

Report

Report to:	Climate Change and Sustainability Committee
Date of Meeting:	20 November 2023
Report by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

Subject:	Biodiversity Duty Report 2021 to 2023
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ present the Council's Biodiversity Duty Report for 2021-2023, as legally required under the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- ◆ The Council's statutory Biodiversity Duty report for 2021 to 2023 is approved for submission to the Scottish Government.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 places a duty on public bodies in Scotland to further the conservation of biodiversity. This biodiversity duty is about taking care of nature all around us, not just in specific protected sites and for particular species.
- 3.2. The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 (commonly known as the WANE Act), requires every public body in Scotland to produce a publicly available report, on compliance with the Biodiversity Duty. This must be completed once every three years. Our next report is due on 31st December 2023.
- 3.3. The Council has complied with the statutory reporting requirement since its introduction in 2014. A summary of responses of public bodies to the biodiversity duty can be found on the NatureScot website.
- 3.4. The Council has a significant influence on biodiversity as a major landowner, as a Planning Authority and through the impacts of its wider service delivery. Direct Council delivery of the biodiversity duty is managed and monitored through the Council's Biodiversity Duty Implementation Plan (BDIP).
- 3.5. The BDIP sets out objectives and outcomes that have been agreed with Resource representatives. The BDIP represents the Council's statement of its delivery against the biodiversity duty; monitoring of the BDIP informs the Council's statutory reporting to the Scottish Government.

- 3.6. The Council is a key member of the South Lanarkshire Biodiversity Partnership and has produced a Biodiversity Strategy which sets an agreed framework for furthering the conservation of biodiversity across South Lanarkshire. The new Biodiversity Strategy is due early 2024.
- 3.7. The Partnership brings together various groups including Government agencies, advisory bodies and Non-Governmental Organisations with an interest in biodiversity in South Lanarkshire. Key partners include NatureScot, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Forestry, Butterfly Conservation, Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network, Scottish Wildlife Trust and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

4 Biodiversity Duty Report 2021 to 2023

- 4.1. The report requires approval by the Climate Change and Sustainability Committee and to be published on the Council's website by 1 January 2024; Scottish Government are sent a link to the report.
- 4.2. The report comprises of eight parts:-

1	Introduction	The Council's role in relation to biodiversity as a public body. Our role and purpose, including any environmental responsibilities.
2	Governance	This section establishes how governance of biodiversity is recognised within the Council.
3	Actions to protect biodiversity and connect people with nature	A description of actions we have undertaken to benefit biodiversity directly or achieve wider outcomes for nature and people over the last three years.
4	Mainstreaming biodiversity / nature-based solutions and climate change	Steps our organisation has taken to incorporate biodiversity measures into wider policies. This section describes how Resources work to mainstream the consideration of biodiversity and how biodiversity measures have been incorporated into various policy areas.
5	Public engagement and workforce development	The Council make use of their regular contact with the public to communicate, educate and promote biodiversity. Details on partnership working with external organisations and communities to further protect, enhance and promote biodiversity.
6	Research and monitoring	Details of how we gather records, monitor and share our biological data.
7	Biodiversity highlights and challenges	This section highlights some of the work we are most proud of and identifies current and future challenges to completing biodiversity-based work.
8	Contribution to biodiversity targets	This section highlights the Council's overall activities that contribute to Scotland's National Biodiversity targets within the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy 2045 'Tackling the Nature Emergency'.

- 4.3. A copy of the draft biodiversity report for 2023 can be found at appendix 1.
- 4.4. Some highlights from the report include:-
- ◆ The designation of 16 new proposed Local Nature Reserves, and an extension to the existing LNR at Langlands Moss in April 2022. The reserves now cover 610ha in total (previously 20ha) and encompass a broad spectrum of habitats including ancient broad-leaved woodland, riparian woodland, ponds, river, peatland and grassland.
 - ◆ Continued support of local volunteers and community groups across South Lanarkshire through a range of mechanisms. This includes regular work sessions, carrying out site improvements, events and activities, and committee meetings.
 - ◆ Continued creation and improvement of habitats for pollinators, including projects with Butterfly Conservation and Buglife to create wildflower meadows.
 - ◆ Supporting outdoor play by providing access to funding for training and equipment, building capacity to help groups run their own outdoor activities and providing opportunities for children to explore nature close to their homes.
 - ◆ The completion of the peatland restoration work at Langlands Moss LNR. Removing 20ha of over mature conifer trees from the reserve, installing over 270 metres length of dams, allowing the water table to rise back to its natural level and to encourage the growth of sphagnum 'bog' mosses to help make the peat an active carbon sink.

5. Employee Implications

- 5.1. There are no direct employee implications with this report. The Council's Biodiversity Officer works in conjunction with all Council Resources to deliver the Council's objectives around biodiversity.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. There are no additional revenue implications associated with this report. NRF funding of £0.545m for 2023 was received in July 2023.

7. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 7.1. Improvements to biodiversity have the potential to help mitigate the effects of climate change for example through natural flood management and carbon storage. There is also a need for biodiversity to be improved to make natural systems better able to cope with the impacts of a changing climate, such as improving nature networks to increase species resilience.
- 7.2. Biodiversity actions are incorporated in the Council's Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy. Measures are reported on through statutory Climate Change Duties.
- 7.3. South Lanarkshire Council has undertaken screening for the proposed South Lanarkshire Biodiversity Strategy and BDIP with regard to the requirements of section 9 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. The Screening Report was submitted and approved to the Scottish Government's SEA Gateway in March 2023, the report sets out the views of South Lanarkshire Council on the likelihood of significant environmental effects for the proposed Strategy and the potential for requiring an SEA.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1. Reporting requirements under the biodiversity duty have implications for all Resources. Targets and measures set out in the Biodiversity Duty Implementation Plan are agreed with all Resources. The Countryside and Greenspace Section offer support and guidance for all Resources and undertake the collation of measures and preparation of the statutory reports.

9. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 9.1. Equality impact assessments were carried out for the previous SL Biodiversity Strategy and the SLC Biodiversity Implementation Plan.

David Booth

Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

20 November 2023

Link(s) to Council Values/Priorities/Outcomes

- ◆ Improve the quality of life of everyone in South Lanarkshire
- ◆ Make communities safer, stronger and sustainable
- ◆ Improve achievement, raise educational attainment and support lifelong learning
- ◆ Encourage participation in physical and cultural activities
- ◆ Work with communities and partners to promote high quality, thriving and sustainable communities
- ◆ Improve achievement, raise educational attainment and support lifelong learning
- ◆ Accountable, effective, efficient and transparent

Previous References

- ◆ Biodiversity Duty Report: Community and Enterprise Resources Committee – 22 May 2018
- ◆ Biodiversity Duty Report: Climate Change and Sustainable Development Committee – 4 Nov 2020.

List of Background Papers

- ◆ [South Lanarkshire Biodiversity Strategy](#)
- ◆ [South Lanarkshire Biodiversity Duty Implementation Plan](#)
- ◆ [South Lanarkshire Biodiversity Duty Reports](#)
- ◆ [Scottish Biodiversity Strategy 2045 Tackling the Nature Emergency Scotland](#)

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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