



Parks and Public Open Spaces Action Plan

Scottish Biodiversity List habitat: No
UK Biodiversity List of Priority Habitats: No

Summary

North Lanarkshire has extensive areas of urban development, within which there is a high proportion of greenspace which is formally managed municipal parkland or mown amenity grassland. These parks and open spaces are often carefully designed and support historical value, whilst providing important features for local communities. However, their ecological value can be variable.

These include the regularly mown Centenary and Westend Parks in Airdrie, with planted trees and some limited planting of exotic shrubs. Sites of this type tend to support little wildlife but are valuable for a range of recreational activities such as children's play and dog walking.

Other sites that incorporate a variety of semi-natural habitats such as woodlands, wetlands, flower-rich grasslands, former wood pasture, tall herb and scrub and collections of old trees. These sites have a higher value for wildlife, providing more opportunities for education and public involvement. Some examples include Cumbernauld House Park, Dalzell Estate in Motherwell, and Colzium House and Estate in Kilsyth. There are also Country Parks, Green Spaces, and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), owned and managed by North Lanarkshire Council.

Between these two extremes are areas of maintained opens space; within housing estates, industrial estates, town centres, road networks, sport pitches, cemeteries and land surrounding other council facilities

These sites provide valuable opportunities to promote habitat creation or act as wildlife corridors in a manner that helps address national targets for various habitats.

The Scottish Household Survey (SHS) (2019) indicates that most adults (66%) lived within a five minute walk of their nearest green or blue space, around the same proportion since 2016.

A smaller proportion of adults in deprived areas lived within a five minute walk of their nearest green or blue space compared to adults in the least deprived areas 62% compared to 67%. More than a third of adults (36%) visited their nearest area of green or blue space every day or several times a week. Those living closer to their nearest green or blue space were more likely to use it more frequently: 44% within five minutes' walk visited every day or several times a week compared to 13% more than 10 minutes walk away. Furthermore, the proportion of people who live more than 10 minutes walk from their nearest green or blue space and do not use it (38%) more than double the corresponding proportion of people who live within five minutes walk 17%.

Research reported in the "State of Scotland's Greenspace (2018) highlights the importance of parks to local residents, especially in urban areas, with 90% of people



considering spending time in their local park. However, the survey also indicates Scottish parks are deteriorating 40% of Scottish People saying the quality of their local greenspace has deteriorated in the last 5 years. With 43% of urban residents using the greenspace once or more a week the decline of our parks at a national level, and the importance of them to residents, indicates the need to maintain and enhance our parks and public open space.

The aim of this Habitat Action Plan is to maximise the wildlife value of parks and public open spaces whilst enhancing the recreational, health and wellbeing value and safety of such areas.

Current Status

Changes to resource targeting as well as alterations to open space management objectives could greatly increase the biodiversity value of some sites.

Legislation and Site Designation

There are various pieces of legislation which protect and enhance habitat potential. These include Conservation Areas, Tree Preservation Orders, Green Belt, SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest), LNR (Local Nature Reserves) and SINCs (Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation). At a local level the “North Lanarkshire Local Plan” lists and zones specific sites in plan maps. Many of these green spaces are protected through policies relating to Protecting Community facilities, Country Parks, and Areas of Great Landscape Value.

There are 3 recognised Country Parks in North Lanarkshire - Palacerigg Country Park, Strathclyde Country Park, and Drumpellier Country Park. There are also 2 gardens within the Council: Colzium House Estate and Dalzell Estate, as well as 6 town parks.

There are also 9 Local Nature Reserves (LNRs): Braedale Hill, Brownsburn Community Park, Dumbreck Marsh, Gartcosh, Greenhead Moss, Kingshill, Ravenswood, Mosswater and Cambusnethan. A Local Nature Reserve is a statutory designation and refers to a place with special local natural interest, set up to protect nature, and for people to enjoy and appreciate.

Current Factors

- Development pressure – a number of areas of public open space have been lost to development or are currently threatened. The habitat can become fragmented due to roads, car parks or new development, until the area becomes unsustainable for the wildlife that occupies it and the impact increases on the remaining habitat.
- Unsympathetic landscaping or restoration - Amongst other problems, this can reduce the extent of semi-natural habitat or the abundance of other ecologically interesting features at a site.
- Public perception - local residents can sometimes strongly object to the presence of informal habitat within public open space, seeing it as untidy, a source of hay



fever, harbouring vermin, a threat to safety or a fire risk.

- Restoration potential – some areas of amenity grassland still retain semi-natural grassland in a suppressed form and can recover to produce species-rich habitat of valuable NVC categories such as MG5 (with plants such as pignut, great burnet, birds-foot trefoil etc). Sites with potential restoration opportunities should be identified.
- Poor tree regeneration – leading to limited age and structural diversity as well as gaps in dead wood generation.
- Limited woodland management resulting in loss of structure and re-growth of stands
- Damage to trees through soil compaction.
- Isolation and fragmentation of parklands, resulting in poor dispersal between sites and low genetic exchange, making populations of species vulnerable to local extinctions.
- Public pressure – Vandalism and other inappropriate activities such as motor biking impact wildlife. Unfortunately, people can commonly blame the green space rather than look to deal with the source of the anti-social behaviour and other potential solutions.
- Management practices, such as unnecessary moving, can lead to isolation of habitats and features such as mature trees as well as root and bark damage to trees often leading to the death of the tree.

Current Action

- Specific nature conservation management takes place at a number of sites. This is carried out by North Lanarkshire's Land Maintenance Department, or the Greenspace Development and can involve contractors, local residents or groups. The most successful projects are the trial and expansion of areas managed to increase the abundance and diversity of native flowering plants.
- Some sites are regularly used for educational purposes such as Strathclyde Country Park, and Drumpellier Country Park (by the Ranger Services); Cumbernauld Glen (by the Scottish Wildlife Trust) and Greenhead Moss. Some sites also contain interpretation boards explaining the history of the site, species found on site and/or plans for restoration.
- The popularity of forest schools within North Lanarkshire has seen an increase of educational opportunities for local children to be in an outdoor classroom.
- There are 9 LNRs in North Lanarkshire - Braedale Hill, Brownsburn Community Park, Dumbreck Marsh, Gartcosh, Greenhead Moss, Kingshill, Ravenswood, Mosswater and Cambusnethan. SNH designated the 70th LNR in Scotland, Cambusnethan Woodlands, in 2014



- There have been 20 Woodland in and Around Town (WIAT) schemes completed since 2008. Since 2015, the total area benefitting from WIAT projects totalled 83 hectares
- Countryside Stewardship Sites – There are 24 Countryside Stewardship sites. The Ranger Service visits, patrols, monitors and reports on these sites at least once a month. The rangers compile appropriate maps and site histories, and establish contacts with neighbouring communities and other Council staff, especially Land Maintenance, Streetscene and Environmental Wardens.
- The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 requires planning authorities to prepare and publish an Open Space Strategy (OSS). The OSS is to set out a strategic framework of the planning authority’s policies and proposals as to the development, maintenance, and use of green infrastructure in their district, including open spaces and green networks. This provides opportunities to identify biodiversity enhancements for sites and better integrate habitat networks in to Local Planning.
- The [Third State of Scotland’s Greenspace Report](#) (2018) published by Greenspace Scotland reveals the extent and type of urban greenspace in all 32 Scottish local authority areas.
The report also provides summary information from the [2017 Greenspace Use and Attitude Survey](#) and the Improvement Service [Local Government Benchmarking Framework](#).
- There are 4 green spaces in North Lanarkshire officially designated as Queen Elizabeth Fields: Colzium-Lennox Estate, Kilsyth; Dalzell Estate, Motherwell; Glenboig Village Park and The Langriggs. This included community and school involvement and boulders have now been installed to mark the sites

Proposed Objectives, Actions and Targets

1. To maintain and enhance the extent and quality of semi-natural habitats in and around parks and public open spaces.
2. To promote good management practice in parks and public open spaces, maximising their wildlife value without compromising safety.
3. To encourage local communities to undertake local action for biodiversity.

Actions	Meets objective number	Action by	Target
Policy and Legislation			
1.1 Protect and enhance designated sites, wildlife corridors and public open	1	NLC	Ensure biodiversity is considered in all planning applications



space through the planning process			and development and sites are protected in the local plan
1.2 Open Space Report delivered by end of 2024	1,2	NLC	Ensure opportunities for biodiversity enhancements and habitat networks are incorporated.
Site Safeguard and Management			
2.1 Encourage botanical diversification of grassland in parks and open spaces	1,2	NLC, GM, SWT, RSPB,	20 new diverse grassland sites developed and managed for biodiversity 2028
2.2 Facilitate the creation and enhancement of accessible wildlife habitat in residential areas	1,2,3	NLC	2 new projects annually from 2023
2.3 Develop Local Nature Reserves in North Lanarkshire	1,2,3	NLC	Implement management plans for Local Nature Reserves. Monitor through annual meetings.
2.4 Promote Local Nature Reserves	1,3	NLC	1 event annually on at least 3 LNRs
2.5 Support the development of community action groups and advise on nature conservation actions.	1,2,3	NLC	Offer support to groups, advise on nature conservation actions. Provide training opportunities to groups. At least one training event annually.
Advisory			
3.1 Raise awareness of the importance of roadside verges and encourage more sympathetic management	1,2	NLC	Promote successful projects.
Future research and monitoring			
4.1 Encourage surveying of local green space	3	NLC	Provide at least one annual training opportunity and coordinated survey opportunity.
4.2 Survey wild flower meadows established by NLC to establish importance	1,2	NLC	Survey 6 wildflower meadows per year from 2023
4.3 Develop a programme of survey for the Local Nature Reserves	2	NLC	Survey programme developed by 2024. Data can be found in site reports to collate accurate survey records



4.4 Quantify the condition and management of Council owned SINC's and LNRs	1,2	NLC	All LNR's to be assessed and in positive management by 2025. All SINC's to be assessed with management prescriptions by 2027
Communication and Publication			
5.1 Promote the benefits of biodiversity in public spaces to the public	1,2,3	NLC	Annual biodiversity themed event
5.2 Encourage creative approach to promoting biodiversity	3	NLC, RSPB, SWT,	Annual photography competition, linked with an LNR, to be developed with local schools from 2024

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Further information

Local Nature Reserves in Scotland: A Guide to their Selection and Declaration, <http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/lhrs/finguide.pdf>. Scottish Natural Heritage July 2000

References

London Parks and Green Spaces Habitat Action Plan
 Camden Biodiversity Action Plan 2013-2018
 The 2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity
 Scottish Biodiversity Strategy: It's in Your Hands
 Greenspace Scotland
 Keep Scotland Beautiful-It's Your Neighbourhood
 Cumbernauld Living Landscapes

2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity - Scottish Government
 Greenspace Use and Attitudes Survey – Greenspace Scotland 2017
 State of Scotland's Greenspace Report – Greenspace Scotland 2018
 Scottish Household Survey 2016 – Scottish Government