



**North Lanarkshire Council**

**Biodiversity Duty Report 2021 - 2023**

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## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 placed a statutory duty on all public bodies to further the conservation of biodiversity. Section 1 of the Act states: “It is the duty of every public body and office holder, in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions”.
- 1.2 The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 amended the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 and introduced a requirement for all Public Authorities to produce and make available a report, every three years, detailing their compliance with the biodiversity duty.
- 1.3 Tackling the Nature Emergency - Scottish biodiversity strategy to 2045. The strategy sets out a clear ambition: for Scotland to be Nature Positive by 2030, and to have restored and regenerated biodiversity across the country by 2045. The Global Climate Emergency and the Nature Emergency are twin reinforcing crises: the actions we take to address each are fundamental to our wellbeing and survival as a species.
- 1.4 North Lanarkshire Council (NLC) achieves its Biodiversity Duty through the delivery of the ‘North Lanarkshire Biodiversity Action Plan,’ focussing on biodiversity at a service level, coordinating partnership work and facilitating local action to help achieve the ‘2020 Challenge for Scotland’s Biodiversity’.
- 1.5 Within NLC, there are 4 core council services: Chief Executive’s, Enterprise and Communities, Education and Families and Health and Social Care.

## **2 Governance**

- 2.1 There are 77 councillors within NLC, representing 21 wards each electoral ward has either 3 or 4 councillors. North Lanarkshire has a population of 341,400. The council operates through a system of committees and sub committees.
- 2.2 The Council is the lead partner for the North Lanarkshire Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) and coordinates the delivery of the LBAP through the North Lanarkshire Biodiversity Partnership. Councillors oversee the production and delivery of the LBAP through the committee reporting process.
- 2.3 Community Greenspace is primarily responsible for meeting key national and local biodiversity responsibilities and objectives, as well as delivering projects. Officers delivering positive action for biodiversity are Conservation & Biodiversity Manager, Biodiversity Projects Officer, Countryside Ranger

Service, and Tree Assets Manager. Community Greenspace work with other departments and stakeholders in partnership projects, and in providing advice and guidance.

2.4 The importance of biodiversity in North Lanarkshire is recognised at a Service level and this report highlights the delivery of the Biodiversity Duty from the period 2021 - 2023.

2.5 The delivery of the Biodiversity Duty is highlighted through 6 key areas:

- Actions to protect and enhance biodiversity.
- Mainstreaming biodiversity.
- Nature based solutions and climate change and biodiversity.
- Public engagement and workforce development.
- Research and monitoring.
- Contribution to targets

### **3 Actions taken to improve biodiversity conservation.**

The North Lanarkshire Biodiversity Action Plan (NLBAP) was updated this year and covers the period 2023 - 2027. It outlines actions and targets for local priority species and habitats. The Action Plan sets a framework for action to conserve and enhance the biodiversity found in North Lanarkshire.

[North Lanarkshire Biodiversity Action Plan](#)

#### **3.1 Landscape Scale Partnership Projects**

During the period 2021 - 2023 North Lanarkshire Council were involved in 3 landscape scale projects.

##### Seven Lochs Wetland Park

The Seven Lochs Wetland Park is Scotland's largest urban heritage and nature park – spanning the Glasgow city and North Lanarkshire Council boundary between Easterhouse, Coatbridge and Stepps. From 2016 to 2023 the Seven Lochs Partnership has delivered a £7M programme of park development and management with support from project partners, National Lottery Heritage Fund, and a range of other funders.

This programme has supported delivery of local and national biodiversity priorities, including:

- Restoration and conservation management of 4 peatland sites
- Development of a Conservation Action Plan for the nationally significant water vole population in the project area
- Creation of new species-rich grassland habitats
- Removal and treatment of invasive non-native species

- Four new or enhanced visitor centres as hubs for heritage / nature learning and engagement.

Linked to these species and habitat works the project has delivered over 200 conservation projects with volunteers delivering 1400 workdays at 33 parks, local nature reserves and other greenspaces. There has also been work undertaken with primary, secondary and additional support needs schools and local community groups to deliver 550 outdoor learning, citizen science and public engagement activities to almost 4000 people.

The Seven Lochs project partners – Glasgow and North Lanarkshire Councils, The Conservation Volunteers Scotland, Glenboig Development Trust, Provan Hall Trust, and Royal and Ancient Golf and Leisure Services – have now signed a new 20-year collaboration agreement to continue to develop and manage the Seven Lochs Wetland Park and green network to protect and enhance biodiversity and connect people to the nature on their doorstep.

#### Cumbernauld Living Landscape (CLL)

Cumbernauld Living Landscape is a partnership project led by the Scottish Wildlife Trust, North Lanarkshire Council and Forestry Commission Scotland. Initial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund was secured to develop the Creating Natural Connections a four-year project which ran from 2019 until 2023. This initiative aimed to make the town's woods, parks and open spaces better for wildlife and people with the support of National Lottery players.

The project worked with young people and community groups to build a network of people who care about, and have the skills to care for, the town's greenspaces. The natural environment was improved through measures including increasing native woodland cover, removing non-native invasive species, and creating new wildflower meadows.

Greater connections between local people and the nature in their neighbourhood has been forged through activities and events, imaginative artworks and new interpretation, and practical volunteering.

Creating Natural Connections was a partnership project between the Scottish Wildlife Trust, North Lanarkshire Council, The Conservation Volunteers, Sanctuary Scotland, and the James Hutton Institute.

Achievements since 2021 have included:

- The creation of an agricultural meadow within Cumbernauld Community Park, bringing diversity to the site, as well as providing feeding and nesting opportunities for a range of farmland birds. The selected area of the Community Park was in agricultural use until recent years.

Creation and enhancement of many other meadows at Cumbernauld Community Park, St Maurice's Pond, and Ravenswood Local Nature Reserve.

- Progression of Invasive Non-native Species survey along the Luggie Water. The aim of the project was to build a more comprehensive picture of where invasive species occur within the Cumbernauld Living Landscape (CLL) catchment area, and where possible determine the source of these species. The survey focused on Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed; however other notable species were also recorded. Training on invasive species identification and survey methods were provided to volunteers and internal staff in the form of an indoor classroom session, which included identification, ecology, and habitats of INNS (Invasive Non-Native Species) species, UK distribution, growth stages and biosecurity. An outdoor session to identify these species on the ground was undertaken to help to identify similar native species that can often be mistake for the non-native species.
- Restoration of 3 urban bogs. This partnership project between CLL, NatureScot and North Lanarkshire Council has helped re-wet 3 urban bogs within the Cumbernauld area (Broadwood, Sparrow and Abronhill). In 2019 feasibility studies were undertaken on the three bogs, which showed that the bogs needed work to stop deterioration of the peatland. Applications for grants from NatureScot's Peatland Action Fund were sought and awarded. Works were undertaken in the winter of 2022 -2023. The three urban peat bogs in Cumbernauld are rare, there are few places you will find this important habitat and carbon store so close to people's homes. The goal of this project was to restore the function of the bogs as close as possible to a natural raised bog hydrology, with peat-forming vegetation over most of its surface. This was undertaken through scrub removal and the peat and plastic damming at all three bogs. Understanding of the successfulness of this project will take place through biannual monitoring of the water table on the bogs.



Damming works at Abronhill bog

## Creating Natural Connections Access Projects

North Lanarkshire delivered a number of access improvement projects improving access to and within key greenspace sites in Cumbernauld. This was delivered through a partnership project (Cumbernauld Living Landscapes) and NLHF funded. The key sites were;

Broadwood Loch  
St Maurices Pond  
Ravenswood Local Nature Reserve  
Luggiebank Wood  
Palacerigg Country Park

Over 5000m<sup>2</sup> of footpath surface was renewed. Each of the greenspaces were adjacent to local residential areas and the improvements helped people better access their greenspace and help to improve positive mental and physical well being.

### Dumbreck and Garrell

The Dumbreck and Garrell project was a partnership between North Lanarkshire Council and Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) funded by the Water Environment Fund and North Lanarkshire Council.

The project aimed to improve Dumbreck Local Nature Reserve and the adjacent Garrell Burn for the local community and wildlife by providing improved paths with improved protection from flooding. Re-naturalising the Garrell Burn and restoring wetland habitat in Dumbreck Local Nature Reserve.



Realignment of Garrell Burn



In terms of biodiversity the project objectives were:

- Habitat improvement over the site. A habitat plan was developed for the site recommending several improvements were carried forward which benefit nationally rare species such as lapwing, sand martin, kingfisher, water vole and bats.



Sand Martin wall at Dumbreck

- River re-wilding: restoration of a natural river channel and alleviation of flooding. The Garrell Burn, as it leaves Kilsyth, was heavily straightened and regularly broke out of this artificial channel. It was restored to a natural shape providing much more valuable wildlife habitat – for fish, insects, and birds. It is also now more attractive and visible for visitors.
- Being next to Dumbreck nature reserve gave us the opportunity to allow the river to top over into the wetland – feeding water to these valuable local habitats. This has been achieved by working with nature rather than artificial structures (e.g. concrete channels and overflows etc.).
- We have also allowed improved fish and eel access into the Garrell Burn by creating a more natural river and installing fish and eel passes at two small weirs which previously obstructed fish access into the upper Garrell.



Fish pass at  
Dumbreck



Phase 1 of the Garrell Burn River Restoration project is now complete. The river channel, once straightened and fast flowing has been returned to a more natural course providing additional flood capacity in the marsh during times of heavy rain. Slowing down the movement of water and retaining it for longer in Dumbreck Marsh prevents more damaging impacts of flooding downstream to homes, businesses, and infrastructure.

With funding from the National Lottery Fund, Phase 2 of the project is underway. A Project Officer has been appointed and will be working on projects in Kilsyth until Summer 2025. These projects include community engagement and involvement, developing a volunteer group, developing a new site Management Plan, develop a species and habitat survey and developing interpretation signage throughout the site.

### 3.2 Local Nature Reserves

North Lanarkshire Council currently has 9 Local Nature Reserves with a further 1 to be designated next year. These community greenspaces are designated for their wildlife value and habitat features, as well as the importance they hold for the local communities in terms of education and health and wellbeing benefits. The 9 LNRs (Local Nature Reserves) are:

- Braedale Hill
- Brownsburn Community Nature Park
- Cambusnethan
- Gartcosh
- Greenhead Moss
- Kingshill
- Mosswater
- Ravenswood
- Dumbreck

[Directory records | North Lanarkshire Council](#)

The site to be designated in 2024 is Frankfield Loch which lies on the boundary between North Lanarkshire and Glasgow City Council and is within both local authority areas. Habitats consist of a rich and diverse mix of wetland and woodland habitat.

Our priorities are to improve the LNRs for local communities and wildlife. This is taken forward through annual events, improved interpretation, improved access, community consultations, and habitat improvements.

Habitat improvement projects and events have been taken forward at all the Local Nature Reserves over the reporting period. Including the following:

- Gartcosh - Creation of new ponds, habitat creation for the benefit of amphibians, invertebrates, and other wildlife. Maintenance of the amphibian wall (to limit movement of protected Great Crested Newt into the neighbouring development area) and other infrastructure along with habitat maintenance including wildflower meadows.
- St Maurice's – enhancement and maintenance of wildflower area, pond enhancement works.
- Greenhead Moss – Works carried out with dedicated volunteer group every Wednesday this includes woodland works, woodland thinning and understory planting. Wildflower meadow maintenance, scrub clearance. Scrub clearance from peatland bog (with Bog Squad), hedgerow planting, and new bridge installation.
- Mosswater – Woodland enrichment works were undertaken in 2023 in partnership with Cumbernauld Living Landscape. These works included tree planting, understory enrichment planting, pond edge planting and bird and bat box installation.
- Frankfield - Phase 1 survey, water vole, bat, amphibian, and breeding bird surveys undertaken to inform the best way to progress with habitat management. To help prevent amphibian casualties along road plans to build a new amphibian wall are in place for 2024. Amphibian ladders have been fitted to gully pots.
- Dumbreck – see landscape projects.
- Kingshill – plastic pilling installation onto drainage ditch on peatland bog to rewet the bog with Bog Squad. Installation of owl boxes.



Pond and bat box at Kingshill LNR



Wildflower meadow at Brownsburn LNR

Future habitat enhancements for 2024-2025 have been set out for many of our Local Nature Reserves with help from the Nature Restoration Funding allocation to Local Authorities.

### 3.3 Nature Restoration Fund

#### Pond restoration and enhancement

Several ponds within North Lanarkshire had become extremely overgrown with vegetation and the build-up of silt. With several drying out completely. This project aimed to revert the ponds to an earlier stage in their succession. Removal of the Typha, associated vegetation and sediment to slow down the regeneration of vegetation. The silt required deepening, spreading out in designated areas around the ponds, thus creating open water areas and channels for species such as water rail.

The works were undertaken at 2 large scale ponds, 2 medium scale ponds and 3 small ponds over 5 different sites.



Pond restoration and clearance at Greenhead Moss and Strathclyde Country Park.

### Wildflower Meadow Projects

Many wildflower meadows have been developed in North Lanarkshire since 2021. Several large meadows have been created at Strathclyde Country Park and Drumpellier Country Park along with some Town Parks.

Native wildflower meadow planting has taken place at 8 of our Town Parks over 2022/23. A consultation was undertaken in 2022 and following feedback from this a plan was developed for each of the parks. [North Lanarkshire Council](#). Future monitoring of these sites will be undertaken.

### INNS Project

The aim of the project is to build a comprehensive picture of invasive species within the Kilsyth catchment area, and the following Local Nature Reserves: Greenhead Moss, Mosswater, Kingshill, Brownsburn and where possible determine source of these species. This information is being used to inform a plan to control and target these species to minimise their spread. The survey work and control focus on Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed, however other notable invasive species will also be recorded to inform future projects.

Treatment of the INNS started at these sites in 2023 and will continue and expand through the next several years.

### 3.4 Other projects:

#### Clyde Climate Forest

North Lanarkshire Council have delivered tree planting through a partnership project with Clyde Climate Forest (CCF) and Trees For Cities (TfC), who provided some funding to assist with the cost of planting. One of the focus areas of the Clyde Climate Forest is increasing urban canopy cover in 'Target Neighbourhoods'. Sites were selected in each of the local authorities in the Glasgow City Region based on areas of low urban canopy cover data as well as SIMD. In North Lanarkshire, the Hattonrigg locality of Bellshill was selected in 2022. TfC delivered community tree planting events, and a number of tree standards were planted within amenity areas. In total, 800 whips and 37 standards were planted. All species planted were native broadleaves such as Oak, Rowan, Silver birch and Hazel. As well as increasing woodland habitat within the area, the tree planting will promote biodiversity and improve local greenspaces for the community. Increasing urban canopy cover will help make communities more resilient to the effects of climate change. Further works are planned through this project in 2024.

#### Climate Emergency Woodlands

Community Greenspace was allocated a spend from the Leader of the Council to plant one tree for every primary school aged child (37,000) in NL. They partnered with Green Action Trust to fulfil all the strategic elements within the timeframe, and additionally were able to draw in maximum grant funding, adding value to the project and providing opportunities to continue planned growth in the NL woodland asset in future financial years in a planned manner.

#### Objectives:

- Create 4 new 'Climate Emergency' woodlands in North Lanarkshire. These woodlands are registered under the Woodland Carbon Code, enabling the Council to accurately record the amount of carbon that will be sequestered through these planting schemes.
- Trees to be of native species to maximise biodiversity benefits.
- Ensure measures were put in place for woodlands to establish to maturity.
- Undertake planting events with local school groups

#### Work completed:

- Strathclyde Country Park, Motherwell completed in 2023.



- Calderbank, Airdrie completed in 2022.
- Low Wood, Cumbernauld completed in 2022.
- Palacerigg County Park completed in 2023.

### Barn Owl and Kestrel Project

North Lanarkshire's Countryside Rangers have been working for over a decade to protect populations of barn owl and kestrel. Providing a strategic recovery plan for these declining species to boost a suffering population, with the help of the local community. The initial target was to identify unoccupied areas within our countryside where there is suitable hunting habitat for both barn owl and kestrel species. It was found that there are many appropriate sites that could support territories for either.

Through work and consultation with landowners, permission has been obtained to erect nest boxes on private land. Boxes are constructed in partnership with local schools, mental health volunteers and other user groups, making links with the Branching Out programme, and local landscape partnerships such as 7 Lochs.

The main goal is to increase the population of both declining species. This has been achieved through ongoing work with colleagues and volunteers to construct, erect and monitor over 50 boxes over the last decade.

North Lanarkshire Council, SSPCA and Central Scotland Raptor Study Group work in partnership to monitor the birds living in the area and identify their movements and breeding patterns.



Photos by Jackie Gilliland, Countryside Ranger



### Cambusnethan Woodland

In order that essential slope stabilisation works could take place upon rail embankments of the West Coast Main Line, a portion of Garrion Gill Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), one of eleven SSSIs that together form the Clyde Valley Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC), was subject to tree removal and degradation of habitat. Ultimately the works caused direct loss of 0.445ha and indirectly impacted upon a further 0.955ha of designated land and EU priority habitat. A 10-hectare area of Cambusnethan Woodland Local Nature Reserve (LNR), known as Hall Gill was selected to be restored to a favourable status. Upon improvement, this area of woodland will ultimately prove suitable for inclusion within the Clyde Valley Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Scotland's largest collection of woodlands designated as the EU priority habitat of mixed woodland on base rich soils associated with rocky slopes.

The procedure of rehabilitating Hall Gill will be overseen by a Habitat Management Group (HMG) formed by members of NLC, Nature Scot and Network Rail. Through tailoring site-specific targets based upon the Common Standards Monitoring Guidance for Woodland Habitats (JNCC, 2004), Nature Scot formed the basis for a Compensatory Habitat Management Plan (CHMP) that will be used to work towards Hall Gill attaining a favourable status for designation across the lifetime of the S69 agreement.

Works were originally meant to start in 2021, however delays to the process have delayed the project until 2024.

The consultation process will begin at the beginning of 2024 with works pending consultation and further protected surveys later in the year.

### Challenges

The Scottish Governments Nature Restoration Fund has been of great assistance in providing direct funding for projects, where previously we had to rely on very competitive grants to try and resource larger scale works. However, timing of receiving confirmation of fund has been late in the financial year and can cause difficulty in achieving a finalised project in the timescale.

## **4 Mainstreaming / Nature based solutions and climate change.**

### **4.1 Biodiversity and the Planning system**

The Biodiversity team, based within Community Greenspace, provide detailed comments regarding ecology as part of the planning process. Acting as internal consultees to the planning authority, this ensures compliance with wildlife and nature conservation legislation. It also ensures that ecological surveys carried out by developers follow best practice and where appropriate, ensures that any mitigation is carried out to a high standard.

From the period 2021-2023, Community Greenspace was consulted on over 500 planning applications and 200 land disposals.

The NPF4 (National Planning Framework 4) was adopted in February 2023. It states that planning, and development will help to achieve a net zero, sustainable Scotland by 2045. This includes securing positive effects for biodiversity. Furthermore, Nature Scot guidance on Developing with Nature refers to the inclusion of “appropriate measures” not only to mitigate and compensate for the loss of biodiversity but also to enhance biodiversity.

North Lanarkshire Local Development Plan was adopted in July 2022. Where there is an incompatibility between the North Lanarkshire Local Development Plan (LDP) and NPF4, NPF4 will take priority.

The Local Development Plan is a 5- to 10-year strategy for physical development.

North Lanarkshire Local Development Plan affords policy and narrative consideration towards biodiversity in Policies:

PROT A – North Lanarkshire protect natural and resilient sustainable places by safeguarding natural heritage assets. When considering future development affecting the natural environment and the specific Green Network Assets identified in this Policy, the Council will seek guidance where appropriate from Nature Scot. Nature Scot has produced a variety of policy and guidance documents for aspects of the natural environment which the Council will utilise and will expect developers to consider in preparing proposals. Site categories identified in this Policy are locations protected for their importance for species or habitats, or other environmental value.

EDQ 1 - Any proposed development will require to be appraised in terms of the site and its surroundings to ensure it will integrate successfully into the local area and avoid harm to neighbouring amenity. The matters to be addressed in the appraisal include but are not limited to:

- Green Network, landscape character and quality on the site and surrounding Land Use Character Area
- Biodiversity of plants and animals on the site and surrounding Land Use Character Area

EDQ 3 - To achieve high standards of site planning and sustainable design and to allow consideration of the proposal, Planning Applications will require to take account of the Site Appraisal required by Policies EDQ 1 and, if appropriate, EDQ 2. Advice on creating Successful Places can be found in: Guidance from Nature Scot and SPG 20 Biodiversity.

## 4.2 Open Space Strategy and Biodiversity

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 requires planning authorities to prepare and publish an open Space Strategy (OSS). The OSS is a strategic framework of the planning authority's policies and proposals as to the development, maintenance and use of green infrastructure, including open spaces and green networks.

The NLC Open Space Rangers are surveying open and greenspaces using a Quality Assessment to capture data. There are six components to the quality assessment, the one most relevant to biodiversity is *Supporting Ecological Networks* this consists of four biodiversity questions relating to sites:

1. Offers a diversity of habitats and contributes positively to biodiversity.
2. Quality of habitat, richness of species and structure of individual species.
3. Connects with wider green networks, or other greenspaces or habitats.
4. Ability to connect with nature.

As well as this invasive non-native species (INNS) data is collected for sites, and there are specific biodiversity questions to capture data on biodiversity in cemeteries. These questions were developed from priorities in the LBAP.

All of this information will be used to inform positive actions for biodiversity and Nature Networks in the future.

## 4.3 Sites of Importance to Nature Conservation (SINCs)

Since 2008 sites proposed as SINCs in North Lanarkshire have been assessed according to each of these five factors:

- Connectivity - this is assessed according to a site's proximity to (*physical links between*) broadly similar habitats found in the surrounding

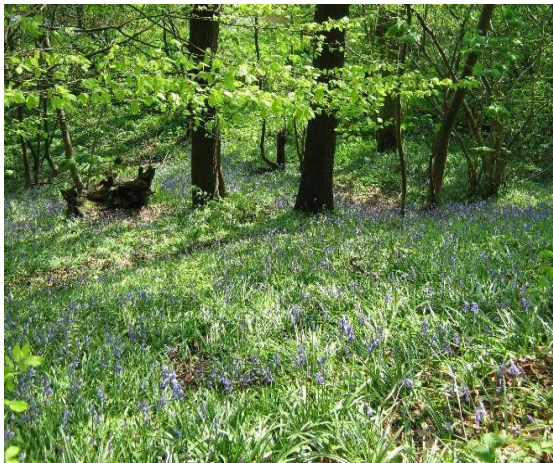
countryside, and ability for the potential of new links (wildlife corridors) to be created.

- Species diversity – this is assessed according to the number and variety of species found on the site compared with what may be expected to occur within similar habitats.
- Species rarity – this is assessed according to the rarity of a habitat within the national and local context, including those on the Scottish Biodiversity List and those listed as priorities in the LBAP.
- Habitat rarity – this is assessed according to the rarity of a habitat within the national and local context, including those on the Scottish Biodiversity List and those listed as priorities in the LBAP.
- Habitat extent - this is assessed according to the amount of a particular habitat found on a site relative to the total found in the local area.

Priority designations are also given to peatlands, riparian corridors and sites with locally/regionally rare species and locally/nationally important populations of common species.

A further SINC review was carried out and updated in 2020. Many of the changes that were made were to rectify mapping errors however one SINC was deleted, and one included into the category.

There are currently 380 SINC sites in North Lanarkshire.



Moodiesburn Glen SINC



Gartcosh SINC



Fairy Glen SINC

#### 4.4 The Plan for North Lanarkshire

The Plan for North Lanarkshire sets the direction of travel for the council and partners. Its purpose is to communicate the shared priorities and provide a focus for activities and resources.

The Plan for North Lanarkshire is a high-level strategic document that outlines a long-term vision for North Lanarkshire - a vision where North Lanarkshire is the place to Live, Learn, Work, Invest, and Visit.

#### 4.5 The Environmental Strategy

An Environment Strategy was set out in 2019 for North Lanarkshire. The council already has a number of strategies, action plans and policies which all contribute to the development and protection of the environment within North Lanarkshire. The purpose of the Environment Strategy is to bring all these policies under the one umbrella to ensure that all such documents take account of, and are aware of, common factors across the other strategies throughout the council and that this is reflected within the individual documents. This will ensure that the council maximises the impact in achieving its own priorities and also contributes to the overall national environmental objectives.

To ensure this one council approach is delivered, the following strategies and plans make up Environment Strategy:

- Biodiversity Action Plan
- Carbon Management Plan

- Air Quality Strategy
- Woodland Management Plan
- Contaminated Land Strategy
- Core Path Plan
- Food Growing Strategy
- Active Travel and Access Strategy
- Local Transport Strategy

The North Lanarkshire Environment Strategy will deliver on a number of priorities and their underlying ambition statements as detailed in the Plan for North Lanarkshire.

- Improve economic opportunities and outcomes.
- Refocus our town centres and communities to be multi-functional connected places which maximise social, economic, and environmental opportunities.
- Maximise the use of our marketable land and assets through improved development in business and industrial infrastructure.
- Market and promote North Lanarkshire as the place to live, learn, work, invest, and visit.
- Improve the health and wellbeing of our communities.
- Encourage the health and wellbeing of people through a range of social, cultural, and leisure activities.
- Enhance participation, capacity, and empowerment across our communities.
- Transform our natural environment to support wellbeing and inward investment and enhance it for current and future generations.
- Ensure we keep our environment clean, safe, and attractive.

[North Lanarkshire Environment Strategy](#)

## **5 Public Engagement and Workforce Development**

### **5.1 The North Lanarkshire Biodiversity Action Plan (NLBAP)**

The North Lanarkshire Biodiversity Action Plan (NLBAP) covers the period 2023-2027 and outlines actions and targets for local priority species and habitats. The Action Plan sets a framework for action to conserve and enhance the biodiversity found in North Lanarkshire.

The NLBAP 2023 -2027 was developed throughout 2022 and 2023. It includes a non-natives action plan and a geodiversity action plan.



The NLBAP process is led by North Lanarkshire Council's Biodiversity Team. The Countryside Rangers, Community Greenspace team along with partner organisations wrote and updated many of the species and habitat action plans.

The NLBAP is the main driver in directing Biodiversity Action in North Lanarkshire, and a key information source for partners and projects operating in the area.

[North Lanarkshire Biodiversity Action Plan](#)

## 5.2 Biodiversity communication:

Number of Schools/ Education facilities Events	Number of Pupils Engaged With	Volunteer Sessions held	Number of Volunteers Engaged With	Number of Events held	Events Attendee Numbers	Partnership Working events	Number of Attendees
28	1113	145	52	39	335	11	116

Biodiversity communication in North Lanarkshire Council is taken forward through several methods and programmes. We have found that some of our most successful and far-reaching biodiversity communication is gained by encouraging people to use our greenspaces. We take this forward through a programme of health walks, through maintenance and provision of interpretation in our Local Nature Reserves, and through working with local community Groups and volunteers to improve local greenspaces for the benefit of both people and wildlife.

The Countryside Ranger Service is our main service undertaking biodiversity communication with the public alongside other engagement activities.

### 5.2.1 The Countryside Ranger Service

The Countryside Ranger Service play an important role in delivering local and national Biodiversity Action Plan targets with a range of projects including biological monitoring and recording, habitat improvement and tackling non-native invasive species. The Countryside Ranger Service are active within local communities and offer formal and informal learning opportunities within North Lanarkshire.

## Branching Out

The Countryside Ranger Service has successfully integrated Biodiversity actions and Health and Wellbeing outcomes through their Branching Out programme of events. The programme has grown over the last three years, and we now take forward five 10-week programmes in our Country Parks, each programme involves 8 – 12 participants with a range of mental health conditions.

Branching out consists of ten 3-hour sessions of conservation work, art creation, and bush craft followed by a 'graduation' ceremony. Health care professionals accompany their patients and take part with our specially trained Countryside Rangers leading the sessions. The progress of participants is clear as the sessions progress. In this reporting period 92 Branching Out sessions have been held across NLC greenspaces.

### 5.2.2 Healthy walking in our Greenspaces

It has been shown by numerous studies that walking and in particular walking in greenspaces has many benefits to both physical and mental health.

Community Greenspace has been working in partnership with Paths for All and NHS Lanarkshire on various projects that promote the enjoyment of walking and the benefits of a more active lifestyle through the Lanarkshire Green Health Partnership.

Get Walking Lanarkshire is a partnership programme between Paths for All, North and South Lanarkshire Council's and their Leisure Trusts and NHS Lanarkshire. The project aims to improve residents' health and wellbeing by joining a local health walk group and taking part in short, safe, low-level walks whilst exploring local parks and green space. In North Lanarkshire alone the project has created an average of 17 walks per week.

[Get Walking Lanarkshire | North Lanarkshire Council](#)

### 5.2.3 Greenspace Interpretation

Alongside encouraging communities to access their local greenspaces through projects such as Get Walking Lanarkshire and the significant path improvements taken forward through Creating Nature Connections (in section 3.1), several opportunities to educate and raise awareness on greenspace sites have been taken forward.

Through consultation the Creating Natural Connections interpretation work identified the provision of information on Cumbernauld's natural heritage and green spaces as a priority. Signage was installed in Greenspaces and Local

Nature Reserves around Cumbernauld. Signage showed links to other sites and provided information on species and habitats of biodiversity importance.

Over the reporting period several meadows have been developed in North Lanarkshire (Section 3.3). This often involved a change in management of sites. Where amenity grass land was previously mown throughout the growing season, cuts were reduced to one or two annually. The initial ground preparation is very aesthetically intrusive, with large areas of bare earth exposed through rotovating of soil. Many of our sites have been in very public areas such as Town Parks and Country Parks. For these reasons extensive public consultation was carried out as part of the Town Parks works. This meant that wildflower sites were adapted and altered to better suit local community needs. Web pages were developed explaining the process and value of the meadows. Links to this further information were provided on site signage and interpretation: [Wildflower planting | North Lanarkshire Council](#). Local schools and community groups were engaged in the process through planting days, with more planned in spring 2024.

### 5.3 Social media and websites

North Lanarkshire Council provide information on our biodiversity services, project information, consultations, and educational material on our website and through the Council's Facebook and twitter channels, which also have targeted local accounts. In 2022 a successful [participatory budgeting](#) exercise identified 34 biodiversity projects, suggested by the public to be put forward to a public vote to receive funding for implementation.

### 5.4 Workforce Development

The Biodiversity team and other staff within Greenspace Development provide expert advice regarding biodiversity issues to colleagues within North Lanarkshire Council.

Staff are encouraged to attend conferences and training events provided by external organisations, such as Nature Scot and Green Action Trust

A Biodiversity Officer attends the LBAP network meeting twice a year to share and learn from good practice examples.

North Lanarkshire Council wishes to encourage high quality development that contributes positively to local environments - including the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and has produced planning guidance to make clear the constraints and biodiversity improvements that should be considered. These will be updated in 2024 to include revised legislation and

guidance and to reflect new measures put forward within the NPF4 and Nature Scot Developing with Nature guidance.

Biodiversity and Development (2011)  
[20 Biodiversity.pdf \(northlanarkshire.gov.uk\)](#)

## **6 Research and Monitoring**

North Lanarkshire's Community Greenspace team have developed our own internal biodiversity action recording and monitoring system. As well as this overarching action reporting and monitoring function. We monitor individual species and project work where possible.

North Lanarkshire is home to an internationally important species of Taiga Bean Goose and NLC are a partner of the Bean Goose Action Group, contributing to monitoring efforts that have been ongoing since 1990.

A highly successful barn owl project was undertaken to contribute to the barn owl action plan. As part of this project monitoring and ringing of the species is carried out and the project provides additional benefits as it is an effective way to deliver environmental education. Monitoring of all other raptors has also been undertaken as part of this process, species include kestrel, tawny owl, peregrine falcon, and sparrowhawk.

Annual monitoring of great crested newts and other amphibians are undertaken at Gartcosh LNR.

Annual surveys for amphibian, water voles at Frankfield LNR along with a 3-year breeding bird survey which will help to contribute to the long-term monitoring and management of the sites.

The Countryside Ranger Service monitor stewardship sites, noting any issues such as disturbance or potential threats, as well as recording species present during their regular site visits. The team also carry out specialist surveys such as monthly surveys of Wetland and Breeding Birds on Strathclyde Loch.

The Community Greenspace team holds protected species data and protected area boundary shapefiles within a GIS alongside a recording system. We record road traffic accidents involving species and where these are frequent inform our road department in order to provide wildlife signage.

## 7 Contribution to targets

The following table indicate the biodiversity targets to which North Lanarkshire Council has contributed.

Targets/key steps from Chapter 1 (Healthy ecosystems) of the "2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity"	Contribution to key step?	Justification
(1.1) Encourage and support ecosystem restoration and management, especially in catchments that have experienced the greatest degradation		7 Lochs project  Dumbreck and Garrell Project
(1.2) Use assessments of ecosystem health at a catchment level to determine what needs to be done		7 Lochs Project & Cumbernauld Living Landscape
(1.3) Government and public bodies, including SNH, SEPA and FCS, will work together towards a shared agenda for action to restore ecosystem health at a catchment-scale across Scotland		Cambusnethan Woodland Project.  7 Lochs Project.  Dumbreck and Garrell Project.
(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		7 Lochs Project. Local Plan. Community Growth Areas.
Targets/key steps from Chapter 2 (Natural Capital) of the "2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity"	Contribution to key step?	Justification
(2.1) Encourage wide acceptance and use of the Natural Capital Assets Index (2012) <sup>12</sup> , including a comparable measure for the marine environment.		

(2.2) Use the index to influence decision-making and market-based approaches, so that the wider monetary and nonmonetary values for ecosystem services are recognised and accounted for		Achieved through consultation with the planning process.
(2.3) Undertake a major programme of peatland conservation, management and restoration		Have undertaken 5 peatland projects over the reporting period.
<b>Targets/key steps from Chapter 3 (Biodiversity, health and quality of life) of the "2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity"</b>	<b>Contribution to key step?</b>	<b>Justification</b>
(3.1) Provide opportunities for everyone to experience and enjoy nature regularly, with a particular focus on disadvantaged groups		Branching Out Programme. Health walks Programme. Greenhead Moss; Palacerigg and 7 Lochs volunteer groups.
(3.2) Support local authorities and communities to improve local environments and enhance biodiversity		9 Local Nature Reserves development and support.
using green space and green networks, allowing nature to flourish and so enhancing the quality of life for people who live there		Advice and recommendations through the planning process.



(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		Branching Out Programme. Health walks Programme. Volunteer Groups at Greenhead, Palacerigg and 7 Lochs. Lanarkshire Green Health Partnership.
(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		Supporting Forest Schools and Forest Kindergartens through encouraging sensitive use of public woodlands.
(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		Working with other Council departments such as Roads, Planning and Flooding to incorporate Biodiversity action.
<b>Targets/key steps from Chapter 4 (Wildlife, habitats and protected places) of the "2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity"</b>	<b>Contribution to key step?</b>	<b>Justification</b>
(4.1) Ensure that the management of protected places for nature also provides wider public benefits		This is mainly achieved through our 9 Local Nature Reserves.
(4.3) Integrate protected areas policy with action for wider habitats to combat fragmentation and restore key habitats		This is mainly achieved through protection of our Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and Green Networks.

(4.5) Involve many more people than at present in this work and improve understanding of the poorly known elements of nature		This is mainly achieved through interpretation, events, and community contacts at our 9 Local Nature Reserves. 7 Lochs Cumbernauld Living Landscapes
<b>Targets/key steps from Chapter 5 (Land and freshwater management) of the "2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity"</b>	<b>Contribution to key step?</b>	<b>Justification</b>
(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	<b>X</b>	Biodiversity and SINC's are recognised in the Modified Local Plan Policy Document. There is policy and guidance in place to protect these areas.
(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		Out with our control
(5.3) Support 'High Nature Value' farming and forestry		Through our WIAT programme.
(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		Dumbreck and Garrell Project. Contribution to management of SINC's, and SACs, and protection of these through the Planning system.

(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		Project at the Dumbreck & Garrell Burn by Dumbreck, Kilsyth in partnership with Flooding Colleagues.
(5.6) Restore and extend natural habitats as a means of building reserves of carbon and to help mitigate climate change		WIAT projects & bog restoration projects
(5.7) Provide clear advice to land and water managers on best practice		Biodiversity supplementary Planning guidance provided to Planners, and developers. Guidance and training provided to other departments in management practices, and awareness of biodiversity priority species.
<b>Targets/key steps from Chapter 6 (Marine and coastal) of the "2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity"</b>	<b>Contribution to key step?</b>	<b>Justification</b>
(6.4) Achieve good environmental status for Scottish seas		Not a priority in this area as we are land bound. Although protection of freshwater taken forward through anti-pollution methods, and re naturalisation projects will contribute to this.