



## **REPORT TO SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE - 13 NOVEMBER 2019**

### **ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL POLLINATOR ACTION PLAN 2019 to 2021**

#### **1 Reason for Report / Summary**

- 1.1 The Sustainability Committee is asked to approve the Aberdeenshire Council Pollinator Action Plan 2019 to 2021. The Pollinator Action Plan outlines work Aberdeenshire Council will undertake to address the decline of pollinating insects.

#### **2 Recommendations**

**The Committee is recommended to:**

- 2.1 Approve the Aberdeenshire Council Pollinator Action Plan 2019 to 2021.**

#### **3 Purpose and Decision-Making Route**

- 3.1 The Aberdeenshire Council Pollinator Action Plan 2019 to 2021 in Appendix 1 identifies the work that Aberdeenshire Council will undertake so as to address the decline of pollinating insects. The Plan outlines the work the Council will take on the land it owns and manages, as well as how it will work with and influence others.
- 3.2 Aberdeenshire Council Priority 11 (Protect our special environment, including tackling climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions) includes a commitment to produce and update a Pollinator Action Plan. In addition, all public sector bodies in Scotland have a duty under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 to further the conservation of biodiversity.
- 3.3 The Sustainability Committee has not received a report on the Pollinator Action Plan before. The Pollinator Action Plan has not been considered by other committees, albeit some of the actions are contained in other strategy documents such as the Draft Natural Heritage Strategy, North-East Scotland Biological Records Centre (NEBReC) Strategy and Ranger Service Strategy, which have been considered by the Infrastructure Services Committee. As stated in the Pollinator Action Plan, progress reports and subsequent iterations of the Plan would be considered by the Sustainability Committee.

#### **4 Discussion**

- 4.1 The available data strongly indicates that pollinating insects are declining across the world – including in Scotland. Pollinating insects provide a number of services to society including pollinating our food crops, providing us with food directly (e.g. honey) and pollinating our garden plants. In addition, they are crucial in the functioning of ecosystems, on which we all depend.

- 4.2 Although the causes of the declines in pollinating insects are complex, with a number of factors acting in combination, it is thought that the primary reasons are loss of habitat and the widespread use of pesticides. Other factors such as disease and, increasingly, climate change also play their part. With this in mind, in addition to reasons for protection identified in 4.1, many would also argue we also have a moral responsibility to protect them.
- 4.3 As identified in the Pollinator Action Plan, there are a number of opportunities for Aberdeenshire Council to play its part in addressing this decline, both through the land it manages and also in the various means that it influences, regulates and/or works with others.
- 4.4 The Environment Team within Planning and Environment has taken the lead role in developing, implementing and monitoring the Action Plan. The actions identified would be delivered by a number of teams and services, in addition to the Environment Team - in particular, Landscape Services, the Ranger Service and NESBReC, all of whom have been consulted.

## 5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

- 5.1 This report and the associated Pollinator Action Plan contribute to the following Council Priorities:
- Priority 1 on supporting a strong, sustainable, diverse and successful economy, given pollinating insects' key role in producing some of Aberdeenshire's agricultural crops.
  - Priority 5 encouraging active lifestyles and promoting wellbeing, with a focus on obesity and mental health, as the Plan includes a commitment to involve communities in improving public greenspace.
  - Priority 11 on protecting our special environment, as it includes a commitment to produce and update a Pollinator Action Plan.
- 5.2 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
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	

- 5.3 The report and associated Pollinator Action Plan have been identified as having positive impacts on sustainability. Their primary focus is action which contributes to achieving resilient pollinating insect populations. The actions will also result in a number of other environmental benefits, including reduced greenhouse gas emissions through reduced mowing, and increased habitat provision for non-pollinating insects and other animal species.
- 5.4 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level:
- ISSR004 Climate Change – measures identified in the Pollinator Action Plan will have a positive impact on Infrastructure Services' efforts to both mitigate climate change and also adapt to the effects of climate change. Reduction in the intensity of greenspace management will reduce CO2 emissions and increase carbon sequestration. Increased habitat provision will result in more resilient species populations.

## **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 are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.
- 6.2 The Committee is able to consider and take a decision on this item in terms of:
- Section S.1.1.a of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance, as part of the Committee's role in approving, reviewing and monitoring the Council's work in respect of sustainable development and climate change in order to ensure compliance with relevant statutory duties
- and
- Section S.1.1.c of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as part of the Committee's role in promoting awareness of the need for sustainability within the Council and wider community of Aberdeenshire.

**Stephen Archer**  
**Director of Infrastructure Services**

Report Prepared by James Davidson, Environment Planner  
30/09/2019



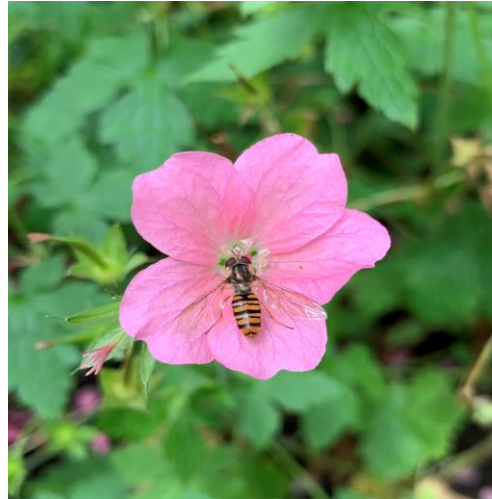
**Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Aberdeenshire Council Pollinator Action Plan 2019 to 2021

# **Aberdeenshire Council DRAFT Pollinator Action Plan 2019 to 2021**

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Aberdeenshire Council Pollinator Action Plan was first produced in May 2015. Since then the need for urgent action for pollinators has increased. This update of the original Action Plan emphasises that the conservation of pollinators continues to be a priority for Aberdeenshire Council. This Action Plan is a corporate, cross service document that identifies key areas of work to March 2021.
- 1.2. Pollinating insects are essential to healthy, functioning ecosystems as they have a key role in the reproduction of many plant species. They are also important to humans - fertilising crops, providing food and also pollinating plants in our gardens.
- 1.3. The main insect pollinators are bees. While honeybees are the best known, there are also many other species of bees, including bumblebees and a wide range of solitary bee species, that contribute some level of pollinating service to crops and natural plant communities. Other groups of insects such as flies, moths, butterflies, and beetles are also important pollinators.
- 1.4. Bee communities, both wild and managed, have been declining over the last 50 years as pesticide use in agricultural and urban areas has increased and changes in land use have resulted in a patchy distribution of the natural and semi-natural habitats which act as food and nesting resources.
- 1.5. Different types of pollinating insect have different requirements, but in order to survive and flourish, they generally require well connected sources of pollen and nectar throughout the flowering season together with shelter, nesting sites and appropriate spaces in which to breed and hibernate.
- 1.6. Providing good habitats for pollinators will also help to support a wide range of other invertebrates as well as seed and insect eating birds and small mammals for example.



## 2. Policy

- 2.1. All public bodies in Scotland have a duty to further the conservation of biodiversity as defined in the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004.
- 2.2. The [Pollinator Strategy for Scotland 2017-2027](#) aims to address the causes of decline in populations, diversity and range of Scottish pollinator species, and to help them thrive in future. Objectives include making Scotland more pollinator friendly by preventing further loss of flower rich habitat, creating

new areas of suitable habitat and enhancing connectivity between them, raising awareness and encouraging action across all sectors.

- 2.3. Aberdeenshire Council Priority 11 (Protect our special environment, including tackling climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions) includes a commitment to produce and update a Pollinator Action Plan.

### 3. Taking Action

- 3.1. Aberdeenshire Council will take action across Services to meet 5 key objectives:

**Objective 1:** Help raise awareness of the importance of pollinators in food production and in ecosystems

**Objective 2:** Contribute to the monitoring and recording of pollinator populations

**Objective 3:** Reduce Aberdeenshire Council's use of pesticides and other chemicals for pest and weed control that may have an effect on pollinator populations

**Objective 4:** Create habitat for pollinators, including improving habitat connectivity

**Objective 5:** Protect existing areas of wildflower rich grassland

- 3.2. Specific actions under each objective are described below.

3.3. **Objective 1:** Help raise awareness of the importance of pollinators in food production and in ecosystems

Pollinating insects certainly have a higher profile with the general public than a few years ago. There is a fairly broad awareness that they are threatened and that they are valuable. However, it is a message that does need to be reinforced and often what is lacking is clear actions that the public can take to help. Aberdeenshire Council will aim to raise public awareness in the ways identified below.

Action	Detail	Lead	Deadline	Measurement
1.1 Raise awareness of pollinators through Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service and NESBReC events.	1.1.1 The Ranger Service run a range of events throughout the year, many of which include awareness raising in relation to pollinating insects	Ranger Service	Yearly events programme	Number of Ranger events which include pollinator element
	1.1.2 Add information on pollinators to Rangers summer events programme	Ranger Service	March 2020	
	1.1.3 NESBReC to highlight pollinators at their events	NESBReC	Ongoing	Number of NESBReC events which include pollinator element
1.2 Work with schools to raise children's awareness of pollinators	1.2.1 Ranger Service to raise awareness of pollinators when working with schools	Ranger Service	Ongoing	Number of Ranger Service events in Schools which include pollinator element
	1.2.2 Greenspace Officers to work with schools to create pollinator habitat in school grounds or local area	Greenspace officers	September 2020	Number of schools worked with in creating pollinator habitat
1.3 Seek opportunities to use Council facilities such	1.3.1 We have 2 pollinator banners - circulate one banner around libraries in Aberdeenshire	Libraries Centre, Oldmeldrum	Ongoing	Locations pollinator banners



as visitor centres and libraries to raise awareness of the importance of pollinating species.	1.3.2 Use second banner at relevant events – it is on display at the Bennachie centre but can be used elsewhere	Ranger Service, Environment Team	Ongoing	have been on display
1.4 Create materials which promote pollinating insects	1.4.1 Create an appropriate sign to identify Council sites which are being managed for pollinators	Greenspace Officers	December 2019	Pollinator sign created
	1.4.2 Produce materials which identify good garden plants for pollinators suitable to growing conditions in north east Scotland	Environment Team	March 2020	Garden plants for pollinators material produced
1.5 Aberdeenshire Council pollinator champions	1.5.1 Aberdeenshire Council to have two Councillor pollinator champions (currently Cllr Argyle and Cllr Wilson)	Environment Team	Ongoing	Number of Councillor pollinator champions
1.6 Seek opportunities for positive press and social media coverage for planting and management for pollinators	1.6.1 Use Aberdeenshire Council Leader funded Greenspaces project as an opportunity to promote pollinating insects through press and social media	Greenspace Officers	September 2020	Greenspace project posts and news releases on pollinators
	1.6.2 Use Rangers and NESBReC social media to promote pollinating insects	Ranger Service	Ongoing	Ranger posts on pollinators
1.7 Respond to relevant national consultations on pollinators	1.7.1 Respond to relevant national consultations on pollinators and pollinator habitat ensuring the situation in Aberdeenshire is well represented	Environment Team	As required	Number of national consultations responded to
1.8 Work with partners and communities to protect and promote pollinators	1.8.1 Work with partners, including neighbouring local authorities and the North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership, to promote and protect pollinators	Environment Team	Ongoing	Number of partnership projects

	1.8.2 Provide advice to communities, where asked, regarding pollinators	Ranger Service and Environment Team	Ongoing	Number of community queries responded to  Number of Ranger Service group sessions
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3.4. **Objective 2:** Contribute to the monitoring and recording of pollinator populations

Pollinators are a highly diverse group of insects that are subject to variable levels of recording and monitoring. Many are difficult to identify without some specialist knowledge, however others, like butterflies and moths, have successful national recording schemes. NESBReC is the local biological records centre and welcomes & encourages recording of pollinating insects.

Action	Detail	Lead	Deadline	Measurement
2.1 Run identification courses for pollinator species	2.1.1 Run at least one NESBReC training course per year which focusses on pollinating insects	NESBReC	At least one training course per year	Number of NESBReC courses for pollinators/yr
2.2 Promote and distribute Aberdeenshire Council pollinator identification leaflet	2.2.1 Reprint pollinator identification leaflet	Environment Team	November 2019	Leaflet reprinted
	2.2.2 Put pollinator identification leaflet on website	Environment Team	November 2019	Leaflet on website
	2.2.3 Promote and distribute pollinator identification leaflet	Environment Team, NESBReC and Ranger Service	Ongoing	
2.3 Process and manage records of pollinating species from local recorders	2.3.1 NESBReC to identify pollinating species from submitted photographs and to manage and process any records of pollinators received from local recorders by inputting into the NESBReC database	NESBReC	Ongoing	
2.4 Input into national recording schemes for pollinating species	2.4.1 Promote (through events and social media) national recording schemes for butterflies and moths	NESBReC and Rangers Service	Ongoing	Number of events & posts promoting recording schemes

	2.4.2 Take part in national recording schemes for butterflies and moths	Ranger Service	Ongoing	Number of national schemes contributed to by Rangers and NESBReC
	2.4.3 Provide local records to national recording schemes	NESBReC	Ongoing	
2.5 Provide information on the status of pollinating insects in Aberdeenshire	2.5.1 Investigate whether local status information can be derived from national monitoring scheme data (e.g. butterflies)	NESBReC	April 2020	Identification of potential for national schemes to provide local status information

3.5. **Objective 3:** Reduce Aberdeenshire Council’s use of pesticides and other chemicals for pest and weed control that may have an effect on pollinator populations

The use of a number of pesticides has now been banned due to their detrimental effect on the environment (particularly pollinating insects) or human health, but there remains a general concern over the levels and range of chemicals used.

Aberdeenshire Council’s use of pesticides is in compliance with relevant regulations and code of practice. Risk assessments are undertaken to ensure all reasonable precautions are taken to protect the environment, wildlife and human life, together with measures to reduce the risks associated with the use of pesticides in public spaces.

Aberdeenshire Council’s Landscape Services have reduced chemical use by around 40% over the past 10 years, and will continue to investigate opportunities to further reduce its use.

Action	Detail	Lead	Deadline	Measurement
3.1 Continue to reduce the use of chemicals in weed and insect control	3.1.1 Identify where it is appropriate and cost effective to reduce the use of chemicals in weed and insect control	Landscape Services	September 2020	Progress with investigating alternatives to chemical control on Council land and in INNS project
	3.1.2 Identify and trial alternatives to chemical plant and weed control	Landscape Services and Environment Team (INNS project)	September 2020	

3.6. **Objective 4:** Create habitat for pollinators, including improving habitat connectivity

We have lost around 97% of ancient wildflower meadows in the UK over the last 80 years. Where wildflower meadows do still exist, they often small and isolated from each other, making it difficult for populations of insect pollinators to colonise new areas. Council owned/managed land presents an opportunity to improve habitat for pollinators. In addition we can influence others through our Development Management policies and process for example.

Action	Detail	Lead	Deadline	
4.1 Create demonstration sites on Council owned/managed land	4.1.1 Maintain meadow at Aberdeenshire Council's Gordon House and explore options to expand the area	Landscape Services and Environment Team	Ongoing	Gordon House meadow maintained
	4.1.2 Maintain meadow at Aberdeenshire Council's Woodhill House and explore options to enlarge area	Landscape Services	Ongoing	Woodhill house meadow maintained
	4.1.3 Explore options for meadows and existing and new Aberdeenshire Council premises	Landscape Services and Environment Team	Ongoing	Number of new meadows on Council managed land
	4.1.4 Maintain Deeside Way meadow at Kincardine O'Neil	Landscape Services and Environment Team	Ongoing	Kincardine O'Neil meadow maintained
4.2 Complete Leader funded Greenspace Project	4.2.1 Identify Council owned/managed greenspace sites to trial reduced maintenance and environmental enhancement	Greenspace Officers	October 2019	Number of trail sites identified

	4.2.2 Engage with the public and Council staff on reduced greenspace management and chosen sites	Greenspace Officers	March 2020	Number of public and staff engagement events
	4.2.3 Implement reduced maintenance	Greenspace Officers	April 2020	Number of sites with reduced maintenance
	4.2.4 Write up project summary and lessons learned including identification of reduced maintenance engagement and implementation process	Greenspace Officers	September 2020	Final greenspace project report completed
4.3 Review the production and use of annual bedding plants	4.3.1 Review the use and supply of annual bedding plants in the Council to see if pollen and nectar rich perennial plants (or some other pollinator beneficial planting type) would be a suitable alternative	Landscape Services/Greenspace Officers	September 2020	Options identified to reduce bedding plant supply and grow alternatives
	4.3.2 Identify if Council plant nursery facilities can produce alternatives to annual bedding – perennial plants, wildflowers or native trees for example	Landscape Services/Greenspace officers	September 2020	Alternatives options identified for nursery plant growth
4.4 Stalled development sites - seek opportunities to sow wildflower mixes on sites with planning permission that are not likely to be developed for some time	4.4.1 Explore opportunities to sow temporary wildflower seed mix at stalled development sites in Aberdeenshire Council ownership former – for example at Ellon Academy site	Environment Team/Planning Information and Delivery Team	April 2020	Options/plan identified for wildflower seeding at former Ellon Academy and other sites
4.5 Development Management enhances pollinator habitat	4.5.1 Ensure developments provide and enhance habitats for pollinating insects through complying with Local Development Plan policies on biodiversity	Development Management and	Ongoing	Polices to protect habitats for

	enhancement, landscaping (including landscaping maintenance) and watercourse buffer strips	Environment Team		pollinators in local development plan
4.6 Aberdeenshire Council infrastructure projects provide pollinators habitat	4.6.1 Work with relevant services (e.g. Roads or Property) to promote the inclusion of pollinator habitat in new infrastructure projects	Environment Team	Ongoing	Number of new Council infrastructure projects which include pollinator habitat
4.7 Review Council roadside verge management to see if benefits to pollinators can be increased	4.7.1 Carry out a review of roadside verge management policies and procedures to see if benefits to pollinators can be increased. Issues to explore include the timings of cuts, liaison with contractors and the use of yellow rattle	Landscape Services	September 2020	Roadside verge management policy reviewed
	4.7.2 Survey road verges near Pitmedden that have previously been planted with Yellow rattle	Environment Team	August 2020	Pitmedden verge surveyed



3.7. **Objective 5:** Protect existing areas of wildflower rich grassland

Many of Aberdeenshire’s richest wildflower grasslands have been identified as sites of national or local importance for biodiversity. These sites are protected through policies in the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan. The local development plan also contains policies to protect areas rich in biodiversity within the wider countryside from inappropriate development and identifies green networks within major settlements. Continued habitat survey will assist with identifying areas of existing species rich grassland.

Action	Detail	Lead	Deadline	Measurement
5.1 Survey for wildflower rich grassland sites and other pollinator habitat	5.1.1 NESBReC to continue habitat surveys in Aberdeenshire so as to identify valuable grassland sites and other valuable pollinator habitats	NESBReC	Surveys carried out yearly in summer months	Area of habitat survey carried out yearly
5.2 Protect valuable pollinator habitat in the development management process	5.2.1 Ensure development complies with Local Development Plan policies on natural heritage/biodiversity protection	Development Management and Environment Team	Ongoing	Number of natural heritage comments on planning applications
	5.2.2 Where undesignated wildflower rich grassland or other key pollinator habitat is identified (through NESBReC survey work or the development management process for example) consider designating these areas as a Local Nature Conservation Site	Environment Team	Ongoing	Number of new grassland LNCS
5.3 Protect pollinator habitat from inappropriate afforestation	5.3.1 Consider impacts on pollinator habitat when responding to forestry planting consultations from Scottish Forestry	Environment Team	Ongoing	Number of forestry consultations

#### **4. Monitoring and Reporting**

- 4.1. This Action Plan covers the period 2019 to 2021. The document has been produced by the Environment Team within Planning & Environment but the actions cross a number of teams and services – all of whom have been consulted. The Environment Team will monitor achievement of the actions in the Action Plan, including assessing the need to review the strategy prior to 2021. The Action Plan has been **approved by Sustainability Committee** (*TBC based on consultation with Committee*) and achievement of actions in the strategy will be reported to Sustainability Committee in 2021.