communities are more likely to buy-in and accept change if they have been part of the process from the beginning. Doing this communication work during the Covid-19 restrictions was more challenging but still possible through online means, social media and the print media, radio and TV.

### ***Community Tree Planting Schemes***

Environmental Services worked in partnership with communities, including schools and businesses, to plant trees across Aberdeen. Our community tree planting saw over 20,000 trees planted across the city in 2021 and 2022. Overall, the Council has planted 43,000 trees since 1 Jan 2021 and there are plans for about 24,000 more during the report period and beyond.

### ***Street Tree Planting***

A commitment to plant new and replacement street trees has seen more than 800 street trees planted in 2021-2023. Street trees bring much needed greenery to our urban areas. Scottish Government Nature Restoration grant funding and additional Council funding paid for the street trees.



### ***Queen's Green Canopy Champion City***

Thousands of trees were planted in Aberdeen as part of a nation-wide initiative to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022. The Queen's Green Canopy is a unique tree planting initiative which invited people from across the United Kingdom to 'Plant a Tree for the Jubilee' to create a legacy in honour of The Queen's Platinum Jubilee and Aberdeen was selected as one of the initiative's Champion Cities..

Being a Champion City was a great honour and Aberdeen is one of only 20 cities across the UK to be awarded this. In Aberdeen, there has been a programme of tree planting throughout the 21/22 season which included:

- Planting up Fernielea open space with 8000 trees and shrubs. This was our Queens Green Canopy premier site and launch. Planting was completed early April 2022
- Street tree planting for 2021/22 aligned to Queen's Green Canopy seeing 500 street trees planted across the City and planting was completed in April 2022
- 70 oak trees were made available to schools and community groups for planting
- All of Aberdeen's formal parks (Duthie Park, Hazlehead Park, Victoria Park etc) have planted a Queen's Green Canopy tree
- Queen's Green Canopy aligned as part of our tree planting programme to Aberdeen City Council's Climate Plan and Spaces for Nature work.
- The theme for the School Garden Competition was Queens Jubilee. There was an excellent response from schools across Aberdeen with winners selected from Cornhill, Loirston and Quarryhill
- Clean Up Aberdeen to be linked in i.e. clean up our woodlands.
- Launch of a Council tree nursery at Hazlehead in 2022

Further information on The Queen's Green Canopy is available at the [The Queen's Green Canopy webpage](#).

### **New housing programme**

Aberdeen City Council is building new council houses across Aberdeen. This major project involves building at several sites aiming to address a long-term shortage of affordable social rented housing in the city.

### ***Actions to protect and enhance biodiversity***

All new Council housing developments have various reports on habitats and nature to inform their preservation, protection and enhancement. Sustainable urban drainage systems are installed where appropriate and blue and green corridors created throughout the developments using native planting along with wildflower meadow planting. Traditional dry stone dykes and holes in fences are provided to allow the movement of hedgehogs and other wildlife.



***Nature-based solutions, climate change and biodiversity***

In addition new Council housing developments include the provision of water butts, low energy fittings and heating by either district heating, air source heat pumps or ground source heat pumps. High levels of insulation are used to reduce heating demand and help alleviate fuel poverty. Bat and bird boxes have been provided to encourage nature and low level lighting specified to reduce the impact on bats and alleviate light pollution. Two burns have been un-culverted and the adjacent area rewilded. Wetland areas have been created where fish can now be seen and they provide useful areas which are allowed to flood in times of heavy rainfall preventing flooding downstream. Trees have been planted on land which was previously amenity grassland and the grass has been allowed to grow with little maintenance. .

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## SECTION 4: NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS, CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY

### How has your organisation integrated biodiversity into actions on the climate emergency such as through Nature based Solutions?

The Council recognises the devastating effect climate change is having on biodiversity and working towards net zero and climate resilience in as many aspects of our business as possible is essential.

- The [Climate Change Plan 2021-2025: Towards a Net Zero and Climate Resilient Council](#) was approved at Council in March 2021. The purpose of this plan is to set out the Council's approach, pathway and actions towards net zero and climate resilient Council assets and operations, by 2045. The plan sets emissions targets for Council assets and operations, outlines actions to reduce carbon emissions and to increase resilience to climate change. It covers 5 main themes:
- **Buildings** - reducing energy demand, transitioning to renewable energy and low carbon technology, increasing resilience of Council buildings and improving standards.
- **Mobility** – transition to zero emission fleet, with an expanded EV charging and hydrogen refuelling infrastructure. Reducing emissions from staff travel. Considerations of climate adaptation for transport infrastructure.
- **Other Operations** - upgraded streetlighting, increase in nature-based solutions, a reduction in waste generated from Council buildings and operations, a reduced carbon footprint from our catering.
- **Leadership and Governance** – improved data and climate risk management, incorporating climate change into Council practices and decision-making processes, strategic resource allocation.
- **Awareness and Behaviour Change** - staff are aware of the Council's climate action and commitments, increasing staff understanding on climate change; and where necessary, upskilling to support actions.

Ongoing progress is taking place to work on a Project Register of over 100 projects being taken forward under the five thematic sub-groups. An Oversight Group drives the tracking of this activity. Further projects to embed climate change in Council systems and processes are being progressed through the Plan.

### What steps has your organisation taken to incorporate biodiversity outcomes into partnership initiatives, wider strategies or initiatives of relevance to climate change?

#### Co-operating in collecting, managing and using biodiversity data

In addition to their usual duties, North East Scotland Biological Records Centre (NESBReC) continues to receive and manage reports of invasive non-native species (INNS) from residents within Aberdeen. The data is held on the NESBReC database for further use by the Council (see section 2). Sightings of the INNS plant species are shared with the Countryside Rangers Service to enable control measures to be

planned. Sightings of grey squirrel and red squirrel are shared with Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels to aid their project work in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire.

During 2021-2023, NESBReC has been a member of the Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum (SBIF) Advisory Group, attending regular meetings and responding to ongoing consultations on the SBIF Review. This review process aims to achieve an improved flow of biodiversity data across the whole of Scotland and NESBReC represents organisations and biological recorders of both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. As of April 2023, the recommendations of the SBIF have resulted in the Better Biodiversity Data (BBD) project and NESBReC staff are active members of the BBD Project Group and the BBD Data Management Sub-Group.

### **Looking ahead, what do you think will be the main climate change related challenges for biodiversity over the next three years?**

In the Council area, the main challenge from climate change is likely to be from flooding. Overall, the challenges from climate change for biodiversity locally are similar to the Scottish challenges which have been detailed in the 'UK Climate Risk Assessment – summary for Scotland' which include:

**Ne1:** Risks to species and habitats due to inability to respond to changing climatic conditions.

*The pace of change is resulting in habitat loss and fragmentation, which means there is a shift in species numbers and distribution and warmer springs / later autumns also changes the lifecycle events of many species. In the Council area this could be a particular problem for the fishing industry with the northward movement of cold-water marine species. Rising river temperatures are a risk to the qualifying species of the River Dee Special Area of Conservation (SAC), particularly the freshwater pearl mussel which is an immobile species.*

**Ne4:** Risks to soils from increased seasonal aridity and wetness.

*This includes water-based soil erosion, deterioration/ loss of soil quality and function plus risks from compaction. Aberdeen can especially see the impacts of water-based soil erosion around the Council area and tackling this problem ties in with aims for flood alleviation.*

**Ne5:** Risks to natural carbon stores and carbon sequestration, **Ne6:** Risks to agriculture and wildlife from water scarcity; and flooding and **Ne7:** Risks to freshwater species from higher water temperatures.

*The River Dee is a Special Area of Conservation for the freshwater pearl mussel, Atlantic salmon and European otter. With lower water flows warming water temperatures and the impact on water quality from flood events there is a need for management practices which reduce risks from low and high water flows. Involvement with the Dee Catchment Partnership allows more can be done for the River Dee higher up in the catchment to see the benefits in the Aberdeen City Council area.*

**Ne9:** Risks to agriculture, forestry, landscapes and wildlife from pests, pathogens and invasive species.



*A warmer climate is changing dispersal which means there is increased threat from pests and disease and INNS. An emerging concern in our city is New Zealand pygmyweed.*

**Ne12:** Risks to habitats and heritage in the coastal zone from sea level rise; and loss of natural flood protection.

*Coastal inundation from storm surge events causes loss and erosion of coastal habitats. There is an increase in dynamic movement of our soft coastal areas. Partnering with the East Grampian Coastal Partnership ensures the capture of the best data for protecting the coastline and promoting responsible access. Working with Buglife on the B-lines project is also enhancing biodiversity through the coastal natural areas of the city.*

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## SECTION 5: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### Public Engagement

#### Countryside Ranger Service

The Aberdeen City Council Countryside Ranger Service currently comprises 2.6 full time equivalent Countryside Rangers, managed by an Acting Countryside Officer. The team manages 25 countryside sites across Aberdeen. These sites total more than 1,000 hectares and include a Site of Special Scientific Interest, four Local Nature Reserves, and 14 Local Nature Conservation Sites. Ranger-managed sites are regularly patrolled to detect maintenance work that is required to keep infrastructure safe for public use

The Countryside Rangers lead an extensive program of public events, from practical habitat volunteering to pond dipping and shelter building. Activities are run for all levels of education including home-schooled groups and groups of adults recovering from addiction and mental health issues.

The Countryside Ranger Service has an active [Facebook](#) page with a following of over 4,600 people and some posts reaching over 1 million views. The Facebook page is used to promote the activities of the team, achievements, interesting wildlife sightings and a weekly 'Friday Elevenses Quiz' which is a biodiversity related photograph or sound clip posted with a question for followers to answer. The Facebook page is a good way for two-way communications with individuals and other groups in the area.

#### Duthie Park Rangers

The Duthie Park Ranger Service provides a variety of environmentally themed educational workshops to schools, nursery and community groups in addition to hosting two public events during the reporting period. The aim is to enhance the learner's knowledge of the natural environment and of Duthie Park. The Park Rangers have also assisted the Natural Environment Policy team with public events for the Parks for Pollinators project.

#### Climate and Nature Pledge

Recognising that delivery of the [Net Zero Routemap](#) will require a collective citywide effort, the [Aberdeen Climate and Nature Pledge](#) was launched in November 2022, supporting the objectives of its enabling strategies. The Pledge enables citizens and organisations to get involved and play their part in the collaborative journey towards a net zero, climate resilient, biodiverse city. There are currently 95 pledge signatories, made up of 30- organisations and 65 individual or household signatories (correct 27/09/23).

All signatories commit to an overall pledge statement (available on the linked website), in addition to commitments across key topics. Businesses are asked to commit to at least one action across each of the five categories; Mobility, Buildings & Energy, Natural Environment, Circular Economy and Empowerment. Individuals are also asked to commit to actions across four categories; Home, Food, Transport and Lifestyle. The Natural Environment commitments for organisations include the following statement linked to the Local Outcome Improvement

Plan Stretch Outcome 15, “*We will...Manage at least 10% of our outdoor space for nature by 2023 and at least 26% by 2026*”. A list of signatory organisations can be viewed on the Net Zero Aberdeen website: [Pledge Signatories | Aberdeen City Council](#)

### **Woodside Wee Forest**

The first Wee Forest has been planted in Aberdeen thanks to the joint efforts of Aberdeen City Council’s Countryside Rangers, Arboriculture team, pupils, and staff of Woodside Primary School and NatureScot. The Wee Forest at Woodside Primary School has joined a group of twenty such forests across Scotland which are being planted.

In March 2023, with the help of the whole of Woodside School, the Countryside Rangers and volunteers planted 600 native trees in the school grounds. This was done in accordance with the guidelines of the Tiny Forest methodology which is supported in Scotland by NatureScot. Since they were planted in a 20m x 20m area the trees have been looked after by the Countryside Ranger Service, pupils and staff of the school, especially through the very dry summer of 2022. The trees are monitored for height and health twice a year, with volunteer days being open to the staff of Environmental Services. Bird and invertebrate counts are conducted through the year in collaboration with the University of Aberdeen, and the Wee Forest is already a thriving area for wildlife beyond the trees that were planted originally: birds, butterflies, fungi and invertebrate populations benefit from the forest, which is already over two metres tall. Woodside Primary School created a film to accompany the launch of the wee Forest <https://youtu.be/9jvHbuanSRI>

### **Crates to plates:**

In 2022 Aberdeen Art Gallery made its spare crates available through, the Council’s ‘Green Champions’ network.

The Council’s gardening staff refurbished the crates, replacing packaging materials with liners and compost, before delivering the first planters, in late 2022, to the Ukrainian guests living in a hotel at Aberdeen Airport in Dyce. Early this year staff from Community Food Initiatives North East (CFINE) helped lead the first planting workshop with the Council’s Countryside Rangers and Ukrainian guests planting, among other things, kale, parsnips and lettuce. Since then, a workshop has run every month, focusing on growing, harvesting and eating the vegetables.

The arrival of more asylum seekers in Aberdeen has seen demand for Crates to Plates evolve towards a second delivery of planters. These will be delivered to other hotels in Aberdeen and used to grow herbs and vegetables, fruit such as strawberries and blueberries and for use in tea making and snacking.

### **Meadow-in-a-Box:**

His Majesty’s Prison Grampian and the Young Offenders Institution have been making wooden planters the meadow-in-a-box project. Planters have been delivered to ten of the Council’s Early Years settings. Thirty more are awaiting delivery to schools, care homes and sheltered housing. The planters will be sown with native wildflower seeds provided for free by NatureScot. Each planter will grow a mini wildflower meadow that looks beautiful and provides pollinating insects with a nectar source in areas often lacking in a natural food source.

Meadow-in-a-Box is part of the Aberdeen B-lines project being run in partnership with Buglife. The intention is to publicise the project regionally so that other Local Authorities can use the model to site their own Meadows-in-a-Box.

## Workforce development

### Workforce upskilling

#### Green Workplace on intranet

A “Green Workplace” area of the staff intranet was established at the start of 2021. This area is for interaction by all staff, and provides easy access to information, practical tips, ideas and opportunities for staff to get involved in the biodiversity, climate change and wider sustainability agenda.

#### Internal Climate Change E-Learning Module

In September 2022, an internal Climate Change eLearning module: *Meeting Our Climate Change duties* was created and rolled out to enable colleagues to play their part in reducing carbon emissions and adapting to climate change.

#### Teacher training

The Countryside Rangers have run a practical outdoor skills course for nursery teachers at the two outdoor nurseries run by the Council.

#### North East Scotland Biological Records Centre training courses

NESBReC provides the public and staff with regular training courses related to biological recording throughout the year. Since the Covid-19 lockdown, the majority of these were moved online, which has proven to be very popular format but has its limitations due to the subject matter. Species identification courses have now returned to in person again.

2021	2022	2023
8 (all online)	8 (4 online)	8 (4 online)

#### Development Management officer training

Officers from the Council’s Development Management teams have attended training courses directly related to biodiversity during the reporting period. Training on biodiversity and related subjects are vital to advance the new National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), which has introduced the requirement for benefits to biodiversity within most developments.

#### Elected Member National Planning Framework 4 training

In preparation for the formal adoption of NPF4 on 13 February 2023, senior planners from the Local Development Plan team held an interactive training event for Elected Members. The training was identified as a particular priority for members of the Planning Development Management Committee and those who sit on the Local Review Body but was also offered to all 43 Elected Members of the Council.

The training event highlighted the changes in the planning system brought about through the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and the adoption of NPF4. The training covered national spatial strategy, national developments, the overarching themes, identified key changes from the previous national guidance documents and explained NPF4's enhanced status as part of the 'development plan.'

In addition to the Elected Member training, a council-wide webinar was organised to explain the implications for the Council as a whole. The audience included colleagues representing the Council in its role as both a landowner and developer.

### **Identify any opportunities that are available to your staff to take part in practical actions**

#### **Local Biodiversity Action Plan Officers (LBAPO) network**

Environmental Planners from the Natural Environment Policy Team have been part of the LBAP officers network which has proven to be an effective way to engage with current emerging guidance for Nature Networks and 30x30 policies and guidance.

#### **Secondment opportunities**

The secondment of an Environmental Planner to the Scottish Government to work as a Senior Environmental Planner, part-time for 6 months, in 2021 involved the following duties:

- Delivering all aspects of Scottish Government Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening, scoping, environmental reports and post adoption statements for a wide range of Scottish Government plans, programmes and strategies, ensuring delivery within agreed timescales and to budget.
- Development and implementation of innovative approaches to SEA in Scotland, promoting a practical and proportionate approach to SEA throughout the Scottish public sector.
- Supporting the delivery of National Planning Framework 4 and the associated Integrated Impact Assessment.
- Providing advice and briefing as required to support successful delivery of the divisional business plan.

The team member got exposed to a different work environment and had the opportunity to work on national plans. This benefitted the individual who could then bring these experiences and ideas back to their work for the Council.

#### **Anchor days for hybrid working**

The Council continues to seek new ways of working as teams and as individuals to find the best way to build and maintain relationships, drive a positive organisational culture, and deliver good customer service. One of the key ways time in the office is enhanced is through the use of team "anchor days".

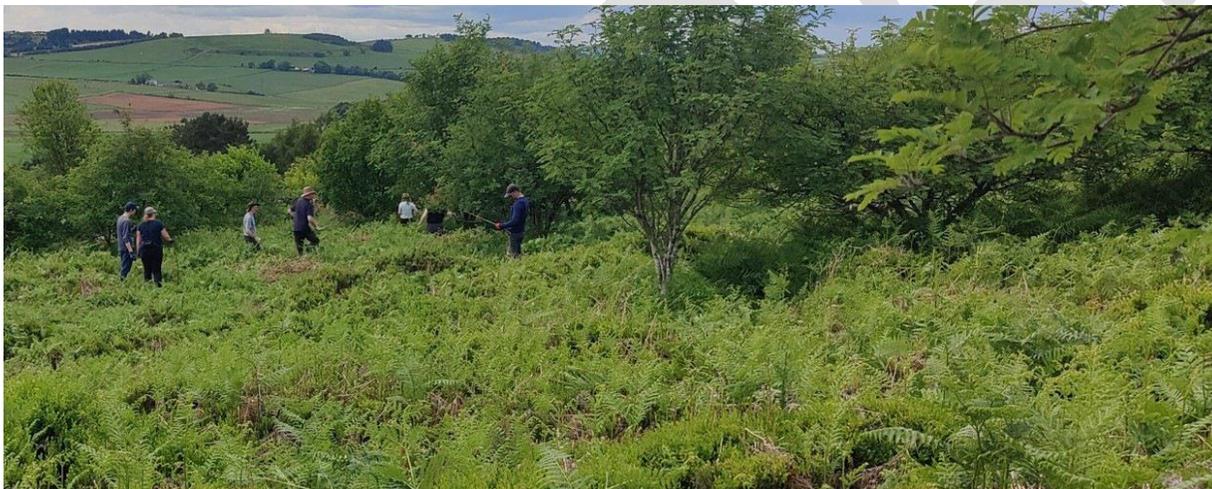
The Climate & Environment Policy Service (CEPS) has extended the corporate advice on team anchor days to include an out of the office meeting every quarter. These are some of the things which CEPS have undertaken during their anchor days:

### **Bracken Bashing at Elrick Hill**

In June, to help protect regenerating Scots Pine and native wildflowers from invasive bracken, the CEPS team went to bash back the bracken to allow the young saplings and wildflowers to grow with less competition for water and nutrients. The Countryside Rangers service provided expert advice and equipment for the task.

#### **“Why do it?”**

- Helping re-populate and support native species in the area
- Team building
- Support and learning more about the Countryside Rangers work
- Getting time away from behind the desk
- Learning about nature and exploring what's in our city
- Providing volunteer opportunities to services that need it



### **Duthie Park Nurseries**

CEPS visited Duthie Park Nurseries to help sow wildflower seeds and plugs for the Aberdeen flagship [Parks for Pollinators](#) project.



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
gov.scot

### **Greyhope Bay**

CEPS visited Greyhope Bay for a coastal walk and dolphin watching.

### **Broad Hill**

CEPS carried out a litter pick on Broad Hill; [Clean up Aberdeen](#) helped supply all the equipment and gear.

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## **SECTION 6: RESEARCH AND MONITORING**

**Describe any research activities that your organisation has undertaken to help develop understanding and awareness of biodiversity**

### **Local Nature Conservation Sites Review**

In 2022 a review of the Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCSs) was started by the Natural Environment Policy team and is expected to finish in 2024. It was the first time the sites had been reviewed since designation. The review will consist of three phases. The first phase of the review involved carrying out a desk study of the sites to identify areas of habitat loss and any changes on site using two habitat data sets held by Aberdeen City Council. This phase is now complete and gave a useful insight into what changes are happening locally in Aberdeen and an overall high level picture of biodiversity loss in the area.

The second phase is ongoing and looks more closely at the sites to assess if they are still appropriately designated by scoring them and checking site boundaries. To help environmental planners with this role a scientific panel was set up to advise them. This panel consists of Aberdeen City Council Countryside rangers, local experts, county recorders, university researchers and NE Scotland Biological Record Centre (NESBReC). To date this scientific panel has proved to be hugely beneficial with providing species records and general site usage by species. It has also given environmental planners invaluable information regarding areas used around the city as wildlife corridors and areas used by migrant visitors. This new information will be used when commenting on planning applications and will be used for designing the Nature Network. The third phase of the review has started and includes looking at boundary extensions and potential new LNCS's. This work will help us contribute to meeting our Local Outcome Improvement Plan target of protecting and managing 26% of our land by 2026 whilst also working towards the national target of protecting 30% of land by 2030.

### **Master of Science (MSc) Projects**

A Master of Science (MSc) student project, which the Natural Environment Policy team has been mentoring, is on the Retrofitting of Green Infrastructure into a housing area in a deprived area of Aberdeen City. Urban Greenspace and Green Infrastructure directly improve people's health and quality of life whilst also making a valuable contribution to biodiversity. However, the retrofitting of green infrastructure into an existing housing area involves change, consultation and a sound plan that residents can buy into and methods that will ensure the green infrastructure is robust, fit for place, functional and attractive and will be retained in the long term.

The project was to identify the best methods to retrofit green space and green infrastructure, trees, hedges, green walls, roofs, and sustainable urban drainage systems into areas of existing housing within a deprived area of the City. The student was to identify a housing area within Aberdeen City where there is a lack of, or poor-quality, green infrastructure and identify specific actions that could be taken to retrofit green infrastructure. The student has produced a report and plan and provided a presentation of the project.



**What follow-up actions or monitoring have you undertaken to assess the impacts of the actions you have taken? How have you measured this? If you do not carry out any monitoring activities, please explain why.**

**Updated Habitat Data**

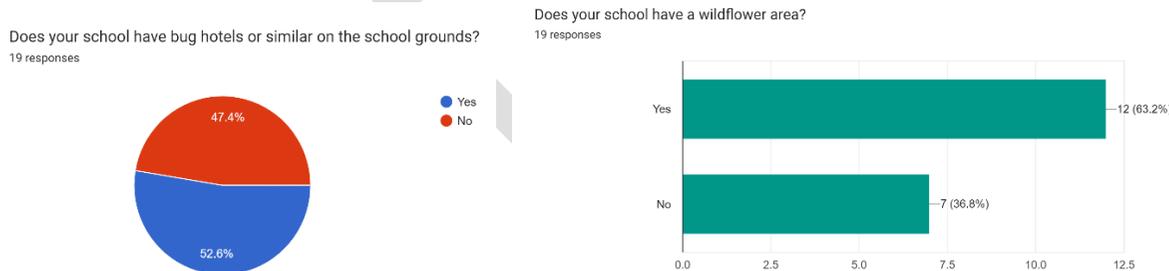
The Council holds habitat data for the whole city which was originally gathered around 2005. In 2021, the Council's partner NESBReC completed habitat surveys which covered most of the city, and subsequently provided data interpretation on the results, mainly for our Local Nature Conservation Sites. This included the percentage change of cover and habitat type, which will be monitored for change on a regular basis.

**Nature Data and Indicators Project**

The Climate and Environment Policy Service have identified there is a requirement to gather nature data to support and monitor Aberdeen City's Council progress to achieving its Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) stretch goal 15 of protecting or managing 26% of Aberdeen's area for nature by 2026. In 2022, the Scottish Government produced Scotland's Biodiversity Strategy in response to how to address the biodiversity loss crisis nationally linking in with the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity 15 (UN COP15) targets and over-arching goals. Delivery plans from Scotland's Biodiversity Strategy will state measures that are needed to help halt biodiversity loss. As part of these delivery plans, it is expected there will be new duties and responsibilities for local authorities to monitor and report on biodiversity. This will involve looking at nature data and indicators to extract trends and patterns to better understand how nature is performing locally, nationally and internationally.

**Quality Improvement Manager poll of schools for biodiversity measures**

Schools in Aberdeen (11 Secondary and 45 Primary) were recently surveyed to ascertain any biodiversity activities in their schools. In the survey 63% of respondents have wildflower areas in their school grounds. A further 53% of respondents have bug hotels located in their outdoor areas. This poll was initiated after identifying a gap in baseline data around biodiversity activities in schools. The poll aim is to ensure annual data on biodiversity activities in schools is recorded and monitored.



### **Impacts of development on Local Nature Conservation Sites**

The Council's Natural Environment Policy teams' project to update habitat data as mentioned above, especially for the Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS), revealed that the main impact of change on our LNCSs' comes from development. Three examples are provided below;

- The development of the new harbour at Nigg Bay impacts on a significant part of the Balnagask to Cove LNCS at its northern end. The area affected includes approximately 3ha of Priority Habitat, including coastal heath and coastal grassland. Part of the area affected is a temporary construction area, and it is assumed that some habitat will be restored or created on completion of this development in those temporary construction areas.
- Several of the LNCS sites are within close proximity of the new Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) and may have been impacted due to the construction of this road. Two sites have been cut into 2 sections as a result of this development and 4 sites have had a small area cut into but with no significant overall impact on those sites. The remainder, whilst possibly affected at the periphery during the development phase, do not appear to have suffered any notable impact.
- A number of the LNCS sites have seen development since the 2004-06 survey period on the land immediately adjacent to the LNCS boundary.

The broad habitat composition of the majority of the LNCS sites has not changed significantly during the study period, and most have not, as yet, been encroached upon by urban development. However, the various habitats within these LNCS are important in themselves, as well as being 'stepping stones' of biodiversity for prospective wildlife corridors through the city. In order to protect these pockets of valuable habitat it is essential that future development in the proximity of the sites does not lead to a degradation of their habitats or compromise the species that rely on those habitats and isolated sites. Allowing development in the near vicinity of these sites might well increase fragmentation of priority habitats with potential impacts caused by drainage, pollution, movement of plants as garden escapes or through dumping, as well as some faunal species disappearing due to being sensitive to human disturbance and noise. It may be prudent to introduce buffers of a certain distance around most LNCS boundaries to safeguard these sites and their biodiversity.

Moreover, the 45 LNCS sites could offer opportunities to increase habitat connectivity between sites and throughout the city for the long-term benefit to biodiversity, as well as to support other important ecosystem services that various habitat types can provide. It is the intention to deal with the impacts caused within our LNCS review which is currently ongoing (see page 30).

### **Have you added any data collected to the National Biodiversity Network or your Local Records Centre?**

Our Countryside Ranger service provide species and INNS records annually to our partner local records centre NESBReC. All records which go to NESBReC go on to National Biodiversity Network.



## SECTION 7: BIODIVERSITY HIGHLIGHTS AND CHALLENGES

Describe your organisation's main achievements for biodiversity over the reporting period and what you are most proud of (this can include processes, plans, projects, partnerships, events and actions).

### Awards

#### Winner

##### 2021

- Aberdeen City Council Blue Green Infrastructure through Social Innovation (BEGIN) project - European Commission REGIOSTARS Award "People's Choice Award"

##### 2022

- Net Zero Energy Transition Awards 2022 - Best Practice Award for Council Climate Change Plan
- RTPi Scotland Planning Excellence Awards 2023
  - Best Plan for Net Zero Aberdeen
  - Planning Authority of the Year
- Aberdeen City Council STAR Awards - Trainee of Year Guy Bergman, Trainee Environmental Planner, Climate and Environment Policy Service
- Beautiful Scotland - Best City
- Keep Scotland Beautiful Green Flag Awards – 7 sites
  - Duthie Park got a Green Heritage award and 10th anniversary of being awarded a green flag
- Fields in Trust UK's Favourite Parks Scotland Winner - Seaton Park

##### 2023

- Keep Scotland Beautiful Green Flag Awards - 9 sites

#### Finalist / Shortlisted

##### 2021

- RSPB Nature of Scotland Awards - shortlisted for Aberdeen City Council; Woodlands, Wetlands & Wildflowers in the Innovation Award category

##### 2022

- RSPB Nature of Scotland Awards - shortlisted for Protecting and Enhancing Aberdeen's Beautiful Trees and Woodlands in the Forest and Woodland Award category
- Aberdeen City Council STAR Awards - Collaboration: Climate and Environment Policy Service



- Torry HeatNet North-West Europe project - finalist in the Scottish Green Energy Awards in the Carbon Reduction category

### Case study 1:

## ABERDEEN FLAGSHIP PARKS FOR POLLINATORS PROJECT

### Overview

Aberdeen City Council is extending naturalised greenspace management by improving and creating blue/green habitats in two high profile parks in the city. In **Aberdeen Flagship Parks for Pollinators**, Duthie Park beside the River Dee and Seaton Park on the River Don have been chosen to show this approach can benefit both people and wildlife. Both parks also serve more deprived areas of the city, include extensive areas of traditional horticultural layouts, and are heavily used.

### More about the parks...

**Duthie Park** (18 hectares) beside the River Dee in South Aberdeen is a [Heritage Park](#) on Heritage Environment Scotland's Inventory for Gardens and Designed Landscapes.

The Heritage approach is used in maintenance, with traditional horticultural practises and formal planting. The Park is next to the River Dee Special Area of Conservation.

**Seaton Park** – (27 hectares) is in the Old Aberdeen Conservation Area in north Aberdeen. The Park won a popular vote award organised by Fields in Trust for Favourite Park in Scotland in 2022 and contains both formal gardens and wilder areas. The Park is also a target for forthcoming active travel investment.

Both parks have very active Friends Groups, with approximately 4300 and 2000 Facebook followers respectively - [Friends of Duthie Park](#) and [Seaton Park Friends](#). The Friends groups are involved in fun days, fund raising and gardening as well as support for nature in the park.



**Goals: What is the project doing, how is it funded and how does it relate to other work?**



The Council is using a *Nature Restoration in Parks* grant from the Scottish Government to survey, plan and design work to further improve the parks for nature. As wetlands and ponds provide a valuable habitat for a range of species, these are being included, in addition to creating or improving wildflower meadow areas for pollinators and tree planting.

Aberdeen Flagship Parks for Pollinators also supports the longer term 'B-lines' pollinator work between Aberdeen City Council and the charity Buglife. This includes naturalisation of grasslands in ways that reconcile with people's actual use of the areas. There is a longer article on the topic including a commentary by Steven Shaw, Aberdeen City's Environmental Services Manager, in 'Aberdeen's natural progress' (31 Aug 2022) on the [Scottish pollinators blog](#).

'Quick win' actions in Aberdeen Flagship Parks for Pollinators are creating and restoring habitats through planting native wildflowers and native trees, and a change to a naturalised meadow management regime.

Project funding totals £37,000, of which £31,000 is on action planning for the long term, and £6,000 on the 'Quick wins'.

The Nature Recovery in Parks grant scheme was put together by greenspace scotland for the Scottish Government and uses part of the Scottish allocation of the UK Government's Levelling Up Parks fund from 2022-23.

Local neighbourhoods of Aberdeen's project where multiple deprivation is experienced include Seaton, Tillydrone, Woodside, Middlefield and Cumming Park, served by Seaton Park, and Kincorth and Torry, served by Duthie Park. According to the [2020 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation](#), Seaton is in the most deprived 10% and Tillydrone is in the most deprived 20% datazones in Aberdeen. Parts of Torry are in the 10% and 20% most deprived areas in Aberdeen.

### **What are current project activities and outputs?**

The Aberdeen Flagship Parks for Pollinators project is collating baseline data to understand the habitats and species currently in the parks. Action plans are being written to improve and manage habitats, and form a platform for the Aberdeen B-lines project with Bug Life Scotland [B-Lines Scotland - Buglife](#)

Specific activities within Aberdeen Flagship Parks for Pollinators include:

- Ecological surveys
- Landform surveys to inform drainage and future management
- Planting for pollinators
- Tree planting at Duthie Park

Education, events and community engagement are involving the council Parks Rangers, Buglife Scotland and volunteers including from Butterfly Conservation and the North East Scotland Biological Records Database.

Two '[Bio-blitz](#)' [community engagement events](#) in Duthie and Seaton parks included interactive activities for kids, grown-ups, beginners, and experts alike.

### **Outcome**



The Aberdeen Flagship Parks for Pollinators project has shown how additional revenue funding for local authorities can extend and accelerate nature restoration work in multiuse parks. It shows the potential to connect this work with other, related projects in a holistic way, for the benefit of nature and for people.

### **Case study 2:**

### **SEDUM ROOFS AND SOLAR PANELS ON BUS SHELTERS**

#### **Overview**

Many biodiversity wins can be multifunctional and serve several purposes. A great example of this is a project organised by the Council Public Transport Unit, who during their bus shelter replacement programme have provided green roof bus shelters with solar panels across the city.

#### **Goals**

At the same time as providing the necessary shelter for public transport users, the sedum roofs are also providing biodiversity benefits and acting as 'stepping stones' for nature within the urban environment. Compared to traditional bus shelter structures, the shelters are self-powered by solar panels. 15 sedum roofed shelters were installed in 2022/23 and a further 15 are confirmed for 2023/24, with potential for up to 35 in 2023/24. Case studies in other cities have shown that green roofs on bus shelters contribute towards climate resistance, absorb rainwater, capture particulates from the air, and support placemaking ambitions. Shelter suppliers have worked with experts to ensure that the species of wildflower and sedum are appropriate to support native pollinators.



### **Outcomes**

The new shelters have been in place since late winter of 2021 / early spring 2022. They appear to be bedding in well and have been well-received by the public. The Council have sourced funding for another two projects of this type funded by NESTRANS and have plans to support a 5-year capital budget project which should provide a great deal of new sedum and solar shelters within the City.

The provision of green roof bus shelters contributes towards the national requirement to enhance and protect biodiversity and additionally supports the Council's vision for Net Zero, ensuring that climate adaptation and biodiversity are considered at all stages of project development, management, and maintenance of the city transport infrastructure.

### **CASE STUDY 3: UNION TERRACE GARDENS – HISTORIC URBAN GREENSPACE WITH MULTI-BENEFITS**



**Overview:**

In 2015 the City Centre Masterplan (CCMP) was agreed unanimously by Aberdeen City Council. This included a plan for Union Terrace Gardens:

*“Enhanced connections to Union Terrace Gardens, restoration of historic features and sensitive contemporary interventions will create a more accessible, enticing and vibrant city centre destination. The enhanced urban green space will provide multi-functional benefits; strengthening urban wildlife corridors, encouraging sustainable transport choices through this enhanced green corridor and equipping Aberdeen to be more resilient to climate change effects”.*

The planting proposals have respected the history and heritage of the gardens; informed by the size and species of existing plants.

Appropriate new plant selection, green infrastructure and soft landscaping has provided a ‘sink’ for biodiversity within the urban landscape.

**Outcomes:**

The three pavilions erected in the park as commercial premises all feature sedum roofs. Lighting has also been designed to minimise impacts on wildlife. The original gardens benefitted from extensive mature tree cover; however, they ranged in condition, with the majority being fair, but a notable amount in poor condition.

The proposals aimed to retain as many of the existing trees as possible, but a combination of poor health and access required to undertake the new construction works, resulted in the majority of the trees ultimately being removed. Three existing trees were able to be retained as part of the final design.

The removal of existing trees was mitigated by extensive new, large, mature tree planting which saw an increase in overall tree numbers and the variety of species which will have notable benefits in terms of biodiversity and long-term resilience of the gardens. In total the proposals included the planting of 89 new trees, the majority of which are very large specimens, of 18 different species. The inclusion of large trees has ensured that the characteristic mature tree cover of the gardens has been maintained. The tree planting is supported by a new hedge, specimen shrubs and perennial planting. Planted at a high density to ensure immediate visual interest, they were selected to provide year-round interest through colour, texture and scent. A total of 43,160 plants were incorporated into the garden design along with 78,982 bulbs. The redevelopment of Union Terrace Gardens was completed in 2023. People are using the gardens more than previously and it promises to become a new and valued focal point for the city.



#### **CASE STUDY 4: DEN BURN RESTORATION**

##### **Overview:**

The Den Burn was once a significant burn for the city but reclamation for agriculture land and development has diverted the burn from the River Dee and culverted it in places resulting in a fast flowing burn and of low ecological value.. The aim of the project is to re-naturalis 2.3km of the Den Burn by creating natural meanders in a previously straightened section, create new wetlands and reconnect people to nature. In the vicinity of the Den Burn there are residential areas, three primary schools, an academy, Woodend hospital and the proposed new Charlie's House Support Centre. The project aims to involve the local community and provide opportunities to promote health and wellbeing by accessing nature through active travel.

##### **Goal:**

It is hoped that work will enhance this wildlife corridor through the city to benefit both nature and people.



**Outcome:**

In 2023, the project was selected for Water Environment Fund money via SEPA to re-naturalise a section of the Den burn. Work has started at designing a burn that will be Nature Positive, considers its role on the local delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals and Net Zero Aberdeen, and becomes a burn that will be resilient to a changing climate.



**CASE STUDY 5: BRINGING BIODIVERSITY INTO THE HEART OF MASTERPLANNING AND DESIGN**

- **Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan**
- **Beach Development Frameworks**
- **Finalised Draft George Street Masterplan**

The ethos of successful and sustainable ‘place’ design is to ‘design for everyone and everything’. A greater challenge that runs through all three masterplan areas, listed above, is to rebalance our urban realm from being arteries for private car dominated ‘movement’ to providing a ‘place’ with a diversity of uses.

Urban greening, supporting greater biodiversity, is a crucial part of having urban environments that provide more holistic environmental benefits that satisfy the need for activity and accessibility and are also attractive places to be in for people and provide the connector routes for local flora and fauna between our greenspaces. This is to be fulfilled in the following approved policy & strategy project areas:

### City Centre

- **Union Terrace Gardens** re-opened in the summer 2023 with a parkland redesign that capitalises on the topography with retained and new trees and a predominant planting of perennials that offer seed-heads, foliage and flowers throughout the year.

### Projects approved in 2022 for project delivery in 2025 include:

- **Schoolhill**, the setting to Aberdeen Art Gallert, Robert Gordon's College and a range of important city centre uses, which suffered the loss of mature elms due to Dutch elm disease, is to be redesigned to provide a new urban plaza to key amenities with a 'pocket-park' connector near to Union Terrace Gardens, and Schoolhill / Upperkirkgate to become a tree-lined pedestrian priority street.
- **Castlegate & 'Mannie' Well**, our largest urban square simply formed in granite paving, is to be redesigned to retain its capacity as a civic meeting place with 2 lines of permanent trees, rain-gardens to provide SUDS and wider environmental benefit and pocket parks with water around the Mercat Cross and Mannie Well which are important, though under-celebrated, historic structures.
- **Aberdeen Market & The Green**, will see new urban realm design that improves the wayfinding between Aberdeen bus and train stations and Union Street with street trees, permanent planting beds and rain-gardens as a greening structure to historic granite streets devoid of soft landscaping.

### The Beach

Aberdeen beach proved to be the most popular greenspace for the city during the pandemic to meet our recreational and re-connect with the world. As a result, a comprehensive Development Framework and specific masterplans have been approved for delivery in 2022-23 for delivery. Key areas to establish greater biodiversity impact include:

- A large-scale new play parkland to be created on mown grassland with children's' play and ball courts within an undulating greenspace structure of themed permanent planting areas.
- Redesign of Queens Links, an historic area of mown grassland, to make it a more structured/useable events space within a structured wild grassland perimeter
- Broad Hill – a natural hill once used as a meeting place for public speaking, is to have its accessibility improved where possible, and the existing grassland planting supported, and the established pine trees to remain.

### George Street

The George Street Masterplan, recommended for approval in October 2023, advocates a place-based approach to redesigning the 12 streets within the study area to limit private vehicular through-routing to create places that fulfil the need to be more diverse, attractive and sustainable in their composition. Urban greening is proposed for all the streets with street trees, rain-gardens and places to 'linger-longer' to create a distinctive new place within the city centre. The area, largely built as Victorian tenement streets with rear greens for clothes drying, has no greenspace. Transformational projects include creating an urban park within a privately owned brownfield redevelopment site with each streets' urban greening creating its own eco-system and connector between greenspace parkland further afield. Decisions on the delivery of the Masterplan will be subject to the Council's annual budget setting process.

### **Looking ahead, what do you think will be the main challenges over the next three years?**

#### **Leadership and Communication**

Strong leadership will be required, from all levels and sectors, if the actions that are required to protect and recover biodiversity are to happen at the pace and scale necessary. This will need to be both through strategy and actions and through wide ranging communications to ensure the key messages are heard and understood; about the value of biodiversity, the current state of it, what this means for people, prosperity and the planet, and what part we can all play in its protection and recovery. This messaging needs to be tailored so that the value of nature and need for action is heeded in the public, private and political spheres.

At the national level sufficient support and resourcing will be necessary from the Scottish Government and NatureScot, amongst others, to help provide this leadership and messaging. Sufficient support and resourcing will also be required to see an effective roll out of forthcoming legislation, strategies and guidance that can positively impact on nature, as well as to ensure effective implementation of National Planning Framework 4.

At all levels, including local authorities, work will be needed to upskill everyone from decision makers to operatives on the changes required and how we invest in and manage nature going forward to ensure the positive outcomes we all need to see.

#### **Partnership working**

The Council recognises that encouraging and supporting partnership working to explore, define and deliver on cross-cutting issues and actions, across the public, private and third sector will make for more successful outcomes for biodiversity, prosperity and people. Community Planning is a key partnership mechanism to achieving successful local outcomes.

Education is also essential to delivering change. Engaging and inspiring the public and partners through citizen science, projects and events to support lifestyle changes will become more important to ensure that sustainable changes are achieved.



Additional resources from government as well as public and private partners towards strengthening biodiversity partnership working will help to ensure that cross-cutting issues and actions can be identified and delivered at the necessary pace and scale.

### **Climate change adaptation - nature based solutions and retrofitting green infrastructure**

Dealing with extreme weather patterns and the consequences this will have for nature and ultimately for biodiversity will be a challenge for all local authorities. It is acknowledged that to address climate change and biodiversity loss, rapid changes are needed when designing our infrastructure and places, especially in urban areas and scenarios where space and budget are limited. To facilitate this urgent change, appropriate funding / incentives, regulation and planning mechanisms are needed to alter, normalise and favour retrofitting green infrastructure and nature-based solutions.

### **Nature Networks, 30x30 and data driven decision-making**

Delivery plans from Scotland's Biodiversity Strategy will state measures that are needed to help halt biodiversity loss. As part of these delivery plans, it is expected there will be new duties and responsibilities for local authorities in monitoring and reporting on biodiversity in particular regarding Nature Networks and 30x30 sites.

This will require more robust nature data and indicators to determine local trends and patterns on how nature is performing locally, which will require evolving resources and expertise within local authorities. This in turn will require both internal and external partnership working to achieve.

### **Funding**

All too often, additional funding tends to be too short term and focused on capital works, when what is equally, if not more necessary, is access to consistent revenue funding over a longer term to facilitate maintenance / monitoring of nature and ; to connect people to nature. Access to longer term revenue funding, will also allow local authorities to collect more reliable data and trends on how well wildlife is performing in their local area, especially when considering climate change.