

Report

Report to:	Climate Change and Sustainability Committee
Date of Meeting:	3 November 2021
Report by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

Subject:	Nature Restoration Fund
----------	--------------------------------

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to: -

- ◆ brief the Committee on the Nature Restoration Fund and outline proposals.

2. Recommendation(s)

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

- (1) that the themes and areas of spend detailed in this report be noted.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Scottish Government's 2021/2022 budget announcement contained a commitment for a new £10 million fund to provide additional funding to support a wide range of projects that will deliver nature restoration, safeguard wildlife and tackle the causes of biodiversity loss especially climate change.
- 3.2. The Scottish Government and Local Authority Leaders have reached an agreement on the proportion of allocation of the newly established Nature Restoration Fund (NRF) to Scottish Local Authorities. This constitutes £5 million of capital funding to be spent in 2021-22 to support new, or to enhance existing, approaches to restoring biodiversity. Of this, £264,000 is to be allocated to South Lanarkshire.
- 3.3. The purpose of the NRF is to support actions that help nature recover across Scotland. To deliver this the NRF will run across two themes:
- ◆ Making Space for Nature (urban focused nature-based solutions for biodiversity and climate change).
 - ◆ Helping Nature Recover (rural focused biodiversity enhancement, climate resilience and reinstatement).
- 3.4. The capital funding allocated to Local Authorities is to support new, or to enhance existing, approaches that further biodiversity and which adhere to the following essential criteria:
- ◆ deliver positive effects for biodiversity and enhance local ecosystems, and/or:
 - ◆ address the climate emergency and its impacts through mitigation and adaptation and by promoting nature-based solutions
 - ◆ Desirable criteria: promote the health and well-being of local communities and reduce inequalities

- 3.5. A light touch reporting arrangement is proposed to understand delivery and inform future policy and practice. Local Authorities will be required to complete and return a short form to the Biodiversity Unit at the Scottish Government within a year of the allocation of funding. The form will set out how the funds have been spent, categorised under the themes and criteria set out above.
- 3.6. As this fund is required to be spent before the end of the current financial year, there is likely to be a focus on initial ground works within 2021/2022 and developing proposals to enable future projects and funding bids to undertake similar type works at other locations.

4. Proposals

- 4.1. Grounds Services have identified 6 main themes for project delivery, and these are aligned to actions and objectives within the Biodiversity Plan:-
- ◆ Peatland and Wetland Management & Development
 - ◆ Local Nature Reserve Management & Development
 - ◆ Enhance Canopy Cover
 - ◆ Outdoor Education
 - ◆ Development of Management Plans and feasibility studies.
 - ◆ Planting for pollinators
- 4.2. The broad areas of spend for this fund have been identified as:-
- ◆ Tools and equipment to enable biodiversity friendly land management to continue into the future.
 - ◆ Material such as trees and wildflower seed to improve the biodiversity value and climate change mitigation of the Council land holding.
 - ◆ Feasibility studies to develop future proposals, such as woodland management plans.
 - ◆ Extending seasonal contracts to deliver on the ground work (i.e. 40 staff have been retained for an additional 10 weeks).
- 4.3. The types of works being considered are:-
- ◆ Removal of non-native rhododendron from woodland areas
 - ◆ Orchard and native tree planting
 - ◆ Pollinator planting within shrub beds including plants that can improve air quality
 - ◆ Wildflower meadow creation
 - ◆ Local Nature Reserve improvements for access and biodiversity.
- 4.4. The benefits of this work tie in directly with the essential criteria of the fund and will deliver positive effects for biodiversity and/or help mitigate the impacts of climate change. The intrinsic link between these two issues mean that many improvements made for biodiversity can deliver real improvements for people and the environment in the light of changing climatic conditions. For example, tree planting provides shade, intercepts water, and stores carbon in woody materials and soil while providing habitat for native wildlife and wellbeing benefits for people.
- 4.5. Information on works per Ward will be provided to local members to ensure they are aware of the projects and the service will work with PR to promote and outline the benefits to the local community. Plans are currently being developed for the following sites:
- ◆ Calderglen Country Park.

- ◆ Chatelherault Country Park.
- ◆ National Nature Reserve at Mauldslee.
- ◆ Existing and proposed new Local Nature Reserves.
- ◆ Various District parks.
- ◆ Green Flag Parks.
- ◆ Council managed greenspaces.

5. Employee Implications

- 5.1. It was considered appropriate, given the nature of these works and the timescales for spend that the majority of the works were kept in house and the service has therefore retained 40 seasonal staff for a 10-week period to undertake the agreed works.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. In addition to the £0.264 million allocated by the Scottish Government, the Climate Change and Sustainability Steering Group have agreed a further £0.146m is allocated to this project from the £2 million Climate Challenge Fund. This will allow some of the proposed works to be completed after March 2021, to align with preferred planting and growing timescales.

7. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 7.1. Improvements to biodiversity have the potential to help mitigate the effects of climate change for example through natural flood management and carbon storage. There is also a need for biodiversity to be improved to make natural systems better able to cope with the impacts of a changing climate, such as improving habitat networks to increase species resilience.
- 7.2. Nature based solutions (NbS) are defined as 'actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits. NbS have a critical role to play in responding to climate change, with a role in removing carbon, preventing emissions and helping us adapt to the impacts of climate change that are already occurring. Examples of NbS include street trees, raingardens and healthy, natural environments.
- 7.3. Biodiversity actions are incorporated in the Council's Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy . Measures are reported on through statutory Climate Change Duties.

8. Other Implications

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

9. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 9.1. This work is not subject to an Equality Impact Assessment. The Biodiversity Strategy and Biodiversity Duty Implementation Plan were subject to consultation through Strategic Environmental Assessment procedures.

Michael McGlynn
Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

13 October 2021

Link(s) to Council Objectives/Values/Ambitions

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

Previous References

- ◆ SL Biodiversity Strategy and Biodiversity Duty 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

- ◆ [South Lanarkshire Biodiversity Strategy](#)
- ◆ [Biodiversity Duty Implementation Plan](#)
- ◆ [COSLA Elected Members Briefing Note: Nature Based Solutions](#)

Contact for Further Information

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

Louisa Maddison, Biodiversity Officer

Tel: 07788 351 851

E-mail : louisa.maddison@southlanarkshire.gov.uk