

## REPORT TO KINCARDINE & MEARN'S AREA COMMITTEE – 29 OCTOBER 2019

### ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL NATURAL HERITAGE STRATEGY 2019-2022 (DRAFT)

#### 1. Reason for Report

- 1.1 This committee report is seeking comments and feedback on the Environment Team's Aberdeenshire Council Natural Heritage Strategy 2019-22 (**Appendix 1**) prior to seeking approval from Infrastructure Services Committee.

#### 2. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 **Consider and discuss the aims and key priorities of the Natural Heritage Strategy 2019-2022 (Appendix 1) and associated Action Plan.**
- 2.2 **Provide comments to be considered by Infrastructure Services Committee.**

#### 3. Purpose and Decision Making Route

- 3.1 This report is being presented to all 6 Area Committees for comments and feedback prior to going to Infrastructure Services Committee on 28 November 2019 for approval.

#### 4. Discussion

- 4.1 The Strategy outlines the work of the Environment Team, within Planning and Environment Service, in relation to natural heritage in Aberdeenshire for the period 2019 to 2022. Delivery of the Strategy will be facilitated by an Annual Action Plan for each year of operation. This is the first Strategy relating to natural heritage work.
- 4.2 The Strategy focusses on the efficient and effective management of the Environment Team's work on natural heritage. The Strategy provides a structured approach to service delivery for the next 3 years and covers natural heritage work in relation to development management, tree protection, site management, biodiversity and partnership working. It outlines aims and objectives with a focus on protection, enhancement, promotion and continuous improvement. Additionally, it sets out how the Strategy links with wider Council and Scottish Government priorities. Overall it will aim to ensure that efficiency and best value are delivered from available Council resources.

- 4.3 Within Planning and Environment, the Environment Team has the lead in delivering the Natural Heritage Strategy. Within the Environment Team, staff who predominately focus on natural heritage total 6.0 FTE.
- 4.4 The Environment Team work in partnership with other teams, Council Services, neighbouring authorities and with other bodies to deliver high quality work on the natural heritage.
- 4.5 It is Aberdeenshire Council's vision to be the best area and the best council in Scotland.

Our vision for the natural heritage is:

*"We will protect, enhance and promote Aberdeenshire's natural heritage for the benefit of current and future generations."*

- 4.6 The aims and objectives of the 2019-22 Natural Heritage Strategy are in line with the strategies, plans and policies of the Scottish Government and Aberdeenshire Council. The four overarching aims which cover all the major natural heritage work areas for the 2019-22 period can be summarised:

#### Protection of the Natural Heritage

- Use statutory powers and provide advice to manage and protect Aberdeenshire's natural heritage in recognition that it is a valuable and irreplaceable asset to the region.

#### Enhancement of the Natural Heritage

- Use available resources, and attract new resources, to enhance Aberdeenshire's natural heritage providing social, environmental and economic benefits.

#### Promotion of the Natural Heritage

- Promote the natural heritage of the region to residents and visitors so that the benefits of this valuable asset are fully realised.

#### Continuous Improvement

- Ensure the Environment Team's work in the natural heritage is high quality, efficient, responsive to customer needs and continually improving.

- 4.7 Key natural heritage priorities to deliver a positive impact on the natural heritage in the area for the 2019 -22 period are:

#### Protection

- Ensure natural heritage data sets are up to date to assist the delivery of sound decision making to protect Aberdeenshire's natural heritage.
- Work with other Council teams and sections who manage Council assets to raise awareness and understanding about the importance in the protection of Aberdeenshire's natural heritage.

Enhancement

- Support community groups and work with partners to enhance local natural heritage assets in Aberdeenshire.

Promotion

- Ensure that more people can access good quality information and advice on Aberdeenshire’s Natural Heritage online and through social media.

Continuous Improvement

- Develop and monitor the Natural Heritage Strategy and Action Plan to ensure team work meets the needs and expectations of customers.

4.8 The development of this Strategy is compliant with the Policy Development and Review Framework in Part 4B of the Scheme of Governance

**5. Council Priorities, Implications and Risk**

5.1 This report helps to deliver a number of Council priorities:

- Priority 1 - Support a strong, sustainable, diverse and successful economy.
- Priority 5 - Encourage active lifestyles and promote well-being with a focus on obesity and mental health.
- Priority 11 - Protect our special environment, including tackling climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating against the impacts of climate change storms and droughts.

5.2 This report helps to deliver a number of other priorities:

- Local Outcomes Improvement Plan Priority - Connected and cohesive communities

5.3 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Financial		X	
Staffing		X	
Equalities		X	
Fairer Scotland Duty		X	
Town Centre First		X	
Sustainability	X		
Children and Young People’s Rights and Wellbeing		X	

- 5.4 There are no new staffing of financial implications directly arising from this report. The delivery of the actions associated with the Natural Heritage Strategy will be delivered within a previously approved budget of £37,500 from Planning and Environment Service revenue budget lines.
- 5.5 An equalities impact assessment is not required because Committee are being asked to consider and discuss the aims and key priorities of the Natural Heritage Strategy 2019-2022 and does not directly change any Council policy or resource allocation and so does not have a differential impact on people with protected characteristics.
- 5.6 The following positive sustainability implications have been identified:
- Climate change mitigation
  - Climate change adaptation
  - General sustainability
- 5.7 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level: ([Corporate Risk Register](#)).
- *ACORP001 Budget Pressures:* The Strategy and Action Plan has been written with a view to delivering an effective and efficient approach to natural heritage management within the available budget. The team will monitor and seek budget opportunities as they arise.
  - *ACORP005 Working with other organisations:* The Environment Team will always seek to work with internal and external partners to maximise the efficient and effective protection, enhancement and promotion of Aberdeenshire's natural environment.
- 5.8 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level ([Directorate Risk Registers](#)).
- *ISSR004 Climate Change:* It is recognised that there is a heightened risk of the natural environment being damaged or lost as a result of climate change. The Environment Team will continue to provide support, advice, and promote best practice to residents, visitors, developers, groups and communities within Aberdeenshire to ensure that they are aware of the natural environment so that it is preserved and to further the conservation of biodiversity.

## 6. Scheme of Governance

- 6.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report and they are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

- 6.2 The Committee is able to consider this item in terms of Section B1.1.2 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as the Committee is asked to consider and comment on a matter or policy which impacts its Area.
- 6.3 The committee is also able consider and comment on the Strategy in terms of B11.1 as it relates to development of council policy in accordance with the Policy Development and Review Framework.

**Stephen Archer**

**Director of Infrastructure Services**

Report prepared by Craig Stewart, Team Leader Environment South  
Date: 12/09/2019

**List of Appendices – Appendix 1: Aberdeenshire Council Natural Heritage Strategy 2019-2022**



From mountain to sea

# Aberdeenshire Council

## Natural Heritage Strategy

2019 - 2022

*“We will protect, enhance and promote Aberdeenshire’s natural heritage for the benefit of current and future generations.”*



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## Visit

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/environment/natural-heritage/>

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## 1 Introduction

Aberdeenshire's environment and natural heritage are some of its most valuable assets. From the high mountains of the Cairngorms, past iconic rivers, through moorland, woodland and farmland to an extensive and diverse sea coast – there is a wealth of habitats supporting a wide range of species. These are nationally, indeed internationally, important, irreplaceable assets that contribute to the high quality of life enjoyed by local residents, attract visitors and underpin the local economy.

Aberdeenshire's natural heritage resource is finite and as such must be carefully managed in a sustainable way. The Environment Team aims to protect, enhance and promote Aberdeenshire's natural heritage by providing advice, producing guidance and through working with colleagues in Aberdeenshire Council, other public sector bodies and communities.

There is a strong legislative basis for Aberdeenshire Council's involvement in natural heritage with the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2003 placing a duty on all public bodies in Scotland to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out all their roles and responsibilities.

## 2 Scope of Strategy

This Strategy is primarily an Aberdeenshire Council working document to help manage the Environment Team's work and deliver national and local priorities in relation to the natural heritage. The Strategy provides a structured approach to service delivery for the next 3 years and covers our natural heritage work in relation to development management, tree protection, site management, biodiversity and partnership working.

Through the period of the Strategy there will be a requirement to consider the challenges of our changing environment and the changing needs of our present, and potential, user groups. To reflect these changes and challenges, an Annual Action Plan will be prepared which will provide detailed actions on the delivery of the Strategy and reflect new and emerging priorities. A report will be prepared each year to highlight progress.

There are separate strategies covering other areas of the Environment Team's work.

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### 3 Policy Context

The Council currently has **11 key priorities** of which three are particularly relevant to this Strategy:

- **Support a strong, sustainable, diverse and successful economy**
- **Protect our special environment, including tackling climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating against the impacts of climate change storms and droughts.**
- **Encourage active lifestyles and promote well-being with a focus on obesity and mental health**

The table below identifies the relationship between national, Council and team policies in relation to natural heritage



**Table 1: Environment Team Natural Heritage Strategy Policy Context**

<b>Scottish Government Purpose</b>	<b>To focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth.</b>			
<b>Scotland Performs</b>  <b>Scottish Government National Outcomes</b>	<i>National Outcome</i>  We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need	<i>National Outcome</i>  We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations	<i>National Outcome</i>  We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity	<i>National Outcome</i>  Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs
<b>Scottish Government National Plans, Policies &amp; Strategies</b>	Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004	National Planning Framework 3		Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997
	Scotland's Biodiversity: It's in your hands	Scottish Planning Policy 2014	Planning performance framework	
<b>Aberdeenshire Council Vision</b>	<b>Serving Aberdeenshire from mountain to sea – the very best of Scotland</b>			
	Aberdeenshire Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2017-27			
	Council Plan 2017 - 22	Council Priorities		
	Infrastructure Services Service Plan 2017-20			
	Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017			
<b>Environment Team Vision</b>	<b>We will protect, enhance and promote Aberdeenshire's natural heritage for the benefit of current and future generations.</b>			
<b>Environment Team Plans</b>	Aberdeenshire Council Natural Heritage Strategy 2019 - 2022			
	Annual Natural Heritage Strategy Action Plans	Individual Work Plans		

## 4 ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL AND ENVIRONMENT TEAM VISIONS

It is Aberdeenshire Council’s vision to be the best area and the best Council in Scotland.

It is the vision of the Environment Team that the natural heritage of Aberdeenshire is protected and enhanced, and that the need to protect and enhance it for current and future generations, is widely understood. The benefits of Aberdeenshire’s unique natural environment should be available to those who live, work and visit Aberdeenshire,

*“We will protect, enhance and promote Aberdeenshire’s natural heritage for the benefit of current and future generations.”*

## 5 ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL ENVIRONMENT TEAM RESOURCES

Aberdeenshire Council’s Environment Team is part of the Planning and Environment Service within Infrastructure Services.

6 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Environment Planners are employed to predominantly carry out the diverse natural heritage portfolio identified in this Strategy. Staff are spread between North and South teams each serving 3 administrative areas. These are supported by 2 FTE Team Leaders (who are also involved in supporting staff on other aspects of the team’s work such as public access and built heritage). Currently staff are primarily based in Stonehaven, Banff and Inverurie.

The Environment Team’s revenue budget 2019/20 is £37,500. This money levers in either external funding or contributes towards the delivery of projects delivered by external partners. This is summarised below.

**Table 2: Environment Team Budget – Natural Environment**

Budget Line	Aberdeenshire Budget (Revenue)	Total Project Expenditure
Natural Environment	£22,000	£148,000 (2018 – 2021 Invasive Non Native Species Project)
Forestry Planting	£0	£13,000
Tree Preservation Orders	£4,000	£0
North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership*	£8,500 (grant)	£38,500
Dee Catchment Partnership*	£3,000 (grant)	£50,000 - £70,000

\* Other bodies and external organisations budget line

Staff from other teams also contribute and perform tasks in support of the vision, including:

- Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service
- Aberdeenshire Council Specialist Services Team including NESBReC
- Aberdeenshire Council Economic Development
- Aberdeenshire Council Landscape Services

Staff from other external bodies also contribute and perform tasks in support of the vision, including:

- River Dee Trust (partners in the invasive non-native species project)
- North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership (via James Hutton Institute)
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Scottish Forestry
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency

Our work also benefits from valuable input from a range of experts from across the region and beyond, some of whom give their time voluntarily such as the panel convened for the Local Nature Conservation Site review process. The Environment Team also work in collaboration with neighbouring authorities to support delivery of the vision.

## **6 NATURAL HERITAGE STRATEGY AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND KEY PRIORITIES FOR ACTION**

The Natural Heritage Strategy has been drawn together to reflect the strategies, plans and policies listed in section 3. The Strategy's aims and subsequent objectives for delivery provide a common framework for a customer and performance focussed programme which works in partnership with stakeholders to deliver a high quality efficient service which provides best value.

The Annual Natural Heritage Action Plan (Appendix 1) provides the detailed actions the team will take to achieve the aims and objectives and indicates how the core outcomes of the Team will be measured. The Environment Team will use the Strategy and the action plan to develop individual annual work programmes which will reflect the specific natural environment needs and aspirations of Aberdeenshire.

In order to achieve our vision, we have four principal aims:

- 1. Protection of the Natural Heritage** – use statutory powers and provide advice to manage and protect Aberdeenshire's natural heritage in recognition that it is a valuable and irreplaceable asset to the region
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- 2. Enhancement of the Natural Heritage** – use available resources, and attract new resources, to enhance Aberdeenshire’s natural heritage providing social, environmental and economic benefits
- 3. Promotion of the Natural Heritage** - promote the natural heritage of the region to residents and visitors so that the benefits of this valuable asset are fully realised
- 4. Continuous Improvement** – ensure the Environment Team’s work in the natural heritage is high quality, efficient, responsive to customer needs and continually improving.

### Key Priorities for Action

In order to provide a focus on the most pressing issues for each three year Strategy period, key priorities for action, significant and relevant to a number of objectives in the Action Plan, have been identified.

<b>1.</b>	<b>Protection</b>
	Ensure natural heritage data sets are up to date to assist the delivery of sound decision making to protect Aberdeenshire’s natural heritage.
	Work with other Council teams and sections who manage Council assets to raise awareness and understanding about the importance in the protection of Aberdeenshire’s natural heritage.
<b>2.</b>	<b>Enhancement</b>
	Support community groups and work with partners to enhance local natural heritage assets in Aberdeenshire.
<b>3.</b>	<b>Promotion</b>
	Ensure that more people can access good quality information and advice on Aberdeenshire’s Natural Heritage online and through social media.
<b>4.</b>	<b>Continuous Improvement</b>
	Develop and monitor the Natural Heritage Strategy and Action Plan to ensure team work meets the needs and expectations of customers



## 7. NATURAL HERITAGE STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

### Aim 1 – Protection of natural heritage

Use statutory powers and provide advice to manage and protect Aberdeenshire’s natural heritage in recognition that it is a valuable and irreplaceable asset to the region

**Table 3**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Monitoring</b>
<b>1.1</b> Development Plans protect and enhances natural heritage and landscape	Provide input to Strategic Planning and Local Development Plan processes	Protection and enhancement of natural heritage assets and landscape	Number of Strategic Planning and Local Development Plan consultation responses
<b>1.2</b> National policy reflects the need and nature of Aberdeenshire	Input to relevant consultations from Scottish and UK Governments	Protection and enhancement of natural heritage assets and landscape	Number of national consultations responded to
<b>1.3</b> Development Management (DM) protects and enhances natural heritage, trees and landscape	Provide consultation advice and support to the Development Management process	Protection and enhancement of natural heritage assets and landscape	Number of DM consultations responses  Number of DM training events and DM team meetings attended  Percentage of Formal consultations within target timescale
	Work with Development Management and Enforcement to improve the protection of trees on development sites	Protection and enhancement of natural heritage and landscape	Number of Enforcement training events and team meetings attended
<b>1.4</b> Support Scottish Forestry in the protection of natural heritage	Provide consultation advice and support for forestry applications	Protection of natural heritage	Number of forestry consultations

<b>1.5</b> Protect trees of visual and cultural importance	Make Tree Preservation Orders (TPO)	Protection of natural heritage, cultural heritage and landscape	Number of TPOs made  Number of TPO's reviewed
	Manage works to protected trees application process	Protection of natural heritage, cultural heritage and landscape	Number of applications for works to protected trees  Percentage of applications for works to TPO protected trees dealt with in 8 weeks
<b>1.6</b> Protect locally significant sites for nature conservation	Maintain and review list of Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS)	Protection of natural heritage	Up to date list of LNCS sites  Number of new LNCS sites
<b>1.7</b> Support other Council teams and sections in the protection of natural heritage and landscape	Work cross-service to ensure protection of natural heritage associated with Council assets (e.g. Housing, Property, Roads & Bridges, Flooding)	Protection of natural heritage and landscape	Number of responses to other Services
	Provide internal training (e.g. Structures and Housing)	Protection of natural heritage and landscape	Number of training events run for other teams/services
	Work with Flooding team to identify opportunities to protect and enhance natural heritage	Protection and enhancement of natural heritage	Number of responses to Flood Team

## Aim 2 – Enhancement of natural heritage

Use available resources, and attract new resources, to enhance Aberdeenshire’s natural heritage providing social, environmental and economic benefits

Table 4

Objective	Description	Outcome	Monitoring
2.1 Use Council managed land to enhance natural heritage and engage communities	Enhance natural heritage and involve communities in the management of sites which Planning and Environment has a responsibility for	Enhancement of natural heritage and community empowerment	Number of community groups and sites supported  Amount of external money accessed  Number of volunteer days
	Work cross-service to enhance natural heritage on Council managed greenspace	Enhancement of natural heritage and community empowerment	Number or sites enhanced  Amount of external money accessed  Number of volunteer days
2.2 Implement management of invasive non-native plant species across Aberdeenshire through partnership working	Participate in the management and delivery of Leader funded invasive non-native species project	Protection and enhancement of natural heritage	Number of people trained  Number of volunteer days
2.3 Protection and enhancement of pollinators in Aberdeenshire	Implement and monitor Aberdeenshire Council Pollinator Action Plan	Protection and enhancement of natural heritage	Pollinator action plan reviewed/updated yearly
2.4 Creation and management of woodlands in Aberdeenshire delivers multiple benefits	Implement and monitor Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy	Protection and enhancement of natural heritage	Progress in achieving strategy’s objectives
2.5 Provide advice and support to community groups and the public	Respond to requests for natural heritage advice from community groups and the public	Promotion of key issues to protect and enhance natural heritage	Number of community groups supported

### Aim 3 – Promotion of natural heritage

Promote the natural heritage of the region to residents and visitors so that the benefits of this valuable asset are fully realised

Table 5

Objective	Description	Outcome	Monitoring
3.1 Aberdeenshire Council engages in and promotes key natural heritage issues	Work with Aberdeenshire Council Councillor Biodiversity Champions	Promotion of key issues to protect and enhance natural heritage	Number of Councillor biodiversity champions
	Support Aberdeenshire Council Rangers Service in their promotion of natural heritage issues	Promotion of key issues to protect and enhance natural heritage	Number of Ranger events supported
	Work with Economic Development to promote climate change and sustainability issues within and out with the Council	Promotion of key issues to protect and enhance natural heritage	Input to Climate Change Duty report  Number of Green News items
3.2 Promote, protect and enhance natural heritage through cross-organisation partnership working	Participate in key partnership projects which aim to protect and enhance natural heritage (e.g. North East Scotland Local Biodiversity Action Plan, NESBReC and Scottish Wildcat Action).	Promotion of key issues to protect and enhance natural heritage	Number of partnership projects we participate in
	Work with other organisations such as SNH, RSPB, SEPA, Scottish Forestry and James Hutton Institute to ensure the most efficient use of our collective resources and the most effective advice/guidance on ecological and environmental issues.	Promotion of key issues to protect and enhance natural heritage	Number of partnership projects we participate in

<p><b>3.3</b> Ensure that more people can access good quality information and advice on Aberdeenshire's Natural Heritage online and through social media</p>	<p>Ensure natural heritage web pages is maintained and up to date and produce promotional material to support our activities</p>	<p>Promotion of key issues to protect and enhance natural heritage</p>	<p>Number of posts/followers/ views  Number of press releases</p>
<p><b>3.4</b> Promote prevention and management of invasive non-native species spread in Aberdeenshire</p>	<p>Deliver annual invasive non-native species forum</p>	<p>Promotion of key issues to protect and enhance natural heritage</p>	<p>Annual invasive non-native species forum held  Number of attendees at annual invasive non-native species forum</p>



## Aim 4 - Continuous Improvement

Ensure the Environment Team’s work in the natural heritage is high quality, efficient, responsive to customer needs and continually improving.

**Table 6**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Monitoring</b>
<b>4.1</b> Develop and monitor the Natural Heritage Strategy and Action Plan to ensure the team’s work meets the needs and expectations of customers.	Undertaken customer satisfaction reviews and ensure Strategy is reviewed, monitored and up to date.	Efficient and effective working.	Up-to date Strategy and Action Plan  Feedback from customer reviews.
<b>4.2</b> The planned outcomes of the Strategy are delivered and reported on.	Identify relevant performance indicators for all activities and produce annual reports on performance.	Monitored and accountable work outcomes.	Completed annual performance report.
<b>4.3</b> Ensure consistency of working across the Environment Team	Develop and maintain Team Best Practice Manual to provide one easy to find location for all common team processes and procedures.	Efficient working and consistency between bases.	Up to date Environment Team Best Practice Manual.
	Hold quarterly meetings of cross team working group.	Efficient and effective working.	Number of cross team meetings
<b>4.4</b> Ensure that staff and have the correct and up to date knowledge and skills in order to give proper advice and deliver projects as required.	Maintain staff training to meet the needs of the service and CPD requirements. Identify individual and group training needs for staff and councillors.	Maintained professional standards.	Completed Personal Performance Plans  Training courses undertaken.

<p><b>4.5</b> Be an exemplar in the protection and management of protected and designated species on the council estate</p>	<p>Work with Scottish Natural Heritage to develop and implement protected species projects and/or process on the council estate</p>	<p>Be a local authority exemplar  Protection of natural heritage</p>	<p>Number of protected species projects and/or process on the council estate</p>
<p><b>4.6</b> Consistent and effective working with neighbouring planning authorities and other statutory agencies</p>	<p>Engage with other planning authorities and statutory agencies to share good practice and improve processes</p>	<p>Be a local authority exemplar  Protection and enhancement of natural heritage, trees and landscape</p>	<p>Meetings/engagement/projects with neighbouring local authorities and statutory agencies</p>
<p><b>4.7</b> Report on natural heritage work to Scottish Government</p>	<p>Submit to Scottish Government public section biodiversity duty monitoring every three years</p>	<p>Be a local authority exemplar  Increase visibility and knowledge of the team and the good work carried out.</p>	<p>Scottish Government reporting completed every three years  Annual report to Sustainability Committee</p>
<p><b>4.8.</b> Build resilience and mitigate against the impacts of climate change throughout the work of the Environment Team</p>	<p>Develop a Climate Change Action Plan for the work of the Environment Team</p>	<p>Protection and enhancement of natural heritage.</p>	<p>Completion of Environment Team Climate Change Action Plan.</p>

## Appendix 1: Natural Heritage Strategy Action Plan

Natural Heritage Strategy Action Plan 2019 - 2020			
Aim 1: Protection of Natural Heritage	Actions	Completion date	Annual Monitoring
1.1 Development Plans protect and enhances natural heritage and landscape	1.1.1 Review and provide comments to Policy Team on LDP Main Issues Report	Ongoing	Number of Strategic Planning and Local Development Plan consultation responses
	1.1.2 Review and provide comments to Policy Team on proposed policies in LDP that affect natural heritage		
1.2 National policy reflects the need and nature of Aberdeenshire	1.2.1 Relevant consultation responded to on time	Ongoing	Number of national consultations responded to
1.3 Development Management protects and enhances natural heritage, trees and landscape	1.3.1 Provide input to development management cases as requested by Planning colleagues	Ongoing	Number of DM consultations responses
	1.3.2 Provide formal development management consultation responses within agreed timescales	Ongoing	Number of DM training events and DM team meetings attended
	1.3.3 Update procedure for consulting Scottish Natural Heritage on bat licences	March 2020	Percentage of Formal consultations within target timescale
	1.3.4 Update procedure for consulting Scottish Forestry in development management cases involving woodland	March 2020	

	<p>1.3.5 Engage with Enforcement Team on potential project on enforcement of tree protection on development sites</p> <p>1.3.6 Write Project Initiation Document for tree protection project</p>	<p>Dec 2019</p> <p>Dec 2019</p>	
<p><b>1.4</b> Support Scottish Forestry in the protection of natural heritage</p>	<p>1.4.1 Provide comment where required on forestry grant scheme applications and felling licences</p> <p>1.4.2 Review Forestry Strategy and provide update to Strategy management group</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Dec 2019</p>	<p>Number of forestry consultations</p>
<p><b>1.5</b> Protect trees of visual and cultural importance</p>	<p>1.5.1 Complete TPO review process</p> <p>1.5.2 Process works to protected trees applications</p> <p>1.5.3 Make new TPO's</p> <p>1.5.4 Review 'not preferred' LDP bid sites for tree protection</p>	<p>Dec 2019</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>March 2020</p>	<p>Number of TPOs made</p> <p>Number of TPOs reviewed</p> <p>Number of works to protected tree applications</p> <p>Percentage of applications for works to TPO protected trees dealt with in 8 weeks</p>
<p><b>1.6</b> Protect locally significant sites for nature conservation</p>	<p>1.6.1 Review list of Local Nature Conservation sites</p> <p>1.6.2 Survey and assess sites for designation as new local nature conservation site required</p> <p>1.6.3 Protect Local Nature Conservation Sites through response to development proposals and forestry consultations</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Up to date list of LNCS sites</p> <p>Number of new LNCS sites</p>

<b>1.7</b> Support other Council Teams and Sections in the protection of natural heritage and landscape	1.7.1	Review and renew Council Housing Bat licence with Housing colleagues	Nov 2019	Number of responses to other Services
	1.7.2	Provide training on protected species for Structures and Flood teams	Nov 2019	Number of training events run for other teams/services
	1.7.3	Provide advice on protected species in relation to Council works/buildings/structures	Ongoing	

Aim 2: Enhancement of the Natural Heritage	Actions	Completion date	Annual Monitoring
<p><b>2.1</b> Use Council managed land to enhance natural heritage and engage communities</p>	<p>2.1.1 Community projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gauchill - path improvements and interpretation</li> <li>• Battlehill, Huntly - forest management</li> <li>• Meadows, Huntly – path improvement and community orchard</li> <li>• Portlethen Moss and Woods – path improvements and management plan</li> <li>• Insch Meadows – habitat improvement and management plan</li> <li>• Arnhall Moss, Weshill – Discovery Trail interpretation</li> <li>• Boddam – environmental improvements</li> <li>• Ury Riverside Park, Inverurie – environmental improvements</li> </ul> <p>2.1.2 Participate in management group of LEADER funded Council owner greenspaces project</p> <p>2.1.3 Provide natural heritage advice and support to LEADER greenspace officers</p>	<p>Oct 2019 March 2020 March 2020 Dec 2019 March 2020 Dec 2019 Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing</p>	<p>Number of community groups and sites supported Amount of external money accessed Number of volunteer days</p>
<p><b>2.2</b> Implement management of invasive non-native plant species across Aberdeenshire through partnership working</p>	<p>2.2.1 Provide training for community groups to facilitate control of invasive species</p> <p>2.2.2 Provide equipment for community groups to facilitate control of invasive species</p> <p>2.2.3 Practical site control of invasive species at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muchalls</li> <li>• Newtonhill</li> <li>• Ury Riverside Park, Inverurie</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing Ongoing Sep 2019 Sep 2019 June 2019</p>	<p>Number of people trained Number of volunteer days</p>

	2.2.4	Raise awareness of invasive issues throughout the area	Ongoing	
2.3 Protection and enhancement of pollinators in Aberdeenshire	2.3.1	Produce and oversee the delivery of Annual Aberdeenshire Council Pollinator Action Plan	Annually	Pollinator action plan reviewed/updated yearly
	2.3.2	Delivery of Environment Team actions associated with Aberdeenshire Council Pollinator Action Plan (and not covered elsewhere in the Environment Team Action Plan) : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and trial alternatives to chemical plant and weed control</li> <li>Demonstration sites of good practice at Gordon House and Woodhill House</li> <li>Explore opportunities to sow wildflower seed mix at former Eilon Academy site</li> <li>Survey road verges near Pitmedden that have previously been planted with Yellow rattle</li> <li>Scottish Pollinator Strategy Progress Report</li> </ul>	March 2020 March 2020 Ongoing March 2020 March 2020	
	2.4.1	Monitor and review Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy	Annually	Progress in achieving strategy's objectives
	2.5.1	Respond to requests for natural heritage advice from communities and individuals	Ongoing	Number of community groups and sites supported
	2.4	Creation and management of woodlands in Aberdeenshire delivers multiple benefits		
2.5	Provide advice and support to community groups and the public			

Aim 3: Promotion of the Natural Heritage	Actions	Completion date	Annual Monitoring
<p><b>3.1</b> Aberdeenshire Council engages in and promotes key natural heritage issues</p>	<p>3.1.1 Ensure Councillor Biodiversity champions have effective links with species experts</p> <p>Biodiversity Champions cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common Bottlenose Dolphin</li> <li>• Community Tree Planting</li> <li>• Farmland Birds</li> <li>• Freshwater Pearl Mussel</li> <li>• Hedgehog</li> <li>• Invasive non-native species</li> <li>• Peatlands</li> <li>• Pine Marten</li> <li>• Pollinators</li> <li>• Ponds</li> <li>• Red Squirrel</li> <li>• Wildcat</li> <li>• Swift</li> </ul> <p>3.1.2 Support Aberdeenshire Council Rangers Service in their promotion of natural heritage issues</p> <p>3.1.3 Work with Economic Development to promote climate change and sustainability issues within and out with the Council</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Number of Councillor Biodiversity Champions</p> <p>Number of Ranger Service events supported</p> <p>Input to Climate Change Duty report</p> <p>Number of Green News items</p>
<p><b>3.2</b> Promote, protect and enhance natural heritage through cross-organisation partnership working</p>	<p>3.2.1 Continue role as key partner in North East Biodiversity Partnership</p> <p>3.2.2 Continue role as key partner in Dee Catchment Partnership</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Number of partnership projects</p>

<p><b>3.3</b> Ensure that more people can access good quality information and advice on Aberdeenshire's Natural Heritage online and through social media</p>	<p>3.2.3 Represent Aberdeenshire Council on Dee Fishery Board</p> <p>3.2.4 Continue role in Management and Advisory group at NESBReC</p> <p>3.3.1 Update of Natural Heritage Planning Advice</p> <p>3.3.2 Monitor and review natural Heritage web pages</p> <p>3.3.3 Update North East Biodiversity Partnership website</p> <p>3.3.4 Facebook updates</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Nov 2019</p> <p>Dec 2019</p> <p>Dec 2019</p>	<p>Number of posts/followers/ views</p> <p>Number of press releases</p>
<p><b>3.4</b> Promote prevention and management of invasive non-native species spread in Aberdeenshire</p>	<p>3.4.1 Delivery of North East Invasive Non-Native Forum</p> <p>3.4.2 Delivery of presentations and distribution of promotional material and display boards around Aberdeenshire</p>	<p>March 2020</p>	<p>Number of attendees at forum</p>

Aim 4: Continuous Improvement	Actions	Completion date	Annual Monitoring
<p><b>4.1</b> Develop and monitor the Natural Heritage Strategy and Action Plan to ensure the team's work meets the needs and expectations of customers.</p>	<p>4.1.1 Produce a 3 year Natural Heritage Strategy</p> <p>4.1.2 Produce an annual action plan 2019-2020</p>	<p>Nov 2019</p> <p>Nov 2019</p>	<p>Up-to date Strategy and Action Plan</p>
<p><b>4.2</b> The planned outcomes of the Strategy are delivered and reported on.</p>	<p>4.2.1 Produce an annual review report and send to Infrastructure Services Committee and Sustainability Committee</p>	<p>March 2020</p>	<p>Completed annual performance report</p>
<p><b>4.3</b> Ensure consistency of working across the Environment Team</p>	<p>4.3.1 Produce Best Practice Manual for all generic natural heritage processes</p> <p>4.3.2 Hold quarterly meetings of Natural Heritage Cross Team Working Group</p>	<p>March 2020</p> <p>Quarterly, ongoing</p>	<p>Best Practice Manual complete</p> <p>Number of cross team meetings held</p>
<p><b>4.4</b> Ensure that staff and have the correct and up to date knowledge and skills in order to give proper advice and deliver projects as required.</p>	<p>4.4.1 Ensure staff have opportunity to carry out required CPD and attend relevant workshops and training</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Completed Personal Performance Plans</p> <p>Training courses undertaken.</p>

<b>4.5</b> Be an exemplar in the protection/management of protected/designated species on our estate	4.5.1 Review and renew Council Housing Bat Licence with SNH	Nov 2019	Number of protected species projects and/or process on the council estate
	4.5.2 Produce and disseminate Aberdeenshire Council statement of protection of nesting birds	June 2019	
	4.5.3 Assist Housing Services in implementing 'flag' system for properties with known Swift nests	June 2019	
<b>4.6</b> Consistent and effective working with neighbouring planning authorities and other statutory agencies	4.6.1 Cairngorms National Park Authority liaison	Annual	Meetings/engagement/projects with neighbouring local authorities and statutory agencies
	4.6.2 Aberdeen City Council liaison	Quarterly	
	4.6.3 Statutory agency liaison – SEPA, SNH, Scottish Forestry	Ongoing	
<b>4.7</b> Report on natural heritage work to Scottish Government	4.7.1 Gather data required for Scottish Government reporting annually	January 2020	Scottish Government reporting completed every three years
	4.7.2 Report to Scottish Government every three years as required on Public Sector Biodiversity Duty	Ongoing	Completion of Annual Report on Public Sector Biodiversity Duty to Sustainability Committee
	4.7.3 Report to Sustainability Committee annually on Public Sector Biodiversity		
<b>4.8</b> Build resilience and mitigate against the impacts of climate change throughout the work of the Environment Team	4.8.1 Commence the development a Climate Change Action Plan for the work of the Environment Team	March 2020	Up to date Environment Team Climate Change Action Plan

