

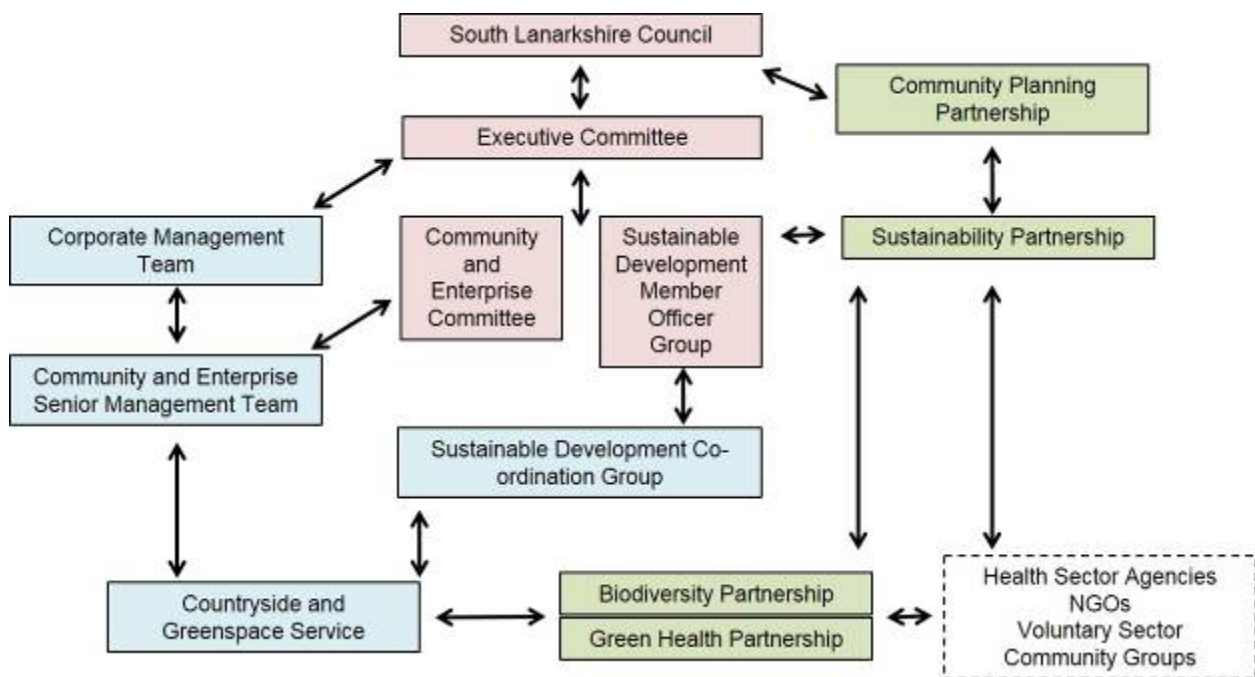


South Lanarkshire Council Biodiversity Duty Report 2018 – 2020



1. Introduction

- 1.1 South Lanarkshire Council (SLC) was established in 1996 under the Local Government etc (Scotland) Act 1994. Under this Act, and through a wide range of other legislation, the Council, as a unitary authority, exercises a range of statutory, regulatory and service functions.
- 1.2 The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act (2004) places a statutory duty to further the conservation of biodiversity; the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act (2011) requires the Council to report its compliance with this Biodiversity Duty.
- 1.3 In order to ensure that the Biodiversity Duty is being met across the Council, the Sustainable Development Coordination Group has been tasked with taking forward the development, implementation and monitoring of our Biodiversity Duty. Representatives from each of the Council's Resources sit on this group and are able to act as coordinators for the implementation of our Biodiversity Duty through the delivery of action plans.
- 1.4 The Council has produced a Biodiversity Duty Implementation Plan (2018-22). The Biodiversity Duty is also recognised in various Council Resource and Service Plans. Additionally, biodiversity is a fundamental part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process that assesses all policies, plans, programmes and strategies produced by the Council.
- 1.5 Services and Resources report through their own structures and committees. Additionally, biodiversity activity is reported within the Council and to the Community Planning Partnership through the Sustainable Development Partnership, as the following diagram shows. In South Lanarkshire, biodiversity expertise is located in the Countryside and Greenspace (CAG) Team, within Community and Enterprise Resources. The Biodiversity Officer post is located within this team. From September 2020 there have been changes to this structure; see section 2.5 for details.



1.6 The following Council services are represented on the **Sustainable Development Co-ordination Group**:

Corporate Resources:

- Finance: Procurement
- IT Services
- Community and Enterprise Resources:
- Sustainable Development
- Carbon Management
- Climate Resilience
- Countryside and Greenspace (Biodiversity)
- Countryside and Greenspace (Outdoor Access)
- Countryside and Greenspace (Greenspace)
- Environmental Health
- Planning and Building Standards
- Regeneration
- Roads and Transportation (Active Travel)
- Roads and Transportation (Flooding)
- Waste Management

Education Resources

- Support Services

Housing and Technical Resources:

- Business Development
- Strategy and Development

Social Work Resources:

- Operations

1.7 All Council Resources are represented on the **Corporate SEA Group** as well as representatives from the South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture Trust and the South Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership. Council Services on the Group are:

- Communications and Strategy, Corporate Resources
- Environmental Health (air quality and contaminated land)
- Countryside and Greenspace
- Flood Risk Management
- Regeneration and Inclusion
- Planning and Building Standards
- Roads and Transportation
- Sustainable Development
- Waste Services
- Support Services, Education Resources
- Strategy and Development, Housing and Technical Resources
- Directorate and Policy, Social Work Resources

1.8 The **South Lanarkshire Biodiversity Partnership**, established in 1997, is supported by the Council's Countryside and Greenspace team and reports to the Sustainable Development Partnership. The Partnership published its South Lanarkshire Biodiversity Strategy in 2018 alongside the Council's Biodiversity Duty Implementation Plan. Both plans were jointly subject to full SEA.

2. Mainstreaming

As a landowner and manager, South Lanarkshire Council 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 Plans are required to include details of the actions each Resource will take to contribute to the Council's Biodiversity Duty. Actions and measures from Resource and Service 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 Council's 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 proposals 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 follow table demonstrates the strong links between biodiversity and a range of Council activities and services.

Code	Description
2.1	<p>Connect (2017-22) is the Council Plan for South Lanarkshire. It 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 Council Resource produces more detailed plans for achieving annual priorities, for example, the Community and Enterprise Resource Plan includes actions documented in this Report.</p>
2.2	<p>Local Development Plan: Biodiversity is covered in the South Lanarkshire Local Development Plan (LDP) under:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy 14: Green Network and Greenspace: "Any development proposals should safeguard the local green network, identified on the proposals map, and identify opportunities for enhancement and/or extension which can contribute towards: iii. Supporting biodiversity."• Policy 15: Natural and Built Environment: covers the protection of designated and other important natural sites, and preventing and/or mitigating impacts on protected species.• 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. <p>South Lanarkshire LDP2 will replace the current LDP when it is formally adopted. LDP2 has been through Examination and will be submitted to the Scottish Ministers early in 2021 to gain their approval to adopt it.</p> <p>LDP2 continues the policy support for biodiversity set out in the current Plan's policies. It has a slightly different format as the detailed policies currently</p>

Code	Description
	<p>contained in Supplementary Guidance will be consolidated in Volume 2 of the LDP2.</p> <p>Biodiversity will be included in LDP2 under: Volume 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 in terms of their impact on the natural and historic environment, including biodiversity, geodiversity, landscape and townscape.” <p>LDP2 also proposes 15 new Local Nature Reserves (LNR) throughout South Lanarkshire, and makes provision for the identification of Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS).</p> <p>Volume 2 of LDP2 contains various detailed policies to provide additional guidance on a range of matters in support of the main policies in Volume 1. Of particular relevance are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 NHE12: Water environment and biodiversity • Policy NHE13: Forestry and woodland • Policy NHE14: Tree Preservation Orders • Policy NHE15: Local Nature Reserves • Policy NHE20: Biodiversity • Policy NHE21: Geodiversity and soils <p>The existing Supplementary Guidance for LDP1 is to be updated and rebadged as non-statutory supporting planning guidance, and will include natural environment, green network and greenspace topics.</p>
2.3	<p>Biodiversity Duty Implementation Plan (BDIP): The Council’s 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 2018 – 2022.</p>
2.4	<p>Community Planning – Sustainability Partnership: The South Lanarkshire Biodiversity Partnership is a sub-group of the Sustainability Partnership which is a thematic group under the South Lanarkshire Community Plan.</p> <p>The aim of the South Lanarkshire Sustainability Partnership is to work towards achieving quality of life and wellbeing in a balanced and sustainable way. Its key goals are to promote sustainable development, provide an overview of the</p>

Code	Description
	environmental conditions affecting local residents and help coordinate local action on climate change.
2.5	<p>Sustainable Development Co-ordination Group: The Group comprises representatives from all Resources within the Council. Its main remit is to oversee the preparation and delivery of the Council's Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy. Regular reports and presentations on biodiversity within South Lanarkshire are given to the Group. This is the main platform for overseeing the preparation and implementation of the BDIP.</p> <p>Following the Scottish Government's declaration of a climate emergency, and the introduction of more challenging climate change targets, there has been a recent change to the governance of sustainable development and climate change within the Council. September 2020 saw the introduction of a new Climate Change and Sustainability Committee which replaces the Sustainable Development Member Officer Working Group, as outlined in the structure chart diagram at 1.5. The Committee will be responsible for ensuring the Council complies with its Biodiversity Duty.</p> <p>The Sustainable Development Co-ordination Group has also been replaced with a higher-level Climate Change and Sustainability Steering Group. This is chaired by the Executive Director of Community and Enterprise Resources with senior management representatives from each Resource. Regular reports and presentations on biodiversity will now be presented to this group.</p> <p>The members of the former co-ordination group will continue and build on their work through a virtual sustainable development and climate change network. The network will also be for all employees with a work-related or personal interest in sustainable development and climate change. This network will provide a forum to share best practice, build knowledge and skills, and raise awareness of biodiversity across the Council.</p>
2.6	<p><u>Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy:</u> 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.</p> <p>The strategy is organised around three themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Council: what we do to manage our own impact on the environment. • Sustainable environment: what we do to protect and enhance the natural and physical environment for the benefit of all. • Sustainable communities: what we do to enable communities to live more sustainably.
2.7	<p>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 the Council's Resource Plans. This content includes text on sustainable development generally and specifically the Council's 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.</p>

Code	Description
2.8	<p>Corporate SEA Working Group: The Group brings together representatives 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 Council led policies, plans, programmes and strategies (plans) and their SEA. Many of the Council's 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.</p>
2.9	<p>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.</p>
2.10	<p>Air Quality Strategy (draft): South Lanarkshire's draft Air Quality Strategy recognises the importance of biodiversity in protecting and enhancing the natural environment. Sustainable South Lanarkshire is a key theme of this strategy which recognises the relationship between air quality and biodiversity.</p> <p>South Lanarkshire's Contaminated Land Strategy also recognises the importance of biodiversity on our natural resources, particularly in terms of nature conservation.</p>
2.11	<p>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.</p>
2.12	<p>The Local Transport Strategy (2013 – 2023) will be fully reviewed and renewed in 2023 and will be subject to SEA. Where the scale of a project requires that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) be undertaken, appropriately qualified and experienced consultants are appointed to carry these out. The results of the EIA are reported in an Environmental Statement which includes guidance on topics such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecology and Nature Conservation • Geology and Soils • Drainage and the Water Environment. <p>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.</p>


Code	Description
2.13	<p data-bbox="368 197 1406 394">Local Housing Strategy (LHS): The LHS is a statutory five year strategy detailing how the Council and its housing, health and homelessness partners will deliver and improve key services across South Lanarkshire. An annual review of the LHS is reported to the Executive Committee. Ensuring homes and communities are environmentally sustainable are contained within the wide range of outcomes of the strategy.</p> <p data-bbox="368 434 1398 564">South Lanarkshire Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP): The SHIP 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 within the LDP.</p> <p data-bbox="368 600 1401 698">In addition, Housing and Technical Resources significantly contributes to the Council's Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy in relation to reducing the environmental impact of housing and domestic construction.</p>
2.14	<p data-bbox="368 734 1315 801">Food Growing: the Food Growing Strategy is in draft; it was due to be published in 2020 but has been delayed due to recent Covid restrictions.</p>
2.15	<p data-bbox="368 842 1366 940">Developer Design Guidance: Flood Risk Assessments and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS): This new guidance, published in May 2020, includes the following recommendations:</p> <p data-bbox="368 976 1362 1106">“SuDS design should contribute to the local enhancement of biodiversity, through the creation of wildlife friendly wetland habitat. See the CIRIA SuDS Manual 2015 (C753) - Table 2.1 Design criteria for SuDS (p34) and subsequent guidance.”</p>
2.16	<p data-bbox="368 1149 1406 1247">Fernbrae Meadows: The reporting schedule of this green infrastructure project was embedded during the funding and post completion reports to NatureScot, with biodiversity as one of the required outcomes.</p>



3. Biodiversity Action

The Council's [Biodiversity Duty Implementation Plan](#) sets out the commitments the Council continues to make to the conservation of biodiversity. The progress made over the years highlights 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 has helped to integrate its consideration within Council resources, both in terms of incorporation within plans as well as action on the ground. We are committed to continue developing our work in this area.

The following table demonstrates actions the Council has taken over the last three years to ensure the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity.

Code	Description
3.1	<p>Local Nature Reserves: The Council has identified a suite of potential new LNRs that were made available for public consultation through the Main Issues Report of the LDP. Following recommendations from the consultation, there are 15 new sites and an extension to the existing LNR at Langlands Moss to progress to designation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backmuir Woods, Hamilton • Blantyre, Bothwell and Uddingston • Cadzow Glen, Hamilton • Fernbrae Meadows • Greenhall, Millheugh and Barnhill, Blantyre • Hamilton Low Park • Holmhill Wood Community Park, Cambuslang • James Hamilton Heritage Park, East Kilbride • Jock's Burn, Carluke • Langlands Moss, East Kilbride (extension) • Milton Tile Works, Carluke • Morgan Glen, Larkhall • Mossneuk, East Kilbride • Neilsland and Earnock Community Wood, Hamilton • Stonehouse Park, Stonehouse • Udston and Glenlee Woods, Hamilton • Westburn, Cambuslang <p>Draft management statements have been created for each site, and NatureScot informally consulted on their content.</p>
3.2	<p>Local Nature Conservation Sites: A list of potential LNCS has been created and mapped, based on previously identified Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and Wildlife Sites from the 1990s, along with sites identified from aerial photography, woodland mapping and peatland mapping.</p> <p>Together with an external contractor, we have surveyed 74 sites in the reporting period, which have been initially assessed using criteria based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Species diversity • Species rarity • Habitat importance • Habitat connectivity • Biodiversity connectivity <p>The initial focus is on the urban and greenbelt area to provide support to the planning system.</p>

Code	Description
3.3	<p>Strategic Environmental Assessments: Biodiversity has been scoped in to all SEAs proceeding to Scoping stage; potential environmental effects are considered and where appropriate, relevant mitigation and enhancement measures identified. The figures below show the number of plans assessed as part of the SEA process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2017: Total 12 (10 Pre-screened, 2 Screening Determinations where SEA not required). • 2018: Total 9 (7 Pre-screened, 2 Post Adoption Statements: Biodiversity Strategy and BDIP). • 2019: Total 14 (13 Pre-screened, 1 completed at Environment Report stage: INNS Strategy replaced by position statement). <p>In addition, there are plans currently undergoing the SEA process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post Adoption Statement: Air Quality Strategy • Environmental Report: Contaminated Land Strategy, LDP 2
3.4	<p>Conservation days at South Haugh: Fortnightly sessions have been running since 2013, providing a volunteering opportunity which gives much needed management to South Haugh, and Low Parks (Hamilton). In January 2020, a new format was arranged and is being trialled, which sees the conservation days rotating around a few sites (including Udston and Glenlee, and Westburn proposed LNRs), but still running predominantly at South Haugh and Low Parks.</p> <p>Path maintenance, Himalayan balsam removal, woodland management and scrub clearing are just a sample of the activities that take place. A core of 6-8 volunteers have been in attendance throughout, with further volunteers from the local communities around the additional sites joining in. The work is having a positive impact on sites and volunteers involved.</p> <p>Due to Covid restrictions, the planned programme of works has been postponed since March 2020, and will be rescheduled when safe to do so.</p>  <p>Photo: Conservation volunteer litter pick at Udston and Glenlee Woods proposed LNR</p>
3.5	<p>Grassland management: The Council continues to create areas of long grass and wildflowers to benefit biodiversity, particularly pollinators. Reduced grass cutting has been introduced to some areas, including one site (in Glen Doll, East Kilbride) which is demonstrating the use of yellow rattle as a way to reduce grass growth. Covid lockdown restrictions have connected many people with their local greenspaces and nature and helped to highlight the importance of wildlife in long grass habitats.</p>
3.6	<p>Invasive, Non-Native Species: The location of INNS, mainly Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam and giant hogweed are recorded. Treatment to remove the plants is applied, where appropriate and areas are subsequently monitored.</p>

Code	Description
3.7	<p>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 chemicals and appropriately managing natural features and wildlife. These sites have associated active Community Groups.</p> <p>During the reporting period, Strathaven Park has a new sensory garden which includes planting to encourage pollinators. A new substantial mixed hedge, supplied by Scottish Forestry is being planted in late 2020.</p>  <p>Photo: growing beds and orchard at Strathaven Park.</p>
3.8	<p>Air quality: The 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.</p> <p>One of the measures within the action plan is to investigate the use of green infrastructure to target emissions. A planting project was delivered in a key target area in Rutherglen which had a focus on improving biodiversity, flooding and air quality. Working with local community garden growing group “Grow 73” large wooden planters were installed with pollution fighting plants, some of which are pollinator friendly.</p>  <p>Photo: Grow 73 volunteers and SLC staff installing planters</p>
3.9	<p>Vacant and Derelict Land (VDL): From 2017 to 2019 there has been an overall reduction in area of land on the VDL Register of 44.27ha. There is biodiversity value in the sites that have become naturalised to woodland or greenspace; this included 4.42ha of land removed from the register during the period 2017-2019.</p> <p>The Derelict Land sub-group of the Biodiversity Partnership has identified sites which could potentially be removed from the VDL Register due to naturalisation. The Council has used Derelict Land Fund monies to carry out further investigations and habitat surveys on some of these sites. Some VDL sites are also identified as potential LNR or LNCS.</p>

Code	Description
3.10	<p>Contaminated Land: Environmental improvement works have been undertaken at Glen Esk (see section 6.4) in East Kilbride to improve a former landfill site. Works included creating a boardwalk and information boards explaining the biodiversity of the area along with the introduction of an outdoor classroom facility.</p> <p>A similar project is underway at Milton Tile Works in Carluke, which is a proposed LNR and includes areas of VDL. Site works include hedgerow gap filling and maintenance, invasive plant species control and wildflower seed sowing. This is due to complete in December 2020.</p>
3.11	<p>Planning Applications: the Council receives many planning applications of various scale across the area. Staff comment on biodiversity aspects of these applications, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effect on native woodland. • Proximity to locally important areas. • 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.
3.12	<p>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 green space, wildlife corridors and wildflower plantations. These are considered on a site by site basis in conjunction with developers.</p>
3.13	<p>Ecological Surveys: Where necessary, the procurement process ensures the completion of ecological surveys to provide information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protected species such as badgers, 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.
3.14	<p>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.</p>
3.15	<p>Community Payback: The Council's Social Work team provides unpaid work placements which include environmental improvements or conservation work such as path maintenance and woodland management.</p>
3.16	<p>Dead wood: On Council 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.</p>
3.17	<p>Eco-Schools: In South Lanarkshire, 212 education establishments are registered as Eco-schools with 69 Green Flags achieved.</p>

4. Partnership Working

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


- 4.1 [The South Lanarkshire Biodiversity Partnership](#) (SLBP) was established in 1997 to bring together partners with an interest in conserving and promoting biodiversity. 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:
- [Butterfly Conservation Scotland](#)
 - [Clyde River Foundation](#)
 - [Forestry and Land Scotland](#) (FLS)
 - [Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership](#)
 - [Green Action Trust](#) (GAT) (formerly the Central Scotland Green Network Trust)
 - [Hamilton Natural History Society](#)
 - [NatureScot](#) (formerly Scottish Natural Heritage)
 - [North Lanarkshire Council](#)
 - [Royal Society for the Protection of Birds](#) (RSPB)
 - [Scottish Environment Protection Agency](#) (SEPA)
 - [Scottish Forestry](#)
 - [Scottish Wildlife Trust](#) (SWT)
- 4.2 [The Sustainability Partnership](#) comprises elected members and officers from the Council, community planning partners and third sector organisations. Staff from Countryside and Greenspace regularly present on biodiversity activities to the Partnership and explore ways in which we can achieve more value from our activities in collaboration with partners.
- 4.3 [South Lanarkshire Outdoor 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 (farmers, estate owners, agencies such as SWT, Scottish Forestry and Historic Environment Scotland), walkers, cyclists, equestrians, people with disabilities, anglers and communities.
- 4.4 [Lanarkshire Green Health Partnership](#) (LGHP): LGHP aims to raise awareness and confidence of the health and social care sector workforce and the public, enabling a better connection with nature. The partnership aims to achieve this by offering holistic care for prevention, treatment and mitigation of ill health by:
- Ensuring outdoor activities are promoted, valued and integrated to the provision of health and care services.
 - Calling for action from many organisations.
 - Shaping work around local health priorities.
- 4.5 [The Clyde and Avon Valley Landscape Partnership](#) (CAVLP) 2012-18: CAVLP has been a partnership between South and North Lanarkshire Councils, NatureScot, RSPB, SWT and local community interest groups and social enterprises. The programme has seen nearly £5m brought into the nationally significant landscapes, ancient woodlands, orchards and other features of the mid Clyde Valley and lower Avon Water. The project approached biodiversity conservation from a landscape scale perspective with a focus on community engagement and capacity building. In 2018, CAVLP concluded and was replaced by Community Action Lanarkshire (CAL). CAL is a programme managed by the Rural Development Trust offering support for rural communities across rural North and South Lanarkshire with community-led action plans to build and grow projects.


- 4.6 The Council works with other external partners to further its biodiversity duty, including:
- [The Green Action Trust](#)
 - [Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership](#)
 - [South Lanarkshire Community Planning Partnership](#)
 - [Greenspace Scotland](#)


Various partnership projects have been developed and implemented over the last three years that contribute to the conservation of biodiversity:


Code	Description
4.7	<p>The South Lanarkshire Biodiversity Partnership: South Lanarkshire Council co-ordinates and provides support for the Partnership. We facilitate and chair annual meetings of the partnership and it's five sub-groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and nature • Vacant and derelict land • Invasive, non-native species (INNS) • Peatland and freshwater • Habitat networks <p>The Partnership has produced a Biodiversity Strategy (2018-22). This takes an ecosystem approach to improving the biodiversity of South Lanarkshire, and has identified five key ecosystems relevant to the area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freshwater • Lowland and farmland • Peatland • Upland • Urban • Woodland <p>For each eco-system and cross-cutting theme, the Strategy identifies progress achieved, key challenges and opportunities, outcomes and action.</p>
4.8	<p>Lanarkshire Green Health Partnership: The programme of work includes offering green health opportunities such as walking, cycling, gardening and volunteering as well as enjoying being out and about in greenspace. Actions have involved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of gardening sessions at five community hospitals. • Integration of green health activities to existing referral pathways such as Physical Activity Prescription, Active Health, Well Connected and Weigh to Go. • Raising awareness of the benefits of nature with over 600 health and social care professionals. • Identification of over 150 green health activities across both area Health and Social Care Partnerships. • Development of a Green Health Directory for staff and the public. • Infrastructure changes and resources developed to improve active travel. • Quality improvement priorities identified through GIS mapping of SIMD areas and quality of greenspace surrounding these communities.

Code	Description
4.9	<p>Community groups: The Council continues to support community groups with an interest in engaging with their local greenspace, for example, by assisting with events and conservation activities, attending meetings and applying for funding. Examples of supported groups are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends of Cadzow Glen • Friends of Fernbrae Meadows • New Roots - Neilsland and Earnock Heritage Group • The Cadzow Crew • The Friends of Holmhills Wood Community Park • The Friends of Langlands Moss • The Friends of Morgan Glen • The Friends of Stonehouse Park • The Friends of the Calder • The Friends of Udston and Glenlee Woods <p>Many sites have undergone improvements in the past to make them more accessible and usable by local communities and nearby schools, and to give a higher biodiversity value, for example by improving the quality of the woodland.</p> <p>Volunteer Review: A report has been compiled, celebrating the achievements of volunteers we support, and detailing the positive outcomes for biodiversity over the last 10 years or so. Our volunteer base comprises of “Friends of” groups, individual volunteers and several long running relationships with organisations such as Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health and Clydesdale Community Initiatives (CCI), all working in conjunction with the Council to improve biodiversity in South Lanarkshire.</p> <p>Examples of these groups are shown in 4.10 to 4.12 and in section 6.</p>
4.10	<p>The Friends of Holmhills Wood Community Park: The Friends of Holmhills Wood Community Park is a sub-group of Cambuslang Community Council. They are a small but dedicated group, keen to promote and conserve the park through awareness raising and public events.</p> <p>The Friends continue to hold regular public meetings, monthly themed meet ups (such as pond dipping for families and practical conservation tasks), public activities and events for all ages and abilities, a weekly Health Walk, and work with local primary, secondary and additional support needs schools.</p> <div data-bbox="370 1559 887 1899" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>Photo: The Friends at a litter pick event</p> <p>Working with Dragonfly Conservation, the Friends have undergone training sessions to allow them to identify both adults and nymphs in the three ponds. They record dragonflies and damselflies throughout the season and have set</p>

Code	Description
	<p>up a weekly butterfly monitoring transect. They also contribute casual wildlife records to the appropriate recording schemes throughout the year. A few of the Friends are very keen naturalists with very good wildlife recording skills. One member is a talented wildlife photographer.</p> <p>Ongoing conservation tasks include thinning of willow between the ponds for the benefit of nesting warblers, pond maintenance, wildflower seeding and the creation of bug hotels for invertebrates.</p> <p>The Friends continue to monitor and assist in the removal of invasive plants. A small patch of Japanese knotweed is hand-pulled each year and continues to reduce. New Zealand pond weed is present in the ponds; the Friends regularly try to curb its spread.</p> <p>The Friends have an active Facebook presence and use this to promote their events and activities, and those of other local environmental groups. They have joined the Greening Cambuslang Network to enable this. In 2019, The Friends of Holmhill Wood Community Park gained the “You’re your Neighbourhood” Thriving Level 4, the second highest level achievable.</p>
4.11	<p><u>New Roots - Neilsland and Earnock Heritage Group</u>: continue to hold informal community such as litter picking, path maintenance and wildlife recording events within the proposed LNR. The group work in partnership with the Council’s CAG team and participate in a Local Management Group. This local greenspace is regularly used by three local primary schools and a nursery group for study and play activities.</p>
4.12	<p>Calderglen Conservation Volunteers meet regularly to continue a programme of work to eradicate invasive alien snowberry and rhododendron from the native woodland areas of Calderglen Country Park. As part of this work there has also been a major effort to remove beech regeneration from the understorey of the native woodland resource.</p> <p>Work will continue to restore the woodlands and eradicate INNS species from the woodlands and help create a native understorey and thriving field and ground layer within the woodland.</p>  <p>Photo: Calderglen Conservation volunteers clearing snowberry</p>
4.13	<p>Conservation Volunteering with CCI: Countryside and Greenspace have worked with CCI to complete 433 volunteer days of work between September 2016 and March 2020.</p> <p>CCI carried out the following biodiversity tasks from 2018 and 2020:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laverock Hill, Hamilton: rhododendron removal; felling of non-native conifers.

Code	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hamilton Low Parks: Himalayan balsam removal in Barmichael Plantation. • Chatelherault Country Park, Hamilton: hazel coppicing. • Mauldslie Wood and parkland, Law: birch thinning; felling of non-native conifers; rhododendron removal; Himalayan balsam removal, and construction of seven timber tree enclosures, each with a planted oak tree. <p>CCI have also worked with SLC CAG, Crawforddyke Primary School and local community members to carry out litter picks, site maintenance and wildflower meadow management in the proposed Jock's Burn LNR during 2020. Pupils from Crawforddyke Primary Eco Club have created a short animation to raise awareness about responsible behaviour on site.</p>
4.14	<p>Greening Camglen: This network of like-minded local organisations and groups working in Rutherglen and Cambuslang aim to promote environmentally positive activities and actions within the local area. The network has plans under various greening themes and involves groups on key Council sites such as the Friends of Fernbrae Meadows, Friends of Holmhills Wood Community Park and Grow 73.</p>
4.15	<p>Volunteer Capacity Building: CAG provide regular opportunities for volunteers to attend training sessions and events. Examples include bat survey training, bushcraft skills and conservation events.</p>
4.16	<p>Creating a B-Line in the Clyde Valley:</p> <p>During 2019 and 2020, South Lanarkshire Council is working with Buglife (The Invertebrate Conservation Trust) to improve 12 sites for pollinators such as bees and hoverflies. Changing the management at various sites will create “stepping stones” of flower rich habitat within the identified B-line corridors.</p>  <p>Photo: yellow rattle sowing at Kirkfieldbank with SLC and Buglife staff and volunteers</p> <p>Activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulbs planted • Plug plants added • Wildflower seed sown • Hedgerow gaps filled • Fruit trees planted

Code	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yellow rattle sown • Flowering shrubs planted <p>This project has been funded by the Biodiversity Challenge Fund. This project was due to be completed in September 2020 but will now be completed in 2021 thanks to a funding extension.</p>
4.17	<p><u>Badgers in the Landscape - community building for wildlife conservation:</u> this project, which aimed to increase awareness and skills of people in South Lanarkshire regarding badger ecology and wildlife crime came to an end in 2019. The aim of the project was to protect South Lanarkshire's badgers, their setts and natural habitats through community action. The project offered lots of exciting ways to get involved including flexible volunteering opportunities, training, sett monitoring, badger surveys and watches and wildlife crime workshops.</p> <p>The project legacy is a successful, independent volunteer group who survey and investigate badger issues in South Lanarkshire and further afield.</p>
4.18	<p><u>Helping Hands for Butterflies:</u> CAG have been working in partnership with Butterfly Conservation Scotland on a project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and NatureScot to create new habitats for butterflies in urban places. This project is underway at Stonefield Park in Blantyre, White Gates Orchard on Hunthill Road, Blantyre and Bothwell Road Park in Hamilton.</p>  <p>Photo: removing cut grass from the meadow in Blantyre</p> <p>Staff and volunteers have been involved in conservation events from winter 2019 to create new wildflower meadows and maintain existing habitats and strongholds for butterflies. Over three years, project work will include a series of meadow discovery days, training workshops and sowing and planting events. This is part of a project covering a large area in Central Scotland, which will include work parties on bing sites in the future, to improve and maintain existing habitat for pollinators.</p> <p>Due to the ongoing pandemic, some volunteer work has paused; CAG staff are working in conjunction with Butterfly Conservation staff, to continue the required work until we can safely work with volunteers again.</p>

Code	Description
4.19	<p>Controlling INNS in SSSI sites: CAG has been working with NatureScot and The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) on a programme to tackle INNS in SSSI areas, namely Bothwell Woods and Low Parks in Hamilton.</p> <p>So far, there have been two sessions controlling Himalayan balsam and rhododendron, with plans to continue this in 2021. In the interim CAG staff will continue with INNS removal until it is appropriate to work with volunteers and other organisations again.</p>  <p>Photo: removing Rhododendron from Bothwell Woods</p>
4.20	<p>Education in Greenspaces: The Countryside Ranger Service continues to support schools to connect with their local greenspace, provide advice and signposting to available resources.</p>
4.21	<p>Community Outdoor Play Groups: These groups have had initial funding and mentoring and now run their own outdoor play activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little Saplings and Mighty Oaks at Stonehouse Park: funding through CAVLP Legacy for training in 2019 has trained three new leaders in 2019. The group now runs monthly outdoor play sessions for two age groups. • Wild About Sandford: funding through CAVLP Legacy for equipment in 2019. • Wild About Lanark at Lanark Loch and Racecourse: funding through CAVLP Legacy for equipment 2019. • Bothwell Road Action Group (BRAG) at Backmuir: funding through CAVLP Legacy to run community play programme in 2019. The group has ongoing support from the SLC Countryside Ranger Service due to Covid restrictions curtailing planned training and events. • Wild About East Kilbride at Calderwood Gardens: funding through CAVLP Legacy in 2019 for training and equipment. • St Nicholas Playgroup and Toddlers at Delves Park, Lanark: funding through CAVLP Legacy in 2019 for training and equipment. The group completed six supported sessions and now run their own outdoor sessions as part of playgroup activities.
4.22	<p>Woodland Play Programmes: These sessions have been delivered in partnership with SLC CAG and various external partners, thanks to CAVLP Legacy funding.</p> <p>Additional Support Needs family play</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two sessions were delivered to REACH Autism Lanarkshire families in partnership with Outlet Play Resource at Chatelherault Country Park; 30 people attended.

Code	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two sessions were delivered to The A Team (Autism Support network for South Lanarkshire families) in partnership with Forest Friends Community Interest Company (CIC) at Braidwood, Carluke; 80 people attended. <p>Backmuir Woods Family Play (in Partnership with BRAG)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four sessions run during summer 2019 with 120 people, in partnership with Outlet Play Resource • Two capacity building sessions with children and young adults from Covey befriending - 129 people, with Outlet Play Resource. <p>Braidwood Pond Programme (delivered by Equitots Lanarkshire CIC and Wellriggs Ecology and Outdoor Learning): William Grant funding has allowed us to develop partnerships to deliver a range of Forest School and outdoor play projects in Carluke and Braidwood areas as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barnardos Youth Housing Support Service and Positive Destinations programmes: 10 young people aged 16-25 took part in a Forest School programme to support their mental wellbeing and build outdoor skills. • Esteem Clydesdale Mental Health and Suicide prevention: 20 people from a range of families supported by Esteem took part in 11 outdoor play sessions. • Carluke High School: 20 young people have taken part in two Forest School programmes to help build their skills and engagement in learning outdoors. • Little Buds is a monthly family play session for families of children with additional support needs. Sessions are ongoing. 87 people have joined the sessions (some are repeat visits). • Family holiday programme: woodland play holiday sessions which are open to all, took place during February and Spring Break 2019; 80 people participated.
4.23	<p>School Partnerships: Education Resources support a wide range of partnerships including Forest Schools, working with local groups and the development of orchards. Schools are active in engaging with their local community and other partners in support of these initiatives.</p>
4.24	<p>Working with businesses: CAG have worked with private businesses to carry out conservation work, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department for International Development staff carried out scrub clearance at Cadzow Castle, Chatelherault Country Park. • A team of staff from both Portakabin and Sainsbury's Bank completed scrub clearance along National Cycle Route 74. • Babcock International funded and helped install a community growing garden and orchard in Blantyre, with SLC and Friends of the Calder. • Rhododendron control with staff from First Direct at Bothwell Woods SSSI.
4.25	<p>Food growing: The Amenity Services 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. Recent projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with a nursery group in Uddingston who wish to become involved in the local park and have agreed to a fruit tree planting

Code	Description
	<p>programme and the introduction of some food growing areas for the children to learn.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creation of a food growing pilot in Strathaven Park which is managed by a local group. • Investigating the creation of a food growing site on derelict and contaminated land in partnership with a local group in Burnhill. • Working with a group in Millheugh who wish to create a community growing area in an unused area of a local park. • Creation of a Community Growing Toolkit for groups who want to create their own sites as a practical guide. • 12 applicants waiting for an allotment were referred to a local growing group to gain growing experience.
4.26	<p>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.</p> <p>The Management Plan (2017-2027) sets out objectives and actions for the sites, including the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To maintain a naturally dynamic 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.
4.27	<p>Life in the Cadzow Oaks: Field work for this project was completed in 2018. Staff and volunteers from the Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow, supported by volunteers and CAG staff were funded by Heritage Lottery Fund supported CAVLP and the Glasgow Natural History Society to carry out invertebrate sampling at the Cadzow Oaks (Hamilton High Parks SSSI). The sampling concentrated on fauna associated with dead wood, using a combination of proved search methods.</p> <p>Up-to-date knowledge of the invertebrate community is of central importance in the conservation of the natural heritage in this area. It will facilitate the evaluation and formulation of appropriate management prescriptions and future monitoring of site quality. Analysis of field samples is ongoing, with a note published on an insect species recorded for the first time in Scotland.</p>
4.28	<p>Windfarm habitat management: as part of windfarm development, many of which are in upland areas, large areas of land are covered by Habitat Management Plans. These aim to improve habitat such as woodland and bogs for species including black grouse and hen harrier.</p> <p>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 RSPB, FLS and, where appropriate, NatureScot, 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.</p>

5. Communication

The Council make use of their regular contact with the general public to communicate, educate and promote biodiversity. Within the Council, staff are kept aware of and up to date with biodiversity issues, changes and opportunities.

Code	Description
5.1	South Lanarkshire Council website : provides information relating to biodiversity, including the Biodiversity Strategy and Biodiversity Duty Implementation Plan.
5.2	The Council's Environmental Statement sets out our environmental commitments. This includes the following statements and guidelines for staff: "We will work to protect biodiversity and safeguard ecosystems services in accordance with national, international legislation, policies and guidelines. Protect the physical environment, biodiversity and greenspace: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of the Council's Biodiversity Duty and associated Implementation Plan. • Complete the biodiversity duty Learn Online module. • Consider environmental volunteering by joining a local or national group."
5.3	The Learn Online course "Your Biodiversity Duty" is available to all staff.
5.4	Facebook Page : CAG runs a Facebook page which provides information and promotes the work of the Council and our partners. This is the main media that we use to advertise events and activities and provide information. During Covid-19 lockdown in 2020 the Facebook page was well used to encourage people to use their local greenspaces with a series of videos and posts on local wildlife. A separate Facebook group was set up to support the green volunteer network in Lanarkshire during this time, along with regular digital meetings for staff and volunteers to keep in touch.
5.5	Environmental Volunteer Newsletter : CAG produce a newsletter twice a year which includes articles on biodiversity projects such as Citizen Science opportunities.
5.6	Volunteer Network : CAG maintains a database of environmental volunteers that work across the area. They receive regular emails giving information and invitations to events and training courses.
5.7	South Lanarkshire Biodiversity Partnership website : This website was refreshed in 2020, providing information on the Partnership, Biodiversity Strategy and various other resources.
5.8	School projects : Schools and pupils involved in projects will often communicate information about these to parents/carers and the wider community through their own websites, blogs and newsletters.
5.9	State of the Environment Report on Glow : Information relating to the Report is available to teachers and pupils on the educational platform Glow. This includes information about the natural environment such as changes in woodland cover and the condition of designated sites.

Code	Description
5.10	The Food Growing Forum brings together a range of groups and resources with an interest in food growing to encourage community benefits and share good practice. A food growing storyboard is being finalised and will be available to the public covering all aspects of food growing.
5.11	Land, Life and Water exhibition was on display at Chatelherault Country Park as the CAVLP project came to an end in 2018. The exhibition showcased over 70 projects and ran alongside events such as archaeological workshops and woodland guided walks. Project work from CAVLP has been retained as a digital archive on the CAL website.

5.12 Training and Learning: Members of staff across the Council have attended various conferences and training events. These include:

- Central Scotland Green Network Forum (annual)
- Corporate SEA Working Group meetings and site visits
 - 2017: 5 meetings, site visits to Broken Cross Surface Mine and Chatelherault Country Park. Presentations on Local Housing Strategy, Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy, minerals, EIA Regulations update, Air Quality Management Areas Plan.
 - 2018: 4 meetings. Presentations on Air Quality Action Plan, Lanarkshire Green Health Partnership, Beat the Streets, South Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership, Resilience, Reflecting on SEA experience for Biodiversity Strategy and BDIP.
 - 2019: 5 meetings. Presentations on National Flood Risk Assessment, Climate Ready Clyde, State of the Environment Report on Glow, Impact Assessment Leadership International Symposium, New Lanark World Heritage Site Management Plan, Food Strategy, demographic data sources, South Ayrshire Council's State of the Environment Report and neighbourhood planning.
- Local Biodiversity Action Plan Officer Network meetings (twice a year)
- Member of the Lowland Deer Network Scotland
- Member of the Park Managers Forum
- National Access Forum (quarterly)
- Sustainable Development Partnership (annual site visits)
- Biodiversity stakeholders events, June 2018 and May 2019
- Amphibian and reptiles of Scotland conference (June, 2018)
- Creating a buzz in development – how can developers help Scotland's pollinators? (August, 2019)
- Trees in the Planning framework (June and Nov 2019, for Planning staff)
- Forestry and the uplands – designing for priority species and habitats (Jan, 2020)
- During lockdown staff attended webinars on various topics, including:
 - Introduction to identifying ladybirds
 - British Ecological Society: Ecology Live weekly
 - Biodiversity Net Gain
 - Trees and Fungi
 - Introduction to Scottish spiders

6. 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.

6.1 Peatland restoration at Langlands Moss

Langlands Moss is a small and largely intact area of lowland raised bog in East Kilbride. The vegetation on the raised bog is typical of the habitat with sphagnum bog mosses, heathers, bog asphodel, round-leaved sundew and cotton grasses. Species of interest found at the site include large heath and green hairstreak butterflies, otter, badger, common frog, newts and common lizard. The nationally rare lichen *Vulpicidia pinastri* can be found on deadwood within the raised bog.

Peatland Restoration project: During 2019 and 2020 SLC are working with the Friends of Langlands Moss (FOLM) and the Green Action Trust on a large project to remove mature conifer plantation from the edge of the raised bog. The aim is to improve the hydrology of the peatland and increase the natural habitats found there. Parts of this work have been funded by NatureScot's Peatland Action Fund:

- Feasibility study (2018): This report set out options for site management and identified areas of deep peat under the conifer plantation. 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 2,925 tonnes of carbon (106,059 tonnes of CO²).
- Peatland restoration work (2020): peatland conservation work involved installation of 18 plastic dams, three peat dams and five bunds. Work also included a protected mammal survey, fixed point photography and vegetation quadrats. Removal of the conifer plantation was completed in late 2020.



Photo: Conifer extraction and blocked drain holding water, 2019

Other projects:

- Bog Squad: This volunteer task force created by Butterfly Conservation carries out peatland restoration work across Scotland. They have been working at Langlands Moss since 2014 alongside the FOLM and other volunteers to remove large sections of invasive scrub and install ditch blocking dams. The effectiveness of the dams has been quick with large pools of water being retained which is helping to re-wet the surrounding peat.



Photo: Bog Squad and FOLM at Langlands Moss, 2019

- FOLM have fun events throughout the year including practical conservation days, community consultation, and bat and moth events.
- The Friends launched a [new website](#) to promote their work and Langlands Moss LNR.

6.2 Fernbrae Meadows

Blairbeth Golf Club in Fernhill, Rutherglen closed in 2015 and the lease on the land reverted back to SLC. As a golf club the site was intensively managed resulting in little biodiversity. It also created a barrier between the community and nearby Cathkin Braes Country Park. By 2016 it was becoming derelict and a target of vandalism. Improvement works were jointly funded by NatureScot's Green Infrastructure Fund, South Lanarkshire Community Benefit Fund and SLC to the value of £975,000 and were completed in November 2019.

20ha of community greenspace has been created, adjacent to some of the most deprived areas of Scotland. This project has transformed a site that was derelict and private and created an open inviting environment to encourage healthy activity and give access to the outdoors. It has gone from a barrier to a gateway to health. The objectives of the project were to:

1. Reduce the number of people socially excluded from healthy activity.
2. Preserve, celebrate and protect greenspace.
3. Improve and create habitats to encourage greater biodiversity.

Grass and whin path networks were installed, complete with viewpoints and activity areas. Between paths, wildflower meadows have been created to improve biodiversity and create interest. Other works included (approximate areas):

- 1ha of wetland habitat created, including reinstatement of a previously canalised watercourse to a meandering burn.
- Creation of 50 allotments.
- 2ha of water meadow created/enhanced including 4,000 native wildflower plugs, some planted by school children and community groups.
- 2ha of new, native woodland/hedgerow planting designed to link fragmented pockets of existing woods with the existing semi-ancient woodland to the south.
- 13ha of grassland maintained and managed as wildflower meadow.

The Friends of Fernbrae Meadows became a constituted community group in 2019. The group have worked with SLC to organise litterpicks, meadow management and an opening event in June 2019 attended by over 400 members of the public.

Fernbrae Meadows is close to local schools and nurseries. The outdoor classroom areas provide a new school experience for both primary and secondary pupils for activities such as pond dipping. 13 primary, two secondary school and various nursery

groups are using the site. There is a Health Walk Group, an allotment society and a weekly litter pick.

The Friends secured an Action Earth grant in 2019 to create meadows and for marginal pond planting and is working with the British Dragonfly Society on their People for Ponds project to improve the habitats for wildlife. In 2020, Fernbrae Meadows was shortlisted for the SURF (Scotland's Regeneration Forum) Awards as Scotland's Most Improved Place.



Photos: meadow creation and flowering

The key outcomes of the project are:

- The creation of 20ha of accessible greenspace.
- Improved access to better quality green infrastructure for a range of activities.
- Better connected green infrastructure through links to Cathkin Braes and other greenspace in the area.
- Opportunities for improved health and wellbeing among local residents.
- Support for community feelings of wellbeing and improved quality of place through better green infrastructure.
- Improved local community identity by involvement in the local greenspace.

The improvements to Fernbrae Meadows has very quickly made it an important and valued attraction in the area with current numbers of over 370 people using the site on a daily basis on average for the last six months. The majority of this time was during Covid lockdown; the site has been a key support locally.

6.3 Clutha Archaeology

Working in partnership with SLC CAG team, Clutha Archeology continue their work in relation to eco-cultural landscapes within the Clyde Valley Woodlands NNR and proposed LNR sites. Their work is focussed on the discovery, recording and conservation of important bio-cultural heritage assets within South Lanarkshire.

This work has led to the discovery of a possible Iron Age site within the Clyde Valley Woodlands NNR, and the investigation of a Bronze Age burial mound and enclosure within Low Parks SSSI. Clutha Volunteers hope to increase awareness and understanding of our bio-cultural heritage and better understand how human activity has shaped our landscapes. Their next project will see a comprehensive audit of all of potential LNR sites within South Lanarkshire.



Photo: Clutha Volunteers surveying at Chatelherault Country Park

6.4 Glen Esk greenspace redevelopment

This project has been funded by the Scottish Government Vacant and Derelict Land Fund to improve a public greenspace in East Kilbride from a derelict area to an open inviting environment to encourage healthy activity for all ages and abilities. SLC have improved 7.6ha of community greenspace at Glen Esk.

The creation of block paving and whin path networks, with a viewpoint shaped as leaf and activity areas allow for an interesting a varied experience throughout the site with the path design providing ease of movement for all. As part of the works to improve the long term biodiversity of the park, wetland areas were created and extended and areas were identified for a single grassland cut during the year to help wildflowers thrive.

Hedgerow/thicket was planted to provide cover for birds whilst strengthening existing wildlife corridors. A Woodland Management Plan is in place with the aim to retain trees unless they are dead, dying, diseased or dangerous. The woodland management plan also includes the removal of snowberry to allow for a more biodiverse woodland floor and to encourage natural regeneration.



Photo: Glen Esk mid-development

A community officer has been assigned to work in the area before, during and after construction and is currently continuing to develop relationships and hold activities on the site to build a feeling of local community ownership. A series of school visits, public meetings and outdoor events have taken place. The community officer is actively engaging with the local community and community groups to organise community activities/events such as bulb planting, walking trails and litter picking. Social media is also used to provide information on Glen Esk to the community.

The site has an outdoor classroom area which provides a new experience for both primary and secondary school pupils to take part in more outdoor classes to better understand the environment and biodiversity. A local forest school use Glen Esk to conduct their classes.



Photo: New boardwalk and wildlife ponds

Key achievements:

- 7.6ha of VDL transformed into an urban greenspace suitable for use by the whole community.
- Improved access to better quality green infrastructure for a range of activities.
- Better connected green infrastructure which links to Calderglen Country Park and other greenspaces in the area.
- Support for improved health and wellbeing among local residents by providing opportunities for a range of activities.
- Support for community feelings of wellbeing and improved quality of place through better green infrastructure.
- Improved local community identity through involvement in local greenspace development.

During the current pandemic, Glen Esk has been a key support locally, providing a local space to enjoy, at a time when most activity was curtailed due to limits to travel and crowding. It has been and continues to be an important help to local peoples' physical and mental wellbeing, giving them a space to get out and enjoy nature close to their homes.

6.5 Pollinator projects at Greenhall and Milheugh

SLC work in partnership with the Friends of the Calder (FOC) to improve the biodiversity of this proposed LNR in High Blantyre in various ways.

In March 2019, the White Gate community orchard was established at Milheugh. The FOC and volunteers from Babcock International funded the project installing six large planters, fencing, new pathways, gates, art, homes for minibeasts, and bird and bat boxes. The fruit trees were donated by SLC and the fruit bushes were planted by TACT (The Tenants Association Coatshill Thornhill) Healthy Park, Blantyre. The orchard is a great resource for the local community and the pupils at High Blantyre Primary school. The site is maintained by the FOC, SLC Unpaid Work Service and SLC Grounds Services.



Photo: Volunteers at the new community garden

Approximately 3ha of previous amenity grassland at Milheugh park has been transformed into a meadow for invertebrates and wildflowers by reducing the cutting regime to once a year and adding flower seeds. Paths are mown through the grassland for access. The mowing regime has also been reduced in the grassland at the Milheugh entrance along Hunthill Road and wildflower seed (including yellow rattle) has been introduced in the grass along the edge of the hedgerow.



Photo: mown path through diverse long grass

The FOC are a very enthusiastic group and passionate about their local area. They have built up solid relationships with large organisations and businesses in their community and continue to pursue new funding streams and campaigns. They make use of the local press and social media to advertise and promote the work of the group and the attributes of the proposed reserve.

The Friends have been involved in many campaigns through Keep Scotland Beautiful including the Upstream Battle project and have received many awards including the Spring Clean Hero award, and It's Your Neighbourhood Award (level 4). The area has been used for a number of events to highlight the diversity and wildlife of the reserve including seed sowing workshops, bug hunts and bat walks.

6.6 Growing Up Wild

Funding from SLC (through CAVLP Legacy Funding), NatureScot and the William Grant Foundation has allowed for the development of "Growing up Wild" and various nature play initiatives. These are co-ordinated through SLC CAG Countryside Ranger Service. During 2018 to 2020 we have worked with schools and community groups to support the development of outdoor learning and community play in local woodlands and proposed LNRs.

As part of the Growing up Wild project, school staff, parents and community group members have accessed training run by Outlet Play Resource to support their ongoing delivery of Forest School and natural play programmes. 12 school staff members have undertaken Forest School Leader and Forest School Assistant training. 5 community members have undertaken Fire and Tools training to enable them to support sustainable community use of local woodlands.



Photo: investigating pond wildlife

The focus of the schools work has been to provide opportunities for children and young people mainly with additional support needs, to learn outside the classroom environment and to build a sense of ownership of their local greenspace. Schools within three South Lanarkshire communities were chosen, all of which fall within the 20% most disadvantaged areas of Scotland (as determined using the SIMD). 68 children/young people, 21 staff and one parent helper have been involved in the project.



Photo: creating art in nature

A series of films have been made as part of this project, which can be viewed on the [SLC YouTube channel](#).

Schools worked with are:

Whitehill area linking to Backmuir Woods proposed LNR:

- Beckford Primary School
- St Paul's Primary School
- Holycross High School

Carluke, linking to Jock's Burn proposed LNR and Braidwood Pond:

- Carluke High School
- Crawforddyke Primary School

Lanark, using local greenspace in the Smyllum area:

- St Mary's Primary School
- Robert Owen Memorial Primary School

Activities included safe fire skills, campfire cooking, shelter-building, tool use, woodland arts and crafts, bug hunts, pond-dipping, plant identification, finding out about protected species, biological recording, filmmaking, teacher training, parent training...and of course, time to play and explore!

Challenges

We are aware that there are challenges to conserving biodiversity. The following table highlights specific concerns that have been raised by various Council Services. While there are challenges to protecting 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 mitigating the 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 communities and external organisations to further our aims. 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 into the future,

Code	Challenges
6.7	Decline in resources including staff numbers.
6.8	Carrying out strategic control of INNS with multiple landowners. This is likely to become more difficult as species continue to spread, the likelihood of long-term funding reduces and the potential ban on glyphosate herbicide use.
6.9	Within schools there are maintenance issues relating to cultivating areas within school grounds, as this relies on school staff due to budget cuts for external maintenance. In some cases, areas encouraged to be natural and wild end up appearing overgrown or unsightly which leads to public complaints.
6.10	Being able to fulfil community expectation and promote our work.
6.11	Growing cost of locally produced food and packaging.
6.12	With increasing emphasis on use of the outdoors, especially in relation to outdoor learning and play, there will be a potential impact on local greenspaces.
6.13	Potential and unknown factors that will affect decision making, budgets, subsidies in the future, as a result of leaving the European Union.
6.14	The ability to encourage, implement and monitor biodiversity inclusion, mitigation and compensatory works within development.
6.15	Ability to develop wide scale partnerships involving external partners, non-government agencies and private land owners to further biodiversity projects on an ecosystem scale.
6.16	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. Ensuring that as a result of Covid-19, the good progress made in raising awareness of environmental sustainability and improving biodiversity of

Code	Challenges
	housing developments is not lost with other priorities being brought forward.
6.17	Finding funding for the development of allotments and growing sites to meet demand.
6.18	Maintaining regenerated sites once the initial funded maintenance period is complete.
6.19	Balancing expectations of communities with regards to greenspaces; finding a place for biodiversity where site management has previously been more formal and intense.
6.20	The impacts of climate change and pollution on biodiversity, infrastructure and health.

7. Monitoring

- 7.1 Environmental data is collated and presented in the [South Lanarkshire State of the Environment Report](#) (SOE) which is updated 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 Teams and Partnership Groups. The Report has ten chapters, one of which is dedicated to biodiversity, fauna and flora. Monitoring relevant to biodiversity from the 2019 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.
- 7.2 The following diagram shows changes in the most relevant environmental issues and indicators between 2011 and 2019, identified in the respective SOE Reports. The boxes highlighted in yellow show changes between 2017 and 2019. 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. The most recent data available was used in assessing the environmental indicators.

Key to indicator information: status codes and trend direction					
G	Good	F	Fair	↑	Improving
				↔	No change
P	Poor		Limited data	↓	Deteriorating
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's LNR at Langlands Moss is in good condition. Considerable improvement continues at the Reserve in partnership with the FOLM. Further potential LNR sites have been identified.		
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. However, 32 ha of plantation has been removed from Council owned ancient woodland sites.		
Peatland			There is insufficient data on the overall condition of raised and blanket bogs across the area, with only a small number of designated sites recorded as unfavourable.		

Environmental issue	Indicator	Status and trend					Comment
		2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	
Population and human health	Healthy lifestyles (Environmental recreation)	↓	↑	↔	↑	↑	Continuous improvement
		Poor	Poor	Fair	Fair	Fair	
Biodiversity, fauna and flora	Designated areas	↔	↑	↔	↔	↔	Improvement sustained
		Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	
	Ancient woodland	↔	↔	↔	↑	↑	Stabilised
		Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	
Material assets and landscape	Recreational land	↔	↑	↑	↑	↑	Continuous improvement
		Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	
	Countryside access	↑	↑	↑	↔	↔	Improvement sustained
		Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	
Water	Water quality	↔	↔	↔	↔	↑	Continuous improvement
		Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	
	Groundwater and wetlands	↓	↔	↑	↑	↔	Improvement sustained
		Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	
	Flooding	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑	Continuous improvement
		Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	
Climate change	Greenhouse gas emissions	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	Continuous improvement
		Fair	Good	Good	Good	Good	
	Environmental awareness	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	Continuous improvement
		Fair	Fair	Good	Good	Good	
Transport	Walking and cycling	↔	↔	↔	↔	↑	Continuous improvement
		Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	

The following table shows monitoring and other reporting actions that take place in South Lanarkshire in relation to biodiversity. Where there is a trend or concern noted from this information, it is noted in the text.

Code	Description
7.3	Actions within the SLC BDIP are reviewed annually by the Sustainability Partnership.
7.4	Actions within the SLBS are reviewed at regular meetings of the Biodiversity Partnership and sub-groups.
7.5	All biodiversity actions and measures in the Council's Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy action plan are monitored and reported through the Council's performance management system, IMPROVe.

Code	Description
	A progress report is presented to the Executive Committee twice a year if the actions and measures are on target.
7.6	<p>CAG staff contribute to national recording schemes and uses various apps for casual recording, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bat Conservation Trust: Waterways and Field surveys completed at Calderglen Country Park since 2006. • British Trust for Ornithology Wetland Bird Survey undertaken every month at Hamilton Low Parks. • Butterfly Conservation’s UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme: weekly transect at South Haugh (by CAG staff) and Langlands Moss LNR (volunteer on SLC land). CAG staff are working with volunteers to undertake butterfly identification training and establish new butterfly monitoring transects at Fernbrae Meadows and Morgan Glen. <p>Participation in these recording schemes contributes to a national picture of these species and their population trends.</p>
7.7	Other biological data is contributed to the Record Centre at the Glasgow Museums Resource Centre. These are then passed on to various organisations, for example, to the Botanical Society of the British Isles for inclusion in the forthcoming 2020 botanical atlas. CAG staff continue to digitise historical data when able.
7.8	An annual census at the heronry at Hamilton Low Parks SSSI is carried out. The site hosts one of Scotland’s largest heronries.
7.9	GAT manages a database of INNS which includes South Lanarkshire information. Records from the public and Council staff contribute to this. The Council also manages a database of INNS locations and their control.
7.10	In 2016, two fish passes were installed on the River Avon which moved the watercourse status from “Poor” to “Good” under the Water Framework Directive. The Clyde River Foundation carried out targeted electrofishing surveys in 2019 to assess the benefit of the fish passes. The report concludes that salmon are now able to access an additional 14km of new river habitat and have been breeding upstream of the Millheugh Weir since winter 2017/18.
7.11	<p>CAG have been working with volunteers and community groups for many years, supporting various types of work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2018/19 4,526 days of volunteer time were reported, which equates (based on £50 per day) to a value of £226,300 annually. • In 2019/20 4,949 days of volunteer were reported; £247,450 equivalent • 2020/21 information has not yet been gathered; we would expect a significant decrease in volunteer time contribution due to Covid restrictions.
7.12	In 2018, the Council was treating INNS at 312 sites. In 2019, treatment occurred at 357 sites. In 2020, treatment is occurring at 388 sites. Species cover has reduced in size or been eradicated at 95% of locations; annual monitoring takes place to check for re-growth.

8. Contribution to targets

The [Scottish Biodiversity Strategy](#) has six chapters with 32 key steps for biodiversity, which are presented in the table below. South Lanarkshire Council's overall activities that contribute to Scotland's national biodiversity targets are indicated.

Chapter 1: Healthy Ecosystems Outcome: Scotland's ecosystems are restored to good ecological health so that they provide robust ecosystem services and build our natural capital.		SLC contribution
(1.1)	Encourage and support ecosystem restoration and management, especially in catchments that have experienced the greatest degradation.	Yes
(1.2)	Use assessments of ecosystem health at a catchment level to determine what needs to be done	No
(1.3)	Government and public bodies, including NatureScot, SEPA and FCS, will work together towards a shared agenda for action to restore ecosystem health at a catchment-scale across Scotland	Yes
(1.4)	Establish plans and decisions about land use based on an understanding of ecosystems. Take full account of land use impacts on the ecosystems services that underpin social, economic and environmental health.	Yes
Chapter 2: Natural Capital Outcome: Natural resources contribute to stronger sustainable economic growth in Scotland, and we increase our natural capital to pass on to the next generation.		
(2.1)	Encourage wide acceptance and use of the Natural Capital Asset Index (2012) 12, including a comparable measure for the marine environment.	No
(2.2)	Use this index to influence decision-making and market-based approaches, so that the wider monetary and non-monetary values for ecosystem services are recognised and accounted for	No
(2.3)	Undertake a major programme of peatland conservation, management and restoration.	Yes
Chapter 3: Biodiversity, Health and Quality of Life Outcome: Improved health and quality of life for the people of Scotland, through investment in the care of green space, nature and landscapes.		
(3.1)	Provide opportunities for everyone to experience and enjoy nature regularly, with a particular focus on disadvantaged groups	Yes
(3.2)	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
(3.3)	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
(3.4)	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
(3.5)	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

Chapter 4: Wildlife, Habitats and Protected Places		
Outcome: The special value and international importance of Scotland's nature and geodiversity is assured, wildlife is faring well, and we have a highly effective network of protected places.		
(4.1)	Ensure that the management of protected places for nature also provides wider public benefits.	Yes
(4.2)	Align habitat restoration on protected areas with national goals for improving ecosystem health, with local priorities determined at the catchment or landscape scales.	In progress
(4.3)	Integrate protected areas policy with action for wider habitats to combat fragmentation and restore key habitats	Yes
(4.4)	Develop a wildlife management framework to address the key priorities for sustainable species management, conservation and conflict issues, including reintroductions and invasive non-native species.	Yes
(4.5)	Involve many more people than at present in this work and improve understanding of the poorly known elements of nature.	Yes
Chapter 5: Land and Freshwater Management		
Outcome: Nature is faring well, and ecosystems are resilient as a result of sustainable land and water management.		
(5.1)	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
(5.2)	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.	n/a
(5.3)	Support "High Nature Value" farming and forestry.	n/a
(5.4)	Put in place the management necessary to bring Scotland's protected areas into favourable condition and improve the ecological status of water bodies.	Yes
(5.5)	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	In progress
(5.6)	Restore and extend natural habitats as a means of building reserves of carbon and to help mitigate climate change.	Yes
(5.7)	Provide clear advice to land and water managers on best practice.	Yes
Chapter 6: Marine and Coastal (n/a)		
Outcome: Scotland's marine and coastal environments are clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse, meeting the long-term needs of people and nature.		

Appendix 1: Acronyms

BDIP	Biodiversity Duty Implementation Plan
BRAG	Bothwell Road Action Group
CAG	Countryside and Greenspace Team
CAL	Community Action Lanarkshire
CAVLP	Clyde and Avon Valleys Landscape Partnership
CCI	Clydesdale Community Initiatives
CIC	Community Interest Company
CMT	Corporate Management Team
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
FLS	Forest and Land Scotland
FOC	Friends of the Calder
FOLM	Friends of Langlands Moss
GAT	Green Action Trust (formerly the Central Scotland Green Network Trust)
Ha	Hectare
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
INNS	Invasive, Non-Native Species
LAMH	Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health
LDP	Local Development Plan
LGHWP	Lanarkshire Greenspace, Health and Wellbeing Partnership
LHS	Local Housing Strategy
LNCS	Local Nature Conservation Sites
LNR	Local Nature Reserves
NBN	National Biological Network
NHS	National Health Service
NNR	National Nature Reserve
RSPB	the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SEPA	Scottish Environmental Protection Agency
SHIP	Strategic Housing Investment Plan
SIMD	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation
SLBP	South Lanarkshire Biodiversity Partnership
SLBS	South Lanarkshire Biodiversity Strategy
SLC	South Lanarkshire Council
SLOAF	South Lanarkshire Outdoor Access Forum
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
SOE	State of the Environment Report
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SUDS	Sustainable (Urban) Drainage System
SURF	Scotland's Regeneration Forum
SWT	Scottish Wildlife Trust
TACT	Tenants Association Coatshill Thornhill
TCV	The Conservation Volunteers
VDL	Vacant and Derelict Land

Front page photos: wildflower meadow at Milheugh; volunteers controlling rhododendron at Bothwell Woods; orchard at Milheugh; volunteers cleaning paths at South Haugh.

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