



Perth and Kinross Council
Statutory Biodiversity Duty: Report on Delivery
January 2018 to December 2020



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1.0 Introduction

Perth and Kinross Council is a local authority with responsibility for an area of 5,300km² housing a population of 151,000 people ([Perth and Kinross Council, 2019](#)). The Council is made up of 40 elected Councillors representing [12 wards](#). The Council operates through a system of committees and sub-committees with officers reporting to committees on relevant matters.

Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, all public bodies in Scotland have a duty to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their functions. The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 further requires all public bodies to report every three years on how they comply with this duty. This is the third report, covering the period from 1st January 2018 to 31st December 2020 demonstrating how Perth and Kinross Council has performed regarding the biodiversity duty for this three-year period.

Day to day governance concerning biodiversity is primarily through the Environment and Infrastructure Committee. The committee considers matters relating to: building standards, land use planning, public transport, tourism, countryside management, parks and open spaces, trees and woodlands, environmental health, flood prevention, reservoirs, environmental assessment, sustainable development and environmental policy, environmental protection and enhancement, and waste management. The overall strategic approach to biodiversity is considered by the Council.

The Council employs a Tree and Biodiversity Officer to advise on and oversee the enforcement of the biodiversity duty. This includes promoting the enhancement of developments for biodiversity and ensuring developments reduce the impact on biodiversity through the planning process and advising all Council departments on their legal requirements. The Council also receives biodiversity support from the Local Development Plan team, Greenspace and a dedicated Tree Enforcement Officer.

Perth and Kinross Council is a partner of the [Tayside Biodiversity Partnership \(TBP\)](#) which celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2018. This partnership allows cross border collaborative working in promoting biodiversity through the Tayside Biodiversity Co-ordinator. We are committed to delivering the actions of the [Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan \(LBAP\) 2016-26](#) and supporting and working with the TBP to safeguard our habitats and species.

Tayside Biodiversity Partnership



Perth and Kinross Council has achieved much for biodiversity over the last three years with enhanced mainstreaming and prioritisation of climate change and reducing biodiversity loss. Many challenges remain and there are multiple opportunities to further the conservation of biodiversity in our daily activities.

2.0 Actions to protect biodiversity and connect people with nature

Land Use Change

In order to influence land use changes, collaborative working with other local authorities, public bodies, local stakeholders and landowners is required. The Council are working with a steering group to explore environmental improvements in the River Leven catchment and, as part of the Comrie Flood Protection Scheme, peatland restoration opportunities are being considered with landowners in the upper catchment in partnership with the NatureScot (formerly Scottish Natural Heritage) Peatland Action funding programme.

Forestry and Woodland Management

A new dedicated woodland enquiries email address was created in 2019 to aid direct communication with partners such as Scottish Forestry and private forestry companies to achieve the Scottish Government's woodland creation target of 12,000 hectares annually. Advice is provided in line with the [Council's Forest and Woodland Strategy](#) to promote sustainable forest management and planting the right type of woodland in the right place to enhance landscape and biodiversity as well as enhancing carbon capture and storage. Emphasis on native species, enhancing connectivity of habitats and creating opportunities for public access is encouraged. A total of 106 woodland consultations have been received since March 2019.

Felling permissions	50
Long term forestry and land management plans	26
Woodland creation proposals	30

Through the [Council's Interim Climate Emergency Report and Action Plan](#), work to identify measures to support private landowners to facilitate and encourage afforestation and peatland restoration is planned. A challenge to achieving this is that much of the land is outwith the control of the Council but we aim to work with landowners and local communities to encourage action.

Case Study: Blairgowrie Climate Café Community Woodland

The community is leading a partnership with the local landowner to plant a community woodland on 10 hectares of land with grant aid provided by Scottish Forestry. Each year 1,500 trees will be planted by local volunteers and householders and by year 10, 15,000 trees will have been planted to capture approximately 200 tonnes of carbon. The site will be selected to maximise additional ecological benefits such as creating a habitat corridor and reducing water run-off and erosion. Householders will have the option to plant additional shrubs between the trees such as hazel that will create even more wildlife habitat and food sources. The Council are committed to encouraging more communities to create woodlands to deliver multiple benefits.

Development Management

Planning applications are screened by the Tree and Biodiversity Officer for potential impacts on biodiversity. This systematic approach contributes to the Council's biodiversity duty and enables the Council to maintain and update a dataset on the Council's Geographic Information System (GIS) of protected and notable species within the Council area. Work is ongoing to update the protected species database from a variety of sources including [Tayside Swifts](#), a TBP Species Interest Group.

The sustainable land use tool on GIS highlights ecological and biodiversity constraints and is used by Council Officers to inform proposals that require an Environment Impact Assessment and/or Habitat Regulations Appraisal to ensure the Council complies with European environmental legislation and statutory requirements.

Local Development Plan 2

The Development Plans Team sets the framework for sustainable development through the preparation and implementation of the [Local Development Plan](#) for Perth and Kinross, in accordance with the [Strategic Development Plan](#) (TAYplan). The Development Plans Team ensure the development of local land use planning policies which promote and enable economic development, are socially inclusive and support the Council's commitment to enhancing and protecting the environment. Council decisions on planning applications must be in accordance with the development plan unless there are other material considerations.

The new Local Development Plan (LDP2) was adopted in 2019 and, along with the developer requirements identified in the Strategic Environmental Assessment, has increased ambitions for biodiversity through updated policies such as:

- Policy 40 Forestry, Woodland and Trees: introduction of a preference for native species.
- Policy 42 Green Infrastructure: introducing a requirement to avoid habitat fragmentation.
- Policy 53 Water Environment and Drainage: increased emphasis on protecting and enhancing natural watercourses, discouraging culverting and increased emphasis on multifunctional Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS).

Year	Total number of planning applications	Number of planning applications assessed for biodiversity constraints	Number of planning applications where biodiversity advice and recommendations were provided	Number of planning applications approved with biodiversity conditions
2018	1605	1362	65	28
2019	1487	1254	249	25
2020	1188	1026	212	50

The Council have increased provision of bird nesting and bat roosting opportunities with emphasis on swift nest sites as a priority species in the Tayside LBAP in new housing developments. The TBP has promoted the importance of protected species to developers and architects by attending the Buildings

for Biodiversity conference in partnership with the Tay Landscape Partnership, the Perth Property Seminar and the Traditional Building Roadshow. Wildlife kerbs are required adjacent to all road gullies within 500m of a SUDS pond in new developments. Where retrofitting of wildlife kerbs or dropped kerbs is not possible or proves insufficient, a series of amphibian ladders are installed, and volunteers undertake gullypot checks. Tayside Amphibian and Reptile Group (TayARG) Pond Days with volunteers to enhance SUDS ponds in Blairgowrie were undertaken in 2019.

The adoption of the Planning for Nature: Development Management and Wildlife supplementary guidance will help make things easier for developers and allow them to fully consider the species and habitat implications of proposals well in advance of submitting a planning application.

Enhanced Tree Protection

The Council aims to safeguard trees and woodlands through the development management process and since February 2019, two posts with an enhanced tree protection remit have worked with developers, landowners and local stakeholders to protect trees and ensure woodland cover is not reduced in the Council area. The Tree Enforcement Officer assesses requests for [Tree Preservation Orders](#) and tree works in [Conservation Areas](#) ensuring trees of amenity and biodiversity value are protected.

Early consultation with the Council's tree, biodiversity and greenspace specialists at the pre-application and application stages of the development management process can positively influence the development design and planning decision to retain and protect existing trees and woodland. In addition, accompanying landscape proposals can be modified to enhance amenity and biodiversity value by influencing species selection, site preparation, site protection, and future maintenance.

Through seeking compliance with planning conditions relating to tree protection on development sites, the Council's planning enforcement team are safeguarding trees and woodlands for the future, contributing to the enhancement of public spaces, residential amenity and biodiversity value. The Council's Tree Enforcement Officer processes tree work applications received (for trees subject to statutory protection), on the underlying premise of sustaining tree cover and promoting new Tree Preservation Orders to secure the long-term statutory protection of valuable trees considered at risk.

The recently updated [Forest and Woodland Strategy](#) and soon to be published Planning for Nature: Development Management and Wildlife supplementary guidance will guide developers on the level of information that is required well in advance of submitting a planning application such as tree and woodland surveys.



Case Study: A Whole Village Approach to Biodiversity Enhancement

Council Exemplar Housing Development

The Glebe housing development in Scone is a Council project providing 65 affordable homes. Early engagement with the architects and landscape designers has resulted in bat and swift bricks being installed in 50% of properties and hedgehog highways, wildlife kerbs, flowering lawns and the planting of native trees and hedges to create connectivity across the site with the nearby woodland. Working with the Street Lighting Partnership has ensured permanent lights are low lux-level, downward facing and directed away from hedgerows, treelines and woodland to avoid fragmentation of foraging and commuting opportunities for bats.

These biodiversity enhancement measures have been incorporated into the Council's new build homes Design Guide so will feature as standard in future builds except off the shelf purchases from developers. As well as influencing future Council projects, the Glebe can be highlighted as an exemplar to other developers.



Scone North

Housebuilders, A & J Stephen, have been working with the TBP to develop long-term hedgehog highways through their new development in Scone. A network of interconnected nature-friendly gardens aimed at protecting the declining species includes small holes (13mm x 13mm) incorporated into screen fencing at ground level. This allows hedgehogs to roam freely and access interconnected patches of feeding and nesting habitat. Agreed compensatory tree planting has ensured creation of a wider, more varied biodiversity corridor than previously existed between two belts of trees. The TBP is providing Householder Information Packs with information on gardening with biodiversity in mind and will be working with the company's landscaper to create a wildlife-orientated garden for the development's show house.

Wheel Inn, Scone

The redevelopment of the former Wheel Inn into flats offered the opportunity to work with the developer to incorporate biodiversity enhancement measures as well as retaining some of the existing trees on site. A landscaping plan with mainly native tree and wildflower species to enhance the area for wildlife including foraging bats and the provision of thirteen swift boxes will further enhance the site for biodiversity.

Invasive Non-Native Species Control

The Council are a partner of the Invasive Non-Native Species Working Group led by NatureScot with Scottish Forestry, SEPA and TBP and works with community groups to enhance public spaces including eradicating invasive non-native plant species. The Council is conducting ongoing reduction of Himalayan balsam and selective spraying of Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed at nine sites including waterways. Council Greenspace Rangers facilitated a total of 653 volunteer hours over the past three years controlling Himalayan balsam with paths groups, community groups and schools.

The Council's [Corporate Plan](#) includes a commitment to create an action plan to prevent and manage invasive non-native species by 2021. A significant challenge is insufficient resources and due to this, giant hogweed control is prioritised over other plant species due to the risk to human health. A more coordinated approach is required for invasive non-native species control to be truly effective.

Through the development management process, the Council are requesting Invasive Non-Native Species Control Plans are submitted with planning applications where invasive non-native species are identified in ecological surveys. Often the presence of species was noted but a commitment to control them was not provided. Requesting plans be submitted and action taken ensures the plants are treated as part of the mitigation measures of the development. Comrie Flood Protection Project identified the presence of invasive non-native species early in the planning process and adopted a proactive approach to treating invasive plants in the catchment.

Community Greenspace

Community Greenspace has responsibility for managing parks and public spaces in Perth and Kinross and are at the forefront of several positive projects to enhance biodiversity on Council managed land. These include pond management, management of wildflower meadow areas and establishment of 40 naturalised long grass areas adjacent to watercourses to create safety zones between the water's edge and parks and greenspaces. Other improvements include ceasing spraying of turf weeds, daisies, clover and dandelions on sports pitches twice annually, ceasing pathway spraying across countryside sites and minimal verge cutting with one verge cut and two junction cuts annually which equates to 30% of the total verge area.



Greenspace staff are currently reviewing the location of inappropriate shrubs across Perth and Kinross and removing them where they obstruct paths. Removed shrubs are replaced with pollinator-friendly shrub species which have been grown at the Council's nursery in Perth.

During the COVID-19 lockdown the Council nursery supported the social enterprise Giraffe by growing vegetables for their café.

The nursery is a valuable asset in assisting the Council in biodiversity planting projects. Native trees are being grown from cuttings or seed for use in different types of planting and at different ages. The Greenspace Team have recently changed dialogue with the general public to help communicate the Council's [Tree Management Policy](#) clearly and ensure trees are protected.

Working with local community groups has resulted in biodiversity enhancing projects in local greenspaces such as planting native wildlife hedges, thinning trees, planting pollinator friendly beds and providing bug hotels and bird boxes in Balmanno Community Garden, Birnam Wildlife corridor, Garrie's Corner in Auchterarder, Pitlochry Wildlife Garden and the Alyth Burnside Improvement Project. The TBP has liaised with the Council regarding a proposed 10% for Wildlife initiative to green parks and small areas on housing developments. There are currently insufficient resources to further this project.



Case Study: Green Graveyards

Green Graveyards is a priority project in the Tayside LBAP and Greyfriars in Perth is actively managed for biodiversity providing a unique urban sanctuary for birds, bats and butterflies. As part of the Tayside Green Graveyard Initiative, this project links with Pollinator Strategy for Scotland targets and partners with the Council's Bereavement Services and EcoCongregation Scotland members. The graveyard is managed with a range of grass lengths – long for pollinators and short for the rare waxcap fungi. Some of the grass is cut at the end of the summer once the wildflowers have seeded. Deadwood is left on site as it provides a food source for many priority species. Bird and bat boxes are provided on some of the mature trees and bats also benefit from the increased insect life in the meadow areas.

Property

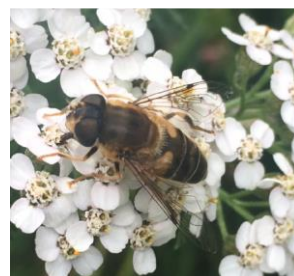
Through upgrading and new build projects, ecologists assist to establish the quality of natural habitats and how they can be protected and enhanced through the capital budget. Bat roosting boxes and swift nesting boxes have been installed in Invergowrie and St Ninian's Episcopal primary schools, Perth Crematorium and inside the spire of St Paul's Church, Perth which is being re-purposed as an external events venue.

Transport

To mitigate localised flooding issues, the Council is developing plans to create rain gardens and wildflower swales at several sites, including the Kinross Park and Ride. The gravel infiltration treatment at the private car park at Loch Leven's Larder is also being managed with biodiversity in mind. The initiative 'Perth, People, Place' will make streets more climate resilient and more people-friendly in the future. Providing shade, storm water capacity and on-street biodiversity at the masterplan stage will help create attractive rain gardens along a key transport route into Perth.

Criminal Justice Service

Following a major review in 2016, numerous actions have been undertaken to enhance biodiversity at Westbank in Perth where the Criminal Justice Service is based. A wooded area in the allotment was created to encourage the local wildlife which includes squirrels, rabbits and buzzards. Nesting boxes, hedgehog houses and bug hotels have also been installed. In partnership with Perth Community Farm, a wild garden and wild long grass areas were created to provide flowering plants for bees in the four hives producing local honey. The potential benefit of the area was recognised at an early stage and a raised walkway was built to provide educational and recreational benefits to the local community.



Architect and Building Services

Following a Biodiversity Ambassador session, Council Architects worked with the Tree and Biodiversity Officer and the TBP to integrate nature into the plans to expand Letham Primary School Early Childhood Centre in Perth. The result is a partnership with the Woodland Trust to plant native trees and an edible hedge, apple trees from a local supplier and raised beds that will grow vegetables to use in the school kitchen. The Childhood Centre is also taking part in the Tree Council's Orchards for Schools project.

Estates

The Council works to empower communities to manage land for the benefit of all and granted a 99-year lease to Forward Coupar Angus for the creation of a community woodland at Butterybank. In

partnership with NatureScot, a pollinator maze will be created in the busy greenspace Kirkgate Park on the banks of Local Leven National Nature Reserve.

Education

In partnership with construction company Robertson, the Council, Carbon Footprint and Generations Working Together, the pupils at Perth Grammar School planted native trees in their school grounds. This will support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13: Climate Action. Together with the Men's Shed, the pupils are creating a sensory and reflection garden, plus a maintenance regime for the trees. To further encourage tree planting in school grounds, an advisory sheet will be circulated in line with the Council's Interim Climate Emergency Report and Action Plan.

Twelve schools have recently been awarded Tree Council Orchards for Schools kits to be part of a UK-wide initiative to plant 5 or 10 fruit trees and fruiting hedges.

Kinnoull Primary School's Eco Group in Perth is working with the TBP on preparing its BeeWild Biodiversity Action Plan which will see fruit trees in tubs, raised beds for vegetable and herb growing, pollinator banks and berried trees being planted to help feed the birds. Teachers, pupils and families will be involved in deciding what actions they want to undertake in the school grounds



Social Services

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Learning and Development Team in the Perth and Kinross Health and Social Care Partnership worked with community councils and Zero Waste Perth to provide "Give and Take" boxes. In addition to non-perishables being made available, the TBP provided free booklets and wildflower seeds to add to the seed bombs also donated. The initiative also prompted a special Easter egg box and inspired other communities across the region, as well as attracting global interest.



The TBP also provided the Council Family Change Unit with a BeeWild Action Plan to help improve the private outside space for staff, visiting children and their parents as part of the therapeutic social work undertaken.

Across Council

The Council is a signatory of the Marine Conservation Society's 'Don't Let Go' campaign, agreeing a voluntary ban on balloon and sky lantern releases on its land.

3.0 Mainstreaming biodiversity

The need to address the cause and effects of biodiversity loss and climate change is a common thread across the topics within the Council's policy framework. The Council started developing the [Perth and Kinross Offer](#) early in 2019, setting a new direction for the Council to transform the way it works with local communities, citizens, partners, businesses, employees and other stakeholders. Environment is one of the four threads and provides an opportunity to enhance biodiversity further.



Sustainable Development

All proposals seeking approval from Council committees are screened for biodiversity through the [Perth and Kinross Integrated Appraisal Toolkit](#) (IAT). The IAT is based on the Council's Corporate [Sustainable Development Framework](#) and biodiversity is a key focus of the natural environment theme. Work is currently being undertaken to map the connections between the framework and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Goals 14 and 15 have implications for biodiversity and part of this work involves developing indicators to monitor the Council's performance towards biodiversity at Perth and Kinross level. By engaging with communities over land use, communities have greater opportunities to raise awareness, influence the future of their areas, and help create a sustainable environment for future generations.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Following the adoption of LDP2, new and updated supplementary guidance has increased the focus on biodiversity:

- A new placemaking guide integrates biodiversity considerations into design considerations.
- A new open space guide integrates biodiversity into open space provision with detailed provision for multifunctional SUDS and planting.
- An updated Forest and Woodland Strategy to consider Scotland's Forestry Strategy (2019) and updated Land Use Strategy (2016) and which supports biodiversity as one of seven key themes.

Open Space Guidance

This [new guidance](#) provides advice on the provision, design and maintenance of open spaces within new developments. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity has been identified as a key design objective and solutions are suggested throughout the document on how to achieve this. Specific emphasis has been given to designing sustainable drainage in a way that it creates habitat for wildlife and links with the wider green and blue infrastructure of the site. A species list which heavily features native species has also been included.

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)

Clearer amenity and biodiversity standards for SUDS have been included in both the [Flood Risk](#) and [Open Space Guidance](#) to encourage better outcomes in new developments. Furthermore, work has started to raise awareness of the potential of SUDS and promote best practice in designing these both within the Council and in collaboration with other parties. Two multi-stakeholder workshops were delivered in 2019 and the first internal SUDS Forum for Council staff was held in 2020.

Draft Food Growing Strategy

The Council is developing a [Food Growing Strategy](#) which responds to the Government's vision to become "a Good Food Nation". This aims to improve the provision of community growing spaces across Perth and Kinross and help communities lead more sustainable lifestyles. The strategy will support biodiversity objectives through facilitating the creation of allotments, community gardens and orchards and promote site design that supports habitat creation and connectivity through green corridors and improved soil quality.



Green and Blue Infrastructure Guidance

This [guidance](#) sets out the framework for the creation of a strategic Green and Blue network for the benefit of people and wildlife and will deliver a wide range of ecosystem services, contributing to climate change adaptation, mitigation and wellbeing. Actions such as connecting fragmented woodland through new planting or regeneration, providing connectivity between protected sites and linking green corridors and SUDS to existing ponds, waterways and wetlands to improve natural flood protection are encouraged.

A Guide to Incorporating Biodiversity into Local Services

The second edition of [A Guide to Incorporating Biodiversity into Local Services \(Tayside\)](#) was recently published to provide all sections of the Council with information and case study examples of how to integrate biodiversity into areas including community safety, education, planning and development and environmental health.

Case Study: Local Nature Conservation Sites

A collaborative project is ongoing to identify local biodiversity sites in Perth and Kinross. This has involved partnership working with the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, NatureScot, and Angus Council with important contributions from TBP partners. The first surveys will be completed in 2021 with a view to the first designations taking place by the end of the year. Provisional sites are available to planners and the exercise has already helped inform forestry, mining restoration and planning proposals.

4.0 Nature-based solutions, climate change and biodiversity

The need to address the cause and effects of climate change and the drive to help meet national targets is a common thread across the topics within the Council's land use planning policy framework. The Climate Change Board, established in 2018, chaired by the Depute Director for Housing and Environment Service leads on climate change within the Council.

Interim Climate Emergency Report and Action Plan



The [report](#) was approved by Councillors in December 2019 and outlines the initial route map to take the Council to a net zero carbon and climate resilient Perth and Kinross. The land use section lists 12 actions that will contribute towards protecting and enhancing biodiversity such as native woodland expansion, supporting peatland restoration and exploration of creating

climate parks. The consultation is ongoing until January 2021.

Nature Based Solutions

Exploring increased use of nature-based solutions is outlined in the Interim Climate Emergency Report and Action Plan such as increased woodland expansion in Council owned areas through creation of a tree planting policy and encouraging schools to enhance mitigation in their school grounds and greenspaces using the Council funded Community Investment Fund.

When investigating ways to reduce flood risk, natural flood management techniques can potentially slow the flow of floodwater and increase the amount of time it takes rain to reach watercourses. Natural flood management techniques were considered as part of the initial feasibility studies commissioned by the Council for a Flood Protection Scheme for Comrie. As a part of this Scheme, the Council are working with landowners in the upper catchment to explore restoring a 20-hectare area of peatland that was drained in the 1980s. If successful, the project has the potential to reduce flood peaks by holding more water for longer in the upper catchment and may also improve water quality and biodiversity. A future aspiration is to work with partners to create a monitoring strategy for peatland restoration to understand the benefits in a local context to encourage participation with local landowners.

Council Officers have identified the need to map the existing projects and opportunities across Perth and Kinross for large scale Green Recovery projects that would benefit biodiversity, mitigate against climate change and benefit the local economy but insufficient resources are available at this time to further this exercise.

Action for Pollinators

In partnership with NatureScot, a pollinator maze will be created in the busy greenspace Kirkgate Park on the banks of Local Leven National Nature Reserve in 2021. The Council's Interim Climate Emergency

Report and Action Plan contains an action for the Council to review current grass mowing practices. This presents an opportunity to increase the number of areas managed for biodiversity and consider the creation of wildflower meadows for the benefit of pollinators and their foodplants. The Perth Heather Garden is maintained by a group of dedicated volunteers and contains 550 varieties that are valuable for pollinator species.

Case Study: B-Lines

The Council are working in partnership with Angus Council, BugLife and NatureScot towards expanding the national [B-Lines](#) project into Tayside across farmland, road verges and urban areas to connect areas for pollinators. B-Lines has been created by the charity Buglife in response to the decline of bees and other pollinating insects and plans to reconnect wild places by creating a network of wildflowers. The B-Lines network in Scotland identifies key areas to restore and create new wildflower-rich meadows, important grassland verges and pollinator friendly gardens that can be adopted by farmers and landowners, local authorities and the general public.



B-Lines offers many opportunities to create links between ongoing local wildlife initiatives in Perth and Kinross to contribute towards this exciting landscape-scale project. Existing community projects in the Tayside LBAP especially the Green Graveyard Initiative, Biodiversity Villages, BeeWild For Pollinators and orchard projects engage all ages and all abilities and will be involved in bringing B-Lines to life in Tayside.

Improving Access to Nature for All

The Greenspace Team maintains and repairs public facilities within greenspaces and the wider core path network to ensure they remain safe and attractive. Core paths are inspected regularly by Greenspace Rangers and signage replaced to ensure they are useable by all.

The Policy Team work with landowners to ensure access rights are maintained and have installed self-closing gates on countryside paths. Management plans for Council owned countryside sites have been created in consultation with local stakeholders since 2018 including the Knock in Crieff, Kinnoull Hill, Perth Lade and the Birks of Aberfeldy.



5.0 Public engagement and workforce development

Public Engagement

By engaging with communities over land use, such as the Local Development Plan and greenspace management, communities have greater opportunities to raise awareness, influence the future of their areas and help create a sustainable environment for future generations.

The Council's five Greenspace Rangers work with and support community groups and volunteers including Friends of Parks Groups, community and paths groups. The Ranger Service has devoted 385 volunteer days to biodiversity enhancing projects including tree planting (440 volunteer hours), vegetation management (2002 volunteer hours) and wildflower planting (374 volunteer hours) with schools and community groups over the last three years. The Rangers work with a variety of groups including less advantaged.



The Rangers run woodland activity sessions for people with early stages of dementia tackling social isolation and providing health and wellbeing benefits to participants, carers and family members. Kinnoull Hill in Perth provides a place for walks, views from the top and The Shed to shelter in on rainy days and enjoy a social lunch at the end of the session. Participants enjoy meeting new people, enjoying nature as well as completing the John Muir Award. In 2019, the project won a

Gold Award in the 'Tackling Inequalities and Improving Health' category of the Designing the Futures Awards.

Rangers work in partnership with NHS Tayside and the Perth and Kinross Association of Voluntary Services to provide practical outdoor sessions. Volunteers care for local greenspaces and woodlands by clearing footpaths, thinning trees, removing litter and planting wildflower meadows. Some participants are referred by the NHS to enjoy the benefits of outdoor exercise to improve mood and reduce anxiety. Groups are run across Perth and Kinross with a lot of work being completed and a lot of tea and biscuits consumed each year.





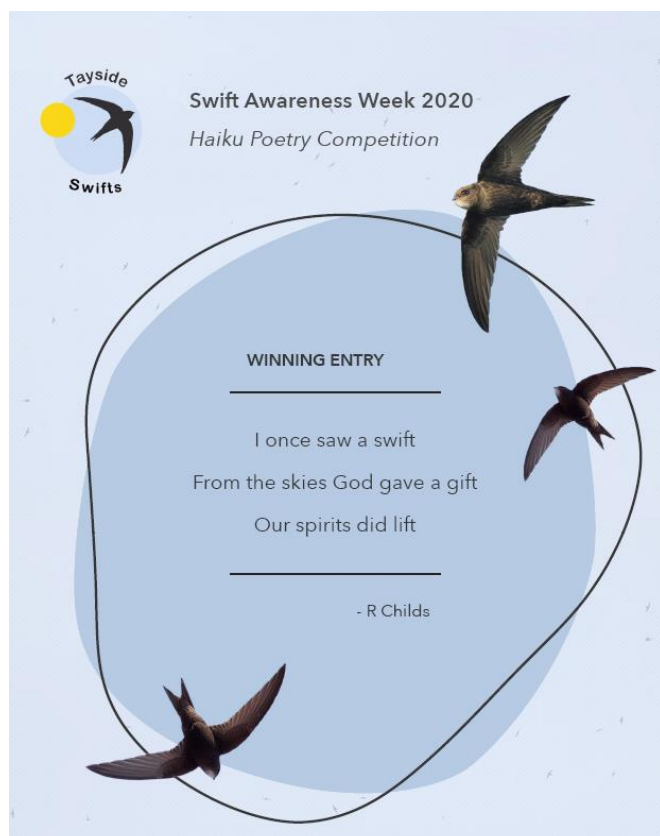
Rangers support volunteering and outdoor learning by working with the Cairngorms National Park Junior Rangers, Police Scotland Youth volunteers and running over 28 outdoor events for young people to complete the John Muir Award.

The Greenspace Team support 48 voluntary Take A Pride in Perth and Kinross and In-bloom groups who implement environmental improvement projects including community gardens and planting pollinator friendly herbaceous schemes.

To celebrate the Year of Coast and Waters 2020, a week-long Wild Waters Festival was planned for June 2020 but, due to COVID-19, this has been postponed. The programme will offer over 40 biodiversity events for families and adults including a riparian management seminar, invasive species removal, Tay reed beds walk and a virtual reality toad experience. Hopefully, the festival programme can run soon.

Tayside Swifts hosts Swift Mapping events in local libraries, together with a display and drop-in sessions for children and adults to take part in competitions and to find out more about the swift conservation projects being undertaken in specific towns and villages across Tayside. Regular small-scale funding has enabled community-based swift conservation projects to be undertaken in Pitlochry, Blair Atholl, Strathearn, Crieff and Kinross. Each project includes the installation of appropriate swift nest boxes and advice on how to maintain existing natural swift nest sites.

An annual programme of public events is arranged on World Swift Day and during UK Swift Awareness Week. In 2020 Haiku poems were submitted and the winner chosen by the Scottish Swift Species Champion, Jeremy Balfour, MSP.



The Rangers run a [Community Greenspace Blog](#) and attend local groups and meetings to engage and promote understanding of protected natural sites and arrange species identification and wildflower meadows training sessions for volunteers. Biodiversity stories are regularly featured in the Community Greenspace and Waste Services Action Partnership Update which is circulated to Councillors quarterly.

Case Study: Scotland's First Biodiversity Village



The Tayside Biodiversity Partnerships Biodiversity Villages project is an exciting new project led primarily by the local communities with guidance from the Council with a focus on practical projects and citizen science surveys that fit the specific settlement.

The Chief Executive of Perth and Kinross Council has confirmed that the project demonstrates the Perth Offer very well. Funding is now being sought to expand the project to at least 25 settlements across Perth and Kinross and several villages have already confirmed they wish to be involved in the future.

Projects will positively contribute to the Councils biodiversity duty and the Pollinator Strategy for Scotland.

The pilot Biodiversity Village project at St Madoes was launched in February 2020 with 93 local people attending a highly-successful mapping session at the Glencarse Hotel. Music, presentations and round-the-table discussions brought everyone together to decide which projects to choose. There were activities for children and the exhibition doubled as a consultation for everyone to make comments. The exhibition then moved to the community hall so that even more people could give feedback. After a popular art competition held for local schoolchildren, a new logo was agreed and Tayside Contracts provided full-colour signs for either end of the village.



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Workforce Development

In 2019, NatureScot provided training for Council Officers on species and habitats protection, Habitat Regulations Appraisals and species licensing. Delayed office openings provide the opportunity for Council Officers to participate in monthly training and, prior to COVID-19, trips to a local windfarm and Glasgow Canal to learn about the habitat enhancement and urban greenspace provision were undertaken. A new SUDS Forum for staff took place in 2020 and will continue in 2021.

Case Study: Staff become Biodiversity Ambassadors

Since May 2019, a staff group of 70+ Biodiversity Ambassadors from all Council sections meet regularly including online in their lunch hour with the Tree and Biodiversity Officer providing training sessions on topics such as legal protection of wildlife, bats in buildings, invasive non-native species, climate change and tree preservation.



The TBP created a lunchtime events programme in summer 2019 with outdoor learning opportunities with local groups and charities including pollinators, an early morning moth breakfast, dragonflies at a Council managed pond and a talk from Tayside Bat Group.

The group has set up practical volunteering projects planting pollinator-friendly plants at Carpenter Court residential home and planting over 60 trees in Viewlands Reservoir Greenspace.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, Biodiversity Ambassador members created cards with a wildlife theme and sent them to Carpenter Court residents to bring some cheer over the Easter weekend.

Working with others and raising awareness of biodiversity across the Council through the Biodiversity Ambassadors has successfully increased understanding of the biodiversity duty and the types of projects that can be implemented. It has led to hands on projects being completed, teams created, and partnerships made. Connecting colleagues across the Council has also identified opportunities such as incorporating nature into plans for primary schools, care homes and open areas for staff.



6.0 Research and monitoring



Local Nature Conservation Sites

The project to identify local biodiversity sites and local geodiversity sites is well under way with a head start provided by the provision of Listed Wildlife Sites files courtesy of the Scottish Wildlife Trust. A collaborative project is ongoing to identify local biodiversity sites in Perth and Kinross. The first surveys will be completed in 2021 with a view to the first designations taking place by the end of the year. With the assistance of Tayside Geodiversity, most proposed geodiversity sites were surveyed in 2020 with a view to designating the first sites by the end of 2021.

Lichen Survey

The Scottish Churchyard Lichen Group surveyed graveyards in East Perthshire in 2013 and discovered 176 lichen species, 30 of them very rare. Astonishingly there were two new British records: a tiny crustose lichen (*Lecanora invadens*) and a lichen parasite (*Sclerococcum tephromelarum*) found growing on the black shields lichen (*Tephromela atra*). Following this, a further survey was undertaken in 2019 in Greyfriars Cemetery in Perth. Further work to promote lichen conservation in cemeteries and churchyards by including sensitive management of stonework and masonry that support lichens in a Council Lichen Policy is planned.

COVID-19 and Effect on Biodiversity Survey

During the COVID-19 lockdown, more people became aware of the wildlife on their doorstep due to less grass cutting. There was also a greater abundance of wildflower species along road verges and in parks. This led to the Council asking local people to survey an area close to them that had been left uncut and compare it to an area of cut grass to ascertain the difference. Areas left uncut contained five times the number of wildflower species than cut areas and 62% of uncut areas contained bees compared to just 12% of cut areas. The



results are now helping to review grass mowing of parks and greenspaces and the research has inspired a MSc research thesis to focus on attitudes towards managing greenspaces for biodiversity.

The Biodiversity Ambassadors group has encouraged all staff to take part in citizen science projects and those that contribute towards the National Biodiversity Network Gateway such as BeeWalk, Save our Red Squirrels, Big Butterfly Count, Big Garden Bird Watch, Tayside Swifts and ZoomIn2 time lapse photographic project. An online editable map to record biodiversity within Perth and Kinross parks and open spaces has been developed by the Council and will be expanded in 2021.

7.0 Biodiversity highlights and challenges

Highlights

1. Biodiversity has become a central plank of Council environment planning through the creation of supplementary guidance and creating an exemplar housing development for biodiversity as well as identifying Local Nature Conservation Sites.
2. The [Interim Climate Emergency Report and Action Plan](#) lists 12 actions that will help tackle biodiversity loss directly and in-directly.
3. Through the Interim Climate Emergency Report and Action Plan increased dialogue with young people about climate change and biodiversity has commenced along with tree planting in school grounds and nearby community woodlands.
4. The formation of over 70 staff Biodiversity Ambassadors has enhanced awareness and mainstreamed biodiversity throughout the Council. Sharing ideas, good practice and creating new collaborations and partnerships has resulted in on the ground actions and changes to Council policies and procedures.
5. Successful securing of funding from the Scottish Grant Scheme for Kinnoull Hill in Perth (£43k) and the Knock in Crieff (£38k) will allow biodiversity actions to be implemented.
6. Successful part-funding through the Community Environment Challenge Fund achieved for Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park Group will allow removal of non-native species, footpath improvement and welcoming signage to enhance access for all.
7. Creation of a new native woodland at Comrie with the planting of 20,000 trees.
8. The Community Greenspace Ranger Service worked with volunteers over 385 volunteer days devoted to biodiversity projects with schools and community groups.
9. The TBPs Biodiversity Villages is an exciting new project led primarily by local communities that will empower local communities to further and enhance biodiversity on their doorstep.
10. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in people of all ages exploring their local area more often and this will be channelled into positive actions such as the Biodiversity Villages project.

Challenges

1. Competing priorities has resulted in less resources to monitor and enforce planning conditions relating to biodiversity and monitor biodiversity enhancement measures in Council projects.
2. Tayside does not have a local biodiversity records centre which is a disadvantage to the Council as biodiversity data is held in several different locations rather than one centralised database.
3. There is a need to develop long-term Council biodiversity and greenspace strategies to identify the resources required to deliver biodiversity enhancements on Council owned land to deliver multiple benefits.
4. A long-term catchment wide plan for controlling invasive non-native species is required.
5. The COVID-19 pandemic has curtailed many of the positive biodiversity enhancement projects carried out by the Council especially the Ranger Service with volunteers. Consultations and events have also been postponed.
6. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an opportunity to develop large landscape scale projects to contribute towards a green recovery that addresses both the biodiversity and climate change crises and delivers for local businesses.

8.0 Contribution to Scottish Biodiversity Strategy key steps

The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy has six chapters. These chapters include 32 key steps for biodiversity, which are presented in the table below.

Chapter 1: Healthy Ecosystems		PKC Progress	Report Section
Outcome: Scotland's ecosystems are restored to good ecological health so that they provide robust ecosystem services and build our natural capital.			
Key Steps			
(1.1)	Encourage and support ecosystem restoration and management, especially in catchments that have experienced the greatest degradation.	Yes	2.0
(1.2)	Use assessments of ecosystem health at a catchment level to determine what needs to be done.	Yes	2.0
(1.3)	Government and public bodies, including NatureScot, SEPA and FCS, will work together towards a shared agenda for action to restore ecosystem health at a catchment-scale across Scotland.	Yes	2.0
(1.4)	Establish plans and decisions about land use based on an understanding of ecosystems. Take full account of land use impacts on the ecosystems services that underpin social, economic and environmental health.	Yes	2.0

Chapter 2: Natural Capital		PKC Progress	Report Section
Outcome: Natural resources contribute to stronger sustainable economic growth in Scotland, and we increase our natural capital to pass on to the next generation.			
Key Steps			
(2.1)	Encourage wide acceptance and use of the Natural Capital Asset Index (2012), including a comparable measure for the marine environment.	N/A	
(2.2)	Use this index to influence decision-making and market-based approaches, so that the wider monetary and non-monetary values for ecosystem services are recognised and accounted for	N/A	
(2.3)	Undertake a major programme of peatland conservation, management and restoration.	No	2.0

Chapter 3: Biodiversity, Health and Quality of Life		PKC Progress	Report Section
Outcome: Improved health and quality of life for the people of Scotland, through investment in the care of green space, nature and landscapes.			
Key Steps			
(3.1)	Provide opportunities for everyone to experience and enjoy nature regularly, with a particular focus on disadvantaged groups.	Yes	5.0
(3.3)	Build on good practice being developed by the National Health Service (NHS) and others to help encourage greenspace, green exercise and social prescribing initiatives that will improve health and wellbeing through connecting people with nature.	Yes	5.0

(3.4)	Increase access to nature within and close to schools, and support teachers in developing the role of outdoor learning across the Curriculum for Excellence.	Yes	2.0 5.0
(3.5)	Encourage public organisations and businesses to review their responsibilities and action for biodiversity and recognise that increasing their positive contribution to nature and landscapes can help meet their corporate priorities and performance.	Yes	2.0 4.0

Chapter 4: Wildlife, Habitats and Protected Places		PKC Progress	Report Section
Outcome: The special value and international importance of Scotland’s nature and geodiversity is assured, wildlife is faring well, and we have a highly effective network of protected places.			
Key Steps			
(4.1)	Ensure that the management of protected places for nature also provides wider public benefits.	No	
(4.3)	Integrate protected areas policy with action for wider habitats to combat fragmentation and restore key habitats.	Yes	2.0 4.0
(4.4)	Develop a wildlife management framework to address the key priorities for sustainable species management, conservation and conflict issues, including reintroductions and invasive non-native species.	No	
(4.5)	Involve many more people than at present in this work and improve understanding of the poorly known elements of nature.	No	

Chapter 5: Land and Freshwater Management		PKC Progress	Report Section
Outcome: Nature is faring well, and ecosystems are resilient as a result of sustainable land and water management.			
Key Steps			
(5.1)	Promote an ecosystem approach to land management that fosters sustainable use of natural resources and puts biodiversity at the heart of land use planning and decision-making.	Yes	2.0
(5.2)	Ensure that measures taken forward under the Common Agricultural Policy encourage land managers to develop and retain the diversity of wildlife habitats and landscape features.	N/A	
(5.3)	Support “High Nature Value” farming and forestry.	Yes	2.0
(5.4)	Put in place the management necessary to bring Scotland’s protected areas into favourable condition and improve the ecological status of water bodies.	No	
(5.5)	Ensure that biodiversity and ecosystem objectives are fully integrated into flood risk management plans and restore wetland habitats and woodlands to provide sustainable flood management.	Yes	4.0

9.0 Conclusion

The Council recognises it must play a key role in helping to deliver a more sustainable and biodiversity rich area, as an employer with responsibility for staff and buildings, as a provider of local services, and as a community leader working in partnership with a range of stakeholders. Furthering the protection and enhancement of biodiversity is a continual work in progress with links across many Council areas, and this report highlights the diverse range of activities undertaken by various teams as part of their regular work programmes.

There are many exciting opportunities and projects to explore such as the Tayside Biodiversity Partnerships Biodiversity Villages project, designating a suite of Local Nature Conservation Sites, reviewing management of our greenspaces and developing long term strategies for biodiversity, greenspaces and invasive non-native species control. An additional opportunity for the Council is that from April 2021, the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership Co-ordinator will be working for Perth and Kinross Council full time following the decision by Angus Council to reduce their contribution to the post.



The Council recognises there is still a lot to achieve within a minimal resource environment and we plan to map the resources required working collaboratively with our communities and other partners to deliver biodiversity protection and enhancement in the most efficient manner for the next reporting period in three years.

The Council has made significant progress to raise awareness of biodiversity and collaborate with the local community, neighbouring local authorities and stakeholders to ensure that biodiversity is at the forefront of our work and will be enjoyed for generations to come.

Please follow these links for further information on [Enhancing Biodiversity in Perth and Kinross](#) and [Biodiversity Projects in Perth and Kinross](#).