

Statutory Biodiversity Duty Report

East Dunbartonshire Council

2021 - 2023

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Statutory Biodiversity Duty Delivery Report
Jan 2021 – Dec 2023

Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, all public bodies in Scotland are required to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities. The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011, further requires public bodies in Scotland to provide a publicly available report every three years on the actions they have taken to meet this biodiversity duty. This report sets out how East Dunbartonshire Council has delivered biodiversity conservation across a range of functions during the period January 2021 – December 2023. The format used is based on a suggested reporting template produced by the Scottish Government. Where relevant, progress recorded below is related back to commitments made in the Council's previous report covering the years 2018 – 2020.

1. Introduction to organisation

1.1. Land and Estate Management

East Dunbartonshire Council (EDC) is one of the 32 council areas of Scotland. Located to the north of Glasgow, the Council contains many of the city's suburbs, commuter towns and villages. The Council is comprised of seven wards, represented by 22 locally elected councillors, and operates through a system of committees which officers report to on relevant matters. Over 30% of built-up areas in East Dunbartonshire are parks and open space which the council maintains together with road verges, roundabouts, civic spaces, school grounds and planting beds. The council area has three Local Nature Reserves, 76 Local Nature Conservation Sites and six SSSI.

1.2. Regulation of Land Use and Development

The development of policy regarding land use and development is undertaken by the Council's Land Planning and Development Service, which includes the Land Planning Policy (LPP) and Sustainability Policy Teams. The LPP team consists of 2.5 planners and 2 policy officers, including the Greenspace and Biodiversity Policy Officer. The Sustainability team includes 2 Climate Change Policy Officers, an LHEES Officer and a Transport Officer. In addition, there are two Strategic Environmental Assessment Technical Officers to ensure compliance with Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) requirements across the Council. The SEA officers conduct SEA on a number of Council plans, policies and strategies which highlight impacts on the natural environment and propose mitigation to eliminate or reduce those impacts where they are likely to be significant. For further information regarding relevant policies, plans and strategies regarding land use and development that impact biodiversity, see Section 3: Mainstreaming Biodiversity. Decisions regarding the implementation of policies affecting land use and development are normally made at meetings of the Council's Place, Neighbourhood and Corporate Assets Committee or the Planning Board or at time via a meeting of the full Council.

1.3. Providing public information, community learning and education around nature and environment

The Council employs a variety of staff whose role specifications either include or are related to the provision of public information and community education for nature and the environment. This includes 2 full time Countryside Rangers based at Mugdock Country Park and 9 full time staff within the Streetscene Technical Support team, including Team Leader. Full details on providing public information, community learning and education around nature and the environment are listed in Section 5: Public engagement and workforce development.

2. Actions to protect and enhance biodiversity

Biodiversity is under increasing pressure from: land use change and intensification, the spread of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS), urban and rural pollution and changes to our climate. The action the Council takes to improve biodiversity conservation can take a number of different forms. This section will discuss measures to mitigate for biodiversity loss, enhance biodiversity and the partnerships the Council engages in to achieve these actions.

2.1. Mitigation for biodiversity loss

2.1.1. Land use change

The Council has reflected the need to mitigate for land use change in the implementation of policy for development. The conservation of biodiversity has been further strengthened in the latest Local Development Plan, see Section 3.5 for further details.

2.1.2. Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)

INNS management is a priority in Policy 17: Natural Environment of the LDP2, stating:

“Where invasive non-native species are present on a development site, or where planting is planned as part of a development, developers must take account of legislative provisions relating to non-native species.”

There are ongoing programmes delivered by Streetscene and Countryside Rangers to manage the prevalence of INNS across East Dunbartonshire, through eradication and monitoring. These include:

- Invasive *Betula* sp. (Birch) and bracken control was undertaken at Drumclog Moor and Lenzie Moss by the Council. Bracken control at Drumclog Moor is part of a 5 year contract and is being monitored by NatureScot.
- *Rhododendron ponticum* removal continues to be carried out at Mugdock Country Park by Countryside Rangers and volunteer groups.
- Various invasive control programmes for *Impatiens glandulifera* (Himalayan balsam), *Heracleum mantegazzianum* (Giant Hogweed) and *Reynoutria japonica* (Japanese Knotweed) across Mains Park, Templehill Woods, Kilmardinny Loch, Barloch Moor and a large number of open spaces.
- Streetscene operations staff followed a programme of herbicide control of *Reynoutria japonica* (Japanese Knotweed) at 60 sites across EDC.

2.1.3. Pollution

Pollution from industry, agriculture and road traffic can impact on waterways, air quality and sensitive ecological habitats.

Air pollution is an environmental pressure that can affect biodiversity, ecosystem services, harm human health and contribute to climate change. The primary source of air pollution in East Dunbartonshire is emitted by road vehicle traffic. The Council monitors air quality continuously at four sites in East Dunbartonshire in Kirkintilloch, Milngavie, Bishopbriggs and Bearsden.

The main pollutants of concern are NO₂, PM₁₀, PM_{2.5} and PM₁. Numerous passive NO₂ diffusion tubes also measure monthly average NO₂ levels throughout the area. In accordance with the statutory requirements of Part IV of the Environment Act 1995, a yearly Air Quality Annual Progress Report (APR) is published by the Council to provide updates on monitoring and mitigation. The 2023 APR has been submitted to the Scottish Government and SEPA for approval and reports for 2021 and 2022 are available on the Council's website. Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) are declared when there is an exceedance or likely exceedance of an identified pollutant or air quality objective. During the reporting period, there were two AQMAs operational in Bearsden and Bishopbriggs. The former was revoked in September 2022 due to consistently improved air quality over the recent years and this was approved by the Scottish Government and SEPA.

Air quality is a material consideration for all proposed developments. During 2022, the Air Quality Planning Guidance was updated following the revoked AQMA in Bearsden.

Litter pick-ups have been conducted throughout green and open spaces in EDC. This benefits flora and fauna while preventing items from entering nearby aquatic eco-systems. Anti-litter initiatives have been implemented in schools across the Council, working with Keep Scotland Beautiful around the National Spring Clean (with Community and Friends of groups) and the Upstream Battle initiative.

2.2. Enhancing Biodiversity

2.2.1. Habitat creation and restoration

The Council has been involved in the following efforts to create and restore a variety of habitats to promote biodiversity:

Meadow creation projects:

East Dunbartonshire has established a total of approximately 17ha of wildflower meadows during the reporting period. A total of 800m of pictorial turf has been laid in areas, such as roundabouts to further boost habitat connections. An estimated 1ha of *Rhinanthus minor* (Yellow rattle) has been sown at key sites along the Balmore corridor and embankments are being identified for further planting.

Tree planting and management:

The Council has planted more than 500 trees in the last three years in parks and open space sites across EDC. In response to ash die-back, where 95% of *Fraxinus excelsior* (Ash) trees in East Dunbartonshire require felling, the Council has committed to replacing each tree with a suitable native alternative. Funding from the Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund has supported the Council in delivering tree planting across street verges to improve biodiversity and mitigate pollution from vehicular traffic and deliver tree and understory shrub planting in woodlands, such as at Cairnhill Woods. Desire lines in Cairnhill Woods have also been closed to encourage natural generation.

2.2.2. Watercourse management and restoration

- **Pond creation and restoration projects:** 25 new ponds were created during the reporting period to improve niche habitat network connections.
- **Peatland restoration works:** Peatland restoration at Lenzie Moss has involved the removal of 46 hectares of non-native shrubs and the creation of further artificial dams to retain water and re-wet the main bog area.
- **Kelvin Valley Project:** The Sustainability Team is developing a brief to examine nature-based solutions and climate change mitigation measures that could be implemented in the River Kelvin and its tributaries to protect and enhance biodiversity and mitigate flooding. Wild Atlantic Salmon has been identified as a priority species.

2.2.3. Encouraging nature in urbanised areas

The Council has undertaken the following actions to improve biodiversity, visual amenity and add value to green spaces in urbanised areas:

- **Landscaping:** Approximately 17ha of wildflower meadows have been established across parks and greenspaces. Operations staff have laid 800m² of Pictorial Turf along verges and roundabouts to boost biodiversity. Around 2500m² of parks and open green space has been planted up with bulbs for naturalisation, including *Camassia*, *Chionodoxa*, *Crocus*, *Muscari*, *Narcissus* and *Tulipa*.
- **Enhancing biodiversity features in Council buildings:** Over the last three year period, schools have been involved in enhancing their school grounds for biodiversity. Projects include tree planting supported through the Queen's Green Canopy Project, the Dandelion Food Growing Initiative, installation of bug hotels and bird boxes and planting wildflowers.

2.2.4. Management practices

- **Grass cutting:** Changes in traditional amenity grass management have been made as part of the creation of wildflower meadows across parks and open spaces in East Dunbartonshire.
- **Management plans:** Management plans which were being developed in the last reporting period have now been implemented and used across woodland, peatland and parkland areas.

2.3. Working in partnership

In addition to the partnership projects mentioned previously, the Council sits on the boards of the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership and Climate Ready Clyde, is the lead organisation for the East Dunbartonshire Biodiversity Partnership, chairs the Land Planning and Sustainability Portfolio Group of Glasgow City Region Deal and attends bi-annual LBAP officers' network meetings. The Council is also a signatory to the Central Scotland Green Network Concordat and Scotland's Geodiversity Charter. The Sustainability Team's Greenspace and Biodiversity Policy Officer attended meetings of the Scottish Biodiversity Officers Network to ensure best practice and stay current with developments in this area.

A partnership with Scottish Water at the Milngavie Reservoirs site has funded 2 FTE posts which are based at Mugdock Country Park and who carry out visitor engagement work at the reservoirs. Further joint working is under consideration.

3. Mainstreaming Biodiversity

Biodiversity conservation is embedded throughout the Council in line with the commitments outlined in previous Biodiversity Duty Reports. The Council's duty to enhance biodiversity is demonstrated through its incorporation in policies, strategies, projects and initiatives across the Council.

3.1. Impact Assessment Checklist and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

All new policies, strategies and plans must be presented and approved to the relevant committee. At the beginning of this process an Impact Assessment Checklist must be completed which includes consideration of whether SEA is required. The SEA officer proactively engages with staff involved in the production of policies and strategies across the Council to aid compliance and understanding of SEA and to integrate environmental and sustainability considerations into strategic decision-making as effectively as possible.

3.2. Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) 2017 – 2027

The LOIP is the shared plan for the Community Planning Partnership (CPP), consisting of 5 public bodies with a legal duty and 10 partner organisations. The LOIP details out the strategic direction, priorities and outcomes in response to local needs and aspirations. The document contains seven overarching Guiding Principles and six Local Outcomes.

The seventh listed guiding principle is Sustainability which aims to:

“...create the conditions for a better quality of life for East Dunbartonshire residents, by recognising their health and wellbeing needs without compromising the quality of our built, natural and historic environment. In doing so, we will build resilience to a changing climate, use our natural resources prudently and consider the long-term implications of our decisions for present and future generations.”

This guiding principle includes a 5 point sustainability charter and 4 point list to measure success.

The theme of Sustainability reflects the CPP's desire to create high quality places for residents to live, facilitate sustainable economic growth, improve our town centres, maximise our tourism and business potential and protect the quality of our local historic, natural and water environment (through the focus on its vision and outcomes for 2027). It also ensures that essential infrastructure for energy, broadband, minerals and waste is provided. Local Outcome 5 is relevant to biodiversity and states:

“Our people experience good physical and mental health and wellbeing with access to a quality built and natural environment in which to lead healthier and more active lifestyles.”

This is an important change from the previous LOIP with the addition of the natural environment within an outcomes and the Partnership's recognition of the importance of good quality open space and healthy eco-systems for the health and wellbeing of East Dunbartonshire residents. The Sustainability Guiding Principle seeks to ensure the recognition and protection of the natural environment when delivering all six of the local outcomes.

3.3. Climate Action Plan (CAP)

Following the 2018 report on global warming from the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and subsequent strengthening of the Scottish emission reduction targets in the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) Scotland Act 2019, carbon emission reductions are recognised as fundamental in addressing the climate crisis. East Dunbartonshire Council has already committed to a target to reduce corporate carbon emissions through its Carbon Management Plan, which has included annual reporting on emissions reductions since the 2015 iterations, in addition to approving a Sustainability and Climate Change Framework in November 2016, which was updated along with the production of a new Action Plan in December 2019. Work is now under way on the preparation of an evidence-based Climate Action Plan (CAP), with Council agreeing a corporate net zero target of 2036 for Scope 1 and 2 emissions, and 20245 for all emissions following the completion of an evidence and options stage of the CAP in September 2023. The draft CAP is now in preparation and will identify actions for corporate emissions reductions to align with the delivery of these targets and interim milestone targets. Significant developments also occurred during 2022/23 in relation to the adaptation strand of the CAP. All adaptation related tasks have been undertaken in collaboration or in consultation with our internal Adaptation and Nature-Based Solutions Working Group (part of the formal CAP governance structure). Management of climate-related risks will ultimately be overseen strategically via the CAP. Nature-based solutions are a key tool in effective climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, including initiatives such as habitat restoration, woodland planting and flood water management. The Council is continuing to work with partners such as the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership to identify opportunities to contribute to strategic projects which contribute to climate change, biodiversity, flood management, health and other agendas, such as the Green Network Blueprint and Clyde Climate Forest.

3.4. Business Improvement Plans (BIPs)

Action for biodiversity is encouraged across the Council via the Business Improvement Plan (BIP) Corporate Guidance document which requires all teams to list the ways in which they address issues around sustainability (including the natural environment and biodiversity) through annual BIPs. To ensure robust consideration for these issues, the Sustainability Policy Team reviews and comments on the sustainability commitments made in draft BIPs. The team then makes recommendations for improvements or additional commitments. Since 2018, BIP commitments have been included in the monthly How Good Is Our Service (HGIOS) performance reporting allowing for a regular update on how these commitments are being delivered.

3.5. Local Development Plan

The Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) was adopted during the current reporting period in 2022 and includes a specific policy on the Natural Environment which supports the protection and enhancement of biodiversity. The Council has developed Supplementary Guidance and Planning Guidance that supports the implementation of the policies in the LDP by providing additional information and best practice examples. The Green Infrastructure and Green Network (Supplementary Guidance) and Natural Environment (Planning Guidance) documents provide further information on matters such as nature designations, site appraisals and ecological surveys, protected species, mitigation and management and opportunities for enhancing the green network through new development.

Policy 9: Climate Change, Sustainability and Energy Infrastructure establishes a policy framework for contributing to national climate change targets and achieving sustainability through the development planning process. The policy requires planning applications for certain types of development to include the submission of a Sustainability and Energy Statement. This requires relevant proposals to meet a series of essential requirements in support of climate change mitigation and adaptation and sustainability. There are also a series of desirable characteristics which are strongly encouraged. Of the essential standards, two relate to biodiversity, namely that proposed development:

- Does not result in a net loss in biodiversity and complies with the mitigation hierarchy set out in Policy 17: Natural Environment.
- Protects, enhances and expands the green network and creates new green infrastructure in accordance with the requirements of Table 3 in the Green Infrastructure and Green Network Supplementary Guidance.

Policy 17: Natural Environment outlines the Council's commitment to protecting and enhancing biodiversity in development. It states that:

"All development must protect, enhance, and maintain existing biodiversity assets and deliver at least a no net loss for biodiversity. Development will contribute positively to biodiversity conservation and achieve at least no net loss through siting and design, avoiding and minimising any adverse impacts on habitats, species or network connectivity, either resulting from the development or as a result of the cumulative effects of development locally."

Developments that avoid habitat fragmentation and isolation, restore adjacent habitats, and create new habitat links in the surrounding area will be supported. Where possible adverse effects on biodiversity arise, an ecological appraisal will be required. The appraisal will identify potential impacts at local, national and international scales to the surrounding area and provide mitigation.

3.6. Economic Development

The Economic Recovery Plan was developed in 2020/21 in response to the lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic. Actions linked to biodiversity under the priority area of Community included park upgrades, creation of the Twechar outdoor centre and regeneration and maintenance of outdoor community and tourism assets. Relevant actions under the Environment priority included the creation of a Circular Economy Strategy (CES) which was published in March 2023 and future strategy development, such as the Climate Action Plan (CAP), which is due to be published in 2024.

Initial discussions on the format of the next Economic Development Strategy indicate a continued focus on sustainability and the integration of a 'Wellbeing Economy' concept, in line with economic policy at the national level.

3.7. Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)

Actions from the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) 2016 – 2020 have been delivered across the four ecosystems (Urban, Rural, Freshwater and Woodland) through working with the 13 organisations of the partnership. Work on the development of the new LBAP is expected to begin in 2024.

3.8. Open Space Strategy

The East Dunbartonshire Open Space Strategy 2015 – 2020 was approved in January 2015 and contains a number of actions to enhance open spaces for biodiversity. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was necessary to temporarily pause work on preparation of the new Open Space Strategy. It has since been agreed that the Open Space Strategy and Green Network Strategy will not be updated, instead they will be combined in a new Greenspace Strategy which will be developed in 2024 in line with the Local Development Plan, Climate Action Plan and Transport Strategy.

4. Nature based solutions, climate change and biodiversity

4.1. Climate Action Plan (CAP)

Nature based solutions are considered an important tool in the Options and Delivery Actions report which has been developed as part of the Climate Action Plan. Examples of actions and opportunities which will be incorporated in the CAP include: undertaking a SuDs audit and improvement plan, undertaking a feasibility study of climate ready planting, identifying climate ready parks across East Dunbartonshire, peatland conservation and restoration and the delivery of wetland habitat creation in the Kelvin Valley.

4.2. Local Nature Conservation Sites

The LDP has designated 76 Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS) for biodiversity and 34 LNCS for geodiversity.

4.3. Infrastructure Upgrades

To improve access to nature and promote health and wellbeing the following upgrades and repairs to tracks and paths have been made:

- Upgrades to paths were undertaken across several sites, including Barloch, Allander, Cairnhill Woods, Luggie Park, Mains Park, Bishopbriggs Park, Kilmardinny Loch and Lenzie Moss.
- Countryside Rangers have overseen the maintenance and improvements to paths and boardwalks across Mugdock Country Park.
- The creation of proper path networks has improved accessibility for local communities and visitors to green and open spaces across East Dunbartonshire.

4.4. Flood and Surface Water Management

The development of flood risk and surface water management plans have afforded opportunities to find nature based solutions that benefit biodiversity. Examples of nature-based solutions include the installation of retention ponds, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) and open culverts, which create habitat features and linkage corridors for wildlife. To help support the on-going integration of biodiversity considerations into flood management work, the Sustainability Policy Team formally meets several times a year with relevant Council officers, including the Flood Risk Engineer.

4.4.1. Flood Management Plans

The Council is part of the Clyde and Loch Lomond Local Plan District which, during this reporting period, has published Cycle 2 of the Local Flood Risk Management Plan (LFRMP) 2022-2028. The aims of the plan are currently being delivered alongside partner organisations, such as SEPA, Scottish Water and Local Authorities within the catchment. Bishopbriggs East, Kirkintilloch South and Lenzie have been identified as areas at risk of surface water flooding and the LFRMP sets out proposals for Natural Flood Management studies and the delivery of SuDs projects to mitigate and reduce the impact of flooding on communities and businesses in East Dunbartonshire.

4.4.2. Surface Water Management Plans (SWMP)

Surface Water Management Plans for three areas in East Dunbartonshire are currently being progressed in Cycle 2 of the LFRMP. Feasibility studies are moving to concept and detail design stage with construction planned in the current Flood Risk Management cycle 2022 – 2028. This work will deliver co-benefits for biodiversity and health and well-being, achieved through habitat creation and open space enhancements, including flood alleviation, such as open culverts, SuDs and rain gardens.

4.4.3. Watercourse Management and Restoration

- Biodiversity enhancements were a key part of the landscaping and planting plans of two flood alleviation schemes (FAS) which have been built at Golf View and Heather Avenue to help tackle flooding.
- Park Burn de-silting and engineering works as part of watercourse management and flood alleviation under Cycle 1 of the FRM Plans has been completed.
- The Council is currently working on two river restoration projects with SEPA and other stakeholders. Both are at different stages in the design process and are jointly funded by the Water Environmental Fund (WEF). The river restoration projects include multiple benefits, include flood mitigation and the protection and enhancement of biodiversity.

4.4.4. Climate Ready Park (Bishopbriggs)

Streetscene and operations staff have so far delivered 2.7ha of meadow creation and undertaken a programme of work to control invasive non-native species, such as *Impatiens glandulifera* (Himalayan Balsam). Other works, including the delivery of SuDs, allotments and park improvements are at the tender stage and submissions are currently being considered. Following evaluation, a suitable contractor for construction will be appointed and work will commence in the new financial year in 2024.

4.5. Nature Networks

The Streetscene and Sustainability Teams are working with the GCV-GNP on building on the Green Network Blueprint produced during the last reporting period. Mapping of species rich grasslands across East Dunbartonshire and identifying areas for the creation of stepping stones is currently being developed. As part of this, the Streetscene Team are looking at meadow creation opportunities to support biodiversity.

5. Public engagement and workforce development

The Streetscene Team organised fossorial water vole training for all staff in Streetscene, Planning, Development and Sustainability. The training was funded through the Nature Restoration Fund and involved learning how to identify their habitat, record their activity and protect and enhance populations within East Dunbartonshire. The Countryside Ranger Service has hosted a total of 177 environmental events at Mugdock Country Park for public participation during the reporting period.

5.1. Practical tasks with volunteers

The Countryside Rangers led volunteer groups on practical conservation tasks at Mugdock Country Park and other greenspaces throughout East Dunbartonshire. The groups varied from regular volunteers, corporate volunteers to occasional participation by community groups or individuals. The total number of volunteer days per year are set out below:

2021 – 20 days

2022 – 560 days

2023 – 482 days

5.2. Education

5.2.1. Biodiversity in Schools

East Dunbartonshire Council is responsible for 8 secondary schools and 33 primary schools. Biodiversity education is integrated into the curriculum and experienced through activities both in school and through external partner organisations. Training and professional learning opportunities for staff is advertised to schools and learning centres through KSB and Learning through Landscapes.

Learning centres throughout the Council take ownership of their outdoor spaces, retrofitting them to improve health and wellbeing, boost biodiversity and aid local food production where possible. Schools with restricted outdoor spaces are working in partnership with local community groups in community gardens, church gardens and local wooded areas. The majority of schools have engaged in the creation of a range of wildlife habitat features, such as bug hotels and bird boxes and installed raised beds or planters for food growing. Four schools (Craigdhu, Gartconner, Milngavie and Twechar) have also installed polytunnels to further support food growing initiatives. Food growing in schools has been funded by a range of providers, such as CCAF, KSB, Food for Thought and Tesco. One third of learning centres have planted pollinator friendly plants to support bees and butterflies. Eco-committee groups are developing outdoor spaces and developing recycling initiatives with a focus on sustainability, such as school uniform and Christmas jumper recycling.

- **Keep Scotland Beautiful (KSB):** Schools within EDC are involved in a number of programmes that benefit the environment and biodiversity. These include working toward Green Flag Status, Climate Ready Classrooms (supporting learning about climate change and biodiversity), Luggiewatch and Upstream Battle (reducing litter and plastics).
- **The John Muir Award and Duke of Edinburgh programme:** Young people are exposed to nature and conservation messaging through outdoor learning. Senior pupils in secondary schools are working towards their award by managing or conserving a local chosen greenspace.

- **Clyde in the Classroom:** A hands-on project that uses brown trout as a way of engaging and educating young people about river ecology across the River Clyde catchment.
- **Dandelion:** In 2022/23, five schools in EDC (Bishopbriggs, Turnbull, Lenzie, Kirkintilloch and St Ninians) engaged in the Dandelion Food Growing Initiative and celebrated with a harvest festival.
- **Queen's Green Canopy Project:** Support from the QGCP has helped deliver tree planting across 50% of schools in EDC in the last 5 years. This includes a mix of *Prunus* spp. (Cherry), *Quercus robur* (Oak) and *Fraxinus excelsior* (Ash).
- **Awards:** In 2021, Gartconner Primary School won the Scottish Fair Trade Award in the Fairtrade and Sustainability Category.

5.2.2. Outdoor Learning

The Countryside Rangers provide outdoor learning opportunities for every age bracket in the Council. They often lead school and college groups (including for awards such as John Muir and Duke of Edinburgh) and clubs, such as the Cubs and Scouts. Practical conservation tasks include biodiversity enhancements, such as wildflower or tree planting, pond creation and putting up bird or bat boxes; habitat management, such as scrub removal or removal of invasive non-native species; and the monitoring of previous biodiversity projects. During the reporting period the number of education sessions delivered is set out below:

- In 2021: A total of 3 school outreach sessions across all age brackets.
- In 2022: A total of 61 school outreach sessions across all age brackets, of which 20 were Forest Schools.
- In 2023: A total of 22 school sessions for all age brackets.

5.3. Corporate Communication

The Council has social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn which are used to promote biodiversity initiatives and projects where relevant. The Corporate Communications Team also routinely issue press releases, raising awareness of biodiversity projects the Council has delivered. Over the last year, communications have been issued relating to the Climate Ready Park, wildflower meadows, birdbox building events, pollinators and marking Biodiversity Day in May.

5.4. Council Website

The Council's website contains pages on biodiversity where the most recent LBAP can be downloaded, and pages on parks and greenspaces and green networks where the Open Space Strategy and Green Network Strategy can be viewed. The Green Network Strategy is available online as an innovative Story Map which displays the strategy and its proposals as an interactive map allowing for better exploration and understanding of the proposals. Events organised by the Countryside Rangers at Mugdock Country Park are advertised on the website and in the What's on Guide.

6. Research and Monitoring

The main monitoring activity of biodiversity actions is the ongoing monitoring of strategy delivery, including the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, Green Network Strategy and Open Space Strategy. All biological records generated by the Council are sent to the Local Records Centre and from there are entered onto the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Gateway. Further detailed information regarding research and monitoring is set out below:

- **Invertebrate Surveys:** The Countryside Rangers have undertaken surveys for species of interest across the Council area. In 2023, 56 Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterflies were recorded at Drumclog Moor and Lennox Forest.
- **Grouse Surveys:** Two surveys of *Lyrurus tetrix* (Black Grouse) are carried out annually by Countryside Rangers at Leckit Hill in the Campsie Fells near Lennoxton.
- **Bat Surveys:** Countryside Rangers conducted two bat transect surveys in Kirkintilloch, two at Mugdock Country Park, and two in Milngavie/Drumclog between 2021 and 2023. Two bat roost surveys were also carried out at Mugdock and two waterway bat surveys were carried out at the Allander Water, Milngavie.
- **INNS Surveys:** For the Mugdock Land Management Plan (2022-2027), audit work was carried out on *Reynoutria japonica*, *Rhododendron ponticum*, *Rubus spectabilis*, *Impatiens glandulifera* and bamboo and these are managed within the park by volunteer groups. *Reynoutria japonica* is also managed via herbicide control in Merkland and Lenzie Moss.
- **Tree surveys:** 7 tree surveys were carried out in 2020/21 across Bishopbriggs Public Park and Etive Park in Bishopbriggs, Roman Park and Whitehill Woods in Bearsden and Whitegates, Peel Park and Woodhead Park in Kirkintilloch.
- **Delivery of restoration projects:** Countryside Rangers, Streetscene and Friends of Lenzie Moss have continued to monitor raised bog restoration work at Lenzie Moss. This includes the removal of tree seedlings and non-native scrub, maintenance of dams and monitoring of water levels.

7. Biodiversity Highlights and Challenges

7.1. Contribution to national biodiversity targets

The following tables detail the Council's contributions to programmes or projects that directly support some of the key actions in relevant chapters of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy:

Target from the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. Chapter 2: Objective 1: Accelerate Restoration and Regeneration	Contribution to target achieved	Contribution made
Take action to ensure pathways for the introduction and spread of INNS are managed to prevent or reduce their rate of introduction and establishment and prevent further damage to eco-systems.	✓	Various control programmes for INNS across parks and open spaces by Streetscene staff. (2.2.1)
Raise public awareness of the impact of INNS and embed INNS biosecurity practice across industries and recreational activities linked to the most important pathways of introduction and spread by 2030.	✓	Countryside Rangers work with volunteer groups to remove INNS, such as <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i> at Mugdock Country Park. (2.2.1)
Take an adaptive approach to abstraction and flows management to protect freshwater biodiversity from the impacts of water scarcity in response to future climate change pressures, using the Controlled Activity Regulations and review of abstraction.	✓	River Restoration Projects. (4.4.3)
Develop a mechanism to promote positive management of rural and urban SuDs for biodiversity benefits.	✓	Flood and Surface Water Management. (4.4)

Target from the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. Chapter 3: Objective 2: Protect Nature on Land and at Sea across and beyond Protected Areas	Contribution to target achieved	Contribution made
By 2030, ensure that at least 30% of land and sea is protected or conserved as protected areas or OECMs, and effectively managed to support nature restoration.	✓	Local Nature Reserve, Local Nature Conservation Sites. (4.2)
Establish a programme to enable protected woodlands to be brought into favourable condition with clear targets and a clear framework for decision making.	✓	NRF funding for tree and shrub planting in woodlands (2.2.1) INNS control at Mugdock. (2.1.2)

Target from the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. Chapter 3: Objective 2: Protect Nature on Land and at Sea across and beyond Protected Areas	Contribution to target achieved	Contribution made
Undertake mapping of opportunities for creating local authority wide Nature Networks by 2030.	✓	GCV-GNP Green Network Blueprint (3.3), species rich grasslands and meadow creation opportunities. (4.5)
Incorporate and embed Nature Networks into policy frameworks and decision making processes as a component of Local Development Plans and Regional Land Use Partnerships nationally by 2030.	✓	Climate Action Plan (3.3), Local Development Plan (3.5). Work is ongoing to embed Nature Networks into the Greenspace Strategy. (3.8)
Prepare and implement nature positive amenity grassland management strategies for the public estate in towns and cities by 2030, incorporating improved technical guidance for practitioners and access to suitable machinery for local authorities.	✓	Changes to management practices of amenity grassland as part of meadow creation projects, including laying of pictorial turf and bulb planting for biodiversity. (2.2.4)
Every local authority should consider the need to prepare and implement a vision for surface water management including appropriate actions for blue-green infrastructure by 2030.	✓	Surface Water Management Plans and Cycle 2 of Flood Risk Management. (4.4.2)

Target from the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. Chapter 4: Objective 3: Embed Nature Positive Farming, Fishing and Forestry	Contribution to target achieved	Contribution made
Increase biodiversity through diversifying age and species mixes, increasing woodland extent and connectivity (and edge habitat), increasing deadwood, and managing grazing and browsing to help facilitate natural regeneration and development of a ground/shrub layer as part of Sustainable Forest Management.	✓	Removal of INNS (2.1.2) Native tree and shrub planting (2.2.1) bulb planting (2.2.3), closing desire lines to encourage natural regeneration. (2.2.1)

Target from the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. Chapter 5: Objective 4: Protect and Support the Recovery of Vulnerable and Important Species and Habitats	Contribution to target achieved	Contribution made
Deliver the actions set out in the Wild Salmon Strategy Implementation Plan 2023-2028 to improve habitat and reduce pressures on salmon and other fish species.	✓	Kelvin Valley Project has highlighted Wild Atlantic Salmon as a priority species. (2.2.2)

Target from the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. Chapter 6: Objective 5: Invest in Nature	Contribution to target achieved	Contribution made
Scale delivery of the Peatland Action programme, restoring the condition of peatlands as a key ecosystem in line with Net Zero targets and supporting the expansion and upskilling of the peatland restoration workforce.	✓	Continuation of peatland restoration works at Lenzie Moss and other sites. (2.2.2)

Target from the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. Chapter 7: Objective 6:	Contribution to target achieved	Contribution made
Develop a communication and engagement programme by 2024 to raise awareness and understanding of the importance of biodiversity and its links to climate change and the changes needed to ensure a just transition to a net zero and nature positive Scotland.	✓	Strategies and events are made available on the Council website (5.4)
Increase public connection and action for nature through expanding the reach of the Make Space for Nature campaign and develop a national nature volunteer and citizen science frameworks by 2025.	✓	Countryside Ranger events, including schools outdoor learning (5.2.2), volunteer removal of INNS (2.1.2) and survey work. (6.)
Progress delivery of the outdoor learning elements of the Learning for Sustainability Action Plan, including nature connectedness and learning, to meet Target 2030 so every 3-16 place of education becomes a Sustainable Learning Centre.	✓	Environmental and outdoor education (5.2.1), school ground improvements and incorporation of biodiversity into new schools (5.2.1), Forest Schools, Dandelion Food Growing Initiative, Clyde in the Classroom and John Muir and Duke of Edinburgh Awards. (5.2.1)

7.2. Highlights for biodiversity in the Council

- The protection and enhancement of biodiversity through Local Development Plan policy and a commitment to further improve the conservation of biodiversity in the Local Development Plan 3.
- A commitment to a range of NBS measures in the evidence-based Climate Action Plan to improve resilience to the effects of climate change.
- Delivery of key projects which further the conservation of biodiversity in the LBAP, Green Network Strategy and Open Space Strategy.
- Successful creation of biodiversity features, such as ponds, meadows and tree planting.
- On-going successful control of invasive non-native species.

7.3. Challenges and aspirations for biodiversity in the Council

Challenges and aspirations for the next three years include:

- Continuing to source and access funding for the delivery of biodiversity projects
- Biodiversity education remains a key issue with local stakeholder concerns regarding meadow creation and other projects.
- There is growing pressure on land arising from proposed developments and land use change, resulting in pressure, fragmentation and loss of existing habitats. The Council proposes to strengthen the protection of habitat and conservation of biodiversity through new land use planning policy.