



Biodiversity Duty Report 2021 - 2023

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1 Introduction

- 1.1** The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 placed a duty on all public bodies to further the conservation of biodiversity. Section 1 of the Act states “It is the duty of every public body and office holder, in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions”.
- 1.2** The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 amends the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 and introduced a requirement for all public authorities to produce and make available a report, every three years, detailing their compliance with biodiversity duty.
- 1.3** South Lanarkshire Council (SLC) was established in 1996 under the Local Government et cetera. (Scotland) Act 1994. Under the Act, and through a wide range of other legislation, the council, as a unitary authority, exercises a range of statutory, regulatory and service functions.
- 1.4** The Duty Report will support delivery of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) Aichi Targets and the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045: Tackling the Nature Emergency in Scotland. Together, these documents outline the major steps needed to improve the state of nature in Scotland.
- 1.5** South Lanarkshire council (SLC) achieves its Biodiversity Duty through the delivery of the South Lanarkshire Biodiversity Strategy (2024-2030), focusing on biodiversity at a service level, partnership working and facilitating local action to help achieve the targets within the Scottish Strategy.
- 1.6** The council has produced a Biodiversity Duty Implementation Plan. The Biodiversity Duty is also recognised in various council resources and service plans.

2 Governance

- 2.1** Biodiversity is governed through our Climate Change and Sustainability Committee (CCS), which has decision making powers to help to accelerate the pace and scale of action needed in response to the climate and nature emergencies and meet challenging national targets. The committee will be responsible for ensuring the council complies with its biodiversity duty.
- 2.2** The committee is supported by the Climate Change and Sustainability Steering Group which is made up of senior manager from all council resources and has responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Biodiversity Strategy and Duty reports and embedding biodiversity within council policies.
- 2.3** A screening process was carried out alongside the preparation of the Biodiversity Strategy and the Biodiversity Duty Implementation Plan. This ensures that the importance of biodiversity is mainstreamed across the council and biodiversity is incorporated across all council led policies, plans, programmes and strategies should continue to benefit the people who live, work and visit South Lanarkshire. The Strategic Environmental Assessment Corporate Working Group is a cross-resource group that works together to ensure that all plans, policies, and strategies undergo the Strategic Environmental Assessment process which includes biodiversity factors. All council resources are represented on this group as well as representatives from South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture Trust and the South Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership.

3. Actions to protect biodiversity and connect people with nature

The [South Lanarkshire Biodiversity Duty Implementation Plan](#) sets out the commitments we continue to make to the conservation of biodiversity. The progress made over the years highlighting the efforts we have made and what we aim to continue to deliver and improve on. The creation of this plan and a larger emphasis on the importance of biodiversity and the nature crisis has helped to integrate its considerations within plans, as well as action on the ground. We are committed to continue developing our work in this area. The following demonstrates the actions we have taken over the last three years to ensure the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity.

3.1 Local Nature Reserves



Photo 1: The front cover of one of our management statements for Milton Tile Works Local Nature Reserve.

In April 2022, SLC designated a total of 17 LNRs, with 16 new sites adding to the existing one at Langlands Moss. Covering 610 hectares in total, these encompass a broad spectrum of habitats including ancient woodland, peatland, open water, wetlands, and grasslands. LNR are locally important areas of natural heritage, usually close to our towns and cities. Some sites have already had significant investment to improve their access and other infrastructure, some very little. Similarly, some have excellent community groups who do much work on their sites, while others have none. SLC wishes to continue and expand work on sites and to keep people interested and involved with their local greenspaces. We want to collaborate with communities to ensure local needs are met and that the public is aware of why these sites are special. Each site has a draft management statement prepared by SLC which provides information on why it is important and the aims for the site in the future.

Many of our LNR's are supported by 'friends' community groups who look after and promote the reserves through regular events and activities, educational visits, and conservation work. Each site has a designated countryside ranger who works with the local communities, interest groups, linking with to local schools, colleges, and universities.

Further information on each site can be found on [our webpage](#), each site has a draft management plan which will be developed into a full site management plan in partnership with the local communities and NatureScot.

The new local nature reserves are:

- Backmuir wood, Hamilton
- Blantyre, Bothwell and Uddingston
- Cadzow Glen, Hamilton
- Fernbrae Meadows

- Greenhall, Milheugh and Barnhill, Blantyre
- Hamilton Low Parks
- Holmhill Wood, Cambuslang
- James Hamilton Heritage Park, East Kilbride
- Jock's Burn, Carluke
- Langlands Moss, East Kilbride
- Milton, Carluke
- Morgan Glen, Larkhall
- Mossneuk, East Kilbride
- Neilsland and Earnock, Hamilton
- Stonehouse Park, Stonehouse
- Udston and Glenlee Woods, Hamilton
- Westburn Marsh, Cambuslang

A series of short films were produced in 2023 highlighting the variety of events taking place in a few of our [Local Nature Reserves](#) and the improvements we have made for biodiversity.

3.2 Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS)

A list of potential LNCS has been created and mapped, based on previously identified Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation from the 1990's, along with sites identified from aerial photography, woodland and peatland mapping.

We have surveyed 150 sites to date (2023), which have been initially assessed using the criteria based on:

- Species diversity
- Species rarity
- Habitat importance
- Biodiversity connectivity

74 sites have passed the criteria, many sites are adjacent or connect to a designated site or link to important green or blue networks. We will continue to survey the LNCS, with an initial focus on the urban and greenbelt sites to support the planning system.

3.3 Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA)

Biodiversity has been scoped into all SEA proceeding to scoping stage; potential environmental effects are considered and where appropriate, relevant mitigation and enhancement measures identified. Plans that have gone through the process recently include the Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy (2022-2027), the council plan (2022-2027) and the community plan (2022-2032).

The figures below show the number of complete plans assessed as part of the SEA process:

- 2020: 5
- 2021: 7
- 2022: 11
- 2023: 8

3.4 Conservation days at South Haugh



Photo 2: Volunteers working at South Haugh removing INNS.

2023 marked the 10th anniversary of the South Haugh conservation days. Fortnightly sessions have been running since June 2013, providing a volunteering opportunity which gives much needed management to South Haugh and Low Parks LNR in Hamilton. Path maintenance, Himalayan balsam removal, woodland management and scrub clearance are just a sample of the activities that take place. A core of 6 to 14 volunteers regularly attends, with further volunteers from the local communities and businesses. The work continues to have a positive impact on the site and volunteers involved.

3.5 Grassland Management



Photo 3: We continue to manage and monitor the banking at Glen Doll in East Kilbride which was sown with yellow rattle with the local community in winter 2019 and 2021. This parasitic plant helps keep grasses down allowing other wildflowers to grow.

We have a good history of working with external partners on various grassland improvement projects. We recently created several B-line sites with Buglife and have worked on various projects with Butterfly Conservation to create wildflower areas from amenity grassland. We continue to create areas of long grass and wildflowers to benefit biodiversity, particularly pollinators. We wish to continue to expand on this work throughout South Lanarkshire. There is also a role for communities to play, especially where there is a potential for change to how local greenspaces are managed. Communication is key to understanding why different types of habitats are a benefit for our wildlife, and a balance needs to be found for the various uses of

sites. The opportunities for sites are variable, and a change does not need to take away the amenity and aesthetic value; it can enhance it.

3.6 Ground Services alternatives to glyphosate

With increased public concern about the use of pesticides, particularly those containing glyphosate in weed control and the potential risks associated with using these products Grounds Services piloted alternative methods of weed control and pesticide free zones in partnership with local groups. They also signed up to the Amenity Forum, the UK's voluntary initiative recognised by Government and its main objective is to promote best practice across the sector.

A variety of methods were trialled in 2021/22 including hot foam, hot steam, new way spray, mankar ultra-low volume lance, hot air / thermal treatments, and different glyphosate products to determine any difference in effectiveness. Overall, the trials usage of glyphosate was reduced by 30% (2019 usage of glyphosate was 4462 litres, reduced to 3123 litres in 2022). This was seen as a significant achievement to the work undertaken to reduce usage, trial alternatives methods and work towards improving and protecting our environment, particularly with regards to ground water and potential leaching into our watercourses.

The trial demonstrated a clear direction for decreasing usage of glyphosate, and Ground Services aim to continue reviewing the use, whilst utilising alternative methods to maximise impact. The service intends to continue to review the locations where herbicides are used and to expand the use of alternative methods to reduce the use of glyphosate.

3.7 Nature Restoration Programme (NRP)

The NRP brings together Scottish Governments Nature Restoration Funding (NRF) with South Lanarkshire Council's Climate Emergency Fund during 2021 to 2023. The focus of the programme was to deliver positive effects for biodiversity, local ecosystems, mitigate the impacts of climate change and promote nature-based solutions. Most of the groundwork was completed by seasonal grounds employees, to keep work in house and be cost effective. The initial focus of the program was on pollinators, whose decline has been well documented in the media. Building on previous work on council land over the last few years, of improving grassland and other habitats. The project also included other nature-based solutions that have many benefits for our natural environment.

Improvements made within the programme:

- **Local Nature Reserves, Country Park, and National Nature Reserve:** creating and improving wildflower areas, tree planting, small access repairs and removal of invasive and non-native species.
- **District Parks:** old and degraded shrub beds were replaced with plants chosen to benefit pollinators throughout the year. Some of these plants are also noted to help improve air quality, which can be incorporated as appropriate. District parks have also been chosen to host the covid memorial orchard, which contribute a biodiversity benefit to pollinators as well as enhancing tree canopy cover.
- **Development of plans and studies:** investing in feasibility studies that will enable future site works that take advantage of various potential funding streams. The objectives for these studies will focus on multiple benefits; nature-based solutions that improve the site for people and wildlife as well as helping to offset the impacts of climate change such as flooding.



Photo 4: The Friends of Calder sowing wildflower seeds in one of the two meadows created as part of the NRP. More than 900 trees were also planted to improve this large expanse of amenity grassland in the LNR for wildlife.

3.8 Invasive, non-native species (INNS)

The location of INNS, mainly Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam, and giant hogweed are recorded. Treatment to remove the plants is applied, where appropriate and area are subsequently monitored. As part of the NRP priorities, South Lanarkshire's grounds services undertook a programme of rhododendron control at Calderglen Country Park, delivering biodiversity gains by the removal of a priority INNS. This was also an important measure for the ongoing sustainability of important woodland as some rhododendron plants were shown to host the fungal pathogen *Phytophthora ramorum*. Monitoring and treatment of regrowth will be an ongoing priority for the foreseeable future.

3.9 Green Flags

Three parks in South Lanarkshire maintain Green Flag Awards which recognise and reward well managed parks and greenspaces. These are [Strathaven park](#), [Cambuslang Park](#) and [Castlebank Park](#). Biodiversity friendly elements of site management include reducing the use of peat and chemical and appropriate managing natural features and wildlife. These sites have associated active community groups. Strathaven Park has a new sensory garden which includes planting to encourage pollinators, a new hedge, creation of a wildflower meadow and improvements to the watercourse for wildlife. The ranger team are currently working with the Friends of Calder community group to work towards a Greenflag award for Greenhall Park and LNR in Blantyre.

3.10 Air quality



Photo 5: Grow 73 maintaining the raised bed in Rutherglen.

South Lanarkshire Council has declared three Air Quality Management Areas and has an [Action Plan](#) which sets out the local measures to be implemented to improve air quality. These actions aim to reduce particulates and nitrogen oxides which will improve air quality as well as having a positive impact on biodiversity. Over the next year the council plans to revise the current air quality action plan and this time we will look to see how we can strengthen the links to biodiversity.

As part of that process, we will look to the [Cleaner Air for 2 Strategy](#) produced by Scottish Government and in particular reference the use of nature based solutions. Environmental Services produced an [2022 Air Quality Annual Progress report](#) highlighting projects in South Lanarkshire to improve air quality. The council are working in partnership with a local community gardening group 'Grow 73' several large wooden planters with pollution fighting plants, some of which are pollinator friendly were installed adjacent to a busy road junction in Rutherglen. The project has been running for several years and [Grow 73](#) continue to maintain the planters and engaged with the Royal Horticultural Society who have supported the project by providing advice, compost, and additional plants.

3.11 Vacant and Derelict Land (VDL)

The remediation and redevelopment of vacant and derelict land is a priority for SLC. Such action is critical to the process of area renewal and regeneration, providing opportunities for economic development, new housing, recreation provision and enhancement of the environment. Between 2006 and 2020, 393.47 ha of previously vacant and derelict land has been taken forward for development or for greening in South Lanarkshire. The Biodiversity Strategy encourages the removal from the register of derelict sites which have become naturalised. Since 2016, 18 sites, totalling 23.63 ha have been surveyed and removed. Some of these have become Local Nature Reserves and potential Local Nature Conservation Sites.

3.12 Contaminated Land



Photo 6: Milton LNR, one of the areas improved for pollinators and wildlife.

In 2020-21, significant site works were undertaken at Milton LNR a former brick works covering around 14 hectares, in Carluke thanks to the vacant and derelict land fund. Three new access points were created, paths and boardwalks were installed along with benches, drainage has been improved throughout the site and a dipping platform installed at one of the ponds. Wildflower seeds were sown in many areas to improve both grassland diversity and pollinator habitats. The site has now been designated as a LNR and is managed for biodiversity, so becoming assets to the local community as well as attracting visitors from further afield.

3.13 Planning Applications

The council receives many planning applications of various scales across the region. CAG staff comment on approximately 100 to 150 applications a year regarding biodiversity, including:

- Effects on native woodland.
- Proximity to locally important sites.
- Impact on access.
- Effect on priority or protected habitats and species.
- SuDS design.
- Impact on the landscape.
- Specific applications for proposed works to trees in conservation areas or trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order. These applications, along with high hedge applications are included within the weekly list of planning applications received.

3.14 Provision of land

As part of all new housing developments, consideration is given to improving the biodiversity of the local area. This includes the inclusion of open greenspace, wildlife corridors and wildflower plantations. These are considered on a site-by-site basis in conjunction with developers.

3.15 Ecological surveys

Where necessary, the procurement process ensures the completion of ecological surveys to provide information on:

- Protected species such as badgers, otter, bats, and breeding birds.
- Vegetation surveys.
- The treatment and eradication of invasive species.
- Habitat surveys to identify and quantify sites of interest, provide baseline information, and provide guidance and recommendations.

3.16 Roadside verges

Since 2015 the council has reduced the number of grass cuts to all verges owned by SLC from six to one cut per year, except where safety reasons demand a more regular cut. Wildflower and landscaped areas and hedges associated with road infrastructure are maintained.

3.17 Community Payback

The SLC Social Work team provides unpaid work placements which include environmental improvements or conservation work such as path maintenance and woodland management. They have undertaken several biodiversity and access projects providing benefits to the local community and visitors to our parks and greenspaces. Path restoration and vegetation clearance at Calderglen Country Park has improved visitor experience on wildlife corridors along the river. In partnership with CAG Countryside Rangers, a complete restoration of the wildlife gardens and greenhouse at Calderglen has transformed the space, providing for a wildlife area for propagating plants as well as a small tree nursery.

3.18 Deadwood

On our land, cut and fallen trees and stumps are left in situ where possible, such as within woodlands, to provide a valuable habitat. Where wood is removed for safety or amenity reasons, it is chipped and used on plant beds.

3.19 Eco-Schools

In South Lanarkshire 216 education establishments are registered as [Eco-schools](#) with 60 Green Flags achieved.

4. Mainstreaming biodiversity, nature-based solutions, and climate change.

As a landowner and manager, SLC has a significant ability to impact biodiversity conservation across its services. While the role of biodiversity enhancement in the council's planning and land management function is well understood, there is now much greater awareness of the benefits to health and social care, education, and other areas of service delivery. All resources work to mainstream consideration of biodiversity and biodiversity measures have been incorporated into various policy areas.

In accordance with the council's resource planning guidance, annual resource plan is required to include details of the actions each resource will take to contribute to the council's biodiversity duty action. Actions and measures from resources and services plans are clearly marked, monitored, and reported through the council's performance management system. As well as the biodiversity actions and measures included in core resource and service plans, biodiversity objectives are also included in the Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy. Progress is reported to the executive committee on all the strategy's actions twice a year.

Corporate guidance on writing committee reports also requires that any proposal being submitted to committees, or the corporate management team include consideration to environmental implications including if SEA has been carried out or compliance with the biodiversity and climate change duties.

The following demonstrates the range of our activities and services and the links to biodiversity.

4.1 South Lanarkshire [Council Plan 2022-2027](#) sets out the vision, values and ambitions the council hopes to achieve to improve outcomes for local people. It sets out the vision which is delivered by the five resources. Each resource produces more detailed plans for achieving annual priorities, for example the [Community and Enterprise Resource Plan](#) includes actions documented in this report.

4.2 [Local Development Plan](#)

SL Local Development Plan 2 was adopted on the 9th of April 2021 and now replaces the adopted LDP 2015 and the SL Mineral LDP and forms the development plan for South Lanarkshire alongside the [Clydeplan](#).

Biodiversity is covered in the South Lanarkshire Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) under:
Volume 1:

- Policy 13: Green Network and Greenspace: "development proposals should safeguard the local green network, as identified on the proposals map, and identify opportunities for enhancement and/or extension which can contribute towards: iii. "Supporting biodiversity".
- Policy 14: Natural and Built Environment: covers the protection of designated and other important natural sites and preventing and/or mitigating impacts on protected species. It contains a general requirement for development proposals to assess impacts on biodiversity: "The council will assess all development proposals on terms of their impact on the natural and historic environment, including biodiversity, geodiversity, landscape and townscape".
- [Supplementary Guidance 8: Green networks and greenspace](#): provides additional information on biodiversity priorities in South Lanarkshire and sets policies designed to support LDP Policy 13, including linking good quality greenspace for their role in nature conservation, biodiversity, recreation and education.
- [Supplementary Guidance 9: Natural and Historic Environment](#) provides additional information on biodiversity priorities in South Lanarkshire and a set of policies designed

to support LDP Policy 14, including policies for woodland, peatland, protected species, geodiversity and soils.

Volume 2 of LDP2 contains various detailed policies to provide additional guidance on a range of matters in support of the main policies in Vol 1. Of relevance are:

- Policy NHE7: Natura 2000 sites
- Policy NHE8: National nature reserves (NNR) and Sites of Special scientific Interest (SSSI).
- Policy NHE9: Protected Species
- Policy NHE10: Prime agricultural land
- Policy NHE11: Peatland and carbon rich soils
- Policy NHE 12: Water environment and biodiversity
- Policy NHE13: Forestry and woodland
- Policy NHE14: Tree preservation orders
- Policy NHE15: Local Nature Reserves (LNR)
- Policy NHE20: Biodiversity
- Policy NHE21: Geodiversity and soils

National Planning Framework 4 [NPF4](#) is a long-term plan looking to 2045 that guides spatial developments, sets out national planning policies, designates national developments and highlights regional priorities. It replaces NPF3 and Scottish Planning Policy. NPF4 now forms part of the statutory development plan, along with SLLDP2 and supporting planning guidance. From February 2023 planning applications will be assessed against these documents. As a result of the adoption of NPF4, Clydeplan will no longer have an effect and as such no longer be part of the development plan. More details and a draft guidance on NPF4 can be found on the following link: [Nature guidance](#)

4.3 Biodiversity Duty Implementation Plan (BDIP)

The BDIP demonstrates the activities and achievements of the council that have contributed to biodiversity improvement in the last few years. It identifies why biodiversity is a key element of how we work and sets out our plans and proposals for 2024 to 2026.

4.4 Climate Change and Sustainability Committee (CCS)

The CCS has decision making powers to help to accelerate the action needed in response to the climate and nature emergencies and meeting the challenges set by national targets. The committee are responsible for ensuring the council complies with its biodiversity duty. The senior management climate change and sustainability steering group support the work of the committee, which is made up of senior managers from all the council resources, ensuring biodiversity is developed and features within council policy.

4.5 [Sustainable Development and Climate Strategy](#) 2022-2027

This strategy recognises the importance of healthy biodiversity and ecosystems in climate change mitigation and adaptation for example the restoration of peatland that improves carbon storage capacity and can reduce incidents of flooding. The strategy provides a framework for embedding biodiversity in other strategies and plans across the council.

There are 13 priorities within the strategy, the most key to biodiversity are:

- 1: Contribute to improving health and wellbeing through environmental protection and access to environmental benefits for all.
- 6: Improve the availability and access to quality local outdoor spaces and services.
- 7: Empower communities to take climate action and be more environmentally sustainable.
- Enhance, protect, and respect the outdoors and the natural and historic environment.
- Conserve, restore and improve biodiversity and use nature-based solutions in tackling the climate.

4.6 Corporate Improvement Advisory Board

The board issues resource planning guidance to all resources on an annual basis outlining standard content to be included within each of our resource plans. This content includes text on sustainable development generally and specifically our statutory requirement under the biodiversity duty to further the conservation of biodiversity. Resources are expected to set out within their resource plans the biodiversity actions which they will be undertaking.

4.7 Corporate Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Working group

The group brings together representative from across all resources and key services to oversee the SEA process within the council. Representatives give information, advice, and assistance on biodiversity to colleagues who are responsible for preparing policies, plans, programmes and strategies and their SEA. Many of our plans have been strengthened by the SEA process and actions of the group. This has proved to be one of the most effective ways of mainstreaming biodiversity into the strategic planning process.

4.8 SEA Scoping workshops

These workshops are held for all our plans which are determined to require SEA. Biodiversity, flora and fauna is one of the environmental objectives considered as part of the SEA process. This helps to ensure that biodiversity is given early and effective consideration in all aspects of strategic planning and often leads to further discussion between services which helps to reinforce the delivery of our biodiversity duty.

4.9 [Air Quality Strategy](#)

South Lanarkshire Council's Air Quality Strategy recognises the importance of biodiversity in protecting and enhancing the natural environment. Sustainability is a key theme of this strategy which recognises the relationship between air quality and biodiversity. South Lanarkshire's [Contaminated Land Strategy](#) also recognises the importance of biodiversity on our natural resources, particularly in terms of nature conservation.

4.10 Education Resources

The Outdoor Learning Policy promotes biodiversity and reinforces the positive gains of being outdoors in relation to learning and wellbeing. Many schools have outdoor learning provision in their grounds such as orchards, nature trails and woodland areas. In addition, teaching and support staff across South Lanarkshire have undergone accredited Forest School training to assist with leading outdoor activities.

4.11 [Local Transport Strategy](#) (2013-2023)

This strategy will be reviewed this year and will be subject to SEA. Where the scale of a project requires that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) be undertaken by appropriate qualified and experienced consultants. The results of the EIA are reported in an Environmental Statement which includes guidance on topics such as ecology and nature conservation, geology and soils, and drainage and the water environment. If a project is of a scale that does not statutorily require an EIA but will still have an environmental impact, then an Environmental Report is always produced.

4.12 [Local Housing Strategy](#) (2022-2027)

Sets out our priorities in relation to the supply of affordable housing, improving housing quality and energy efficiency, supporting independent living, tackling homelessness, and supporting sustainable places. The strategy was developed in partnership with a wide range of people and organisations and was assessed for the impacts it may have on communities and the environment (SEA).

South Lanarkshire Council's [Strategic Housing Investment Plan \(SHIP\)](#) (2023-2028), is a five year plan which provides details of planned new social housing across South Lanarkshire in partnership with registered social landlords. This accords with the policies with the LDP2. In addition, Housing and Technical Resources contribute to the council's Sustainable

Development and Climate Strategy in relation to reducing the environmental impact of housing and domestic construction.

4.13 [Food Growing Strategy](#) (2020-2025)

The Executive Committee approved the Food Growing strategy in December 2020. This outlines how we intend to work towards increasing food growing provisions as well as how we will identify available lands to develop allotment sites, and areas for food growing, for example raised beds, orchards, and community growing. The strategy has a section on biodiversity and the environment, highlighting how food growing areas contribute positively to biodiversity and when developing new sites consideration will be given to the provision of green corridors for wildlife and havens for insects, including pollinator species. We encourage plot holders to plant insect friendly plants and where possible create opportunities for the provision of habitats such as logs and ponds.

4.14 Fernbrae Meadows LNR

The reporting schedule of this green infrastructure project was embedded during the funding and post completion reports to NatureScot (NS), with biodiversity as one of the key required outcomes. The last report to NS was in January 2023, highlighting the conservation and habitat improvements at reserve along with the educational and training activities.

4.15 Making Space for Pollinators Report

In November 2023 the Making Space for Pollinators Report is due to go to the CCS committee for approval. The report sets out our aims to help conserve and enhance for pollinators and their habitats throughout South Lanarkshire. The report highlights the various projects and partnerships we have developed to support and enhance our land for native pollinators. We aim to create a series of nature networks through our urban areas linking public parks, greenspaces, nature reserves, gardens and allotments, to the wider countryside to help support the movement and health of our pollinators. The report lists the 155 grassland sites, covering 62 hectares of land that have already been improved for pollinators and our next steps to monitor and expand these sites.

5. Public engagement and workforce development.

There is a strong track record of partnership working in South Lanarkshire in which biodiversity has a key role. Detailed below are external organisations and communities with which the council has worked in partnership with to further protect, enhance and promote biodiversity.

5.1 [The South Lanarkshire Biodiversity Partnership](#)

The Biodiversity Partnership (SLBP) was established in 1997 to bring together partners with an interest in conserving and promoting biodiversity throughout the region. It is responsible for the preparation and monitoring of the South Lanarkshire Biodiversity Strategy. The partnership is supported and facilitated by the council and has members from organisations including: NatureScot, Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership (GCV), RSPB, SEPA, Forestry and Land Scotland, Scottish Forestry, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Butterfly Conservation, and the Clyde River Foundation.

South Lanarkshire Council co-ordinates and provides support for the partnership. We facilitate and chair annual meetings of the partnership and its sub-groups. The partnership is in the process of producing a Biodiversity Strategy (2024-2030). This takes an ecosystems approach to improving the biodiversity of South Lanarkshire and has identified six key ecosystems relevant to the area. For each ecosystem and cross-cutting theme, the strategy identifies progress achieved, key challenges and opportunities, outcomes and actions.

5.2 [South Lanarkshire Access Forum](#) (SLOAF)

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 requires all access authorities in Scotland to set up at least one Local Access Forum. SLOAF advises the council and any other person or body on issues that arise in relation to outdoor access. Our forum consists of representatives from a

wide range of interests including land managers (farm, estate owners, agencies such as the FCS, Historic Scotland and SWT), walkers, cyclists, equestrians, anglers, and local communities.

5.3 Lanarkshire Green Health Partnership

LGHP was established in March 2018 and is a cross sectoral collaboration working together to connect people with nature and maximise the use of health inducing green assets. This multi-agency partnership provides a platform to maximise the use of greenspaces for community health and wellbeing. The partnership allows the voluntary, health and social care sectors to work together more closely, to expand the provision of green health volunteering opportunities in the use of nature-based solutions to deliver a range of public health outcomes. LGHP include NatureScot, NHS, Scottish Forestry, Volunteer Action South Lanarkshire, South and North Lanarkshire Council's. Projects including Get Outdoors Lanarkshire, Get Walking Lanarkshire, Community Food Growing Initiative Lanarkshire are supported by this partnership.

5.4 [Community Action Lanarkshire](#)

Community Action Lanarkshire (CAL) is a programme managed by the Rural Development Trust offering support for rural communities across North and South Lanarkshire. The project follows on from the Clyde and Avon Valley Landscape Partnership (CAVLP) funded from 2012-18. The programme has seen £4.8 million invested into the region, projects approached biodiversity conservation from a landscape scale perspective with a focus on community engagement and education.

5.5 We work with other external partners to further our biodiversity duty, including:

- [Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership](#)
- [Green Action Trust](#)
- [South Lanarkshire Community Planning Partnership](#)
- [Greenspace Scotland](#)

Various projects have been developed and implemented over the last three years that have contributed to the conservation and promotion of South Lanarkshire's biodiversity:

5.6 Community Groups and Volunteer capacity building

We continue to support community groups with an interest in engaging with their local greenspace by assisting with events and conservation activities, attending meetings, and applying for funding. More information can be found on the following community groups by clicking on the links:

- [Friends of the Calder](#)
- [Friends of Cadzow Glen](#)
- [Friends of Fernbrae Meadows](#)
- [New Roots - Neilsland and Earnock Heritage Group](#)
- [Cadzow Community Corps](#)
- [Friends of Holmhill Wood Community Park](#)
- [Friends of Langlands Moss](#)
- [Friends of Morgan Glen](#)
- [Friends of Stonehouse Park](#)
- [Friends of Udston and Glenlee Woods](#)

Many of our designated Local Nature Reserves have a dedicated "friend's" community groups attached to them. These groups are an important link within the community, and they are invaluable in protecting and promoting biodiversity through community engagement, practical conservation work to providing ecological data for national surveys. Examples include installing and repairing dams along old forestry drainage channels within our peatland reserve, to planting trees and expanding our nature networks to improving grasslands for pollinators. Many

volunteers have a keen interest and extensive knowledge of flora and fauna, from butterflies, moths, bats, dragonflies, mammals, and amphibians.



Photo 7: Langlands Moss LNR, a large health monitoring event with Butterfly Conservation (Summer 2022).

We have worked with many external partners providing training for our volunteers, topic range from conserving peatlands, butterfly and moth identification workshops to habitat creation and management for pollinator species.

The Countryside and Greenspace Team (CAG) continue to work with volunteers and community groups, supporting various types of work. The average time spent volunteering each year is 4746 days (2018 to 2023), which equates to £474,600 annually (based on £100 per day). 2022 was a great year for our volunteers a huge 5342 days were accrued equating to £534,200. This is an under-representation of the work carried out in South Lanarkshire by volunteers as we do not receive information from all our groups every year. CAG promote all their events, activities and projects on the [South Lanarkshire Countryside Rangers Facebook page](#) .

In 2021, a draft report was compiled, celebrating the achievements of the volunteers we work with and support, detailing the positive outcomes for biodiversity. The Countryside and Greenspace team produced a draft report summarising the work of our volunteer (2011 to 2021). The report found that 900 hectares of land have been improved for biodiversity and access over the ten-year period.

5.7 The Friends of Holmehills Wood Community Park LNR

The group is a subgroup of Cambuslang Community Council, they are a small group of volunteers dedicated to promoting and conserving the reserve through awareness raising and regular public events. The friends hold regular public meetings, themed meets up, for pond dipping, practical conservation days, public activities and events for all ages and abilities, a weekly health walk and work with the local primary, secondary and additional support needs schools located near the reserve.

Members of the group are keen naturalists; they regularly record the wildlife at the reserve and contribute to casual wildlife records to the appropriate recording scheme throughout the year and one member of the group is a talented wildlife photographer and regularly shares the photos on the friends Facebook page.



Photo 8: Monitoring and recording for dragonflies and damselflies at the ponds at Holmehills LNR.

Ongoing conservation tasks include thinning of the willow scrub around the three ponds at the reserve to maintain the ponds but also for breeding warblers, the creation of wildflower meadow and control of INNS. In December 2022, they achieved an outstanding award from Keep Scotland Beautiful “It’s your neighbourhood award” the scheme recognised the wildlife survey work done by the volunteers contributed to the success.

5.8 New Roots – Neilsland and Earnock Heritage Group

New Roots Heritage Group formed in 2011, they continue to improve the LNR for biodiversity and access through events, activities for the local community, the reserve is regularly used by the three local primary schools and a nursery school for outdoor education.



Photo 9: Volunteers planting trees as part of the Clyde Climate Forest scheme.

An urban woodland has been created at the reserve as part of the Clyde Climate Forest scheme and to help ash dieback disease recovery in South Lanarkshire. In March 2022 the South Lanarkshire Countryside Rangers supported a dedicated team of volunteers who learned skills to successfully plant around 1000 trees. The volunteer team continued in 2023 planting nearly 4000 more tree, to add to the woodland canopy and expand the woodland corridor connecting to establish broadleaved woodland in the surrounding landscape.

5.9 The Friends of Udston and Glenlee Woods

The Friends of Udston and Glenlee Woods formally constituted in 2011. Over the years they have carried out numerous events and worked with local schools and community, promoting the responsible use of the woods. Over the last few years, they have been assisting with the

conservation days, litter picks and the running of events such as bat walks, plant identification sessions. Tasks such as laurel, snowberry and spirea removal, woodland management, litter picking, and drainage work have been undertaken.

[Supporting Our Community](#) is a charity based in Hillhouse in Hamilton. Over the last three years, through working in partnership with CAG, they have organised bushcraft type sessions for families at Udston and Glenlee Woods LNR, during the summer months.

Partnership working with St Ninians Church 'Care for Creation' group, to run several nature-based walks and activities for the parish at Udston and Glenlee Woods. Also, nature information and tips given for their regular newsletter.

5.10 Friends of Hamilton Low Parks

The friends of Hamilton Low Parks newly formed in October 2019 and are not constituted but have met several times in the year. They regularly help on the conservation days and assisted with public events organised by members of the CAG team. In 2023, in partnership with the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) Recorder a field trip was organised at the reserve as part of their Vice Country 77 field works surveying programme.

5.11 Westburn LNR

Sessions have been running bi-monthly, since February 2020, improving the site and providing a volunteering opportunity for the local community and businesses. Litter picking, woodland management and path maintenance are just some of the tasks undertaken at Westburn.

5.12 Calderglen Conservation Volunteers

In partnership with Calderglen Conservation Volunteers, the Countryside Ranger Service continues to support community efforts to remove INNS species from the ancient woodland sites at Calderglen Country Park. As part of this work there has been a major effort to remove large areas of snowberry and rhododendron from the native broadleaved woodland.



Photo 10: A CAG poster from our Facebook page highlighting the continuing conservation work to control INNS at Calderglen Country park.

Work will continue to remove INNS, to help restore the native woodland flora to help create a native understory and thriving field and ground layer within the broadleaved woodland at Calderglen. The volunteers have also been working to make their grasslands more insect friendly, as well as establishing a community orchard on site.

5.13 The Friends of Langlands Moss

The Friends of Langlands Moss LNR are a group of volunteers who established to promote and protect the plight of this raised bogs. They work in partnership with SLC, NS and many other interested parties dedicated to improving the LNR. They run many activities, events and nature conservation days throughout the year and regularly attend conferences and speak about their work preserving peatlands. They have made significant improvements to the access network

around the reserve, installing signage and interpretation boards to raising funds for the installation of a large boardwalk over the raised bog.



Photo 11: The Friends of Langlands Moss community group gathered after a day of conservation work with Butterfly Conservation's Bog Squad.

Since 2015 they have worked with Butterfly Conservation's Bog Squad conducting projects include, a peat depth survey, installing dams along the former commercial conifer plantation drainage ditches, to removing scrub and trees from the bog to improve the hydrology of the peatland.

5.14 Conservation Volunteering with CCI (Clydesdale Community Initiatives)

The Countryside and Greenspace (CAG) continue to work with CCI to complete 363 volunteer days of work between March 2020 to March 2023. CCI offer a range of volunteering opportunities across Lanarkshire, work includes tree planting, thinning and woodland maintenance.

5.15 [Greening Camglen](#)

Is a network of like minded organisations and groups working in Rutherglen and Cambuslang with the aim to promote environmentally positive activities and actions within the local area. The network has plans under various green themes and involves groups on key council sites such as the friends of Fernbrae Meadows, friends of Holmhill Wood and grow 73.

5.16 Managing and monitoring B-Line in Clyde Valley

In 2019 South Lanarkshire Council Grounds Service Team and CAG worked with Buglife (The Invertebrate Conservation Trust) to improve 12 sites throughout Lanark, Kirkfieldbank and Crossford for pollinator species such as bees and hoverflies, staff and volunteers changed the management at the sites to increase the wildflower content within the grassland.



Photo 12: One of our B-line sites at Castlebank Park, Lanark

The project was funded by the Biodiversity Challenge Fund, due to be completed in 2020, extra funding allowed the work to be extended to 2021, which allowed us to sow more wildflowers at the sites. In 2022 and 2023 we have continued to monitor the development of these sites, recording species within the FIT Count app.

5.17 [Helping Hands for Butterflies](#)

In partnership with Butterfly Conservation the “Helping Hands for Butterflies” was a three-year project that ended in October 2022 and engaged with over 700 people throughout the central belt of Scotland. The project was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and NatureScot to create new habitats for butterflies in urban places.



Photo 13: An example of one of the signs put in place at our Helping Hands for Butterfly sites, to raise awareness of the project.

The project introduced the world of butterflies and moths to new volunteers, through training events and workshops to help people identify and monitor species. The project also aimed to create flower rich grasslands in urban parks that were specifically intended to help butterflies and moths. Management plans were created for each site, with four main aims to reduce the cutting, remove the cuttings, plant yellow rattle for the first year, then plant with butterfly friendly species.

As the meadows developed over the three years, field trips and workshops were arranged with volunteers to record the invertebrates. An interesting discovery was made at Stonefield Park, where dozens of large predatory wasps (*Amblyteles armatorious*) were observed flying through the long grass. This species hunts large caterpillars especially the large yellow underwing moth, which was subsequently recorded in later surveys. Throughout the project, the plant and insect diversity of all the meadow sites has increased dramatically. All of them now have at least five different species of flowering plants, attracting a variety of butterflies, moths and other wildlife as the habitats develop.

Three sites were chosen in South Lanarkshire at Stonefield Park and Hunthill Road community orchard in Blantyre and Bothwell Park, in Hamilton. Staff and volunteers help create and improve these sites for invertebrates removing the cutting to reduce the nutrient content going back into the soils and the addition of wildflower seed. The council will maintain and expand the three project sites for wildlife. A full report and films of the project highlights produced by Butterfly Conservation can be found on their webpage (see link above).

5.18 Corporate Volunteering

Over the last few years, various companies and businesses have volunteered to carry out conservation work within the LNR's.

These have included: Scottish Power and Microsoft Business Solutions: at South Haugh, Terenus Land and Water Ltd: at Udston and Glenlee Woods. McLaughlin and Harvey Construction Ltd, Cambuslang Fire Service and Westburn Nursery Staff, at Westburn and The Edrington Group helping in the orchard in Blantyre.



Photo 14: One of our local businesses (The Edrington Group) volunteering at Milheugh LNR.

5.19 Control of INNS within Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

CAG continue to work with NatureScot and The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) on a programme to tackle INNS within the SSSI areas, at Bothwell Woods and Low Parks in Hamilton. Session have taken place throughout 2021 to 2023 to remove rhododendron at Bothwell and Himalayan balsam at Low Parks.

5.20 Community Outdoor Play

These groups had initial funding and mentoring mainly through The Clyde and Avon Valley Landscape Partnership Legacy fund (replaced by Community Action Lanarkshire) and now run their own outdoor play sessions in LNR's and greenspaces throughout South Lanarkshire:

- Little Sapling and Mighty Oaks: at Stonehouse Park LNR.
- Wild About Sandford.
- Wild About Lanark: at Lanark Loch and racecourse
- Bothwell Road Action group: at Backmuir LNR, this group has ongoing support from the Countryside Ranger service.
- Wild About East Kilbride.
- St Nicholas Playgroup and Toddlers at Delves Park, Lanark.

5.21 School Partnerships

Education Resources support a wide range of partnerships including Forest School, working with local groups and the development of orchard. Schools are active in engaging with their local communities and other partners in support of these initiatives.

Growing up Wild-South Lanarkshire was funded by SLC (through the Clyde and Avon Valley Landscape Partnership Legacy Fund), NatureScot Outdoor Learning in Nature-OLIN fund and the William Grant Foundation. The project was co-ordinated through SLC CAG. It involved working with seven schools and two community groups to support the development of outdoor learning, Forest School and community play in local woodlands. Part of the learning process covered the importance of woodlands for biodiversity. Staff and volunteer training and starter outdoor play kits were offered to each establishment to build capacity of these groups to run their own programmes. 375 people participated with St Paul's Primary and Holycross High now run their own Forest school programmes. [Case studies from NatureScot's website can be found using this link.](#)

5.22 Food Growing

The Amenity Service team are working with associations and groups on a range of formal allotment and informal community growing projects. Where possible sustainable growing

methods are incorporated, and advice is given on how to improve biodiversity beyond food growing. The Food Growing Strategy (2020-25) and the [Food Growing annual report](#) (2021-22) has a section of biodiversity and the environment and highlights the work done at various allotments for nature. Allotment holders are provided with information and are encouraged to improve their site for biodiversity.

Existing food growing sites already contribute positively to biodiversity, and when developing new sites, consideration is made for green corridors for wildlife and havens for insects and pollinator species. For example, at Lammermoor in East Kilbride the site has been designed to incorporate a sustainable drainage system, to collect water and channel it into an attenuation pond. This will enable the improvement of the landscape to include wildflowers to attract pollinators and pond plant to improve the wetland area to hopefully attract frogs, toads and newts to the site.

Recent projects include:

- Planted two small orchards in Cambuslang Park (LNR) and Castlebank Park.
- Addition of six trees in Whitegate Orchard in Milheugh LNR, in Blantyre.
- Provided wildflower seed to all council managed allotment sites and some community growing sites for pollinator species.
- Supplied seed for window boxes and herbs to 55 groups and primary schools, who are participating in a council run food growing scheme.
- Planted 800 trees in 13 covid memorial orchards in 11 district parks and two country parks.
- Established a link between GreeningCamglen with EK Development Trust to co-ordinate seed exchange.
- East Kilbride Development Trust issued 2500 seed packs to schools and community organisations.
- Grow 73 / Healthy n Happy distributed grow at home packs to schools and community groups in Rutherglen.



Photo 15: The community orchard “Whitegate” at Milheugh LNR.

5.23 [Clyde Valley Woodlands National Nature Reserve](#)

This composite NNR comprises six sites which are managed by their respective owners: SLC, SWT and NatureScot. The sites are managed under joint objectives; members of staff attend regular steering group meetings.

The [management plan](#) (2017-27) sets out objectives and actions for the sites, including the following objectives:

- To maintain a naturally dramatic semi natural gorge woodland.
- To maintain and enhance biodiversity on the reserve.
- To encourage research, survey and monitoring appropriate to the reserve.
- To increase awareness and understanding of the rich natural and cultural heritage of the Clyde Valley Woodlands NNR.

CAG conservation volunteers continued to fell trees as part of conifer removal and general tree thinning within the NNR, allowing more light into the woodland floor. We have planted oak trees and plan to plant some hazel. Bluebells have been observed spreading in this section since trees have been thinned. A report of a sighting of red squirrels has prompted rangers to start some monitoring with trail cameras to see if we do indeed have new visitors.



Photo 16: Bluebells at Mauldslie woods.

5.24 Windfarm habitat management

As part of windfarm development, many of which are in upland area, large areas of land are covered by Habitat Management Plans. These aim to improve habitat such as woodland and peatland for species including black grouse and hen harrier. In South Lanarkshire over 11,000ha (approximately 6.3% of the total land area) is managed in this way. Staff from SLC and organisations including NatureScot, RSPB and FLS are involved with various stages of wind farm development and sit on steering groups with landowners and operators to ensure effective habitat management on these sites.

5.25 Education in Greenspaces

The Countryside Ranger Service continue to support schools to connect with their local greenspaces, provide advice and signpost to available resources.

5.26 Glasgow and Clyde Valley (GCV) Green Network

We continue to work in partnership with GCV establishing the Clyde Climate Forest and the Clyde Peatlands, as part of their Green Network Blueprint and Strategic Habitat Network. In January 2023, GVC received funding from NatureScot to support a green network regional grassland project, to conduct a study to assess the extent and condition of all species rich grassland across the Glasgow region.

5.27 Scottish Badgers

Countryside and Greenspace have been working in partnership with Scottish Badgers and Police Scotland to provide basic training on sett identification in the Lanarkshire area. Training included general natural history and a history of how organised crime and wildlife crime against large mammals can be closely linked, plus updates on legislation on what constitutes a sett in current use.

5.28 Workforce development

Members of staff across the council have attended various conferences, webinars and training events provided by external organisations. The Countryside and Greenspace Team regularly attended conferences and training courses provided by many external organisations to improve their knowledge and understanding of biodiversity: over the past three year we have attended course from Butterfly Conservation, Green Action Trust, Buglife, Plantlife, Greenspace Scotland, Paths for All, Bat Conservation Trust, Froglife, Scottish Government and NatureScot.



Photo 17: Teachers from High Blantyre Primary School, taking part in a training session by CAG staff at Greenhall, Milheugh and Barnhill LNR.

CAG continue to work in partnership with Butterfly Conservation and the [BogSquad](#) to deliver workshops, provide training on surveying, monitor species to improve habitats for invertebrates, practical conservation work and demonstrations. We have also provided teacher training to help them to discover more about their local greenspace sites and encourage them to utilise the space for outdoor learning and discover nature.

Many of our volunteers who have expanded their knowledge, skills and experience over the years working in our LNRs' and greenspaces have gone on to study science, ecology or environmental science at universities and colleges. The work experience gained from volunteering with CAG has helped some people into employment, many within the environmental sector.

The Countryside Ranger Service have been supporting UWS (University of the West of Scotland) Applied Bioscience and Zoology degree course careers programme for a few years, including hosting a student work placement. This allows someone with a relevant qualification to obtain an understanding of the tasks and challenges involved in working to conserve and promote biodiversity in South Lanarkshire. Having links with a local university and working with student volunteers also has a benefit in that we are more closely involved with scientific research on our sites and have an excellent exchange of information.

The Countryside and Greenspace Team provide advice regarding biodiversity issues to colleagues within South Lanarkshire Council. The Biodiversity Officer attends and is in contact with the local biodiversity action plan officer network, they meet twice a year to share and learn from good practice examples.

6. Research and monitoring

6.1 Biological recording

We work with Glasgow Museums Biological Record Centre (GMBRC) in collating and sharing biological data, to help us to improve our understanding of the natural environment. Data gathered from monitoring and surveying is sent to the National Biodiversity Network (NBN). We monitor for various national programs; British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Wetlands Bird Survey (WeBS), Scottish Badgers, Bat Conservation Trust, Buglife, Plantlife and Butterfly Conservation.



Photo 18: Large Heath Butterfly discovered at Langlands Moss LNR during a butterfly and moth training day in 2022.

For the past fifteen years we have monitored two butterfly transects at Low Parks in Hamilton and Langlands Moss in East Kilbride LNRs, the latter supports a population of Large Heath butterflies. More recently in 2021, two more butterfly transects have been established with the local community at Fernbrae Meadows and Morgan Glen LNR's. A heronry count takes place at Low Parks SSSI between February and October, the information gathered from this survey guides management of the woodland in which they nest. Since 2007 CAG have carry out two annual bat surveys at Calderglen Country Park, monitoring the populations of Daubenton's and pipistrelle bats along the Calder Water. We regularly survey for species within our LNR's to monitor for a particular species of interest or protected species, gathering information for conservation projects and assess the need for future management.

For the past five years we have been surveying and assessing our potential LNCS throughout South Lanarkshire. On the day of the survey, we gather information on habitat type, condition, species lists, we also note dangerous trees, ash dieback, access issues, site problems and recommendations for conservation management.

The Countryside Ranger Service regularly monitor our greenspaces throughout South Lanarkshire, noting any issues, disturbances, and potential threats. They work with local volunteers, schools, and universities to actively encourage citizen science within our LNR's and local greenspaces. A few of our local nature reserves have been host to several university undergraduate and postgraduate research projects. We have provided background information, species data, and arranged site visits.

Speckled Wood Monitoring

As we experience more changes in climate, CAG is anticipating changes in populations of butterfly species moving into the South Lanarkshire area. Speckled wood butterfly have been spotted in isolated areas, and with Redlees Urban Park being one of them, several volunteers, and members of Butterfly Conservation Scotland have been monitoring the site as part of a transect, plus monitoring the area for any casual records.

British Dragonfly Society

CAG has established a partnership with the British Dragonfly Society, studying and raising awareness of the variety of Odonata species on our doorstep. We have good sites at a few of our Local Nature Reserves, namely Redlees Urban Park, Holmhill Wood Community Park, and James Hamilton Heritage Park. Although some of the sites are in very urban areas, it is still worthwhile to encourage people to explore and learn about the local wildlife and working with specific organisations allows us to do this.

6.2 Environmental data

Environmental data is collated and presented in the [State of the Environment Report](#) (SOE) for South Lanarkshire every two years. The report is formally approved by the council's Executive Committee and its key findings are presented to various forums, including the Corporate Management Team, Resource Management Team, and partnership groups. The report has ten chapters, one of which is dedicated to biodiversity, flora, and fauna. Monitoring relevant to biodiversity from the 2023 edition of the SOE report is provided below. This shows that there has been an improvement in South Lanarkshire in relation to LNRs and woodland cover.

6.3 The following diagram shows changes in the most relevant environmental issues and indicators between 2011 and 2021, identified in the respective SOE reports. The boxes highlighted in yellow show changes between 2019 to 2021. There has been continuous improvement and stabilisation across these indicators.

A summary of the indicators used in assessing the state of South Lanarkshire is presented, highlighting the current status of each indicator and the directional trend.

G	Good	F	Fair		↑	Improving
					↔	No change
P	Poor		Limited data		↓	Deteriorating
				Note: The most recent data available was used in assessing the environmental indicators		
Indicator		Current status	Trend direction		Explanation	
Designated areas		F	↔		Not many sites have been surveyed since the previous report. Although there has been some isolated improvement, in general the condition of the designated features remains similar to previous reports.	
Local Nature Reserves		G	↑		The council has designated 16 new LNRs and an extension to Langlands Moss.	
Native woodland		F	↑		Although total native woodland cover is increasing, further work is required to improve connectivity of habitats, expanding native broadleaf woodland cover.	
Ancient woodland		F	↔		There is no change in the area of ancient semi-natural woodland cover. There is limited data on the overall condition of this habitat.	
Peatland					There is insufficient data on the overall condition of raised and blanket bogs across the area, with a number of designated sites recorded as unfavourable.	

7. Biodiversity highlights and challenges

The Council has undertaken many projects and activities to conserve biodiversity, as detailed within this report. The following examples highlight some of the work we are most proud of.

7.1 Designation of 16 new Local Nature Reserves in South Lanarkshire and doubling the size of the original LNR.

The main highlight since the last Duty Report must be the designation of sixteen new Local Nature Reserves and the extension of the original LNR at Langlands Moss from 20ha to 40ha in April 2022. The CAG team worked in partnership with NatureScot, the planning team, and many other council resources over the past six years to achieve this goal. The process included a consultation process producing a mains report with the local community, working with friend's groups, and other interest groups to producing individual site surveys and draft management statements. We now have 17 LNR's in South Lanarkshire, increasing the total area covered by this designation from 20 ha to 610 ha.

A brief description of some of the biodiversity projects that have taken place at our LNR's:

7.2 Greenhall, Milheugh and Barnhill LNR

SLC continue to work in partnership with the Friends of Calder community group at the LNR in Blantyre. Since the last duty report an additional six trees, three planters, composter and a large bug hotel have been added to the community orchard. The orchard is a great resource for the local community and the pupils of the local primary and nursery schools. The site is maintained by SLC Unpaid Work Service and SLC Grounds Services team.



Photo 19: Butterfly Conservation hosting a butterfly and moth workshop at Greenhall, Milheugh and Barnhill LNR.



Photo 20: The annual bat walk is one of the many events CAG and the Friends of the Calder organise at the LNR.

In 2022 improvements for biodiversity were made in a large expanse of amenity grassland at Greenhall, two large wildflower meadows have been created and approximately 900 trees have been planted to improve the diversity of trees and to expand the woodland connecting to the existing mature woodland and parkland trees.

The Butterfly Conservation (BC) project 'helping hands for butterflies' established a wildflower meadow in the Milheugh part of the reserve, this has been maintained by the volunteers, as part of the project BC providing two training days for the local community, providing practical advice on maintaining the meadow and skills for surveying for invertebrates.

The Countryside Rangers and the Friends of the Calder continue to promote and enhance the biodiversity of the site, through events and activities throughout the year, from tree planting, meadow creation, woodland management, INNS removal, bat walks and river dipping.

7.3 Langlands Moss LNR Peatland Restoration Project

In early 2020 Langlands Moss LNR underwent a dramatic transformation as part of a £202,000 peatland restoration project in partnership with Green Action Trust (GAT) and NatureScot (NS). A feasibility survey was commissioned by SLC in 2018 through NatureScot's Peatland Action fund to determine the potential of the site for eco-hydrological restoration. A large conifer plantation stood to the north and west of the raised bog and the survey found sections of deep peat underneath this plantation. The average peat depth was found to be 139cm, with deeper pockets of over nine metres. The volume of peat equates to 298,199.6m³ with an estimated carbon content of 28,925 tonnes of carbon. With this evidence from the study, we decided to remove the large stand of conifer trees and dam the drains associated with the forestry plantation, with the aim to increase the water level in and around the raised bog.



Photo 21: Contractor installing peat dams at Langlands Moss LNR.

The project involved removing an area of 20.15ha of over mature conifer trees, a protected species survey, removal of brash from the surface of the peat, the installation of 21 peat dams and five bunds, resulting in installing approximately 278 metres length of dams at the reserve. By felling the conifer trees and blocking the associated drainage ditches, we are allowing the water table to rise back to its natural level, preventing the underlying peat from drying out and, in time, restore the growth of sphagnum mosses to make the peat an active carbon sink.

Restoring the bog will support the council's commitment to combating climate change, it will also lead to a much more diverse, attractive, and accessible recreational facility for the people of East Kilbride. In 2021, we found that some of the plastic dams had become damaged, failing to retain the water. So, in 2022 with GAT and advice from NS we employed a contractor to reprofile the failing dams with peat.



Photo 22: The new peat dams retaining water within the reserve.



Photo 23: A view over the raised bog at the reserve, more wet pools forming over the bog since the addition of the peat dams.

We continue to monitor the regrowth of the vegetation on the felled conifer area through fixed-point photography, quadrats and an annual vegetation survey. A butterfly transect runs through Langlands Moss, since the removal of the trees the number of butterflies and moths recorded at the reserve has increased significantly. CAG and the Friends of Langlands Moss continue to improve the reserve for wildlife, repairing any damage dams, removing scrub and trees from the peatland to improving the grasslands with the addition of wildflower seed and plugs.

7.4 Neilsland and Earnock - [Drawing on Greenspaces](#)

Connecting people and places in a unique and creative way “Drawing on Green Spaces” a community art project supported by Creative Scotland and SLC CAG. A local artist explored the plants and greenspaces around the Neilsland and Earnock LNR. Through botanical art, photographs and mixed media pieces, The local artist engaged residents to help them discover, understand, and conserve our local biodiversity. The culmination of the project was an exhibition of biodiversity themed artwork and workshops held in the Low Parks Museum in Hamilton.



Photo 24: One of the exhibitors with her work from ‘Drawing on Greenspaces’ on show at Low Parks Museum.

7.5 Outdoor Learning – supporting educators.

In 2022 funding obtained through NatureScot was secured to run a pilot program to support local teacher to discover Neilsland and Earnock LNR. The pilot project worked to deliver appropriate training for the teachers from the surrounding primary and nursery schools, to make them more knowledgeable about their local greenspace and to provide them with the skills that would enable them to visit and use the area for outdoor learning, both sustainably and with

confidence with their pupils. 80 children and ten staff took part in the pilot, training included practical skills and various outdoor activities to highlight the benefits of children connecting with nature and outdoor learning. Funding is available for another year, where we hope to repeat on the success of this project in another LNR in South Lanarkshire.

7.6 Blantyre, Bothwell and Uddingston (BBU) LNR

In November 2022, the BBC Landward programme visited Redlees Urban Park (which is located within the LNR), to film the ancient woodland practice of coppicing hazel. Green Aspirations Scotland manage the hazel woodland at the reserve.



Photo 25: BBC Landward recording at Reedlees Urban Park.

BBU is centred around the river Clyde, so as a result has a lot of issues with INNS, such as Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam. Supporters of the LNR have been assisting with a programme of Himalayan balsam removal at certain key sites, to observe the effects of this control on native species. Rhododendron is also a problem in the SSSI woodland so seasonally appropriate control is undertaken too. No volunteers or CAG staff use chemical for this work, SLC Ground Services team have experimentally undertook some larger scale control of Japanese Knotweed using an herbicide foam application.



Photo 26: Removing INNS at Bothwell.

7.7 Udston and Glenlee - Wildflower Meadow Creation

In autumn of 2022, an area of Glenlee (Udston and Glenlee Woods) was identified for wildflowers. An area of over 1500 square metres was cut, raked off and planted with wildflowers. The meadow will continue to be managed and surveyed from now on.

7.8 Milton Woods LNR

A site of a former brick and tile works on the outskirts of Carluke. Identified by SLC as vacant and derelict land, it is around 14 hectares in size and was inaccessible to the local community. The site supported a mosaic of habitats from bare and previously disturbed ground of the former brick works, semi-improved neutral grassland, marshy grassland, scrub, broadleaved woodland, and open water associated with the former clay pits. The site supports scrubby willow and birch woodland, which appears to have naturally regenerated following the abandonment of the tile works and tip; rank grassland and tall ruderal vegetation dominate the remaining areas. There were several large stands of Japanese knotweed and snowberry on the site.



Photo 27: One of the boreholes at Milton Woods newly renovated LNR.

In 2020 / 21, significant site works were undertaken at Milton thanks to the Vacant and Derelict Land Fund. Three new access points were created, one of which has parking spaces. Paths and boardwalks were installed along with benches and a central design incorporating reclaimed bricks in a Celtic knot pattern. Drainage has been improved throughout the site and a dipping platform was installed at the larger pond. Wildflower seeds were sown in many areas to help improve both grassland diversity and pollinator habitats. This new LNR now provides a much-welcomed asset to the local community.

In June 2022 CAG were invited to present a poster for the Brownfield Biodiversity Conference organised by Glasgow Natural History Society and the University of Glasgow. We were then invited to submit an article in February 2023 for The Glasgow Natural History Society journal [The Glasgow Naturalist](#). The article described the transformation of four former brownfield sites in South Lanarkshire, which have recently been designated as Local Nature Reserves, with reference to their importance for biodiversity, recreation, and education.

7.9 Fernbrae Meadows

In 2021 a group of volunteers came together to devise a new butterfly transect for Fernbrae Meadows. Joining in training online with Butterfly Conservation and SL Countryside Rangers. The Lunchtime Heroes sessions gives people a chance to gather once a fortnight to participate in conservation tasks including citizen science, removal of invasive species, litter-picking and removing guards from newly planted trees.



Photo 28: One of the many wildflower meadows improved for wildlife at Fernbrae Meadows.

The health walks and buggy walks continue to run giving people a chance to experience nature close to home. Some of the [walkers at Fernbrae Meadows](#) produce several film clips talking about what nature means to them. Project 31 hold outdoor play sessions, the local nurseries and primary schools regularly visit Fernbrae Meadows using the outdoor space for play and learning. The Friends of Fernbrae Meadows and CAG support many events throughout the year exploring the ponds, gardening sessions in the allotments, creating new habitats to removing INNS. They continue to work on the meadow reducing the nutrient levels, harvesting seed, and learning about meadow as a habitat.

In Spring 2023, CAG and volunteers started to monitor the 400m hedgerow which runs across the centre of the reserve. Using the Healthy hedgerows app and the Great Hedgerow Survey we were able to access the health of the hedgerow and with the community produce a plan to maintain and improve it for wildlife. As part of the NRF 15kg of urban pollinator wildflower seed was sown in one of the five new wildflower meadow areas improved for nature at the reserve.

7.10 Morgan Glen LNR

The ranger service provides six conservation days a year at Morgan Glen with Clydesdale Community Initiatives (CCI), a social inclusion charity supporting those facing barriers, to contribute to their local community. Volunteers come along and make a connection with the Glen helping to make improvements for access and biodiversity. Lunchtime Heroes sessions are offered at the reserve once a fortnight where people can participate in conservation and citizen science tasks. Local photographers and natural history enthusiasts share their wildlife images regularly on social media, giving local people an awareness and appreciation of the wildlife on their doorstep.

In Spring 2023 the community joined the countryside ranger for a Spring Walk in the Glen seeing the wide variety of wildflowers in their splendour. The ranger created a wildflower wander walk on the app [Go Jauntly](#) allowing people to go on a self-guided spring tour. This was the first in a series of seasonal walks. St Mary's PS use the site regularly with Eolas Outdoor Learning for Forest School. The children set up a trail camera in the Glen with the Forest School Leader and captured images of wildlife. Robert Smillie PS is about to commence Forest School and the site is also used by Happy Feet Nursery and the SLC Specialist School Support Team. The teachers leading the sessions are keen to monitor their impact and have provided bat boxes for the site.

Youth Family and Community Learning brought a group of young people out throughout summer 2021 working towards their John Muir Award with the countryside ranger. Over the weeks they participated in the Big Butterfly Count, audited the health of the river and walked to

Chatelherault Country Park to see how Morgan Glen fitted into a wider green network. In Spring 2023 they brought a group of young people from Larkhall Academy to learn how to use woodland resources and take care of the space.

The [BBC's My Kind of Town](#) featured Morgan Glen and the Nature Discovery, Nature Recovery programme as part of our Get Outdoors project. Activities have included nature play with families and the Machan Trust, visits with youth, family and community learning, storytelling and regular conservation days.



Photo 29: BBC My Kind of Town at Morgan Glen LNR August 2022.

7.11 [Smarter Choice, Smarter Places Fund](#) (SCSP)

A partnership project between South Lanarkshire Countryside and Greenspace (CAG) and Voluntary Action South Lanarkshire (VASLAN) arising from the Lanarkshire Green Health Partnership (LGHP). In response to Covid19, the LGHP developed the Get Outdoors Lanarkshire website and Facebook page as a way of supporting health and wellbeing through nature connection.

Through funding from South Lanarkshire Council and Smarter Choices Smarter Places during 2022-23 the programme was extended to include on the ground activity designed to connect communities to their Local Nature Reserves (LNR's). This was through a combination of engagement activities including community mapping through the GoJauntly App, public and schools' guided walks, woodland play sessions, arts, storytelling, nature connection sessions and conservation volunteering to manage sites for biodiversity and access. The project reached out to 1860 people through 195 events and activities within nine different greenspaces. The walks highlighted the GoJauntly app to create walking routes and highlight natural features and biological interest in the greenspaces and LNRs. Several films were produced via SCSP highlighting the projects and wildlife found within the LNR's:

[Jock's Burn LNR nature on your doorstep](#)
[Backmuir woods LNR](#)

7.12 Jock's Burn LNR

Walking for Wellbeing was launched at Jock's Burn in November 2021, to provide an opportunity for social connection and wellbeing activity after successive lockdowns. After an initial pilot, the walk was relocated to Milton Tileworks to accommodate people with limited mobility and a wheelchair user and subsequently a baby buggy. Thirty-five people have attended in total with a regular attendance of around twelve people, around half managing serious health conditions. All reported improved wellbeing after each walk and an increase in their walking or spending time outdoors in nature. The majority reported that they did not walk regularly before the sessions. A positive outcome is that Countryside Ranger-led walks now only happen monthly, but the group meet independently on a weekly basis.

Regular walkers are volunteering to litter pick and interested in making site biodiversity improvements. Recently Paths for All have worked with the group to support this and pilot their Nature Connectedness Placemaking Toolkit. As a result, the Paths for All artist in residence will also work with the group on a bird box and biodiversity project.

7.13 Supporting Educators in LNR's

Supporting Educators in LNR's is a collaboration between NatureScot, SLC Education, CAG, and local schools in Hamilton to support outdoor learning and teacher training within Neilsland and Earnock LNR. The aim of the training and support is to acquaint teaching staff with to make them more knowledgeable about their local greenspace, with the aim of building school's capacity to participate in outdoor learning. The success of the pilot means it has been extended to 2023/24 to encourage engagement at more LNR's across South Lanarkshire.

7.14 [Clutha Archaeology](#)

An archaeological dig undertaken by Clutha Archaeology volunteers and Archaeology Scotland at Chatelherault Country Park and Clyde Valley Woodlands NNR helped our community volunteers explore the links between our ancient woodlands and the historic environment. Clutha archaeology continue to work with CAG on a project to map and document all our newly designated LNRs.

7.15 [Cadzow Community Corps](#)

The Cadzow Community Corps a group of volunteers who meet twice a week at Chatelherault Country Park, in Hamilton. They became constituted in 2019 originally named the Cadzow Crew, in 2021-22 they accumulated 459 volunteer days and in 2022-2023 746 volunteer days. Work includes gardening, woodworking, planting trees and woodland management.

7.16 Froglife

At the time of drafting this report we are working in partnership with Froglife to improve four of our LNR's for amphibians. The conservation project has been funded through NatureScot 's Nature Restoration Fund. Suitable locations with Fernbrae Meadows, Westburn, Langlands Moss LNR's and Chatelherault Country Park have been identified where we can create new ponds and improve existing areas of open water for nature. Management plans have been produced for each of the site and the council have a commitment to manage the ponds for wildlife. The work is due to start winter 2023/24.

7.17 Pollinator boost: New Bee and Butterfly border at Calderglen Zoo gardens:

One of Calderglen Zoos traditional herbaceous borders has been transformed into a pollinator heaven, targeting bees, butterfly, and moth species, guided by expert advice from the Butterfly Conservation Society. The planting provides butterflies with food, shelter, and environments in which to lay their eggs. This incorporated a balanced mixture of both ornamental and wild species to create a beautiful space full of nectar-rich plants, featuring various trees, shrubs, and herbaceous planting.

7.18 Challenges

We are aware that there are challenges to conserving biodiversity. While there are challenges to protect biodiversity, there are many more benefits, including those with cross-cutting benefits. For example, the protection and improvement of peatlands has benefits for wildlife; it also contributes to the mitigating effects of climate change and reducing flood risk.

Changes to budget and staff levels over the past few years have highlighted the importance of working with local communities and external organisations to further our aims, funding, and allow us to work on national and larger scale projects. This has become a key element of how we work, and we consider it to be a strategic factor in how we will continue to develop our partnership and project work in the future.

The following list highlights specific concerns that have been raised by various council services.

7.19 Decline in resources including staff numbers.

7.20 Carrying out strategic control of INNS with multiple landowners. This is to become more problematic as species continue to spread, the long-term funding and potential ban on glyphosate herbicide use.

7.21 Being able to fulfil community expectations and promote our work.

7.22 Growing cost of locally produced food and packaging.

7.23 With increasing emphasis on use of the outdoor, especially in relation to outdoor learning and play, there will be a potential impact on local greenspaces.

7.24 Ability to develop wide scale partnerships involving external partners, non-government agencies and private landowners to further biodiversity projects on an ecosystem scale.

7.25 Potential and unknow factors that will affect decision making, budgets, subsidies in the future, as a result of leaving the European Union.

7.26 The ability to encourage, implement and monitor biodiversity inclusion, mitigation, and compensatory works within developments.

7.27 Meeting the demand for new housing and minimising the impact this has on local biodiversity. Careful planning and close working relationships between developers and those with an understanding of biodiversity will be required to carefully manage this potential conflict.

7.28 Finding funding for the development of allotments and growing sites to meet demand.

7.29 The impacts of climate change and pollution on biodiversity, infrastructure, and health.

7.30 Having an impact on the scale and gravity of the nature and climate crisis.

7.31 Maintaining regenerated sites once the initial funded maintenance period is complete.

7.32 Balancing expectations of communities with regards to greenspaces; finding a place for biodiversity where site management has previously been more formal and intense.

8. Contribution to biodiversity targets

The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy 2045 [Scottish Biodiversity Strategy 2045 Tackling the Nature Emergency](#) sets out clear ambition for Scotland to be Nature Positive by 2030 and to have restored and regenerated biodiversity across the country by 2045.

***Our vision is:** By 2045, Scotland will have restored and regenerated biodiversity across our land, freshwater and seas. Our natural environment, our habitats, ecosystems and species, will be diverse, thriving, resilient and adapting to climate change. Regenerated biodiversity will drive a sustainable economy and support thriving communities, and people will play their part in the stewardship of nature for future generations.*

The Strategy contains 26 of the most urgent priority actions which will put us on track for halting the loss of biodiversity and being nature positive by 2030. South Lanarkshire council's overall activities that contribute to Scotland's National Biodiversity targets are indicated in the list below:

Priority Action from the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy 2045

Chapter 1: Accelerate restoration

- Introduce a programme of ecosystem restoration.
- Implement Scottish Plan for INNS surveillance, prevention and control, and secure wider support measures to enable effective INNS removal.

Chapter 2. Expand and connect protected areas and improve their condition.

- Expand our protected areas to at least 30% of the land.
- Ensure we secure positive effects for biodiversity from our National Planning Framework (NPF4).
- Ensure that every local authority area has a nature network improving ecological connectivity across Scotland.
- Realise the potential of National Nature Reserves as key assets for increasing ecological connectivity.

Chapter 3. Nature-friendly farming, fishing and forestry

- Ensure that productive forests and woodlands deliver increased biodiversity and habitat connectivity as well as timber production.

Chapter 4. Recover and protect vulnerable and important species.

- Continue effective species recovery, reintroduction, and reinforcement programmes.
- Support surveillance and monitoring to support managing risks around pathogens and disease in wild bird populations.
- Implement measure to protect and recover Scotland's migratory fish populations.

Chapter 5. Generate the investment needed to support nature recovery.

- Maintain and seek to increase investment in nature restoration through the Nature Restoration Fund.
- Investment in green skills and local economic opportunities supporting nature-based education, skills and volunteering.
- Continue to develop and enhance the woodland and peatland carbon.

Appendix 1: Acronyms

BDIP	Biodiversity Duty Implementation Plan
CAG	Countryside and Greenspace Team
CCI	Clyde Community Initiatives
CMT	Corporate Management Team
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
FOC	Friends of the Calder
FOLM	Friends of Langlands Moss
GAT	Green Action Trust
Ha	Hectare
HLF	Heritage lottery Fund
INNS	Invasive non-native species
LDP	Local Development Plan
LHS	Local Housing Strategy
LNCS	Local Nature Conservation Sites
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
NBN	National Biological network
NHS	National Health Service
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NRF	Nature Restoration Fund
NRP	Nature Restoration Programme
NS	NatureScot
RSPB	Royal society for the Protection of Birds
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SEPA	Scottish Environmental Protection Agency
SHIP	Strategic Housing Investment Plan
SMID	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation
SLBP	South Lanarkshire Biodiversity Partnership
SLBS	South Lanarkshire Biodiversity Strategy
SLC	South Lanarkshire Council
SLOAF	South Lanarkshire Outdoor Access Code
SOE	State of the Environment Report
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SUDS	Sustainable (Urban) Drainage System
TCV	The Conservation Volunteers
VDL	Vacant and Derelict Land