

Report

Report to:	Climate Change and Sustainability Committee
Date of Meeting:	29 November 2023
Report by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

Subject:	Making Space for Pollinators
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1.1 Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ Provide the Climate Change and Sustainability Committee with an update on the work undertaken to expand the Council's land use for pollinators.

2. Recommendation(s)

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

(1) that the report be noted.

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 or for a particular species.
- 3.2. The Scottish Government Pollinator Strategy for Scotland 2017 to 2027 sets out how Scotland can continue to be a place where pollinators thrive, along with actions that are needed to help achieve that objective. The Scottish Strategy aims to address the causes of decline in populations, diversity and range of our pollinator species and to help them thrive in the future. The Making Space for Pollinators Report sets out the Council's aims to help conserve and enhance pollinators and their habitats.
- 3.3. 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. The report 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, Buglife and Butterfly Conservation.
- 3.4. Pollinators are critical to the function of our natural environment. The Scottish Pollinator Strategy is a priority in the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy 2045 – 'Tackling the Nature Emergency in Scotland', published in December 2022, which sets out clear ambitions for Scotland to be Nature Positive by 2030, and to have restored and regenerated biodiversity by 2045.

4. The Nature Restoration Fund (NRF)

- 4.1. In 2021 the Council was awarded £264,000 via the Nature Restoration Fund (NRF) and a further £188,000 in 2022. Also in 2022, the Grounds Service was allocated an additional £146,000 from the Council's Climate Emergency Fund. This funding has

allowed a programme of work improving biodiversity and local ecosystems, mitigating the impact of climate change and promoting nature-based solutions. The focus of the programme has been on pollinators, building on previous work on council land over the last number of years of improving grassland and other habitats for biodiversity.

4.2. The Council was awarded a further £545,000 from the NRF for 2023, with the Scottish Government highlighting the funds' strategic themes where the fund seeks to deliver on:

- ◆ Habitat and species restoration: management for enhancement and connectivity.
- ◆ Freshwater restoration, including restoration of natural flows in rural catchments.
- ◆ Control of invasive non-native species (INNS) impacting on nature.
- ◆ Urban: Enhancing and connecting nature across, and between, towns and cities.

4.3. This approach hopes to deliver multiple benefits, supporting health and well-being, green jobs, air and water quality improvements in addition to supporting nature recovery. There is also an expectation that local authorities begin to develop projects which will contribute to establishing Nature Networks in their area. The fourth National Planning Framework sets out the Scottish Government's aim that Nature Networks be put in place in every local authority to enhance biodiversity and better connect areas for nature. Ecological connectivity is provided by wildlife sites, corridors and stepping-stones, landscape features, watercourses, green and blue spaces that together form integrated nature networks.

4.4. A programme of further work is planned over the Winter period, building on previous years' experience and aligned to the NRF's strategic themes and ambitions around the establishment of Nature Networks. More detailed information is provided within the report at Appendix 1.

5. Making space for pollinators

5.1. South Lanarkshire Council currently does not have a separate wildflower or pollinator Strategy. The Biodiversity Strategy and Biodiversity Duty Implementation Plan (BDIP) provides a strategic focus for conservation work with inclusions that will contribute to fulfilling the objectives of the Pollinator Strategy for Scotland and focussing on making improvements to the way our land is managed.

5.2. There has been a dramatic decline in the abundance and distribution of many of our pollinators. In the UK half of our 27 bumblebee species are in decline: three have become extinct and 71% of our butterflies are in long term decline. Pollinators are a vital part of our biodiversity. If we lose pollination services by insects, we risk damaging not only plants and animals but agricultural yields, our economy and our wellbeing.

5.3. The Making Space for Pollinators report (Appendix 1) is the Council's first report summarising the work undertaken over a number of years to address these issues. The report highlights many ways in which we can support and enhance our native pollinators. They require extensive, well-connected areas in which to forage, nest and over winter. Creating [nature networks](#) through our urban areas linking public parks, greenspace to nature reserves, gardens and allotments, to the wider countryside can help keep South Lanarkshire pollinator friendly.

- 5.4. Over recent years, the Council has developed and improved 155 grassland sites for pollinators, covering 62.77 ha throughout South Lanarkshire. Naturalised grass is essential for pollinators, and this is created by allowing the grass to grow longer and more naturally, where wildflowers can flower and set seed. This has been achieved through various projects and case studies which are highlighted in the report. For example, grassland improvement work achieved through the NRF in our 17 Local Nature Reserves, working with local communities and 'friends' groups and larger scale projects in partnership with Conservation groups: the three-year project with Butterfly Conservation: Helping Hands for Butterflies engaging with 700 people throughout the central belt of Scotland.
- 5.5. This approach also has the additional benefit of absorbing 0.397 tonnes of carbon dioxide per hectare per year when compared to short grass which does not sequester any carbon dioxide.
- 5.6. Pollinator areas require an alternative maintenance regime with the cuttings removed to reduce the nutrient level in the soil allowing the wildflowers to flourish and suppress grassland species. Where possible and depending on the size of the site, paths are established through a pollinator area so that the local community can access the area for walking and seeing up close the benefits of these areas for pollinators. More detail is provided in the appended report.
- 5.7. The service will continue to identify suitable areas throughout South Lanarkshire to improve the wildlife value and coverage of managed grassland. Sites will be chosen for their accessibility for the appropriate machinery for grass cutting, lifting and removal from site. Proximity to existing open spaces and nature reserves is also important as well as working with local communities for additional wildflower planting. For example, throughout 2023 the service has been working with members of the local community in East Kilbride and have identified seven areas in St Leonards for expanding grassland management. An alternative maintenance regime will be implemented, and the flora and fauna will be monitored to tack any changes and improvements. These grasslands link to a network of greenspaces in the local area including Calderglen Country Park, Glen Esk Urban Park and many proposed Local Nature Conservation Sites.
- 5.8. The Council's approach to grassland management to support a healthy and diverse population of pollinating species will be directed through the following objectives:

1.	Deliver the actions within our Biodiversity Strategy and Biodiversity Duty Implementation Report to benefit pollinators.
2.	To continue to manage wildflower grasslands and other habitats to promote biodiversity.
3.	To define, enhance and maintain Nature Networks throughout South Lanarkshire for pollinators where appropriate. Promote the restoration and creation of flower rich habitats in the countryside and in urban areas, linking to neighbouring and national networks.

4.	To continue to work with partners and communities, providing training, practical activities, events and monitoring to encourage community involvement. Encourage citizen science and other volunteer projects that add value to existing monitoring schemes.
5.	Develop demonstration sites on public land, parks and Local Nature Reserves.
6.	Support the use and development of pollinator friendly pest control methods.
7.	Recognise the importance of brownfield sites and manage these to benefit pollinators.
8.	To raise awareness of the plight of pollinators and actions needed to help reverse species decline.

6. Employee Implications

- 6.1. 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 and creating space for pollinators.

7. Financial Implications

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

8. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 8.1. 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 habitat networks to increase species resilience.
- 8.2. Biodiversity actions are incorporated into the Council's Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy. Measures are reported on through statutory Climate Change Duties.
- 8.3. The existing Biodiversity Strategy and BDIP have both undergone a full Strategic Environmental Assessment. The Environmental Reports and post-adoption statements are available on the Council website. A new Biodiversity Strategy and BDIP will be completed by February 2024.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1. The Countryside and Greenspace Section offer support and guidance for all Resources and undertake the collation of measures and preparation of the statutory reports.
- 9.2. There was no requirement for consultation in terms of the information contained in this report.

10. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

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

David Booth
Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

10 November 2023

Link(s) to Council Values/Priorities/Outcomes

Values

- ◆ Focused on people and their needs
- ◆ Working with and respecting others
- ◆ Ambitious, self-aware and improving

Priorities

- ◆ We will work towards a sustainable future in sustainable places
- ◆ We will work to recover, progress and improve

Outcomes

- ◆ Our children and young people thrive
- ◆ Good quality, suitable and sustainable places to live
- ◆ Caring, connected, sustainable communities
- ◆ People live the healthiest lives possible

Previous References

- ◆ SL Biodiversity Strategy and Biodiversity Implementation Plan: Community and Enterprise Resources Committee – 22 May 2018
- ◆ Edinburgh Declaration: Climate Change and Sustainable Development Committee – 28 Apr 2021.
- ◆ Biodiversity Duty Report: Climate Change and Sustainable Development Committee – 4 Nov 2020.

List of Background Papers

- ◆ [Pollinator Strategy Scotland 2017-2027](#)
- ◆ [South Lanarkshire Biodiversity Strategy](#)
- ◆ [South Lanarkshire Biodiversity Duty Implementation Plan](#)
- ◆ [South Lanarkshire Biodiversity Duty Reports](#)
- ◆ [Scottish Biodiversity Strategy 2045 Tackling 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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