

RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL BIODIVERSITY DUTY REPORT 2015 - 2017



The term 'Biodiversity' is short for biological diversity and, put simply, it is the variety of life. It includes every plant and animal including humans. Biodiversity also includes the range of habitats on which all flora and fauna depend. It is not just about the rare and endangered: it encompasses all life from the common to the threatened.



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The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 gives public bodies a duty to further the conservation of biodiversity. In addition, the Wildlife and Nature Conservation (Scotland) 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 2015-2017.

Part 1— Introduction

Renfrewshire covers an area of some 270 kilometres (102 miles) and in 2016 had an estimated population of around 176,000.

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 provide a range of services which seek to support and enhance biodiversity conservation in this context. These include:

- Renfrewshire Council's Community Plan supports healthy lifestyles and wellbeing of communities;
- Development and Housing Services guide the use of land and development to ensure high quality places within Renfrewshire, through the Local Development Plan and Development Management functions;
- Environment and Communities Service manage parks, cemeteries, Gleniffer Braes Country Park and a variety of open spaces; and,
- Education and Children's Services promote an increasing range of 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 is particularly in relation to habitats prioritised on the Scottish Biodiversity List and which are of local significance.

PART 2: Biodiversity Duty: Progress Report 2015 - 2017

The Scottish Government sets out areas that it considers important for public bodies to include in their Biodiversity Duty Reports, these are as follows:

- 1 Introductory information
- 2 Mainstreaming
- 3 Actions taken to improve biodiversity conservation
- 4 Partnership working and biodiversity communications
- 5 Biodiversity highlights and challenges
- 6 Monitoring
- 7 Contribution to targets



PART 3: Progress Summary 2015-2017

Good progress has been made in **mainstreaming** biodiversity duties into core activities, integrating biodiversity into corporate projects, plans and strategies.

Section 2: Mainstreaming			
Ref. No.	Action	Outputs	Outcomes
2.1	Renfrewshire Community Plan 2017-2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports healthy lifestyles and wellbeing of communities. Public consultation supporting preparation of the plan using the Place Standard includes an evaluation of “natural space” as one of 14 criteria. 	Renfrewshire Council has opportunity to communicate biodiversity conservation message to its 22 community planning partners.
2.2	Emerging Renfrewshire Local Development Plan 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Site Assessments for the Main Issues Report 2017 included biodiversity as a criterion for evaluating suitability. Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation continue to be recognised. 	Biodiversity continues to be protected through the Council’s planning policy and processes. Biodiversity enhancement is supported and encouraged.
2.3	Procurement policies and practices	Procurement Framework Agreements require an environmental policy to be submitted with tenders.	Increased awareness of biodiversity in business sectors.
2.4	Employing authority for Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Authority	Five year strategy for Clyde Muirshiel (2016) supports the park an attractive and ecologically important visitor destination with increased biodiversity value.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Woodland, moorland, wetland, loch and coastal areas are effectively managed and enhanced; Biodiversity is effectively conserved; Best practice is shared and utilised.
2.5	2017 Scottish Natural Heritage Swift Best Practice Advice Note	Advice Note circulated within Renfrewshire Council and included in the design of new Council homes in Renfrewshire.	Planned new Council housing at Bishopton and Johnstone Castle will incorporate Swift nesting bricks into their designs.
2.6	Author and lead organisation for Renfrewshire Biodiversity Action Plan 2018 - 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of 2004 LBAP completed and reported. Draft Renfrewshire LBAP completed for public consultation, incorporating comments from 25 partner organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 25 partner organisations actively supporting biodiversity conservation locally. New resources brought to biodiversity conservation projects in priority habitats. Improved levels of public awareness of biodiversity conservation in Renfrewshire.

The Council's approach to **actions** concentrated on embedding biodiversity in the delivery of the Green Network identified in the Renfrewshire Local Development Plan and supporting a range of partners to deliver biodiversity activities.

Section 3: Actions Taken to Improve Biodiversity Conservation			
Ref. No.	Action	Outputs	Outcomes
3.1	Clyde Muirshiel Country Park Woodland Management Plan 2016-2025	Prepared by Renfrewshire Council for Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park in autumn/winter 2015 and approved by Forestry Commission Scotland in spring 2016.	Removal of 7ha of mature Sitka Spruce and replacement with 5ha of semi-natural native woodland during winter 2017/18. Remaining 2ha left unplanted to protect an area of blanket bog which extends into the Country Park from surrounding moorland.
3.2	Support for Castle Semple Volunteer Group. http://clydemuirshiel.co.uk/muirshiel-pond-project/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £10,000 awarded to Group from Tesco "Bags of Help" scheme in March 2016. New pond created at Muirshiel Country Park as a result of funding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New example of priority habitat created. Volunteers given opportunities to engage in practical biodiversity conservation skills. More pupils and students can learn about pond biodiversity and its conservation.
3.3	Semple Trail Heritage Project http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/article/3061/Semple-Trail-Heritage-Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Windows on Wildlife" Project Officer delivered workshops to over 1,500 pupils. 1,049 people attended "Windows on Wildlife" presentations across Renfrewshire of captured wildlife footage. Thousands more people enjoyed selected wildlife footage on social media. 750 people attended more active events such as badger watching, otter spotting, bird ringing, small mammal surveys and after-dark walks. Paths upgraded on approaches to and within Parkhill Woods SINC. 6 staff from Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park and RSPB Lochwinnoch trained to become certificated pesticide operators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people engaged with biodiversity and its conservation. Local people more aware of the biodiversity in their communities. More people are aware of the richness of Renfrewshire's biodiversity. More people in Renfrewshire inspired to become actively involved in biodiversity conservation. More people can access one of the largest biodiversity-rich woods in Renfrewshire. Invasive Non-native Species such as Japanese Knotweed can be controlled much more effectively in Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park.

Section 3: Actions Taken to Improve Biodiversity Conservation

Ref. No.	Action	Outputs	Outcomes
3.4	Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park's volunteers	Supervised volunteering hours: 2014/15 3,312 2015/16 4,846 2016/17 2,977	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equivalent to 2 FTE members of staff working on habitat improvements throughout the 3 year reporting period. Over 2ha of invasive Rhododendron ponticum cleared from Parkhill Woods; Sitka Spruce saplings weeded at Muirshiel Country Park; priority pond habitat restored at two locations, hedge managed, nest boxes made for Scottish Biodiversity List priority birds.
3.5	Community Resources' Land Services Team led volunteers	Supervised volunteering hours: 2015 760 2016 620 2017 252	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equivalent of 1 FTE member of staff working on habitat improvements for a year. Hedgerows managed, scrub controlled, access improved, ditches cleared, litter lifted, sensory garden restored, plus nest boxes, bird feeders and bug hotels constructed and erected.
3.6	Linwood Community Woodland access improvements Project	Paths widened, sealed, levelled and drained as part of multi-funded project.	Local people can enjoy improved access to Wet Woodland and Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland habitats.
3.7	Biomass Renfrewshire Feasibility Study	Renfrewshire Council's 350ha of woodland, evaluated for their potential to be managed for wood chip biomass fuel production.	Option for the future sustainable management of Renfrewshire Council's woodland resource evaluated as part of ongoing work to consider future management approach.



Partnership Working and Biodiversity Communications was a key focus for the Council and activities delivered. Key highlights include the Council led co-ordination of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group and Growing Grounds Forum as well as a range of cultural and education programmes.

Section 4: Partnership Working and Biodiversity Communication			
Ref. No.	Action	Outputs	Outcomes
4.1	Co-ordination of the LBAP Steering Group for Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 meetings between 2015 and 2017 Membership expanded to 27 organisations by the end of 2017 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparation of draft Renfrewshire LBAP 2018 Regular liaison has resulted in practical conservation works on the ground in Renfrewshire. Joint ventures planned and joint partner applications for biodiversity activities Submitted to be part of the Paisley 2021 UK City of Culture programme.
4.2	Renfrewshire Growing Grounds Forum (coordinated by Renfrewshire Council and chaired by Renfrewshire Health & Social Care Partnership)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11 meetings held with an average attendance of 14 people. Regular communications between meetings. Membership of the Forum has expanded to 43 organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of organisations responding to opportunities to incorporate biodiversity conservation into their activities. Closer links between biodiversity conservation and health awareness activities.
4.3	Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park's Ranger led educational programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7,022 Renfrewshire school pupils receiving conservation education between 2015 and 2017 Productive partnership developed with University of the West of Scotland providing work experience for students and opportunities to study biodiversity in the field. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raised awareness and increased participation in biodiversity conservation. Cample Burn Juniper Restoration Project enhanced, uncommon reptiles surveyed at Muirshiel Country Park, woodland surveys completed, water quality monitored at Castle Semple Loch SSSI.
4.4	Tag-n-Track Project implementation at Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park	Full time Project Officer and part time Ranger employed for a two-year period to develop and promote activities for schools and volunteers, including training courses on use of motion detection cameras, animal behaviour, fieldcraft, species ecology and conservation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1,500 extra school pupils have participated in biodiversity focused activities and have raised awareness of biodiversity conservation issues. Potential for volunteers with new biodiversity conservation skills.

Section 4: Partnership Working and Biodiversity Communication

Ref. No.	Action	Outputs	Outcomes
4.5	Renfrewshire Museums Natural History Department	<p>Development of high profile initiative to regenerate Paisley Museum, including the storage and exhibiting of its extensive and important natural history collections.</p> <p>Three biodiversity themed exhibitions.</p> <p>Paisley Natural History Society held 8 lectures per year in Paisley Museum on a wide range of biodiversity subjects.</p>	Raised awareness and increased participation in biodiversity conservation.
4.6	<p>Environment and Communities Service</p> <p>Outdoor Environmental Education and Interpretation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental education provided at Glenniffer Braes Country Park for 748 pupils between 2015 and 2017. • Face-to-face interpretation provided at a number of parks and local nature reserves in the Paisley area for 427 adults between 2015 and 2017. • Six nurseries using the woodlands at Gleniffer Braes Country Park between 2015 and 2017. 	Raised awareness and increased participation in biodiversity conservation.
4.7	Renfrewshire Schools supporting biodiversity education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 126 educational establishments in Renfrewshire registered with “Eco-Schools” sustainable schools programme. • Activities delivered by programme include pond restoration, creation of butterfly gardens and gardening clubs, as well as local environmental reviews and biodiversity plans for schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity is increasingly incorporated into activities across the school curriculum. • Raised awareness and increasing participation in biodiversity conservation.

A key **highlight** over the period of this report is the production of a draft Renfrewshire Biodiversity 2018-2022 which sets out a positive and ambitious context for the enhancement of biodiversity across Renfrewshire. Future **challenges** lie in further mainstreaming biodiversity activities into more areas of the Council's activities.

Section 5: Biodiversity Highlights and Challenges			
Ref. No.	Action	Outputs	Outcomes
5.1	Development of draft Renfrewshire Biodiversity Action Plan 2018-2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed review of 2004 LBAP and stated actions; Preparation of draft Renfrewshire LBAP in partnership with LBAP Steering Group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biodiversity partners committed to undertaking actions as part of the Biodiversity Action Plan. Partnership approach has resulted in biodiversity projects being undertaken on the ground. Robust Local Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group guiding biodiversity actions.
5.2	Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park's hi-tech approach to biodiversity education and awareness work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities involve remote camera trapping techniques and internet uploads to reveal otherwise difficult to see species, as well as more traditional outdoor, indoor and classroom based activities. Tag-n-Track project to study the migration movements of local Lesser Black-backed Gulls via satellite tagging technology. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greatly extended reach for biodiversity awareness through new technologies.
5.3	Biodiversity Mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further mainstreaming of a biodiversity conservation ethos into more areas of Council work. Innovative partnerships forged with the voluntary and private sectors to coproduce biodiversity conservation work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raised awareness and increasing participation in biodiversity conservation within the Council. Enhanced levels of biodiversity conservation activity in Renfrewshire.
5.4	Management of Renfrewshire Council's Woodland Resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management plans written for a sample of priority woodland sites and approved for grant-aid by Forestry Commission Scotland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More Council woodland brought into sustainable management. Local people enjoy the full benefits of the Council owned woodland and appreciate the rich biodiversity to be found in these areas.

Monitoring biodiversity has been progressed through an ongoing review of Renfrewshire’s statutory nature designations. A monitoring framework is being developed with the Local Biodiversity Steering Group to evidence progress in delivery of actions.

Section 6: Monitoring			
Ref. No.	Action	Outputs	Outcomes
6.1.	Review of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)	To date 26 SINC resurveyed , along with five other areas suggested to Renfrewshire Council as SINC candidates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All sites reviewed by end of 2020. Availability of enhanced information on Renfrewshire’s local priority biodiversity sites.
6.2.	Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 143 biodiversity monitoring surveys between 2015 and 2017. Hen Harriers and Peregrine Falcons monitored annually throughout period for nesting activity. Wetland birds counted regularly and data entered on the British Trust for Ornithology online portal. Water quality at Castle Semple Loch monitored and reported. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved knowledge of numbers and distribution of butterflies and bumblebees available locally and at a national level. Data on breeding success of rare bird of prey made available to national databases so that wider conservation issues can be assessed. Data on wintering populations of local species made available for national analysis. Risk of damaging algal blooms affecting biodiversity and recreational uses is evaluated effectively.



Council activities highlighted within this report make a positive **contribution to targets** identified in Scotland’s Biodiversity Strategy: 2020 Challenge.

Section 7: Contribution to Targets Healthy Ecosystems	Contribution to Key Step	Justification
Encourage and support ecosystem restoration and management, especially in catchments that have experienced the greatest degradation.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Woodland Management Plan for Clyde Muirshiel Country Park completed and implemented (Section 3.1).
Use assessments of ecosystem health at a catchment level to determine actions.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of SINC’s underway (Section 6.1). Biodiversity monitoring in Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park (Section 6.2).
Government and public bodies will work together towards a shared agenda for action to restore ecosystem health at a catchment-scale across Scotland.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LBAP Steering Group for Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde (Section 4.1).
Establish plans and decisions about land use based on an understanding of ecosystems. Take full account of land use impacts on the ecosystem services that underpin social, economic and environmental health.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biodiversity conservation and enhancement embedded within Renfrewshire Local Development Plan (Section 2.2) Draft Renfrewshire Biodiversity Action Plan 2018 - 2022 prepared (Section 5.1).



Section 7: Contribution to Targets Biodiversity, Health and Quality of Life	Contribution to Key Step	Justification
Provide opportunities for everyone to experience and enjoy nature regularly, with a particular focus on disadvantaged groups.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff led events and activities at Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park (section 3.3, 4.3, 4.4 and 5.2). • Accessibility enhancements at Semple Trail Heritage Project (section 3.3). • Improved access to biodiversity rich habitats at Linwood Community Woodland (section 3.5). • Biodiversity themed exhibitions and talks at Paisley Museum (section 4.5).
Support local authorities and communities to improve local environments and enhance biodiversity using green space and green networks, allowing nature to flourish and so enhancing the quality of life for people who live there.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Castle Semple Volunteer Group created new pond at Muirshiel Country Park (section 3.2). • Volunteer activity at Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park equated to 2 FTE officer inputs across the three years (section 3.4). • Renfrewshire Growing Grounds Forum supported existing and aspiring growing groups (section 4.2).
Build on good practice being developed by the National Health Service (NHS) and others to help encourage greenspace, green exercise and social prescribing initiatives that will improve health and wellbeing through connecting people with nature.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renfrewshire Growing Grounds Forum supported existing and aspiring growing groups (section 4.2). • Promotion of activities through Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership (section 2.1).
Increase access to nature within and close to schools, and support teachers in developing the role of outdoor learning across the Curriculum for Excellence.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High proportion of schools participating in the Eco-Schools sustainable schools programme (section 4.7)
Encourage public organisations and businesses to review their responsibilities and action for biodiversity, and recognise that increasing their positive contribution to nature and landscapes can help meet their corporate priorities and performance.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2016 Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Strategy specifically encourages “increased biodiversity value” (section 2.4). • Draft Renfrewshire Biodiversity Action Plan 2018 - 2022 prepared (section 5.1). • Adoption by Renfrewshire Council of SNH’s “Swift Best Practice Advice Note” (section 2.5).

Section 7: Contribution to Targets Wildlife, Habitats and Protected Places	Contribution to Key Step	Justification
Ensure that the management of protected places for nature also provides wider public benefits.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies embedded within Renfrewshire Local Development Plan (section 2.2). • Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Strategy 2016 (section 2.4).
Integrate protected areas policy with action for wider habitats to combat fragmentation and restore key habitats.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies embedded within Renfrewshire Local Development Plan processes (section 2.2). • Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Strategy 2016 (section 2.4). • Renfrewshire Biodiversity Action Plan 2018 - 2022 (section 5.1).
Involve many more people than at present in this work and improve understanding of the poorly known elements of nature	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renfrewshire Biodiversity Action Plan 2018 - 2022 (section 5.1). • “Tag-n-Track” project in Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park (sections 4.4 and 5.1). • LBAP Steering Group support (section 4.1).



Section 7: Contribution to Targets Land and freshwater management	Contribution to Key Step	Justification
Promote an ecosystem approach to land management that fosters sustainable use of natural resources and puts biodiversity at the heart of land-use planning and decision-making.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies embedded within Renfrewshire Local Development Plan (section 2.2). • Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Strategy 2016 (section 2.4). • Renfrewshire Biodiversity Action Plan 2018 (section 5.1). • Biomass Renfrewshire project (section 3.7).
Ensure that measures taken forward under the Common Agricultural Policy encourage land managers to develop and retain the diversity of wildlife habitats and landscape features.	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside remit of Renfrewshire Council.
Support 'High Nature Value' farming and forestry	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside remit of Renfrewshire Council.
Put in place the management necessary to bring Scotland's protected areas into favourable condition and improve the ecological status of water bodies.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largely restricted to SSSI/SPA area which fall within Renfrewshire Council ownership in the Renfrewshire Heights SPA and Castle Semple Loch SSSI.
Ensure that biodiversity and ecosystem objectives are fully integrated into flood risk management plans, and restore wetland habitats and woodlands to provide sustainable flood management.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing through liaison within LBAP Steering Group and as expressed in the Renfrewshire Biodiversity Action Plan 2018 - 2022, Local Development Plan.
Restore and extend natural habitats as a means of building reserves of carbon and to help mitigate climate change.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved Muirshiel Country Park Woodland Management Plan (section 3.1). • Sergeantlaw Moss conservation works by Butterfly Conservation Scotland's "Bog Squad" (section 4.1)
Provide clear advice to land and water managers on best practice	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing and as requested.

Section 7: Contribution to Targets Marine and Coastal	Contribution to Key Step	Justification
Achieve good environmental status for Scottish seas.	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside remit of Renfrewshire Council.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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