



Auchterarder Hedgehog Highway Project

Interim Report November 2024-2025

Project Summary

The *Auchterarder Hedgehog Highways Project* (2024–2026) is a two-year community biodiversity initiative. The project focuses on conserving and enhancing local populations of the Western European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) by improving garden connectivity and promoting hedgehog-friendly gardening practices. Working closely with local residents, schools, and care homes, the project aims to create a network of “hedgehog highways” across Auchterarder, reducing habitat fragmentation and helping hedgehogs move safely between gardens.

Key Outputs to Date

- An information leaflet compiled and printed for local distribution
- Several community events to share information, survey equipment and hogilos: including training workshops, mapping sessions, and volunteer drop ins.
- Confirmation that hedgehogs are widely spread across the town with video footage
- Engagement with two care homes and two schools
- Presentation at the 2025 Tayside Recorders’ Day in Perth
- Newsletters compiled and distributed across Auchterarder
- Widening the project and working with the UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme

Introduction

The Auchterarder Hedgehog Highways Project was officially launched in November 2024 as a 24-month initiative funded by Gleneagles and being jointly led by the Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust and Tayside Biodiversity Partnership. The project focuses on community-led hedgehog conservation strategies. Owing to habitat loss and fragmentation, combined with an increase in badger numbers, hedgehogs are increasingly found in urban areas as their rural habitats become less hospitable. Residential gardens now constitute a significant portion of urban green space, providing a prime habitat for hedgehogs. However, human activities in these areas pose additional threats to hedgehog populations. Recognised as Near-Threatened and at risk of extinction, it is crucial to adopt approaches that engage communities and encourage homeowners to create wildlife-friendly gardens.

Our goals are to promote hedgehog-friendly gardening practices and improve connectivity between gardens through the creation of hedgehog highways. Hedgehogs can visit up to 20 gardens in a single night while foraging for food. There is a direct correlation between the number of access points in a garden and the frequency of hedgehog visits. Adding hedgehog highways to previously inaccessible gardens increases the area’s carrying capacity for the species. Additionally, it reduces the risk of road mortality by minimising the need for hedgehogs to cross roads.

A key component of the project involves tracking hedgehog activity. To achieve this, there will be spring surveys, during which volunteers will use trail cameras and footprint tracking tunnels to monitor hedgehog numbers and measure improvements in the area. Workshops will also be held to train local participants in the effective use of equipment and data collection techniques, ensuring the community is actively involved in the project's success.

November – December 2024

An information leaflet was developed to outline hedgehog-friendly gardening practices and the project's objectives. The leaflet also encouraged individuals to become “Hedgehog Champions” by joining Hedgehog Street, a website providing comprehensive hedgehog information and a national platform for recording sightings - [Home - Hedgehog Street](#). The website is jointly run by the People’s Trust for Endangered Species and the British Hedgehog Preservation Trust, both national organisations. They publish the “State of Britain’s Hedgehogs Report” every three or four years, a comprehensive review of the hedgehog’s status across the UK. We continue to promote the use of this online resource to help the community track sightings and access guidance on attracting hedgehogs to their gardens.

In November 2024, a Community Biodiversity Mapping session was held as part of the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership’s Biodiversity Villages & Towns Initiative. Attendees were invited to share ideas for making Auchterarder more wildlife friendly. Dedicated zones were set up for bird boxes, amphibians, community orchards, pollinator corners, and a project information area where we gathered contacts from residents interested in participating. Six attendees confirmed regular hedgehog visits to their gardens, with some actively feeding them. Additionally, several participants expressed interest in adding hedgehog highways to their gardens.

Participants also raised concerns about a lack of wildlife considerations in new housing developments. This is beginning to be addressed via planning conditions whereby developers are expected to consider nature in their planning applications. Moving forward, we aim to engage developers in incorporating wildlife-friendly standards into future projects to improve habitats in the area.

Following the mapping event, we distributed an email questionnaire to gather additional insights from interested residents. The questionnaire included:

- Description of garden boundaries
- Number of residents in the household
- Neighbours’ interest in hedgehog highways
- Wildlife-friendly features of the garden
- Presence of hedgehogs
- Interest in receiving a hogilo (hedgehog hibernation box)
- Willingness to participate in footprint tracking or trail camera surveys
- Use of Hedgehog Street
- Interest in workshops or training sessions

While response rates were modest, the feedback was encouraging. Many respondents reported wildlife-friendly gardens featuring native plants, wood piles, compost heaps, and minimal use of insecticides. A significant number expressed enthusiasm for attending training sessions and actively contributing to the project.

January 2025

Moving into the new year, the project’s focus was on recruiting volunteers from Auchterarder to participate in hedgehog conservation activities. We sought individuals willing to use trail cameras, install hogilos, and/or use footprint tracking tunnels in their gardens. Additionally, we raised awareness about hedgehog highways to prepare for building this nature network as hedgehogs emerge from hibernation. To achieve this, we prioritised promoting the project and advertising the training workshop on 8th February. A poster was circulated.

Reviewing previous projects with similar objectives has proven essential. By examining established studies (referenced in the appendix), we can make more informed decisions to optimise the project's success. The reviewed literature highlights the importance of appealing to a broader range of householders. While it is beneficial that hedgehogs are a charismatic species, many participants engaging in creating hedgehog highways are passionate about biodiversity conservation and already maintain wildlife-friendly gardens with access points. Conversely, those whose gardens could see the most improvement are often less likely to participate, presenting a unique challenge for expanding the project's reach.

A great addition to the project has been the involvement of Ochil Tower School, a Camphill Community caring for and educating children and young people with complex additional support needs. The school grounds, already managed with wildlife in mind, offer tremendous potential as a hedgehog haven. Recognised as an eco-school, the site features woodlands and grounds that could be a prime habitat. A visit in February assessed potential additions to the grounds and outlined ways the school can contribute to the initiative.

March – June 2025

This time of year is crucial for hedgehog conservation, as it marks the beginning of a hedgehog's active life after the winter months of hibernation. Between mid-March and early April, we begin to see hedgehogs emerging from hibernation. Around this time, we asked volunteers to set up their hedgehog survey equipment, such as footprint tunnels and/or trail cameras. In the previous months of the project, volunteers will have also placed their hogilos. The period between setting up the hogilos and the hedgehogs emerging from hibernation should be beneficial, as it allows the hogilos to become established in the natural environment. This makes them more likely to be used by hedgehogs for nesting or daytime shelter.



Image 1: hedgehog spotted on the 28/05/2025 at 00:14. The hedgehog can be seen using both a feeding bowl and the hogilo

We have successfully captured images using our trail cameras and observed hedgehogs preparing to nest in the hogilos (Image 1). Now that we are recording more confirmed sightings, we can begin collecting and analysing this information as a dataset on population abundance and health. Once we have gathered sufficient data, we will be able to analyse hedgehog movements and identify potential sanctuary locations. An initial map of equipment locations in the village has already been created, and over the coming weeks, we will begin adding hedgehog sightings to the map (Fig 1).

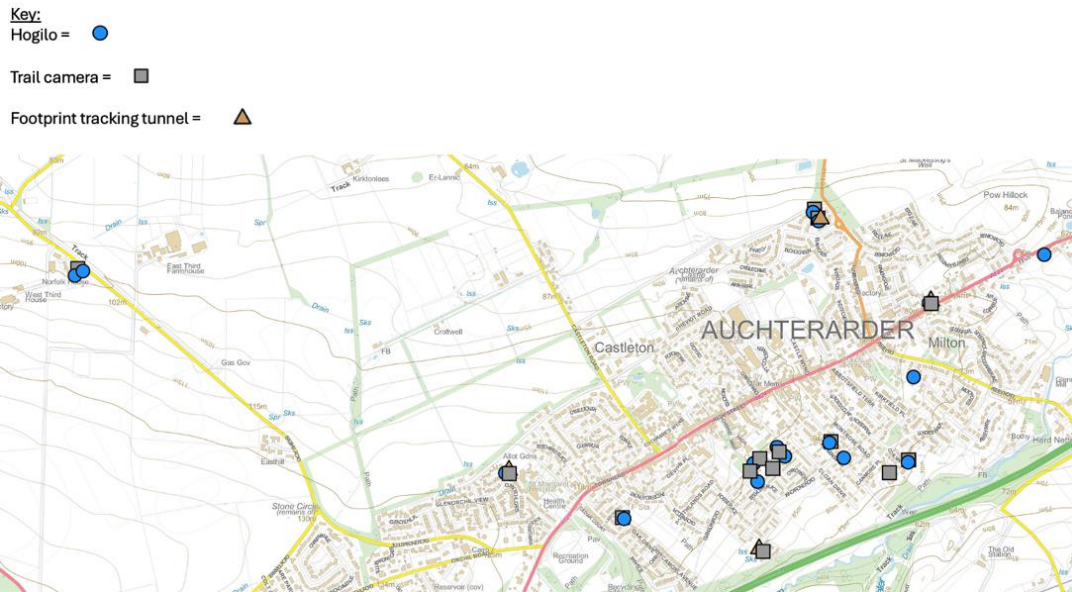


Figure 1: Shows the distribution of hogilos (blue dot), trail cameras (grey square), and footprint tracking tunnels (orange triangle)

Now that we are receiving photos from volunteers, we have great content to share on our social media platforms. We aim to make this project accessible to a wide range of age groups and hope that these posts will help us reach more people who might not otherwise be aware of the opportunity to get involved. Volunteering with the Hedgehog Highways Project offers valuable experience in community-based conservation, particularly for high school students. We are beginning to work with a biology teacher at The Community School of Auchterarder to support students who are interested in getting involved in conservation efforts.

Hedgehog Awareness Week runs each year from 4th to 10th May. To celebrate, we held a drop-in session for volunteers at Auchterarder Parish Church on the 6th May. This gave volunteers the opportunity to collect hogilos, trail cameras, and footprint tracking tunnels, as well as ask any questions they had about the project and hedgehog conservation.

The poster below was shared on various community social media platforms. A big thank you goes to the Parish Church for kindly storing and helping organise the distribution of the hogilos.

An important aim of this project is to ensure that new developments in Auchterarder are adhering to the biodiversity enhancement strategies advised by Perth and Kinross Council. With a particular focus on the inclusion of hedgehog highways in new builds, we have begun reviewing planning records to identify sites that have committed to implementing these measures, as well as noting any that appear to have fallen short of the agreed requirements. So far, we have identified three sites of interest in Auchterarder.

We will review these in more detail and contact the developers to offer guidance and support where



needed. In addition to monitoring new developments, we are encouraging volunteers to identify potential access points in their own gardens. These will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to ensure optimal connectivity between gardens, enabling hedgehogs to move freely and safely for foraging and migration.

We hope to see an increase in hedgehog numbers from those recorded this summer to those we will record next summer, as we continue to establish a reliable and connected network for hedgehogs throughout the area.

July 2025

In early July, we launched the first issue of our “Hedgehog News.” It featured an Auchterarder Hedgehog Highway Blog with project updates and an article on practical ways to help hedgehogs in July, such as providing water to prevent dehydration. We introduced a Trail Camera Photo Competition, giving volunteers a chance to have their best footage presented. Another new feature, “Hedgehog Homework,” includes easy-to-read summaries of research articles to make hedgehog science more accessible and relevant to volunteer activities. The issue concluded with July’s Biodiversity Challenge—a fun monthly task to encourage readers to explore and connect with nature.



August – September 2025

In August, we released the second issue of Hedgehog News, continuing our regular features and updates, along with links to useful websites for readers who want to learn more.



That month, we also began working closely with Parkdale Care Home and Ruthven Towers Care Home to monitor hedgehogs in their grounds and create dedicated sanctuary areas. As part of an existing Tayside Biodiversity project, Parkdale Care Home already had a hedgehog hotel set up, with food and water for hedgehogs, and they wanted to confirm if it was in use. Excitingly we confirmed not only one,

but at least two hedgehogs were inhabiting the grounds of Parkdale Care Home. We went through over 1,000 trail camera videos that were collected in just over two weeks. We saw at least one male and one female hedgehog, but we suspect there may be more than this as some hedgehogs had distinctive markings which made them more easily identified as another individual. For example, you can see below that these are two different hedgehogs:



Images showing two distinctive individuals found in the Parkdale grounds

Meanwhile, at Ruthven Towers, we set up both a trail camera and a footprint tunnel in their activities garden. Within a few days, we recorded hedgehog footprints and video footage, confirming their presence there too. These findings are especially encouraging, as the two care homes are located in different parts of Auchterarder, showing that the local hedgehog population is well-distributed across the town.

October 2025

In October, we presented at this year's Tayside Recorders' Day in Perth, sharing the project's aims and the progress made so far. With over 45 attendees, including ecology and conservation professionals as well as members of the public keen to get involved, it was a great opportunity to showcase our achievements and outline our plans for the year ahead. We were also invited to take part in a Q&A panel, where attendees asked questions and explored some of the topics discussed in more detail.

Overall, the event was a fantastic opportunity to raise awareness of the project, connect with a wider audience, and inspire potential new volunteers.



Next Steps

Our next phase focuses on expanding participation and deepening conservation impact by building on the strong foundations established in the project's first stages.

To boost community involvement, we aim to understand why some households have not yet taken part. Identifying these barriers will help us refine our outreach strategies and improve volunteer engagement. Increasing participation is essential, as more hedgehog-friendly gardens and connected highways directly enhance habitat connectivity across the neighbourhood.

A key objective for the two-year project is to measure the impact of hedgehog highways on local hedgehog density. By comparing data collected before and after highway installation, we can assess changes in movement patterns, habitat use, and overall population capacity in Auchterarder.

Over the coming months, we will focus on the following actions to strengthen our efforts:

- **Exhibition at Auchterarder Library (7th–17th January 2026):** A 10-day exhibition to showcase project progress and engage the community.
- **Volunteer Drop-in Events:** Held during the exhibition to reconnect with volunteers, provide updates, and map hedgehog sightings.
- **Promote Hedgehog Highways:** Encourage participants to install garden boundary highways over winter, improving connectivity ahead of spring emergence.
- **Maintaining Volunteer Contact:** Focus on communication (including our newsletters) during the winter to sustain engagement and recruit new participants for the 2026 spring survey.
- **School Outreach:** Collaborate with local schools through the **Hedgehog Friendly Campus** initiative (hedgehogfriendlycampus.co.uk).
- **Garden Habitat Creation:** Provide spring bulbs and wildflower seeds/plugs in autumn to help volunteers create quiet, sheltered spaces for hedgehogs. This ties in with the **Tayside Biodiversity Partnership's Pollinator Stepping Stones Project**, benefiting both hedgehogs and early pollinators such as bumblebees.

We will continue using trail cameras and footprint tunnels to monitor hedgehog activity and distribution. In addition, ongoing collaboration with local hedgehog rescue centres will track reports of injured or displaced hedgehogs, providing valuable insight into the project's long-term impact.

Widening the Project

As part of its ongoing legacy, the experience gained through the Auchterarder Hedgehog Highways Project is now helping other communities within the Tayside Biodiversity Towns & Villages Initiative. We have expanded the project (with separate funding) by holding community events in Kinross, Blairgowrie, Stanley, Kettins, Abernethy, and Aberargie. With over 40 volunteers across these communities, the project is already making a positive impact throughout Perthshire. Over the coming winter, we plan to hold another community event in Inchtute, a new Biodiversity Village.

An exciting new focus for the initiative has been working with the UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme to run training days on how to complete a Flower Insect Timed Count (FIT Count). This has given volunteers the chance to learn more about the diversity and abundance of invertebrates in their gardens — providing valuable insight into the food sources available for hedgehogs. We always encourage volunteers to create habitats that support a healthy supply of food resources, and this training now makes it even easier for people to monitor invertebrate groups in their gardens.

To widen the project further over the next year, in addition to hosting a community event in Inchtute, we plan to build on the successes of the Auchterarder project and apply these strategies in other Biodiversity Villages across Tayside. For example, working with care homes has proven highly rewarding, offering opportunities for residents to engage with nature and contribute to citizen science, so we aim to involve similar community groups in other towns and villages.

We are very grateful for the ongoing support of the Gleneagles Hotel funding via the Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust and for the in-kind support of the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership. Without the help and interest from so many people (of all ages) within the local community, this project could not exist, so a special 'thank you' is also due to the people of Auchterarder.

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Appendix

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- [Biodiversity Duty Report 2021-2023.pdf](#) – page 6, Enhancing Biodiversity in Development Management: planning conditions within Perth & Kinross now include the minimum requirement of “hedgehog highways to be created in fencing via a 13x13cm gap.
- Also - [A4_PlanningForNature2022.pdf](#) (Annex 4, page 27)

