

REPORT TO INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE – 13 MAY 2021

DEE CATCHMENT PARTNERSHIP – PARTNERSHIP REVIEW REPORT

1 Reason for Report/Summary

- 1.1 To report to the Infrastructure Services Committee (ISC) on the outcome of the Partnership Review for the Dee Catchment Partnership (DCP) and to seek continued support and funding for this Partnership. The Report provides an update on the work of the DCP since the last Partnership Review in 2019.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Approve the continued support for the Dee Catchment Partnership; and**
- 2.2 Approve the financial contribution of £3,000 per annum from Planning and Environment Service, Environment, Payments to Agencies and Others and £6,000 per annum from Roads, Landscape Services and Waste, Flood Management, Payments to Agencies and Others.**

3 Purpose and Decision-Making Route

- 3.1 The Council's Partnership Policy requires that partnerships are reviewed every two years to demonstrate that the partnership produces benefits that outweigh the costs and that it supports the Council Plan including the strategic priorities. The DCP was last reviewed in 2019 and continued support for the Partnership was approved by ISC on 16 May 2019 ([Item 8](#)).
- 3.2 The DCP was set up in 2003 bringing together bodies with an interest in the River Dee. Other partners include Aberdeen City Council, Cairngorms National Park Authority, River Dee Trust, NatureScot, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Forestry and the James Hutton Institute (JHI). A wider group of organisations and agencies contribute to a broader partnership group and cover conservation, farming and forestry interests and this group has an independent Chair. The part-time DCP Project Officer is hosted by the JHI with outreach work currently being undertaken through a contract.
- 3.3 The vision for the DCP is "to return the River Dee and its catchment to good order throughout, with sufficient high-quality water, habitat and amenity to allow its inhabitants, flora and fauna to flourish". The DCP plays a key role in co-ordinating partnership work which has proven to be an efficient mechanism for delivering shared action utilising available resources.

- 3.4 The work of the DCP is set out in the current Dee Catchment Management Plan (DCMP) which was approved in 2007 by the 16 constituent organisations. Focused 3-year Delivery Plans are prepared to detail the current priorities. This Report provides an update on the activities of the DCP over the past two years and highlights some of the opportunities for future work.

4 Discussion

- 4.1 A Partnership Assessment and Annual Risk Assessment have been carried out for the DCP and are attached (**Appendix 1**). A Partnership Agreement exists between the JHI, as host of the Project Officer, and the other funding partners of the DCP and this covers many of the issues raised by the Partnership Assessment.
- 4.2 The work of the DCP is set out in the Dee Catchment Management Plan ([DCMP-SummaryFORWEB.pdf \(deepartnership.org\)](#)). This document sets out 37 objectives which relate to improving water quality, improving the morphology of the river and its tributaries, protecting and enhancing riparian habitats and the species they support, and encouraging responsible access. These objectives are the subject of delivery plans and action cards, which are reported on every five years to the DCP Management Group and Steering Group. Many of the actions are the statutory responsibilities of various partner organisations, but others fall outwith these responsibilities and are unlikely to be delivered without additional funding and the coordinated input of a number of organisations. The Partnership gives access to a wider range of expertise and experience in both theoretical and practical matters than is available within any one organisation and this is important in the design and planning of project work. This has allowed the Partnership to deliver a range of projects such as the river restoration work detailed in 4.3. Another significant benefit of partnership working is the shared delivery of outreach work which provides an efficient and effective mechanism for the development of educational resources and communicating with local communities.
- 4.3 Some of the work undertaken by DCP over the past two years include:
- The delivery of the Easter Beltie Restoration Project near Torphins which has involved re-meandering approximately 2km of previously straightened and deepened channel, and the formation of a 10ha floodplain in which wetlands and woodlands will develop. This work has been undertaken as a close collaboration between the DCP Project Officer and the Dee District Salmon Fisheries Board, working with the landowner and liaising with the local community. The work has been funded by the NatureScot Biodiversity Challenge Fund and has already reaped benefits with spawning salmon, otters and kingfishers being seen within the restored burn. The benefits of restoration are being studied by the James Hutton Institute and Napier University to evaluate the changes in the natural environment. Filming by Scotland the Big Picture has been undertaken throughout the works and the progress of this project has been covered

on Landward, BBC Out of Doors and several local newspapers. The project has been documented on the DCP website [Easter Beltie restoration - Dee Catchment Partnership \(deepartnership.org\)](http://deepartnership.org);

- Promoting awareness of natural flood management through showcasing a new river erosion model at events;
- Maintaining and increasing levels of awareness through a programme of outreach activities such as the Yellow Fish Project which is aimed at children and raises awareness of how our drains work, where they go and what items can cause harm;
- Redevelopment of the DCP website which now incorporates stand-alone pages for the North East Invasive Non-Native Species website;
- Continuing to promote awareness about the invasive non-native species;
- Outreach activity continued during 2020 but with more focus on promoting awareness of the wildlife of the River through DeeWatch. This was launched in 2019 and brings together a wealth of wildlife knowledge from ranger services and local experts to give access to a diary of photographs giving residents information on when they are most likely to spot plants, birds, insects and fungi. [General News - Dee Catchment Partnership \(deepartnership.org\)](http://deepartnership.org)

4.4 The current Dee Catchment Management Plan was produced in 2007 and is now due for review. A workshop planned for spring 2020 was cancelled and an online forum is currently being organised to discuss priorities, targets and actions for the future. Council Officers from several departments will be invited to contribute to this review.

4.5 DCP has been asked to provide an in-kind contribution to the development phase of the *Cairngorms 2030: People and nature thriving together* bid which is being led by Cairngorms National Park Authority and has been shortlisted for a Heritage Lottery Heritage Horizons Award. If successful, DCP will contribute to the development of an action plan for future funding bids. Other work planned by the Partnership includes continued work with the River Dee Trust staff on developing a long-term plan for management and access for the Beltie Burn restoration area; contributing to Dee District Salmon Fisheries Trust trails on fish enhancement on the Muick and Garin; and significant communication and outreach work via DeeWatch, monthly articles in the Deeside Piper and other relevant media.

5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

5.1 The work of the DCP helps to deliver the Strategic Priorities “Education” and “Health and Wellbeing” within the Pillar “Our People”, aligning with the principles right people, right places, right time.

The work of the DCP helps to deliver the Strategic Priorities “Infrastructure” and “Resilient Communities” within the Pillar “Our Environment”, aligning with the principles the right people, right places, right time, and climate and sustainability.

- 5.2 The work of the DCP will help to deliver against Climate Ready Aberdeenshire 2020-2030, Aberdeenshire’s climate change adaptation and mitigation strategy.
- 5.3 This Report links to the key principle of embedding ‘climate and sustainability’ in the new Council Plan. Biodiversity protection and enhancement is an essential element of sustainability and is key to meeting our climate change duties.
- 5.4 The Climate Change Declaration agreed by Full Council on 18 March 2020 recognises the key role protecting and restoring biodiversity and the natural environment has in reducing emission and adapting to climate change.
- 5.5 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	

- 5.6 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required because the work of the DCP does not have a differential impact on any of the protected characteristics.
- 5.7 The Council's staffing input into the project is from existing staff resources within Infrastructure Services. The financial implication for the Council is the contribution of £3,000 per annum from the Planning and Environment Service, Environment Budget page, Payments to Agencies and Others budget line and £6,000 per annum from Roads, Landscape Services and Waste, Flood Management Budget page, Payments to Agencies and Others budget line. The average annual expenditure for DCP core costs is £31,000 with additional funding for project delivery secured through grants, as required.

5.8 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level ([Corporate Risk Register](#)):

- ACORP001 Budget Pressures: The Aberdeenshire Council contribution is allocated from existing Service Revenue budgets.
- ACORP005 Working with other organisations: DCP has a Partnership Agreement setting out the responsibilities of the various partner organisations together with a 3-year plan with funding commitments in principle for this period, although most organisations are only able to guarantee funding on a year-by-year basis.
- ACORP006 Reputation management (including social media): the Partnership Agreement sets out the procedures for any media work to protect the reputations of all partners.
- ACORP010 Environmental challenges (e.g., Climate change adaptation strategies and community resilience): flooding is one of the topics covered by DCP outreach work within the wider Dee Catchment helping to mitigate this risk.

5.9 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level ([Directorate Risk Registers](#)):

- ISSR004 Climate Change: Conserve the natural and historic environment by protecting and enhancing landscape, biodiversity and historic assets. It is recognised that there is a heightened risk of the natural environment being damaged or lost as a result of climate change. DCP aims to protect and enhance the environment within the River Dee catchment and alongside partner organisations promote works to improve resilience and mitigate the impact of warming temperatures, for example, by tree planting within the catchment.

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. They are satisfied that the Report complies with the [Scheme of Governance](#) and relevant legislation.

6.2 The Committee is able to consider and comment on this this item in terms of:

- Section F.1.1.1 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to policy issues and resource matters in relation to Planning and Environment that are not reserved to the Full Council or specifically delegated to any other committee of the Council.

Alan Wood
Director of Infrastructure Services

Report prepared by: Judith Cox, Environment Planner
Date: 19 April 2021

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Partnership Assessment and Risk Assessment for the Dee Catchment Partnership.

Start-Up Assessment

Appendix 1

Partnership Working Policy - Partnership Assessment

This should be completed every two years as per the terms of the Partnership Working Policy.

This information will be presented to the relevant policy committee to inform its decision on membership of the partnership

Areas for consideration	Assessment	Comment/Proposed Action
Is the partnership a statutory partnership?	▼	
If yes, please state the legislation in the comment box. (Please continue to go through the assessment for best practice purposes, rather than to assess whether there should be participation in the partnership).		
The partnership has set outcomes or objectives to be achieved	▼	
The partnership's aims and any commitment of budget fit with the council's strategic plan and priorities (http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-plan)	▼	Our People - Health and Wellbeing - green spaces; Our Environment Natureal Environment Strategy, Biodiversity
If yes or partly, please specify which priorities in the comment box		
The partnership follows the Account Commission's Code on Following the Public Pound / financial regulations and agrees appropriate arrangements for allocating start-up and running costs (http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2004/nr_040311_following_public_pound.pdf)	▼	The James Hutton Institute prepares its accounts in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, known as UK GAP. Internal accounting processes and procedures are designed to maintain control and accountability over public funds.
The partnership makes links to the CPP's Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priorities where relevant (http://www.ouraberdeenshire.org.uk/our-priorities/local-outcomes-improvement-plan/)	▼	
All other appropriate bodies have been invited to participate in this partnership	▼	All key bodies with a water management focus are involved including Scottish Environment Protection Agency, NatureScot, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Aberdeen Harbour Board, Scottish Forestry and the Dee District Salmon Fishery Board.
The partnership ensures equality of opportunity for all and complies with statutory duties (equalities, socio-economic, town centres first principle) as required	▼	JHI is the employing organisation and has a policy on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
The partnership has a document such as an agreement, remit or memorandum of association to define its role, powers and how it carries out its business	▼	
The partnership makes a formal annual report that includes annual accounts and performance to its members and other bodies if necessary	▼	No formal annual reporting. JHI as the host organisations provides an end of year financial spreadsheet on income and expenditure
Appropriate status and voting rights are accorded to the council in the partnership	▼	Agreement is in place. Aberdeenshire Council has a representative on the
Members of the partnership's top-level decision-making group can be recalled by their nominating bodies	▼	
The risks faced by the partnership are shared between partners	▼	
Routine sharing of personal data will take place within the partnership	▼	Clause in Partnership Agreement covers data sharing if required.

Start-Up Assessment

<p>If yes or partly, please consider if a Data Privacy Impact Assessment, an Information Sharing Agreement or a Privacy Notice is required. All guidance and templates can be found at this link https://aberdeenshire.sharepoint.com/sites/Arcadia/services/Pages/Business%20Services/CT/Information%20Management%20and%20Record%20Management/Data%20Protection/Data%20Protection.aspx</p>		
<p>The partnership has a complaints process or agrees to adopt the complaints process of a member organisation</p>	▼	<p>The partnership follows the complaints procedure of the James Hutton Institute</p>
<p>Meetings of the partnership's top-level decision-making group are open to the public</p>	▼	<p>are held where a range of interested parties are invited to attend. This includes</p>
<p>The public is entitled to see reports considered by the partnership's top-level decision-making group</p>	▼	<p>Reports would be made available to the public on request. Summaries of DCP activities are available via a newsletter.</p>
<p>Minutes of the partnership's meetings are made publicly available</p>	▼	<p>Minutes can be made available to the public on request.</p>
<p>The partnership's top-level decision-making group has a quorum for meetings</p>	▼	
<p>Members of the partnership's top-level decision-making group are appointed for a limited period of time</p>	▼	
<p>There are agreed arrangements for dissolving the partnership</p>	▼	
<p>There are clear arrangements for the council to exit the partnership</p>	▼	
<p>There is a procedure for ensuring members who declare conflicts of interest take no part in decision</p>	▼	<p>Councillors are not represented on the Management Group or wider Partnership group.</p>
<p>The partnership recognises the obligations placed on Elected Members due to the Code of Conduct and has a procedure for ensuring members who declare conflicts of interest take no part in decision.</p>	▼	<p>Councillors are not represented on the Management Group or wider Partnership group.</p>
<p>Cost / Benefit Analysis</p>	<p>Response</p>	
<p>Please detail the staffing and financial implications of running the partnership, including those on other council services and partners</p>	<p>Annual contribution of £3,000 by P&ES and £6,000 by Flood Team. A member of P&ES staff sits on the DCP Management Group.</p>	
<p>Please state the source of any funding received by the partnership</p>	<p>NatureScot, Aberdeen City Council, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Scottish Forestry and various</p>	
<p>Please describe the benefits of council participating in the partnership</p>	<p>Provides a co-ordinating role for the delivery of a range of projects to enhance the water environment of</p>	
<p>The partnership is sustainable and is the best way of achieving its aims and outcomes</p>	▼	

▼

Annual Risk Assessment

Appendix 1

Partnership Working Procedure - Risk Assessment

This should be completed every two years as per the terms of the Partnership Working Policy.

This helps determine if the partnership presents a "significant" risk to the Council and what steps require to be taken if that is the case.

Partnership Name:	Completed by:	Date:
Dee Catchment Partnership	Judith Cox	Mar-21

All partnerships must be recorded in the Register of Partnerships on Arcadia

This table assesses whether your partnership should be recorded as a **significant** partnership requiring a Risk Register (from the Risk Management Team).

Please enter the score in the last column for the statement which most closely represents your partnership.

Impact No.	Description	Minor (Score 1)	Important (Score 2)	Significant (Score 3)	Major (Score 4)	Score
1	The Council contributes to the partnership by direct funding and/or indirectly through staff resources, work done etc.)	< £10K per annum	£10K to < £50 k per annum	£50K to < £100k per annum	> £100k per annum	1
2	The partnership's success is critical to the achievement of one or more of the Council's Strategic Priorities.	Not directly linked to a strategic priority (this needs to be flagged up to the policy committee in this case)	Linked to a strategic priority	Significant contributor to success of a strategic priority	Essential to the achievement of a strategic priority	2
3	Failure of the partnership would have an impact on the Council's reputation.	Threat of adverse comment in local press or the equivalent that Corporate Communications consider to be of material concern to the Council.	Actual adverse comment in local press or the equivalent that Corporate Communications consider to be of material concern to the Council.	Individual press reports in national media that Corporate Communications consider being of material concern to the Council.	Concerted, widespread or recurrent critical coverage of the Council or for a specific event in the media	1
4	The extent to which partnership expenditure is controlled by the Council.	The Council has full control over expenditure decisions.	The Council has veto on expenditure decisions.	The Council is a party to expenditure decisions.	The Council has no control over expenditure.	3

Annual Risk Assessment

5	The partnership takes decisions on behalf of or which are binding on the Council.	The Partnership does not take decisions on behalf of the Council	The Partnership does not take decisions on behalf of the Council but representatives with decision-making authority attend the partnership and consider and influence its recommendations.	The Partnership does not take decisions on behalf of the Council but representatives with decision-making authority attend the partnership and agree to be bound by its decisions.	The partnership has decision-making responsibilities directly delegated to it from the Council.	2
6	The Council has set up the partnership in order to receive additional funding and/or meet Statutory or Regulatory requirement.	Not required by law or to receive funding.	Indirect or limited links to successful achievement of funding.	Direct links to successful achievement of funding.	The Council is required to participate in this partnership by law or to receive specific funding.	2

Total Score	11
Maximum Possible Score	24
Impact %	45.83%
Evaluation	Not Significant