

Third Statutory Biodiversity Duty Report 2017-2020

Report by Chief Officer Place

Report for Decision

1 Recommendations

1.1 That PRS:

- i) approve the appended report (Appendix B) as the Council's third statutory Biodiversity Report 2017-2020;
- ii) agree to the publication of the Biodiversity Report 2017-2020 on the Council's website and provide the Scottish Government with a copy; and
- iii) refer this report and the Biodiversity Report 2017-2020 to the Performance Review & Scrutiny Committee for its information.

2 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 This report seeks; approval of the appended paper as the Council's third statutory Biodiversity Report 2017-2020 (using the Scottish Government's template); agreement for it to be published on the Council's website; and for a copy to be forwarded to the Scottish Government. This covering report and Biodiversity Report set out the actions undertaken by Midlothian Council since November 2017 to further the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in accordance with the requirements of the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 and the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011. The Acts require the publication of the report and the submission to Scottish Government.

Date 10 November 2020

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3 Background

- 3.1 Biodiversity is the variety of life. It includes plants, animals, even micro-organisms and bacteria, interacting with each other and the non-living environment (soil, water, etc.) to form living ecosystems. These interactions within ecosystems cleanse the air and water, pollinate crops, break down waste, control pests and diseases and regulate natural events. The production of food, fuels, medicines and the fibres of our clothes is dependent upon this web of life. Once ecosystems are disrupted, life, life patterns and the availability of such goods and services can be put at risk.
- 3.2 The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 requires public bodies to further the conservation of biodiversity in delivering services, having regard to the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (published in 2004). The strategy sets out local government's role in conserving biodiversity: including through community planning, spatial planning, education and greenspace management. The 2004 Strategy was supplemented in 2013 with the "2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity". The aims of the 2013 document are:
- protect and restore biodiversity on land and in our seas, and to support healthy ecosystems;
 - connect people with the natural world, for their health and well-being, and to involve them more in decision making; and
 - maximise the benefits for Scotland of a diverse natural environment and the services it provides, contributing to sustainable economic growth.
- 3.3 The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 requires public bodies to publish a 'Biodiversity Report' every three years that sets out the actions taken by the public body in carrying out its biodiversity duty. The attached proposed report highlights the activity undertaken by Midlothian Council in carrying out that duty. The Council's last biodiversity report was published in November 2017 and can be viewed on the Council's website.

4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)

4.1 Resource

There are no additional resource implications for Midlothian Council from this report. Preparation of the Biodiversity Report has been undertaken within existing budgets. Resource for future work on biodiversity matters will need to be identified as part of Service Plan preparations.

Volunteer contributions to the furtherance of biodiversity in Midlothian are highlighted in the appended Biodiversity Report.

4.2 Digital

None

Subject to Cabinet approval, the appended biodiversity duty report will be uploaded to the Council website.

4.3 Risk

The Council is required by the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 to publish a third “Biodiversity Report” on its website and provide a copy to the Scottish Government. Failure to meet this requirement risks resultant reputational damage.

Lack of resources and consideration for safeguarding and enhancing biodiversity, such as implementing the Midlothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2019-2024 (LBAP) and other associated work reported in the appended biodiversity duty report, could pose a risk in terms of determining whether the Council is properly discharging its biodiversity duty. That could also create reputational damage for the Council.

4.4 Ensuring Equalities

This report does not relate to a new or revised policy or service change/budget change. It is therefore considered that undertaking an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) in relation to this report is not necessary.

4.5 Additional Report Implications (See Appendix A)

See Appendix A

Appendices

Appendix A – Additional Report Implications

Appendix B – Midlothian Council Third Biodiversity Duty Report 2017-2020

APPENDIX A – Additional Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

Natural environment priorities and actions have been included within the environment component of the Midlothian Sustainable Growth Community Planning Theme, one of Midlothian's five community planning themes. This environment component has now become part of the Midlothian Community Planning Climate Emergency Group. The new Climate Emergency Group will retain natural environment priorities and actions relating to biodiversity safeguarding and enhancing.

A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- ☒ Holistic Working
- ☒ Hub and Spoke
- ☒ Modern
- ☒ Sustainable
- ☒ Transformational
- ☒ Preventative
- ☒ Asset-based
- ☒ Continuous Improvement
- ☐ One size fits one
- ☐ None of the above

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- ☒ One Council Working with you, for you
- ☒ Preventative and Sustainable
- ☒ Efficient and Modern
- ☒ Innovative and Ambitious
- ☐ None of the above

A.4 Delivering Best Value

In discharging its Best Value duties the Council is required to contribute to the achievement of sustainability. The Council's Sustainable Development Framework notes the stresses being placed on global life-support systems, including through biodiversity loss.

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Through work facilitated by the Council's Ranger Service significant engagement with individual and community groups is undertaken in its nature conservation and biodiversity work.

Public ownership and partnership are principles of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP). This occurred through the Midlothian LBAP Steering Group for the production of the LBAP and continues through the implementation of LBAP actions. Ongoing engagement and

partnership will be occurring through the work of the Midlothian Community Planning Climate Emergency Group.

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

There is no direct impact arising from this report.

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Biodiversity is central to life. Its safeguarding and enhancement are also central to quality of life. The Council would be at risk of failing in its statutory duty and policies and strategies if it neglected biodiversity. Enhancing biodiversity will add to the quality of life for residents and visitors.

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

This report, through the Biodiversity Duty Report, seeks to highlight what the Council has been doing to help safeguard and promote biodiversity. As stated above in section A.7 of this report, biodiversity is central to life. Safeguarding and enhancing of biodiversity will help support sustainable development.

APPENDIX B: MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL THIRD BIODIVERSITY DUTY REPORT 2017-2020

The Biodiversity Duty REPORTING TEMPLATE: LEVEL ONE ORGANISATIONS

Report Outline

Bodies are encouraged to use the following structure for their report. This is set out in the template below, which you can either type directly into, or copy into a separate document.

- Section 1: Introductory information about your public body
- Section 2: Actions to protect biodiversity and connect people with nature
- Section 3: Mainstreaming biodiversity
- Section 4: Nature-based solutions, climate change and biodiversity
- Section 5: Public engagement and workforce development
- Section 6: Research and monitoring
- Section 7: Biodiversity highlights and challenges

Completion Notes

These completion notes offer guidance to support your public body to complete your Biodiversity Duty Report. Taken together with the associated hyperlinks, they provide suggestions on the breadth of actions that could be included in your report. They may also assist with forward planning on how biodiversity can be taken into account in future.

While they incorporate the key elements on which you may wish to report, they are not an exhaustive list and it is likely that there will be a range of additional work that your organisation carried out in support of biodiversity on which you may also wish to report. To find out more on the Biodiversity Duty see the [NatureScot website](#).



SECTION 1: INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR PUBLIC BODY

Please describe your organisation's role and purpose, including any particular environmental responsibilities

Guidance on completing this section	<p>Organisation: Midlothian Council</p> <p>Midlothian Council is a Scottish local council authority responsible for the provision of a variety of services in Midlothian which are typically provided by local government. These services include, but not exclusively, education and training, social care, roads, waste and recycling collection, civil registration services, housing, property management, land and countryside management, trading standards, environmental health, planning, economic development and building standards.</p> <p>The Council Leader is one of 18 elected local councillors that run the Council.</p> <p>The Council's Chief Executive is responsible for the effective operation of the Council and in ensuring that excellent and efficient services are delivered to the people and communities of Midlothian. The below three part structure of the Council supports and delivers this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Joint Director, Health and Social Care, Chief Officer of Midlothian Integrated Joint Board;• Executive Director, Place; and• Executive Director, Children, Young People and Partnerships, Chief Education Officer. <p>Delivery of biodiversity safeguarding and enhancement most directly effects the following Council services and forms a fundamental part of daily work;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Land and Countryside Services – through management of Council land, the Ranger service, and engagement with the general public through the activities of Land and Countryside Services and the Ranger Service; and• Planning – through land use planning, development plan and guidance production and the determination of planning applications.
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Text Field

Political leadership and responsibility for biodiversity at Midlothian Council lies with its Cabinet. The lead service for reporting duty is Planning which is within the Place Directorate.

The Single Midlothian Plan during 2017-2020 always contained Environment priorities and actions. The 2020/2021 Single Midlothian Plan includes, amongst others, actions relating to the delivery of the Midlothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2019-2024 (pages 64-65). These actions can be seen in the below table and through the below link to the Council's website:

https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/3925/single_midlothian_plan_2021

Action	Due date	Indicator	Target	Ownership
Promote the restoration and creation of pesticide free, flower rich habitats in the countryside and urban areas	31/3/21	Create at least 2000m ² per year of pollinator habitat	New Measure	Midlothian Council/ Local Community
Produce management plans for three Local Biodiversity Sites	31/3/21	Produce three site management plans	3	Midlothian Local Biodiversity Plan Partners
Run workshops on promotion of biodiversity knowledge and enhancement, including workshops on the construction, installation, maintenance and	31/3/21	1 workshop per delivery partner (4 in total)	4	Midlothian Local Biodiversity Plan Partners



		monitoring of homes for wildlife in gardens and greenspaces				
		Promote removal/modification of fish barriers on the River North Esk	31/3/21	Remove or modify 1 barrier	New Measure	SEPA, owners, communities and businesses supported by the Midlothian Biodiversity Partnership
		Establish a Climate Emergency group in the Midlothian Community Planning Partnership	31/3/21	Replace the current Sustainable Development theme "Environment" group - 1 new group established	New Measure	Midlothian Community Planning Partnership and associated members
		Investigate a Sustainable Growth Agreement (SGA) between Midlothian Council and SEPA	31/3/21	1 SGA agreed	New Measure	Midlothian Community Planning Partnership
		Investigate identifying tree coverage on community planning partners landholdings using appropriate software	31/3/21	Tree coverage record established	New Measure	Midlothian Community Planning Partnership



Midlothian Council elected local Councillors and officials are involved with the following external bodies which have a remit incorporating biodiversity:

- Cllr Russell Imrie and Cllr Peter Smaill (Provost) are Board Members of the Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust.
- Cllr Russell Imrie, Cllr Kelly Parry and Cllr Pauline Winchester are members of the Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee. Cllr Andrew Hardie is a member of the Pentland Hills Regional Park Advisory Group.
- Midlothian Council had been a partner in the Lothians and Fife Green Network Partnership 2017-2020, and was represented by a senior Council staff member on the Partnership Group. The Council is involved in the replacement of the Lothians and Fife Green Network Partnership.

SECTION 2: ACTIONS TO PROTECT BIODIVERSITY AND CONNECT PEOPLE WITH NATURE

Please describe and explain any actions that your organisation has undertaken alone or as part of a partnership to benefit biodiversity directly, to tackle the main drivers of biodiversity loss, or to achieve wider outcomes for nature and people

<p>Guidance on completing this section</p>	<p>Land and Countryside and the Ranger Services</p> <p>The work of the Land and Countryside and the Ranger Services actively promote biodiversity enhancement and engagement in the natural environment. Land and Countryside Services maintain Council controlled land in line with service plans and seeks to enhance biodiversity where it is able. A recent example is the woodland management for biodiversity at 50 ha site in Cuiken Glen and Mauricewood Woodland, near Penicuik, at a cost of £400,000. The work involved improving the path network to increase public access to enjoy the woodlands. Ash has not been favoured for new planting in the woodland management to help prevent future loss from Ash die back disease.</p> <p>Midlothian Council Ranger Service manages the countryside for the benefit of people and wildlife at the following sites: Vogrie Country Park, Roslin Glen Country Park, Springfield Mill, Gore Glen Woodland Park, Straiton Pond Local Nature Reserve and both the Penicuik to Dalkeith and Roslin to Straiton Walkways (active travel routes).</p> <p>The Objectives of the Ranger Service are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreation: To encourage participation in Midlothian's countryside and to work in partnership with communities; • Education: To help everyone learn about Midlothian's countryside and heritage; and • Conservation (biodiversity). <p>Volunteering to safeguard the natural environment and biodiversity is a key part of the work of the Ranger Service. The Ranger Service works with volunteers in its management of these Midlothian assets and works with all ages to promote enjoyment and learning of the outdoors and natural environment. Further details of this work with volunteers is provided in section 5 of this report.</p>
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Land and Countryside, Ranger and Planning Services

The Planning Service, Land and Countryside and Ranger services combined to work with partners to produce the Midlothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2019-2024.

Midlothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2019-2024

In February 2019 Midlothian Council adopted a new Midlothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) 2019-2024. This document replaced the 2006 Midlothian LBAP.

A Steering Group of informal partners*, including community representation, was formed in 2017 to oversee and contribute to the creation of this new LBAP for Midlothian. The group developed a new approach for this LBAP which focused on a much smaller number of themes and actions than the 2006 LBAP. It was agreed there were too many actions in the 2006 LBAP and that availability of resources would not support such an approach for the new LBAP. It was agreed to focus on a few key priorities that would be deliverable over the lifetime of the LBAP in a context of resource constraints. The outcomes of the Single Midlothian Plan, particularly those that safeguarding and enhancing biodiversity would contribute to, strongly influenced the identification of six priorities for the LBAP. (*Including SEPA, Scottish Water, NatureScot, Pentland Hills Regional Park, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Scottish Forestry and the local records centre (The Wildlife Information Centre)).

The six identified priorities for the Midlothian LBAP 2019-2024 are:

- Pollinators
- Homes for Wildlife
- Rivers, Streams and Ponds
- Invasive Non-Native Species
- People and Nature
- Protected Sites and Species

Twelve actions were identified by the Steering Group to help deliver these six priorities. The LBAP sets out the work to be undertaken to deliver these actions and the partners that will be involved in, and also lead on, delivery. An action and delivery table is included at the end of the LBAP to make these points clear.



The work to deliver the 12 actions brings together local government – particularly Council services, government agencies, charities, developers and communities groups. Community representation was included at the start of the process and more needs to be done to encourage further community involvement in the delivery of the LBAP actions. Action 10, Promoting Citizen Science, reflects the Steering Groups desire and intention have more public involvement and interest in biodiversity.

The 12 actions identified to help deliver the six LBAP priorities are:

- Action 1 Restoration and creation of flower rich habitats
- Action 2 Creation of nest boxes and other wildlife homes
- Action 3 Installation of nesting and wildlife and wildlife homes in new developments
- Action 4 Pond and wetland creation and maintenance
- Action 5 Improving the ecology of watercourses
- Action 6 Tackling Invasive Non Native Species in rivers, streams and ponds
- Action 7 Tackling Invasive Non Native Species on the Borders Railway Line
- Action 8 Management of Urban Woodlands
- Action 9 Wildlife Corridoes
- Action 10 Promoting Citizen Science
- Action 11 Managing Local Biodiversity Sites
- Action 12 Local Priority Species

The actions are reviewed annually to monitor progress and identify challenges to delivery of actions.

Planning

The planning service has specific duties which have significant implications for biodiversity protection and enhancement. More details are in section 3 of this document.

In August 2018 the Council adopted its Midlothian Green Network Supplementary Guidance as required by the Midlothian Local Development Plan (2017). This sets out details for increasing connectivity across Midlothian and also green infrastructure requirements from new development sites. This will help create wildlife habitat as



part of the development. The planning service has in 2020 used IT software to workout tree canopy coverage in different Midlothian electoral wards to try and calculate the sequestration and financial value of trees. This will be used to influence the work of the planning team in supporting the retention of trees, and promotion of tree planting, where this appropriate and can be achieved. In 2018 the Council's planning service worked with Buglife and partners, including NatureScot, on Buglife's B-Line project to identify habitats and potential travel routes. Pollinators are one of the actions in the new Midlothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

The following are other examples of specific biodiversity work supported by the Planning service.

Local Records Centre

Since 2009 Midlothian Council has financially supported The Wildlife Information Centre (TWIC), the local wildlife record centre, by procuring services from them through a Service Level Agreement. Many other authorities in south east Scotland, including all in the Lothians and Scottish Borders Council, have a Service Level Agreement with the record centre for provision of services. Midlothian Council recognises and appreciates the value of a local records centre for helping safeguard and enhance biodiversity, and for the assistance provided to help the Council carry out its functions.

Midlothian Local Biodiversity Site System

The Local Biodiversity Site system set up by Midlothian Council in 2009 remains in place and is operative. It replaced the former Local Wildlife Site system and the change was made in line with the 2006 *Guidance on Establishing and Managing Local Nature Conservation Site Systems in Scotland* which requires sites to be assessed against in terms of species diversity, species rarity, habitat rarity, habitat naturalness, habitat extent and connectivity. There are currently over 50 designated local biodiversity sites in Midlothian.

The Midlothian Local Biodiversity Site System is administered by The Wildlife Information Centre, the local records centre, on behalf of the Council through a service level agreement reviewed on an annual basis. The Wildlife Information Centre is a registered charity separate from the Council. The Council is very grateful to all partners that are involved in this important work. The system would not operate without their support and input. The local biodiversity sites feed into the planning process as set out in section 3 of this report.



	<p>The Wildlife Information Centre maintains records for the Council of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• flora and fauna records across Midlothian, including those identified in proposed and designated Local Biodiversity Sites in Midlothian; and• details of proposed and designated Local Biodiversity Sites, including site boundaries, site survey and site assessment information. <p>With the assistance of the Wildlife Information Centre, a methodology for considering and assessing potential Local Biodiversity Sites (LBS) and operating the LBS system in Midlothian has been established by the Council. This methodology is updated when and if required.</p> <p>The LBS system is overseen by a Midlothian Local Biodiversity Site Steering Group which is chaired by Midlothian Council. Its other members include The Wildlife Information Centre and acknowledged volunteer local botanical experts, including representatives of the Scottish Wildlife Trust and Botanical Society of the British Isles. NatureScot is a corresponding member of the Steering Group.</p>
Links to related resources	<p>Midlothian Council has a very dynamic and active Ranger Service based at Vogrie Country Park, focusing on recreation, education and conservation (biodiversity). Further details of the Rangers' activities can be viewed on the Council's website:</p> <p>https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/200283/parks/394/midlothian_ranger_service</p> <p>In February 2019 Midlothian Council adopted a new Midlothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan (2019-2024) which can be viewed on the Council's website:</p> <p>https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/1231/environment/290/biodiversity</p> <p>This document is solely intended to promote and safeguard biodiversity in Midlothian.</p> <p>The Midlothian Local Development Plan (adopted by Midlothian Council in November 2017) provides the policy land use framework for growth in Midlothian and the policy framework against which development proposals are assessed. This includes a policy framework of how proposals should be assessed in relation to their impact on the natural environment, and biodiversity, The document can be viewed on the Council's website:</p> <p>https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/205/planning_policy/286/development_plans_and_policies</p>



The Local Development Plan also includes policies on green networks, Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, flooding, tree and hedgerow protection, protection of peat and carbon rich soils and protection of river valleys.

In August 2018 Midlothian Council adopted Supplementary Guidance entitled the Midlothian Green Network to help deliver the policy framework of the Midlothian Local Development Plan (adopted November 2017). One of the purposes of this Supplementary Guidance is to promote wildlife connectivity. The document can be viewed on the Council's website:

https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/205/planning_policy/286/development_plans_and_policies/3



SECTION 3: MAINSTREAMING BIODIVERSITY

Please outline any steps your organisation has taken to incorporate biodiversity measures into its wider policies, plans or strategies. This should include decision-making structures and staff and organisational roles and responsibilities.

Guidance on completing this section	<p>The mainstreaming of biodiversity is reflected in the following corporate documents. It reflects the status given to biodiversity matters that must be taken into account by council officers in carrying out their duties and work, and the Council's decision making:</p> <p><u>Service Plans</u></p> <p>Service plans for Midlothian Council's Land and Countryside Service, which includes the Ranger Service, identify work to be undertaken with direct and significant benefit to biodiversity. The Council's monitoring package, Covalent, monitors progress on actions and requirements. As with other parts of Land and Countryside Service, the Ranger Service demonstrates significant leadership in taking forward biodiversity conservation on the ground in partnership with organisations in and outside the Council. Details of this work are provided in this Biodiversity Duty Report.</p> <p>Planning's service plan has a direct relationship with biodiversity, through the Service's development management work, development planning and the production of policy and guidance intended, where relevant, to specifically promote and support biodiversity. Again the Council's monitoring package, Covalent, monitors progress on actions and requirements.</p> <p><u>Sustainability Impact Check</u></p> <p>The Council's corporate report template has a 'Supporting Sustainable Development' section and applying the check is encouraged to generate the necessary commentary, including in relation to biodiversity impacts. Guidance on the Council's intranet is provided on completing this section of the report. Application of the Council's Sustainability Impact Check is further intended to help with completing this part of Council reports.</p>
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Strategic Environmental Assessment

Biodiversity is one of the environmental issues referred to in the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. Under the Act the Council is required to carry out a process of 'Strategic Environmental Assessment' ('SEA') when developing or updating certain policies, strategies, plans, programmes, etc. The process is intended to ensure a more thorough consideration of environmental impacts.

SEA and sustainable development information and resources have been brought together for staff on the Council's intranet. This guidance allows those producing reports to set out how a report relates to SEA requirements in terms of whether they represent "plans", "programmes" and "strategies". This will help complete the section of the Council report template entitled "Supporting Sustainable Development" which sets out that matters relating to SEA should be dealt with in that section.

Midlothian Council Ranger Service

The Ranger Service works to achieve or maintain Green Flag status on a three yearly basis for sites. Within the seven criteria for achieving green flag status are Criteria 4: Environmental Management and Criteria 5: Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage. The achievement of reaching green flag status recognises and requires that biodiversity is enhanced on the sites. The Ranger Service produces site management plans for Vogrie Country Park, Roslin Glen, Straiton Pond, Penicuik to Dalkeith Walkway and Springfield Mill to help deliver biodiversity enhancement. Additionally Roslin Glen, Springfield Mill and Gore Glen Woodland Park are designated local biodiversity sites.

Planning Service

The Council in carrying out its function as planning authority takes into account, and where appropriate, seeks to enhance biodiversity in carrying out this work. The assessment and decision making on planning applications and production of planning policy (i.e. the Local Development Plan) and guidance are the primary means by which this is done.

The Midlothian Local Development Plan (2017) sets out a framework of policies for the preservation of the natural heritage of Midlothian which includes protection for internationally, nationally, regionally and locally important nature conservation sites, species protected by law, and habitats outwith designated areas. It



contains a requirement for any development proposals to demonstrate compatibility with the aims and objectives of the MLBAP and related plans, by identifying appropriate measures to protect, enhance and promote existing habitats and/or the creation of new habitats, and provide for the effective management of these habitats. It also contains protection for local nature conservation sites, that includes local biodiversity sites, that have been accepted by Midlothian Council as proposed sites but have not been formally designated. The policies of the Plan are the basis for the assessment of planning applications submitted to the Council. The application of these policies helps to safeguard and enhance biodiversity value in Midlothian. As would be expected, the policy framework of the Local Development Plan is wide and varied. It includes matters such as open space, landscaping, trees/hedgerows, Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, flooding, nature conservation designations. All of these have clear implications for biodiversity and its protection and enhancement.

In assessing development proposals, other material considerations will be taken into account. These include the Midlothian LBAP 2019-2024, where for example the LBAP's actions may directly relate to a development. Planning officers seek to assist with implementation of the LBAP actions through measures, such as requesting "homes for nature" in new developments or swift boxes which have resulted from having an up to date LBAP. Other material considerations include the green network supplementary guidance which seeks, as part of its role, to promote wildlife connectivity.

In late 2020 or early 2021 Nature Conservation planning guidance will be published. This document will be a material consideration in the assessment of planning applications. It is aimed at providing information and guidance for planning officers assessing development proposals and applicants preparing development proposals.

The Council's Landscape Officers (a single job share post) work with planning officers and developers in the assessment and implementation of proposals. The incorporation of particular plant species and landscape schemes help to enhance the biodiversity value of a site and the wildlife connectivity of a site to adjacent areas. This is a particular feature of implementing the requirements of the Midlothian Local Development Plan (2017) and the Midlothian Green Network Supplementary Guidance (2018).



	<p>Screening of Planning Applications for Biodiversity Impact</p> <p>All planning applications received by Midlothian Council are screened by The Wildlife Information Centre (TWIC), the local wildlife record centre, against a range of criteria to identify potential biodiversity issues in proposals. The screening criteria include designated nature conservation sites, wildlife records, existing land uses e.g. peat, carbon rich soil, grass lands. The report flags up for the planning officer dealing with the planning application potential issues and possible courses of action to consider. These screening reports are supplied to the planning officers dealing with the planning application to help them to assess the significance of impact on biodiversity from the proposal. The Record Centre also provides a service to interpret biodiversity information submitted in support of planning applications. This service is intended to supply information to help the planning officer dealing with the proposal understand the competency of the supporting information submitted and, potentially, what further information the planning officer might require to request from the applicant to properly assess the impact of the proposal. Since November 2017 after the second Biodiversity Duty Report, nearly 2250 applications have been screened by The Wildlife Information Centre. The Wildlife Information Centre provided comment on nearly 1250 of these applications.</p>
Links to related resources	<p>See web links in Section 2.</p>



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

How has your organisation integrated biodiversity into nature based solutions to the climate emergency and other socio-economic outcomes?

Guidance on completing this section	<p><u>Midlothian Community Planning</u></p> <p>The Single Midlothian Plan contains Environment priorities and actions. The 2020/2021 Single Midlothian Plan includes, amongst others, actions relating to the delivery of the Midlothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2019-2024 (pages 64-65). These can be seen on the Council's website: https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/3925/single_midlothian_plan_2021</p> <p>Following Midlothian Council declaring a Climate Emergency at its 17 December 2019 Council meeting, on 16 January 2020 the Midlothian Community Planning Board meeting agreed that a community planning climate change group should be established to raise the influence and priority given to addressing the climate challenge, help achieve the goal of making Midlothian Council's activities net zero by 2030, achieving 100% clean energy across the Council's full range of functions by 2030 and raise the priority given to addressing climate change to the highest level as a cross cutting theme for partners and Midlothian Council. The aim would be to reduce the carbon foot print of all partners in Midlothian.</p> <p>It was agreed that the Environment component of the Midlothian Community Planning Partnership's Sustainable Development Group become the Climate Change Partnership group required in the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration. The Environment component of the Sustainable Development Group had brought forward the biodiversity actions into successive Single Midlothian Plans. To reflect the Council's declaration, this climate change group has been called the Climate Emergency Group. It is made up of community representatives, Council staff, government agency staff, not for profit organisations and representatives from the private sector.</p> <p>The new Climate Emergency Group had its first meeting on 28 August 2020. It identified a number of topic groups for identifying targets and work to meet the 2030 Net Zero target of the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration. The topic groups cover the following areas, agriculture, housing, transport, renewable energy and community engagement. Biodiversity has key role to play in all of these topic groups.</p>
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Midlothian Council Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan

On 25 August 2020 the Council approved a new Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. It was approved by Council almost at the same time as the inaugural meeting of the Midlothian Community Planning “Climate Emergency Group” on 28 August.

While all of its actions will have an impact on biodiversity, a number of the actions are perhaps more clearly identifiable as beneficial to biodiversity protection and promotion. These actions include:

- using organic fertiliser and planting bedding, and native biodiverse rich planting species in Council parks and controlled land to promote biodiversity;
- provide an exemplar pond project at the Council’s offices at Fairfield House, Dalkeith;
- where appropriate, introduce green roofs to new Council developments;
- implement the 2019-2024 Midlothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan;
- develop a carbon offsetting scheme to mitigate the carbon impact of development;
- award and promote new developments with the highest standards in sustainability and climate change adaptability;
- identify and adopt accredited methodology and application to record and place financial value on trees and open space;
- aim to make the Dalkeith Penicuik Walkway Scotland’s first Green Flag cycle path – this is a cross Midlothian active route connecting a number of Midlothian settlements; and
- through the Midlothian Local Development Plan 2:
 - i) promote the concept of developing an ‘urban forest’ in Midlothian
 - ii) secure 21% tree canopy cover in new developments
 - iii) set a presumption against the loss of mature trees;
 - iv) replacement tree planting for all unavoidable tree loss; and



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">v) securing biodiversity net gain on all development sites.vi) set the ambition that new development sites shall be carbon neutralvii) investigate the feasibility of developing a Zero Carbon Development Zoneviii) climate change adaptation through the planning application process
Links to related resources	<p>The 2020/2021 Single Midlothian Plan, and the biodiversity related actions soon on pages 64-65 of the document, can be viewed on the Council's website:</p> <p>https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/3925/single_midlothian_plan_2021</p> <p>These actions are also set out in section 1 of this report.</p>

What steps has your organisation taken to incorporate biodiversity outcomes into partnership initiatives, wider strategies or initiatives of relevance to climate change?

Guidance on completing this section	<p>The work associated with Midlothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan and the Midlothian Community Planning Climate Emergency Group incorporate biodiversity outcomes and clearly demonstrate partnership working. The actions and outcomes will promote and highlight the importance of biodiversity in the action against climate change. The Midlothian Community Planning Climate Emergency Group has just started its work, so the specific outcomes are not yet identified. It will involve significant partnership working and all the outcomes will be directed at making Midlothian NetZero Carbon by 2030.</p> <p>The Council has helped maintain the Midlothian Local Biodiversity Site System in Midlothian since 2009 through partnership working the Local Records Centre (The Wildlife Information Centre), Scottish Wildlife Trust, NatureScot and botanical experts in the Lothians. As indicated in section 3 of this report, designated and proposed local biodiversity sites have status as material considerations in the assessment of planning applications, where the proposal may affect the site. This support for the Local Records Centre supports the collection and distribution of wildlife data, which in turn can be used to support survey work and also be taken into account in the development and assessment of development proposals.</p>
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Links to related resources	See links in sections 1 and 2 of this report.
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Looking ahead, what do you think will be the main climate change related challenges for biodiversity over the next three years?

Guidance on completing this section	<p>The main challenges will be maintaining and getting extra resource to support measures that safeguard and enhance biodiversity. There will be reduced resource across all sectors and the necessity to safeguard and promote biodiversity will need to be made even stronger.</p> <p>The role of biodiversity in climate emergency will need to be strongly made also, as it may lose out if resource is diverted to reducing emissions in the built environment and in manufactured goods/processing. Biodiversity may not be supported as much in the process to reduce emissions and lose out in that regard.</p> <p>Over the next three years there is likely to be significant pressure to increase employment opportunities. While even if this did not have a direct local impact on biodiversity, it may divert resource from enhancing biodiversity and less attention may be given to it.</p> <p>Getting support over the next three years for undertaking large scale biodiversity support measures may prove challenging. This includes the getting the support, the resource – capital and revenue cost for ongoing maintenance, the land and getting the skills and knowledge.</p>
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SECTION 5: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Public Engagement

Guidance on completing this section	<p>While the Midlothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan and Midlothian Community Planning Climate Emergency, and to a degree the Council's whole Planning service engage with the public on biodiversity matters, the main directly focused biodiversity engagement work has been led by the Council's Ranger Service. The highlights of this work are summarised below. It sets out the work the Rangers do with Midlothian schools helping roll out the biodiversity elements of the school curriculum and wider environmental education, the conservation/biodiversity work the Rangers do with volunteers, and also the outdoor activity events they organise to engage with all ages and parts of communities in Midlothian.</p> <p>Environmental Education Curricular Environmental Education The Ranger Service continues to organise and lead free curriculum based education for schools and groups, reaching 10,404 participants or 692 groups from 2017-20. The Rangers teach and inspire pupils about nature, their local environment and the world around them. This is based on the Curriculum for Excellence from the Early through to the Senior phase and includes:</p> <p>Nursery and Early Years education provision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• nature and history walks;• exploring the seasons;• identifying and using senses;• mini-beast hunting; and• naming basic plants and animals. <p>Primary School:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• pond and river system studies;• woodland and invertebrate studies;• habitat and biodiversity of school grounds and the local area;• landscape studies (basic human and physical geography); and• local history guided walks incorporating industrial and cultural heritage.
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Secondary School and Tertiary:

- geography and biology field studies including techniques for covering land use and conservation management and river systems and woodland ecology.
- advice and assistance with Advanced Higher projects.

Self-led activities:

- the Ranger Service has three resource boxes which are free to borrow; these allow teachers to lead environmental activities themselves. They cover pond and river dipping, woodlands and mini-beasts, environmental games, and include bug boxes, nets, trays, ID keys books etc.

In-service training

- the Ranger Service can arrange training days to teachers interested in developing topics and activities based in the countryside. This is aimed at helping development of school staff skills in conservation and biodiversity.

These actions have sought to enhance biodiversity itself in Midlothian and increase understanding and involvement in it across different groups and age ranges in Midlothian and beyond.

For All – Learning About and Caring for Nature in Midlothian

Countryside Events programme – the Ranger Service runs an annual events programme of nature based activities for all throughout our Countryside Sites and Midlothian's wider countryside. 243 events took place between 2017 and 2020 reaching a diverse audience of 9997 visitors

Countryside Information – includes web based information, social media updates via facebook and site based interpretation, information and leaflets at all seven countryside sites run by the Ranger Service.

Countryside Volunteers – all seven Ranger Service run countryside sites have a group of volunteers to achieve biodiversity and access objectives. Ongoing maintenance and project work has involved over 31,374 hours of volunteer contribution from 2017-20. External groups of volunteers contribute to larger tasks.

The Midlothian Outdoor Festival is held in August every year, though it was cancelled in 2020 due to Covid-19. The festival has built over recent years into an incredibly popular multi-faceted outdoor festival stretching



	throughout August with a wide range of events. At its heart though remains the ethos of appreciation and developing understanding of nature and biodiversity. It is a major event on the calendar with events widely circulated on social media and the Council's website.
Links to related resources	See links in section 2 of this report.

Workforce skills and training

Guidance on completing this section	As described earlier in this section 5 of the report, the Ranger Service provides opportunities for training for school teachers. The planning service are made aware of and invited to biodiversity training/awareness events from a variety of sources.
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Identify any opportunities that are available to your staff to take part in practical actions

Guidance on completing this section	As above
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SECTION 6: RESEARCH AND MONITORING

Describe any research activities that your organisation has undertaken to help develop understanding and awareness of biodiversity

Guidance on completing this section	<p>Midlothian Council does not undertake biodiversity research. However, it supports the biodiversity recording/monitoring work through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support for the Local Records Centre; • operation of the local biodiversity site system; and • monitoring of the Midlothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan actions. <p>The Local Record Centre provides data, including Midlothian data, to the National Biodiversity Network.</p> <p>The Council's Ranger Service does not undertake monitoring or recording of data, and instead leaves that to the groups and volunteers they works with. The Ranger Service also allows local groups and students undertake monitoring and biological recording.</p>
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What follow-up actions or monitoring have you undertaken to assess the impacts of the actions you have taken? How have you measured this? If you do not carry out any monitoring activities, please explain why.

Guidance on completing this section	Efforts are concentrated on ensuring, where ever possible, that actions are delivered. That applies to delivery biodiversity related Service Plan actions and the Midlothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Feedback on and awareness of the impact of actions feeds into the creation of future actions.
Links to related resources	Intentionally Blank



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

Guidance on completing this section	In sufficient data is available to flag up trends or areas of concern that are not already highlighted in the Midlothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan.
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Have you added any data collected to the National Biodiversity Network or your Local Records Centre?

Text Field	Yes. Information has been given to the Local Record Centre and the Local Records Centre has given information to the National Biodiversity Network.
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SECTION 7: BIODIVERSITY HIGHLIGHTS AND CHALLENGES

Describe your organisation's main achievements for biodiversity over the reporting period and what you are most proud of (this can include processes, plans, projects, partnerships, events and actions).

<p>Guidance on completing this section</p>	<p>Below is a summary of the best and most proud of biodiversity achievements completed by Midlothian Council in partnership with others since November 2017:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing seven very large countryside sites for public access, enjoyment and biodiversity education. These include Vogrie Country Park, Roslin Glen Country Park, Springfield Mill, Gore Glen Woodland Park, Straiton Pond Local Nature Reserve and both the Penicuik to Dalkeith and Roslin to Straiton Walkways; • Providing conservation/biodiversity educational learning and volunteering opportunities for all people in society and having large numbers of people take up these opportunities; • Undertaking woodland management for biodiversity at a 50 ha site in Cuiken Glen and Mauricewood Woodland, near Penicuik, at a cost of £400,000. The work involved improving the path network to increase public access to enjoy the woodlands; • Organising and running the very successful and Midlothian Outdoor Festival in 2018 and 2019. The 2020 event was cancelled due to Covid-19; • The production with partners and the adoption in February 2019 by Midlothian Council of the Midlothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2019-2024; • Production and adoption in August 2018 by Midlothian Council of the Midlothian Green network Supplementary Guidance; • Continuing support for the Local Record Centre; • Continuing the operation of the Midlothian Local Biodiversity Site System;
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- Production and adoption by Midlothian Council in August 2020 of the Midlothian Climate Change Strategy;
- Maintaining natural environment priorities and actions in successive Midlothian Single Plans; and
- Development of the Midlothian Community Planning Climate Emergency Group and its sub topic groups.

Looking ahead, what do you think will be the main challenges over the next three years?

Guidance on completing this section	<p>The response to the section 4 question “Looking ahead, what do you think will be the main climate change related challenges for biodiversity over the next three years?” is equally applicable to this question. This is copied below for ease. In addition to this response, the biggest challenges in the next three years will be: supporting measures that enhance biodiversity, fully and properly contributing to partnership working, and contributing toward the Council’s declared position of being Net Zero Carbon by 2030. However, these challenges must be met and dealt with.</p> <p>Response to section 4 question “Looking ahead, what do you think will be the main climate change related challenges for biodiversity over the next three years?”</p> <p>“The main challenges will be maintaining and getting extra resource to support measures that safeguard and enhance biodiversity. There will be reduced resource across all sectors and the necessity to safeguard and promote biodiversity will need to be made even stronger.</p> <p>The role of biodiversity in climate emergency will need to be strongly made also, as it may lose out if resource is diverted to reducing emissions in the built environment and in manufactured goods/processing. Biodiversity may not be supported as much in the process to reduce emissions and lose out in that regard.</p> <p>Over the next three years there is likely to be significant pressure to increase employment opportunities. While even if this did not have a direct local impact on biodiversity, it may divert resource from enhancing biodiversity and less attention may be given to it.</p>
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	Getting support over the next three years for undertaking large scale biodiversity support measures may prove challenging. This includes the getting the support, the resource – capital and revenue cost for ongoing maintenance, the land and getting the skills and knowledge.”
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