



SECTION 1: INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR PUBLIC BODY

	East Renfrewshire Council's role and purpose in relation to Biodiversity
Introduction	<p>This report outlines the progress made by East Renfrewshire Council in fulfilling its biodiversity duties in the period from January 2021 to December 2023. The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 makes it a duty for all public bodies to publish a report on the actions they have taken to meet their biodiversity duty every three years. The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 states that Local Authorities have a duty to “exercise any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity as far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions”.</p> <p>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 is 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.</p> <p>.</p> <p>This Report provides information on the following themes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. East Renfrewshire Council's role in relation to biodiversity2. Actions to protect biodiversity3. Mainstreaming biodiversity4. Nature-Based Solutions, Climate Change and Biodiversity5. Public Engagement and Workforce Development6. Research and Monitoring7. Biodiversity Highlights and Challenges



Summary of East Renfrewshire's role and purposes in relation to biodiversity.

1. Land management and biodiversity

- East Renfrewshire Council directly manages 345 hectares of land, this figure includes stewardship of 116 hectares of woodland. While sports pitches and amenity grassland are a significant proportion of the total, there are areas of unimproved grassland, a number of wetlands and ponds and substantial lengths of rivers and burns. The management of the Council land estate is transitioning to maintenance practices which enhance biodiversity. Woodland has been planted on amenity grassland in urban areas and trials are ongoing with new grass mowing programmes and the reduction in herbicide use.
- Dams to Darnley Country Park is a partnership project between East Renfrewshire and Glasgow City councils. The country park covers 1350 acres of woodland, farmland and reservoirs between Barrhead, Darnley and Newton Mearns. The park attracts an estimated 100,000 visitors a year. Biodiversity is actively managed within the park: there is a habitat management plan in place which includes actions for the protection, enhancement and the promotion of biodiversity.
- Whitelee Access Project is a joint collaboration between East Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire and East Ayrshire Councils, Scottish Power Renewables, Forestry Commission, Scottish Water and Glasgow Science Centre. Whitelee is the area covered by the UK's largest onshore windfarm combining blanket bog, commercial coniferous forest and a mosaic of mires and wetland habitats. Much of the land is undergoing largescale habitat restoration with a large area of degraded peatland in the process of being restored.



2. Regulation of land use and development

- The planning service play a key role in protecting and enhancing biodiversity. Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) was adopted in March 2022. LDP2 identifies: 6 SSSIs, 72 Local Biodiversity Sites covering 1179 Ha, 1 local nature reserve and 73 Tree Protection Orders. There are 424 hectares of land designated as protected urban greenspace. The plan makes protection and enhancement of biodiversity a priority consideration for new development proposals. In the last 3 years planning policies have secured the creation of 2 hectares of wetlands and 2 hectares of woodland in new housing developments. A number of development applications were refused because of potential negative impacts on biodiversity.

3. Providing public information, supporting community learning and education around nature and the environment;

- There are two countryside ranger teams; one based at Whitelee the other at Dams to Darnley Country Park. The countryside ranger services provide a full programme of environmental events, outdoor learning and nature education. Many East Renfrewshire schools participate in the John Muir award scheme. The Wee Woods 26 events attracted over 500 participants. The Council supports schools to work with the Clyde River Foundation in monitoring the health of the Lovern Water.

4. Significant environmental impacts from our operations.

- In 2021/2022 East Renfrewshire Council's annual carbon emissions were 55,856tCO₂e. This figure is a 10% reduction on the previous period of 2019/2020. The figure has been declining steadily for over a decade but future reductions will be increasingly hard to realise.



SECTION 2: ACTIONS TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE BIODIVERSITY

	<p>Actions undertaken by East Renfrewshire Council or with partners to benefit biodiversity directly, to tackle the main drivers of biodiversity loss, or to achieve wider outcomes for nature and people.</p>
<p>Habitat creation</p>	<p>1. Habitat Improvements: Tree Planting on Council owned land</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership with Trees for Cities to plant 2800 trees in 1 hectare of amenity grassland in Cowan Park, Barrhead. Planted by volunteers led by Eadha, a new woodland of mixed native broadleaves was established in March 2021. • Wee Woods COP26 – 10,000 trees planted at 26 small high density planting sites to recognise Glasgow’s historic role hosting COP26. Planted between Nov 2021 and February 2022 • Partnership with East Renfrewshire Council’s housing department to plant 1000 trees as landscaping for a new social housing development. Planted March 2023 • Partnership with Clyde Climate Forest to plant 522 trees by local people in a canopy deprived neighbourhood in Barrhead. Clyde climate Forest used canopy analysis to identify neighbourhoods with the lowest tree cover, experiencing high levels of deprivation and most at risk from climate related extreme weather events. The strategically located standard trees and new woodland plots will provide shade and reduce flood run-off. Planted March 2023 • The Council supported three community organisations who organised their own tree planting events, the groups planted over 1000 trees at three different sites. • Plant a Tree in 23 is ongoing with 10000 trees being planted between December 2023 and February 2024



Habitat Mapping	<p>4. Habitat Network Mapping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is an ongoing partnership with Glasgow Clyde Valley Green Network to identify grassland nature networks and associated opportunities to connect and restore these networks where they are damaged. The mapping was produced digitally and is part of a wider collaboration between the local authorities in the Glasgow City Region to identify and strengthen nature networks across the city region. This work is central to realising the intent of NPF4 policy 3 and also supports the development of Nature Scot's Nature Network Framework. <p>5. Integrating Nature-based Solutions through Local Development Plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Green Network Special Planning Guidance was adopted as a supporting document to LDP2 in June 2023. The document provides detailed policy and guidance on integrating green infrastructure into new development using local examples of housing development where this has been successful, with explanations of the nature services being delivered by this new green infrastructure. <p>6. Working at a regional scale to restore nature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work is on-going work to support delivery of the Glasgow Clyde Valley Green Network Blueprint for the Glasgow City Region.• The Council is a signatory to the Clyde Climate Forest Concordat and is a member of the Clyde Climate Forest canopy working group which meets quarterly and provides support and advice to the Clyde Climate Forest Initiative which aims to plant 18 million trees across the Glasgow City Region by 2030. The council's ongoing tree planting programme contributes towards this target.



SECTION 3: MAINSTREAMING BIODIVERSITY

<p>LDP2</p> <p>Special planning guidance</p> <p>Other Council Plans/policies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consideration of biodiversity and nature is a pre-eminent theme in the Local Development Plan 2 adopted in March 2022. The nature related policies in LDP2 are more robust and more detailed than in LDP1 and there is a major focus on the climate emergency as the central over-arching principle. The policies in LDP2 closely align with the biodiversity polices in NPF4 published a year later in February 2023. • Adopted as a supporting document of LDP2 <i>The Development Contributions</i> SPG has directed £220K of contributions towards the improvement of green spaces, parks, Dams to Darnley Country Park, and green network projects. Biodiversity enhancements have benefited including sowing meadow mix seed, tree planting, and a feasibility study on options to restore the Capelrig Burn corridor. • The Council's Open Space Assets Plan 2023 now incorporates actions to enhance biodiversity across the council's land estate, including tree planting and reduction in herbicide use. • The Council's Get to Zero Action Plan is the Plan charged with tracking actions to reduce the Council's carbon emissions to zero by 2040. The GTZ Plan includes a number of cross over actions with a biodiversity theme. These include the identification of council owned land suitable for re-wilding projects, pilot trialling reduced herbicide use and alternative weed control methods, completion of the Open Space Audit, completion of a river restoration project on the Capelrig Burn and the appointment of biodiversity officer. • The Council has a sustainable procurement policy, currently procurement activity is responsible for 72.1 % of Council CO2 emissions making this a key area of work. Demonstration of sustainable practice is a scoring criteria for all tendering processes.



- | | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Before any new Policy or Strategy documents are adopted by the Council they must undergo a Climate Impact Assessment. This assesses negative and positive climate impacts of the policy and requires a demonstration that any negative impacts have been minimised or mitigated.• The East Renfrewshire Food Growing Strategy encourages and facilitates local food growing, promoting gardening and horticultural techniques which are nature friendly. |
|--|---|



SECTION 4: NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS, CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY

	<p>Integrating biodiversity with actions on the climate emergency through development and promotion of Nature Based Solutions.</p>
Nature Based Solutions	<p>East Renfrewshire Council is a partner in the Glasgow & Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership (GCVGNP). There are currently two areas of partnership work.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Work with GCVNP includes contributing to the delivery of the Blueprint Strategy: the city region project to identify key habitat corridors for woodland, grassland and wetland and active travel links. GCVGNP have identified a local network of Blueprint Strategy. In the last 3 years there have been projects to improve access and habitat networks along the Lavern Valley corridor, improving sections of path and managing grassland for biodiversity. A key objective of the blueprint is to increase resilience to climate change through ensuring continuity of habitat, allowing species to migrate.2. The Council is an active contributor to the growth of the Glasgow Region Climate Forest, an ambitious project to plant 18 million trees which will provide both climate mitigation and climate adaption benefits to the wider Glasgow area.3. The Lavern Water restoration project redesigned the river channel with additional flood plain storage to better cope with extreme rainfall events.



SECTION 5: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

<p>Supporting Volunteering</p>	<p>Dams to Darnley Country Park Ranger Service ran the following activities during this reporting period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 94 Dams to Darnley Volunteers sessions involving 468 participations, equal to 2600 work hours carried out within the country park, carrying out all manner of tasks • 4 corporate volunteer sessions arranged, engaging with 45 people and carrying out varying tasks in the country park • 7 volunteer sessions arranged with Community Networks support group for adults with learning disabilities <p>The Clyde Climate Forest provides opportunities for volunteers to plant trees at organised tree planting days:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 volunteers were involved planting the Dunterlie Clyde Climate Forest • Wee Woods 26 involved 110 volunteers involved in planting trees on 3 different days.
<p>Health and well being</p>	<p>Dams to Darnley Countryside Ranger Service provides sessions in nature for people experiencing health and well-being challenges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2022 developed a 6 week programme for Renfrewshire Association for Mental Health (RAMH) to get clients outdoors, working and engaging with nature. Equal to 33 visits or 99 working hours.



Outdoor Learning

- 2023 delivered two 6-week activity programmes for RAMH clients – summer and a new autumn programme. Clients signed up for 6 weeks each time, to carry out tasks and projects in the country park. Equal to 88 visits or 264 hours. 3 members of these groups subsequently joined the regular D2D Volunteer group.

Darnley Darnley Countryside Ranger Service work closely with schools providing a programme of educational activity.

- 2 ecology themed visits arranged to the country park for 20 children via ERC Health & Social Care Partnership
- 6 ecology themed visits arranged to the country park for 88 children and parents via Children 1st charity
- 68 school visits to the country park or in-school (outreach) visits, engaging with 3869 pupils
- 27 visits arranged for cub, scout, rainbows, girl guide and boys brigade groups engaging with 550 kids on nature/ecology themed activities
- 1 week long school work placement arranged

The Clyde River Foundation provides outdoor education in the river environment, monitoring river health and carrying out fish counts.

- The Foundation worked with Carlibar Primary School monitoring the Lavern Water in 2022 and rearing young trout for release in 2024.

Wee Woods 26 was a mass participation event involving every school in East Renfrewshire.

- 32 Schools were involved planting the 26 Wee Woods planted to coincide with COP26.



Public events	<p>Dams to Darnley Country Park run an annual programme of public events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 17 free public events provided with a nature theme engaging with 312 members of the public of all ages• the ranger service attended the Eaglesham Fair and the Neilston Show, taking information and activities based on nature and engaging with ~800 members of public
STEM	<p>Dams to Darnley Country Park provide materials for STEM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 new STEM worksheets developed and tested with teachers on a STEM ecology/outdoor learning training day organised at the country park• Ecology and STEM training provided to 10 teachers from all over Scotland via consultation with the Primary Science (STEM) Development Officer (PSDO) for East Renfrewshire Council, part of the Raising Aspirations in STEM Education (RAiSE) network of Education Scotland.• 3 STEM subject sessions provided to school pupils• AECOM provided in class STEM sessions with Carlibar Primary School as part of the Lavern Water Restoration Project.
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dams to Darnley Ranger Service recorded a 35% increase in Facebook followers and increased engagement with nature/ecology based posts
Practical Actions for Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A staff tree planting day took place in winter of 2022. 18 members of staff planted 250 trees.



SECTION 6: RESEARCH AND MONITORING

Monitoring	<p>Fish stocks in the Lavern Water were monitored by the Clyde River Foundation in Autumn 2023 to establish the status of migratory fish species. There will be follow up monitoring of fish populations in the Lavern Water following the removal of two barriers to fish passage in 2023.</p> <p>Due to resourcing issues there were no other biological monitoring activities during the period of report.</p>
-------------------	---

Does your monitoring show any significant trends or highlight any areas of concern?

Trends	There is not enough monitoring evidence available to identify trends.
---------------	---

Have you added any data collected to the National Biodiversity Network or your Local Records Centre?

Local Record's Centre	The Council does not currently have capacity to collect biological records
------------------------------	--

Research	The Council participated in the Nature Scot led Natural Capital Assessments Of Urban Nature-based Solutions in Scotland Report (2023). The purposes of the Report was to This study explores the extent to which NCA tools can support the development of green infrastructure/ nature-based solutions projects in Scotland, testing three different NCA tools against a completed project.
-----------------	---



SECTION 7: BIODIVERSITY HIGHLIGHTS AND CHALLENGES

Describe your organisation's

	East Renfrewshire Council's main achievements for biodiversity over the reporting period.
Projects	<p>Completion of the Levern Water Restoration Project in June 2023 represented the culmination of 6 years work. There were numerous challenges and constraints to be overcome. These included a constrained site, hazardous levels of contamination, the disruption of the pandemic, rising costs and funding gaps. A strong partnership with SEPA and a good relationship with the consultancy who did the feasibility and design work was foundational to achieving success. The project stressed the value of large multi-discipline teams; hydrologists, river morphologists, engineers, ecologists, contamination specialists, landscape architects, planners and quantity surveyors.</p> <p>The legacy is a restored river in a prominent town centre location that provides a large number of nature services to local people. A new blue/green space has been created for people to enjoy with riverside paths and seating, the biodiversity netgain report showed large gains for river biodiversity and good gains for the landscaped meadow areas beyond the river, and the river's expanded flood plain provides new capacity to deal with future extreme rainfall events.</p>



	The main challenges over the next three years
Funding	The Nature Restoration Fund has been vital in supporting biodiversity projects over the last 3 years. Continuation of the fund would support ongoing work. NPF4 places new requirements on planning teams to ensure that development brings biodiversity enhancements, while this is welcomed as a necessary aim the resources to ensure meaningful biodiversity benefits are both secured by the planning process and then delivered are currently not available.
Resources & Expertise	Successful delivery of NPF4 Policies 3 and 4 and the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy will require professional expertise beyond current staff capabilities.