



Renfrewshire Council
Biodiversity Duty Report 2023



Renfrewshire
Council

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The term 'Biodiversity' is short for biological diversity.

It includes every plant and animal, including the range of habitats on which all flora and fauna depend.

Introduction

The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 gives public bodies a duty to further the conservation of biodiversity. The Wildlife and Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2011 requires public bodies to publish a report every three years on the actions undertaken to meet biodiversity duty.

This report highlights the actions undertaken by Renfrewshire Council to support biodiversity over the period 2021-2023 and is the fourth Biodiversity Duty Report produced by the Council.

In July 2023 the Scottish Government amended its advice to public bodies and provided a revised template, setting out the main areas that it considers important for public bodies to include in their Biodiversity Duty Reports. This report follows the Scottish Government template.



1. Biodiversity in Renfrewshire

Renfrewshire covers an area of some 270 square kilometres (102 square miles) and on 30 June 2021 had an estimated population of around 179,940 people.

The natural character and biodiversity of Renfrewshire is a valuable asset, providing the basis for many social and economic activities of direct benefit to the local community. Renfrewshire Council provides a range of services which seeks to support and enhance biodiversity conservation in this context. These include:

- The Economy & Development team within the Chief Executive's Service guides the use of land and its development, along with the maintenance and enhancement of high quality places within Renfrewshire, through the Local Development Plan and Development Management functions.
- Environment, Housing & Infrastructure Services manage urban parks, cemeteries, Gleniffer Braes Country Park, parts of Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park and open spaces.
- Children's Services promote environmental education through schools, encouraging children to become more conscious of biodiversity conservation and other sustainability issues.

The Council seeks to positively use, manage and maintain its land assets to support and enhance biodiversity conservation. This relates particularly to habitats and species prioritised on the Scottish Biodiversity List and these form the framework of the Renfrewshire Biodiversity Action Plan 2028-2022, which the Council co-ordinates on behalf of around 40 local biodiversity partner organisations.



2: Actions to Protect and Enhance Biodiversity

As in previous reporting periods, Renfrewshire Council has continued to protect and improve biodiversity, as well as connecting people with nature, through direct action and a series of innovative partnership projects, as summarised below.

Section 2: Actions to Protect and Enhance Biodiversity			
Ref. No.	Action	Inputs/Outputs	Outcomes
2.1	Creation of Biodiversity Areas in Renfrewshire	Annual allocations (from 2021/22) of Scottish Government Nature Restoration Fund grant-aid supported biodiversity improvements on 19 cut grassland sites, with a further 11 sites approved by the Infrastructure, Land & Environment Policy Board on 30 August 2023.	Greenspaces transformed from intensively managed grassland to create biodiversity areas https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/86b7ab224cce402f8f8e3fa2434c0ac4
2.2	Implementation of Muirshiel Country Park Woodland Management Plan 2016-2025	Maintenance of around 4000 native trees by volunteers, including Scots pine, aspen, silver birch, downy birch, common alder, hazel, rowan and oak. Removal of Sitka spruce saplings to protect an area of blanket bog at the edge of the Country Park and beside the surrounding moorland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Involvement of volunteers directly in conserving priority habitats. ▪ Increased area of Scottish Biodiversity List priority habitats: Upland Birchwood, Upland Oakwood, Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland. Enhancement of upland blanket bog (Scottish Biodiversity List priority habitat).
2.3	Cample Burn Juniper Conservation Project in Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park.	Maintenance of 750 planted juniper, aspen and eared willow carried out with Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park volunteers.	The planted trees are contributing to an enhanced upland habitat and are an example of a local rewilding project.
2.4	Support for Castle Semple Volunteer Group.	In 2021/23 Clyde Muirshiel staff organised a programme of activities to support conservation work at Castle Semple and Muirshiel.	Group delivered 6,166 hours of voluntary biodiversity conservation work on tree planting, rhododendron and Himalayan balsam removal, hedge maintenance, litter removal and wildflower garden work.

Section 2: Actions to Protect and Enhance Biodiversity - Continued

Ref. No.	Action	Inputs/Outputs	Outcomes
2.5	Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park staff managing conservation volunteers	Supervised volunteering hours: 2020/21 951 2021/22 1,778 2022/23 3,437	Volunteers provide equivalent to one FTE member of staff working on important habitat improvements.
2.6	Volunteers at Gleniffer Braes Country Park led by on-site staff from Council's Environment, Housing & Infrastructure Services.	Supervised volunteering hours: 2021 86 2022 162 2023 132	Rhododendrons controlled, hedgerows managed, litter lifted, trees planted, sensory garden restored, bug hotels constructed and erected, scrub managed, pond planting, access improved and ditches cleared.
2.7	Peatland conservation works.	Renfrewshire Council helped Butterfly Conservation Scotland's Bog Squad to return to Sergeantlaw Moss in Gleniffer Braes Country Park to control invasive scrub early in 2024, providing Licence to Occupy for the project, help to promote the events and onsite guidance.	Lowland Raised Bog (a Scottish Biodiversity List priority habitat) conserved at the edge of Paisley. More volunteers actively involved in biodiversity conservation work.
2.8	Glasgow & Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership	Renfrewshire Council continued to liaise with the GCVGNP team at a City Region level to produce mapping resources designed to show opportunity areas for expanding the extent of Species Rich Grassland and then Wetlands.	Outputs and recommendations for future action could provide the opportunity to link locally valuable habitats into nature networks both within Renfrewshire across a wider framework provided by the Glasgow City Region.

Section 2: Actions to Protect and Enhance Biodiversity - Continued

Ref. No.	Action	Inputs/Outputs	Outcomes
2.9	Planned Dargavel Community Woodland Park	Following previous multi-agency guidance coordinated by Renfrewshire Council, BAE Systems' Dargavel Park Strategic Plan was approved by Renfrewshire Council in November 2021. The first phase – Formakin Link 1 - had been approved in June 2018. This has been delivered and includes a 'wildlife area', as per the approved plans. Proposals for Formakin Link 2 were approved in May 2021 and are being progressed by BAE Systems.	<p>The negotiations leading up to the Strategic Plan have clarified priorities for future conservation management, to ensure benefits for biodiversity and future site users are maximised.</p> <p>People living in the new community are already enjoying the biodiversity aspects of the attractive landscapes surrounding their homes.</p>
2.10	Brownside Braes Lesser Whitethroat Conservation Project	Delivery of Partnership project between Renfrewshire Council, Paisley Natural History Society and Trees for Cities had created new area of scrub woodland to attract nesting Lesser Whitethroats.	1,300 trees planted to special design over 7.9ha will increase CO2 sequestration by up to 55 tonnes per year. Direct community involvement in practical action.
2.11	Creation of Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland habitat at Barwood Park, Erskine	Delivery of Partnership project between Renfrewshire Council, Clyde Climate Forest and Trees for Cities has created new area of native woodland in an urban park.	1,050 trees planted to link existing isolated trees to create small woodland of 2,000 m2. Direct community involvement in practical action.

3: Mainstreaming

Renfrewshire Council has continued to make good progress in mainstreaming biodiversity duties into core activities and has taken several opportunities to integrate biodiversity conservation into corporate projects, plans and strategies.

Section 3: Mainstreaming Biodiversity			
Ref. No.	Action	Inputs/Outputs	Outcomes
3.1	Council plays lead role in developing, supporting and implementing the Renfrewshire Biodiversity Action Plan process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcomes of the 2018-2022 Biodiversity Action Plan reviewed and discussed with local biodiversity partners during meetings. Biodiversity Action Plan for 2023-2027 discussed with partners and drafted, with proposed submission to Council's Planning and Climate Change Board in spring 2024. Officer time provided to coordinate implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan throughout reporting period. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nearly 40 partner organisations actively supporting joint biodiversity conservation action locally. Provides framework for Council's development management functions. Resources shared for priority habitats biodiversity conservation projects. Improved levels of public awareness of biodiversity conservation in Renfrewshire.
3.2	Renfrewshire Local Development Plan 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy ENV 2 provides protection and encourages enhancement of a variety of features which make up Renfrewshire's natural heritage. The Spatial Strategy for Places recognises the importance of enhancing and strengthening the Green Network by preparing and delivering a Green Network Strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biodiversity continues to be protected through the Council's planning policy and processes. Biodiversity enhancement is supported and encouraged. Locally significant Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) illustrated on the Development Plan's area maps, along with other environmental and natural heritage designations.
3.3	Renfrewshire Vacant and Derelict Land Strategy (2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages nature positive places that will be more resilient to the impacts of the climate crisis and support the recover and restoration of our natural environment. Action Plan commits the Council to engage with local communities regarding the future use of small sites not recorded on the vacant land register and work in partnership to identify sites which may be suitable for greening, growing, planting or biodiversity opportunities. 	Renfrewshire Council endorses a naturalising approach to regenerating vacant and derelict land, as such sites sometimes develop interesting plant and animal populations with deliberate human intervention.

Section 3: Mainstreaming Biodiversity - Continued

Ref. No.	Action	Inputs/Outputs	Outcomes
3.4	Sustainable Procurement Programme	Award from Renfrewshire Council's Climate Change Action Fund enabled the Corporate Procurement Unit to develop a monitoring and recording framework supporting assessment of the climate change impacts of contracts and run training events for local businesses about climate change and sustainability.	Increased awareness of biodiversity in business sectors.
3.5	Grant funding to local groups from Renfrewshire Council funding sources	During this three-year period, Renfrewshire Council operated a series of competitive grant funds supporting communities to develop and deliver local projects, many of which had a focus on improving the environment and biodiversity. This included a Community Climate Fund and a Parks & Greenspaces Fund.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Community Climate Fund supported a range of projects including Lochwinnoch Sustainable Community Garden to propagate and plant out wildflower seeds, Kirklandneuk Primary school to create a biodiversity area in the school grounds, a biodiversity garden at Ferguslie Cricket Club and biodiversity improvements by the Sculpture House Collective in its Community Dye Garden, Ferguslie Park, Paisley. ▪ The Greenspaces Fund supported the Friends of Jenny's Well LNR to restore and maintain access paths so that more people in Paisley can enjoy biodiversity. ▪ Lochwinnoch Force for Nature were funded via planning gain to acquire Swift nest boxes for erection on local buildings.



4: Nature-Based solutions, Climate Change and Biodiversity

Renfrewshire Council has continued to make good progress in developing and implementing a positive response to the Climate Emergency which it declared on 27 June 2019, committing to making Renfrewshire carbon neutral by 2030. This response recognises the potential role of biodiversity in achieving the carbon neutrality target and includes nature-based solutions.

Section 4: Nature-Based Solutions, Climate Change and Biodiversity			
Ref. No.	Action	Inputs/Outputs	Outcomes
4.1	Renfrewshire Local Development Plan 2021	Policy 13 (Flooding and Drainage) recognises the importance of the management of flood risk through natural flood management and green infrastructure within the context of a flood management scheme. It also states that flood measures should have a positive effect on the water environment as well as the natural heritage interests of the site and land surrounding the site.	Additional habitats potentially created as a result of flood management initiatives.
4.2	Renfrewshire's Plan for Net Zero	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan approved and published in August 2022. Under the "Resilient Place" theme, the plan identifies the Priority Area of "helping nature locally". In addition, the Plan commits to identifying appropriate locations and measures to increase carbon storage and biodiversity on public land assets, e.g. restoration of peat bogs; greening public spaces; and wild flowering instead of using lawnmowers on verges. 	Increased awareness of issues amongst elected members, managers and officers.
4.3	Peatland Restoration project proposals at Queenside Muir, West Tandlemuir Farm in the Renfrewshire Heights SPA (Special Protection Area).	Working in partnership with NatureScot, proposals to restore water levels on 216ha of blanket bog have been developed to planning application stage, with a view towards a NatureScot funding application and implementation in autumn 2024.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimated that 556 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide per year will be sequestered by restored peatland habitat. Enhanced habitat for biodiversity conservation, including Hen Harriers. Improved flood management, silt wash-out and water quality along the River Calder.
4.4	Candren Burn Feasibility Study, Ferguslie Park, Paisley.	Working in partnership with SEPA, delivery of a feasibility study to consider opportunities around the deculverting and re-naturalisation of the Candren Burn, Ferguslie Park, Paisley as part of 'The Making of Ferguslie', a local plan for the neighbourhood. RIBA 0-1 feasibility stage to be progressed during spring 2024, supported by SEPA's Water Environment Fund.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness of potential benefits amongst various Council services, statutory agencies and community representatives. Liaison mechanism established. Technical Working Group actively supporting project.

5: Public Engagement and Staff Development

Renfrewshire Council has continued to deploy resources to promote biodiversity conservation throughout its communities and worked with partners to maximise the benefits of these efforts. New technologies have been used where appropriate to reach wider audiences and have become an important feature of staff training and networking activities.

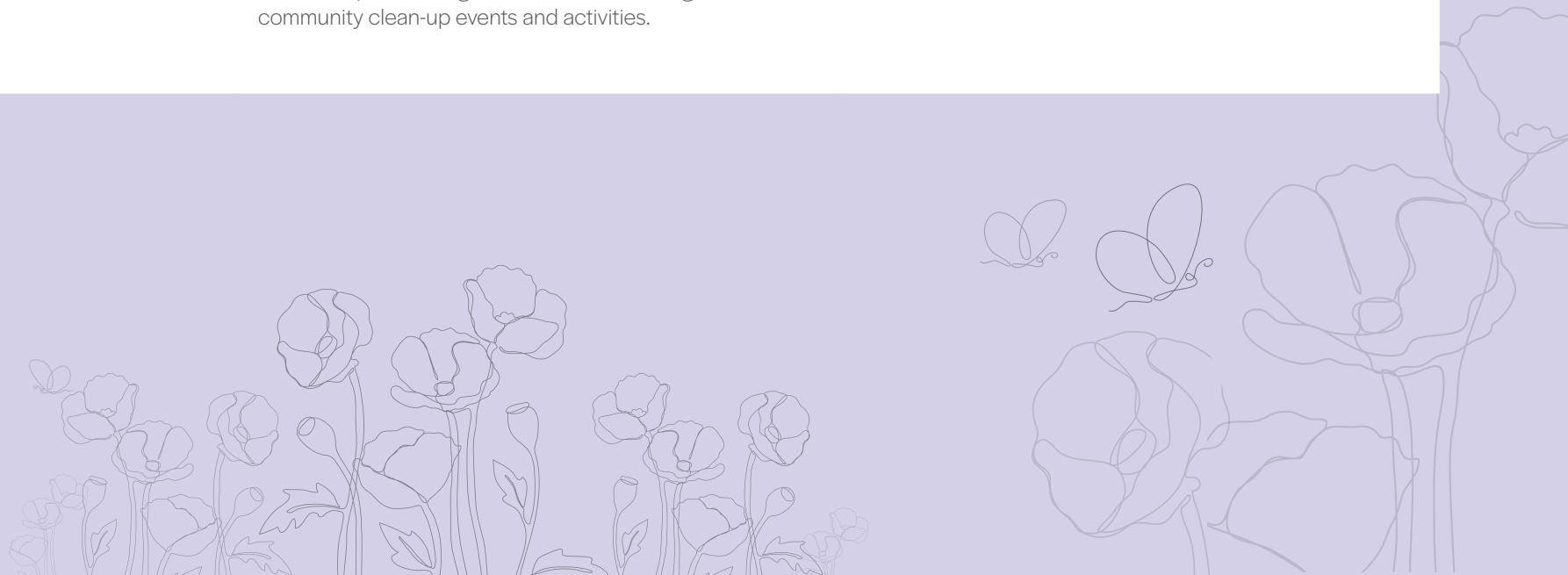
Section 5: Public Engagement and Workforce Development			
Ref. No.	Action	Inputs/Outputs	Outcomes
5.1	Co-ordination of the LBAP Steering Group for Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 meetings chaired between 2021 and 2023, with Renfrewshire Council also performing the secretarial role. Information sharing by email of national newsletters, funding opportunities, networking events, etc. coordinated by Renfrewshire Council. The number of represented groups increased from 35 to 38 over the reporting period. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emerging draft of updated Renfrewshire Biodiversity Action Plan. Regular liaison resulted in practical conservation works on the ground in Renfrewshire. Joint ventures undertaken, with partners receiving funding support from the Council.
5.2	Renfrewshire Growing Grounds Forum (coordinated by Renfrewshire Council and Renfrewshire Health & Social Care Partnership)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7 meetings held to maintain peer information exchange function. Regular email communications between meetings, to disperse relevant information about funding, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allotment site managers incorporating biodiversity features, e.g. ponds, orchards, wild areas, beehives, bug hotels, wild flower planting projects, schools work. Closer links between biodiversity conservation and health promotion activities.
5.3	Renfrewshire Council website and associated social media channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renfrewshire Council website updated and biodiversity pages expanded to report conservation projects, places to enjoy biodiversity and interactive map of designated sites. ArcGIS StoryMap on Biodiversity Areas project launched on the Council website. Social media channels have been used for consultation purposes, e.g. for the Biodiversity Action Plan. 	Increased awareness of Renfrewshire's biodiversity and opportunities to become involved in biodiversity conservation initiatives.

Section 5: Public Engagement and Workforce Development - Continued

Ref. No.	Action	Inputs/Outputs	Outcomes
5.4	OneRen Natural History Department	Paisley Museum Reimagined project in main construction phases and then exhibition planning to effect transformation. This will bring new life to the natural history collections and exhibits.	Targeted fourfold increase in visitor numbers (i.e. 125,000 per annum) after reopening in 2025, so clear opportunities for raised awareness and increased participation in biodiversity conservation.
5.5	Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Services: staff deployed for outdoor environmental education and interpretation at Gleniffer Braes Country Park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Environmental education provided at Gleniffer Braes Country Park for 150 pupils in 2021, 272 in 2022 and 386 in 2023. ▪ Face-to-face interpretation provided for 70 adults in 2022, as well as a corporate volunteering day for 80 employees. In 2023 five events involving 56 people were organised, including partnership activities with the Paisley Natural History Society. ▪ Glenburn Nursery used Glen Park in Gleniffer Braes Country Park for Forest Kindergarten activities in 2021. ▪ Other groups used site for self-programming activities. 	Raised awareness of Renfrewshire's biodiversity and the need for biodiversity conservation.
5.6	Renfrewshire Schools supporting biodiversity education.	Schools continue to provide children with opportunities for direct contact with nature, particularly through gardening activities. A number of schools have EcoGroups linked to the Keep Scotland Beautiful "Eco-Schools" programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pupils have direct contact with nature in an everyday situation. ▪ Pupils have greater awareness and increasing participation in biodiversity conservation.
5.7	Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park's Ranger led educational programme	<p>Environmental education sessions were delivered to 1094 people in 2021/23, from pre-nursery up to secondary and tertiary education.</p> <p>Digital marketing and promotional activities support many education and outdoor learning messages and information provision with a Facebook 'reach' figure of 273,432 people engaging online in 2021/23.</p>	Raised awareness and increased participation in biodiversity conservation.

Section 5: Public Engagement and Workforce Development - Continued

Ref. No.	Action	Inputs/Outputs	Outcomes
5.8	Muirshiel Country Park's "Branching Out" mental health recovery programme.	35 participants in past three years.	Improved mental and physical health for the people in Renfrewshire using and caring for their woodlands, green spaces and nature.
5.9	Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Communications	<p>Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park has a growing presence on social media. At the end of March 2023 there were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6,000 Facebook 'likes' • 2,129 Twitter followers • 355,500 video views on YouTube. • 1,400 followers on Instagram. 	Wider range of people know about Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park, its biodiversity and opportunities to become involved directly in its conservation.
5.10	"Team Up to Clean Up" campaign	Four TCV wildflower meadow creation/maintenance workshops were arranged through the Council's Team Up to Clean Up team. Organised in addition to regular series of community clean-up events and activities.	5,000 engaged community members involved in clean-up events.



6: Research and Monitoring

Biodiversity research and monitoring has continued during this period. Its resource demanding nature means that most of this work is undertaken to support specific policies or to guide improved management of Council land.

Section 6: Research and Monitoring			
Ref. No.	Action	Inputs/Outputs	Outcomes
6.1	Review of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)	Scope prepared for commissioned survey and review of SINC's.	Prioritised approach to survey and review to be developed over 2024.
6.2	Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 124 species surveys were undertaken in the past three years. Data from these were fed into appropriate national survey databanks for bumblebees, butterflies and birds. Six samples of water quality at Castle Semple Loch were analysed to check for microbiology and levels of chemicals associated with algal blooms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved knowledge of numbers and distribution of species available locally and at a national level. Risk of damaging algal blooms affecting biodiversity and recreational uses is evaluated effectively.
6.3	Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park staff working with partners	<p>Ospreys colonised Clyde Muirshiel in the last reporting period, and continue to return as a nesting species each spring:</p> <p>2020 - 1 chick 2021 - 2 chicks 2022 - 3 chicks</p>	Osprey, a key species, have bred successfully, 2020 - 2022, raising six chicks - and 11 since their first nest five years ago.
6.4	Gleniffer Braes Country Park faunal surveys	Daily logs of birds and other incidental wildlife maintained by Countryside Rangers and reported to local records centres.	Knowledge of local wildlife distributions and statuses improved.

7. Biodiversity Highlights and Challenges

This period was challenging for local authorities and other tiers of government, as well as community and voluntary sector partners. The report has placed a strong emphasis on partnerships and cross-sector working and biodiversity conservation will have to be linked even more firmly with community recovery in order to progress towards the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy targets in future years.

7. Biodiversity Highlights and Challenges			
Ref. No.	Action	Inputs/Outputs	Outcomes
7.1	HIGHLIGHT: Actions to support and coordinate the inter-agency LBAP Support Group for Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 online meetings held, chaired and coordinated by Renfrewshire Council officers. Emails from local biodiversity partners, outside agencies and national organisations circulated to represented organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biodiversity conservation discussed by local communities, the Council, and other public agencies as an important local issue requiring priority treatment in the local area.
7.2	HIGHLIGHT: Drafting the Renfrewshire Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2027 on behalf of local partners in readiness for publication and implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal review of the 2018-2022 edition presented to the LBAP Support Group and discussed to evaluate successes and to indicate new directions for 2023 onward. Proposals for actions to include from 2023 agreed. Drafting of new Plan on behalf of partnership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership approach to delivering biodiversity conservation initiatives resulted in actions being contributed by organisations outside the Council. Plan recognised as a reference document by all sectors.
7.3	HIGHLIGHT: Partnership approach has permitted landscape scale initiatives, innovative projects and direct community involvement in biodiversity conservation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership with SEPA to investigate the feasibility of daylighting the Candren Burn at Ferguslie Park. Partnership with NatureScot's Peatland Action and the Glasgow City Region Clyde Peatlands Project to develop proposals to restore 200ha of blanket bog in the Renfrewshire Heights SPA/SSSI. Regeneration Capital Grant Fund application submitted to Scottish Government to create Foxbar Community Garden, promote a local nature network and regenerate vacant land. Local groups actively supporting neighbourhood biodiversity as a result of Council fund allocations. 	<p>Greater community engagement and voluntary involvement in biodiversity conservation.</p> <p>Council (and partner organisations) resources used efficiently and effectively in a challenging economic environment.</p>

7. Biodiversity Highlights and Challenges - Continued

Ref. No.	Action	Inputs/Outputs	Outcomes
7.4	<p>HIGHLIGHT: Appointment of two new operational staff posts for biodiversity and woodlands/trees has enabled series of enhancements to proceed on Council land in line with locally expressed wishes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 19 new biodiversity areas on previously manicured amenity grassland mapped and summarised on a bespoke StoryMap on the Renfrewshire Council website. <p>Successful grant application submitted to the Nature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Restoration Fund for the Renfrewshire Rivers Project, seeking to control five invasive non-native plant species in five river catchments. 	<p>Increase in areas with enhanced biodiversity and greater levels of awareness about the needs for conservation work.</p>
7.5	<p>CHALLENGE: integrating biodiversity conservation into Council strategies at a time when resource challenges drive decisions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Environment & Infrastructure Services appointed two new members of staff to pursue operational projects on Council land. ▪ Plan for Net Zero published. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong commitment towards biodiversity conservation established across the Council. ▪ Value of healthy semi-natural habitats recognised in Renfrewshire's Plan for Net Zero.
7.6	<p>CHALLENGE: scaling up biodiversity conservation work to comply with new legislative demands arising from Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, Nature Networks, reviews of locally designated sites, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plans for peat restoration projects on the ground being developed. ▪ Planned development of a Renfrewshire Forestry & Woodland Strategy. ▪ Investigation into feasibility of deculverting the Candren Burn in Paisley. ▪ Funding secured to control invasive non native plant species along five watercourses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Biodiversity Action Plan commits to explore landscape scale habitat enhancements on Council owned land. ▪ Nature Networks strengthened and given enhanced core area to act as sources for future spread of wildlife populations.



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