Our nature matters

Fife's Local Biodiversity Action Plan
Fifth Edition • 2026-2045

Fife Council

Our Climate Matters

Fife Biodiversity Partnership

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Foreword

I am delighted to present the 5th edition of the Fife Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Biodiversity plays a critical role in maintaining and enriching our lives in Fife. It provides benefits to our health and wellbeing, our economy, what we eat and drink, and protects us from the impacts of pollution and climate change.

Developed by the Fife Biodiversity Partnership, this edition of the Plan establishes a 20-year vision for biodiversity in Fife. It will drive partnership action to protect our valuable natural world and help us tackle the impacts of the twin nature and climate crises. Since the publication of the first Local Biodiversity Action Plan in 2000, Fife has made significant progress towards restoring, protecting and enhancing the natural environment. Biodiversity action can be seen across Fife, from river and sand dune restoration projects to tree planting in local communities.

Fife Council are committed to continuing this progress. Through projects like “Transforming Fife’s Greenspace” and our “Fife Climate Forest”, we will deliver biodiversity improvements across our estate and for the people of Fife. But no one organisation can do this alone; everyone has a role to play, and we welcome the opportunity to work as part of the Fife Biodiversity Partnership to deliver this Plan. We also hope this inspires action across Fife, from individuals, community groups and schools, to businesses and institutions. We can all play our part in protecting and enhancing Fife’s unique natural environment for future generations.

Cllr. Jan Wincott
Spokesperson
Environment & Climate Change

Introduction

Welcome to the Fife Biodiversity Action Plan

This is the 5th edition of the plan since Local Biodiversity Action Plan Partnerships were established after the Rio Earth Summit in 1992.

This version is as important and ambitious as ever, with aims to tackle the twin environmental crises of biodiversity loss and climate change. It provides a route map for the people of Fife to contribute to Scotland's national targets of having restored nature by 2030 and to have regenerated biodiversity in and on Scotland's land, freshwater and seas by 2045.

The Plan was developed by the Fife Biodiversity Partnership. This includes representatives of local communities, environmental charities, public sector organisations, Non-governmental Organisations, and businesses. Each of these groups are working in collaboration to realise the goal of improving Fife's nature and resilience to the impacts of climate change.

The Partnership collectively developed the Plan's 20-year vision, identifying six priority areas for biodiversity in Fife. This includes Species, Habitats, Connectivity, Invasive and Non-Native Species, Climate Change, and Awareness and Engagement. These priorities will guide and support the delivery of actions on the ground through five-year delivery plans. The delivery plans include actions across the six ecosystems, as well as cross cutting actions to connect them through nature networks at a landscape scale. These plans will show how we intend to meet the challenges head on and how you can support and contribute to improving nature in Fife for generations to come.

If you wish to be involved in any of the actions locally or Fife-wide or want to know more, please go to **our.fife.scot/nature** or contact the Fife Biodiversity Partnership at **biodiversity@fife.gov.uk**.

FIFE BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP

What is Biodiversity?

Biodiversity is every living thing, all around us in all its wonderful abundance. Biodiversity helps maintain a liveable Fife, from the worms underground cultivating the soil to the mighty oak trees providing breathable oxygen. Biodiversity is fundamental to Fife's health, wealth and wellbeing.

What is a Local Biodiversity Action Plan?

The Local Biodiversity Action Plan outlines Fife's priorities for nature conservation. The Fife Biodiversity Partnership have adopted a twenty-year plan in line with the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045. The Plan supports the development of measurable outcomes for biodiversity. It guides protection of vital habitats and species while supporting the restoration and enhancement of Fife's landscapes. By encouraging local involvement in conservation efforts and raising awareness of the value of nature, the Local Biodiversity Action Plan aims to improve quality of life across Fife; now and into the future.

The plan builds on wider commitments to tackling the twin climate and nature crises, including Fife Council's "Climate Fife" Strategy and Action Plan. Biodiversity restoration, enhancement and protection are key areas of action in Climate Fife, supporting both emissions reduction targets and resilience to the impacts of climate change, recognising the benefits for both climate change and nature recovery.

Who is the Local Biodiversity Action Plan for?

The Fife Local Biodiversity Action Plan belongs to everyone. This includes individuals, community groups, landowners, land managers, businesses, planners, developers, and both statutory and voluntary organisations to name a few. Across Fife, both small and large actions can add up to meaningful, large-scale change - now and for many generations to come.

Recording Nature - Fife Nature Records Centre

Fife Nature Records Centre supports the Local Biodiversity Action Plan by gathering, managing and sharing wildlife records that help build a picture of species distributions across Fife. By collating thousands of sightings each year - from expert volunteer recorders, local groups and national schemes, to observations from the general public and records shared by consultants - Fife Nature provides an evidence base that informs planning, development and land-management decisions. The data can support organisations working on local conservation priorities and can be used to help highlight priority species and track changes in where species are found. Fife Nature Records Centre supplies ecological information to council services and external users, adding wider context and long-term data that complement on-site assessments.

Fife Nature promotes public participation in biological recording through citizen-science projects and local volunteer opportunities. This not only helps connect people with Fife's biodiversity but also adds to overall knowledge. Encouraging accurate submission of the "4 Ws" (who, what, where and when) supports the creation of high-quality wildlife records. Tools such as iRecord can be used to identify and record nature across Fife. Applying careful record checks alongside expert review from valued local taxonomic specialists ensures records are robust and reliable. This work contributes directly to the Local Biodiversity Action Plan's aim to conserve and enhance Fife's natural heritage. For more information, contact Fife Nature Records Centre at **nature.info@fife.gov.uk**

Getting Involved

Anyone, anywhere in Fife can get involved in biodiversity restoration, enhancement and protection. From making space for nature in gardens, to farming with a 'nature positive' spin or taking part in a beach clean. All actions can make a difference. Please see our list of partners to get involved. The full list of Fife Biodiversity Partnership members is available at **our.fife.scot/nature**.

Our Local Biodiversity Action Plan in the wider context

International

Co-ordinated action at an international scale is important. It ensures that migratory species, such as swallows, are adequately protected. It enables national protection of species that are not common in other countries. For instance, Scotland is internationally important for its heather moorland and lowland raised bog.

One of the most important international instruments to protect biodiversity and ensure it is used sustainably is the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. It was inspired by a growing global commitment to sustainable development. Adopted in 1992 in Rio, it has been ratified by 168 countries. The 15th Conference of the Parties in 2022 concluded with the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Globally around one million species[1] are threatened with extinction. The framework aims to halt, safeguard and reverse biodiversity loss by 2050 through a series of overarching goals and targets.

1 15/4. Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

National

In 2024, the Scottish Government launched the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. It outlines Scotland's approach to halting biodiversity loss and enhancing the natural environment by 2045. The strategy sets ambitious plans to protect and enhance the diverse ecosystems across Scotland. This includes halting biodiversity loss and being nature positive by 2030.

"By 2045, Scotland will have restored and regenerated biodiversity across our land, freshwater and seas. Our natural environment, our habitats, ecosystems and species, will be diverse, thriving, resilient and adapting to climate change. Regenerated biodiversity will drive a sustainable economy and support thriving communities, and people will play their part in the stewardship of nature for future generations."[2]

The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy sets out a series of actions across all habitat types. This includes managing invasive non-native species, exploring natural capital mechanisms and creating resilient ecosystems. Achieving the targets within the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy are a statutory duty under the Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill[3], passed in 2026. The Fife Local Biodiversity Action Plan will aim to deliver on the vision of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy at a local level.

The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004[4] sets out the requirements for all public sector bodies across Scotland to advance biodiversity conservation when carrying out any work. This is known as Biodiversity Duty and supports wider outcomes such as achieving national targets and action against the climate and nature crises. This is a statutory duty and must be reported to the Scottish Government in line with the legal requirements for reporting.

With a focus on the marine environment, the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010[5] introduced a framework to support the seas. The act is designed to safeguard and restore marine biodiversity through the integration of protection, conservation and restoration measures. It highlights the importance of sustainable development in marine environments, setting out a statutory planning system. The co-benefits of this act include an increase in climate resilience, increasing marine renewables and leveraging investment in the marine ecosystem as a vital asset for Scotland.

Scotland's National Planning Framework 4[6] places biodiversity at the heart of planning decisions, recognising the urgent need to address the twin nature and climate crises. Under policy three, all development proposals must actively contribute to restoring and enhancing biodiversity. This means that planning must go beyond avoiding harm and it should deliver measurable improvements for nature. It should encourage proportionate and locally relevant measures such as native planting and green infrastructure.

Fife's Local Biodiversity Action Plan reflects these principles, ensuring that planning decisions within our area contribute meaningfully to a healthier, more resilient natural environment.

2 Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045: Tackling the Nature Emergency in Scotland
3 Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill as introduced
4 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2004/6/contents
5 Marine (Scotland) Act 2010
6 National Planning Framework 4

Local

Since the last edition of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan in 2013, there have been a number of changes to Fife's biodiversity. Some of these have been positive and others not so;

- Beaver have been noted in Fife for the first time since their reintroduction to Scotland.
- Disease has taken its toll on both plant and animal species, as ash dieback and avian flu have impacted the land and seascapes of Fife and beyond.
- Troublesome species such as giant hogweed have been located and managed through targeted eradication and treatment. This can be seen throughout the upper reaches of the River Eden, opening riparian areas to natural regeneration.
- In 2026, the RSPB published data from their Big Garden Birdwatch[7] which showed that in Fife, some traditionally common garden bid species such as blackbird and starling are mirroring steep national declines. Meanwhile blue tit and coal tit are slightly outperforming national trends here in Fife showing modest increases in occurrence whilst house sparrow remains our most common garden visitor.

It is difficult to say whether biodiversity in Fife is in a better or worse place than it was at the publication of the 4th Edition of the Plan. This is owed mostly to a lack of available data and baseline to make such a generalisation. From 2026, a series of baselining actions will be undertaken to ensure that such a comparison is possible at the renewal of each Delivery Plan as well as at the conclusion of this edition.

In 2021, Fife Council made a commitment to nature by signing the Edinburgh Declaration on Biodiversity[8]. Through the declaration, Local Authorities pledge to undertake transformative change to halt biodiversity decline and mitigate against the impacts of climate change on the natural environment.

Each local area has a duty to identify their priorities across habitats and species in a Local Biodiversity Action Plan. The priorities should have significance and relevance to their locale, and design and identify actions to protect and enhance those features. This is informed by the national strategy and Scotland's Biodiversity List. There are many local strategies, policies or initiatives with overlapping objectives that influence the delivery of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Further details of local strategies can be found in the appendix.

Many business-as-usual programmes of work are ongoing across Fife Council services. This includes the legal fulfilment of both the Biodiversity and Climate Change Duty Reporting, mapping suitable Nature Networks, and prioritising biodiversity through the planning system.

7 https://www.rspb.org.uk/whats-happening/big-garden-birdwatch/results

8 Supporting documents - Edinburgh Declaration on post-2020 global biodiversity framework - gov.scot

Priorities

Our Aim

The aim of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan is to continue to protect and enhance biodiversity for its intrinsic value, championing a thriving natural Fife. This involves protecting wildlife, restoring habitats and enriching the wellbeing and everyday experiences of our communities.

This will be achieved through halting biodiversity loss, maintaining and improving the condition of habitats while supporting the creation of new habitats. This includes reducing the pressures on nature, improving connectivity, involving people in decision-making about the environment and ensuring environmental and social benefits are derived from economic activity. It is also a call to action to reimagine Fife as a place where biodiversity leads the way to a greener and more resilient future.

Our Priorities

For the fifth edition of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, the Fife Biodiversity Partnership have identified six priorities which the plan and associated actions will be targeted towards. The priorities are relevant across each of the six ecosystems. The priorities lay the foundation for actions undertaken across Fife and will be used when planning on the ground activities.

The priorities are:

Species

Habitats

Connectivity

Invasive and non-native species

Climate change

Awareness and engagement

Priority one: Species

Maintain and where possible enhance priority species across our ecosystems.

Fife is home to a variety of habitats and species that hold particular interest, rarity or designation. From red grouse on the peaks of the Lomond Hills to red squirrels in the woodlands and the bumblebees that pollinate our meadows; Fife is rich with wildlife.

The Kingdom is home to seven species defined as European Protected Species under the Habitats Regulation 1994[9]. This includes verified recordings of otter, great crested newt, eight types of bats and the addition for the first time of beaver in Fife[10]. There are many types of whales, dolphins and porpoises that live in our seas. Also found in Fife's fresh and marine waters are salmon, dolphins and puffins which are on the Scottish Biodiversity List[11]. Fife is also home to over 150 species found in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan[12] such as water vole and corn bunting.

Scotland's priority species across its landscapes and seascapes are listed in Scotland's Biodiversity List which is maintained by NatureScot. At a local level, the Fife Biodiversity Partnership will continue to monitor this list of national priorities and keep our Fife's Nature Priorities List updated on the website as our climate and landscapes change over time.

Corn bunting

9 Protected Species List - Habitats Regulations 1994 | NatureScot
10 National Biodiversity Network
11 Scottish biodiversity: list - gov.scot
12 Biodiversity – The UK Action Plan | JNCC Resource Hub

Priority two: Habitats

Maintain and where possible enhance and restore priority habitats across our ecosystems.

Fife's natural heritage is extremely diverse. This is due to the influence of coastal factors and surrounding hills, as well as local geological features and landforms. When combined, these characteristics produce a richly varied tapestry of habitats that are home to a wealth of important species. Fife has over 150 sites with natural heritage designations covering almost 65,000 hectares. As such, Fife makes an important contribution to Scottish, UK and international biodiversity.

Fife will work to conserve and restore locally significant habitats and species, particularly those that are under direct threat of detrimental impact. Habitat management will be critical. This may include managing challenges such as disease, for example ash dieback. Priority will be given to actions that have the greatest impact, either cumulatively or through specific interventions to halt biodiversity loss and to drive nature positive and nature-based solutions.

Priority three: Connectivity

Promote and enable habitat and species connectivity where appropriate.

Connectivity is crucial for healthy ecosystems. It enables adaptation to climate change, encourages greater species diversity and supports vital ecosystem services. There are several project's in Fife that enable improved connectivity of species and habitats. This includes the Fife Climate Forest which strives to protect existing trees and identify high value planting opportunities for new trees. One of the projects aims, connect, looks to link new trees and hedgerows to create corridors for wildlife movement.

The Scottish Government has set several ambitious targets. It aims to halt biodiversity loss and ensure that 30% of land in Scotland is protected for biodiversity and nature by 2030[13]. Fife has 55 sites classed as within the 30x30 category across the authority area.

Nature networks are another method of supporting increased biodiversity connectivity and enhancement. This involves developing a series of corridors and stepping stones to connect sites identified as nature rich. This includes 30x30 sites[14] and any other site identified as important locally, for example Local Nature Reserves. The corridors will follow along six different habitats including woodland, wetland, grassland, heathland, coastal and urban. Fife Council's Climate, Nature and Sustainability Team are leading on the development of the nature networks mapping for Fife. The mapping includes existing habitats and opportunities for network enhancement. This is a collaborative project and has been informed by discussions with neighbouring local authorities recognising that biodiversity knows no boundaries. It also reflects other connectivity and nature corridor projects undertaken by partners across Fife.

While protecting and supporting local biodiversity connections is extremely important, there will be times when connections are not appropriate due to potential negative impacts. For example, it is important to not spread grey squirrels into established populations of red squirrels where they can have a significant negative impact on one of our locally important species. Any projects exploring connectivity of habitats will ensure the most appropriate routes are chosen that maximise benefits and minimise disruption.

Connectivity is also a key consideration across our settlements and transport networks. Opportunities to secure biodiversity gains through the design and delivery of active travel and road infrastructure should be prioritised. This includes providing ecological corridors (e.g., hedges, species-rich verges, swales, woodland pockets), wildlife crossing features, and native planting to support species movement. Other features include the development of edible routes and orchards along Fife's travel infrastructure. Nature-based drainage solutions should be used in preference to hard engineering, and the protection of soils and veteran trees should guide all roadside works. Incorporating these measures helps avoid habitat fragmentation while improving resilience, air quality and climate adaptation across Fife's communities

13 Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045: Tackling the Nature Emergency in Scotland

14 Nature Networks for Planning Authorities | NatureScot

Priority four: Invasive & Non-Native Species

A strategic approach to the management, and where possible eradication, of agreed invasive and non-native species in Fife.

In Fife, biodiversity is increasingly threatened by invasive species, other non-native species, and problematic native species, all interacting with land-use pressures and climate change. Invasive non-native species alone cost up to £1.9 billion[15] annually in Great Britain and around £200 million in Scotland, driving habitat degradation, infrastructure damage and ecological decline.

1) Invasive Species

Invasive species are non-natives that spread and cause environmental or socio-economic harm; an estimated 10–15% of established non-native species[16] become invasive.

Woodlands: Rhododendron ponticum[17] severely impacts native woods and forests by suppressing light and biodiversity; recovery can remain limited even decades after removal. Management requires repeated cutting, herbicide or flailing with long-term follow-up. Giant hogweed adds public-health risks while eroding riparian vegetation and rapid spread of snowberry can smother and displace native woodland floor species.

Rivers and wetlands: Himalayan balsam rapidly colonises banks, suppresses native plants, and its winter die-back significantly increases erosion and sedimentation. Japanese knotweed damages buildings, destabilises banks, and requires multi-year chemical or excavation-based control, with legal liabilities for spread.

Invasive animals: American mink[18] has major impacts on water voles and ground-nesting birds. Large collaborative trapping programmes in Scotland have demonstrated successful long-term removal of breeding populations.

American mink

15 https://www.nonnativespecies.org/about/gb-strategy/the-great-britain-invasive-non-native-species-strategy
16 https://nbn.org.uk/news/gb-non-native-species-strategy-2023/
17 https://www.forestry.gov.scot/publications/approach-prioritising-control-rhododendron-scotland
18 https://www.abdn.ac.uk/sbs/research/impact/eradicating-american-mink-and-conserving-the-native-water-vole-population/

2) Non-Native Species

Most non-native species do not become invasive, and many contribute economic or amenity benefits. Management focuses on preventing harmful introductions and ensuring responsible handling of species outside their native range. The Code of Practice on Non-Native Species (2012)[19] clarifies duties of care, due diligence, and legal responsibilities for land managers.


American skunk cabbage

Locally relevant non-natives include garden or pond plants with high invasion potential (e.g., American skunk cabbage, giant rhubarb) requiring careful disposal to prevent escape. Other widespread non-natives such as grey squirrel or signal crayfish are regulated due to documented harm to native species and habitats.

3) Problematic Native Species

Some native species become locally problematic when ecological balance is altered by human land-use change, predator removal or climate effects. Scotland's restoration ambitions under the Biodiversity Strategy to 2045 explicitly link habitat recovery with active management of such species.

Deer: High densities of red and roe deer can inhibit woodland regeneration and cause damage to peatlands[20]. NatureScot's implementation of the Deer Working Group recommendations calls for substantial population reductions to meet climate and biodiversity goals. Research[21] shows woodland regeneration improves markedly where deer densities are maintained at ≤3–5 deer/km².

Bracken: Though it is native, bracken can dominate heathland and grassland. It can hinder woodland establishment and reduce biodiversity value. With pesticides no longer available or recommended, UK agencies now promote integrated mechanical, rolling and site-specific, non-chemical approaches through updated 2024 Best Practice Guidance.

Gorse: Gorse can form dense stands that suppress priority habitats and elevate wildfire risk. Scottish Forestry permits targeted removal where required for woodland creation, with clear seasonal and mapping requirements to ensure ecological sensitivity.


Gorse

19 https://www.gov.scot/publications/non-native-species-code-practice/

20 https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/land-and-sea-management/managing-wildlife/deer-scotland/managing-deer-climate-and-nature

21 https://www.stir.ac.uk/news/2026/january-2026-news/lowering-deer-densities-can-help-restore-scotlands-lost-highland-mountain-woodlands-new-research-shows/

Priority five: Climate Change

Our biodiversity is resilient to climate change and delivers nature-based adaptation and mitigation solutions to the climate emergency.

The climate and nature crises are heavily interlinked. Climate change can affect biodiversity in many ways including accelerating species loss, increasing the spread of diseases and forcing migration of species in search of a reliable habitat[22]. While this is a global issue which can often feel far away, the impact of climate change can already be seen across Fife. For example[23]:

- An increase in storm events damaging salmon spawning grounds
- A lack of defined seasons impacting food chains
- Ocean acidification caused by an increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide impacting marine species such as oysters and molluscs

In 2019 Fife Council declared a Climate Emergency. Through the declaration, Fife recognises there must be urgent action to reduce our carbon emissions to avoid irreversible damage. The council has committed to a net zero target of 2045 as outlined in the Climate Fife Strategy and Action Plan[24]. This will be achieved through a series of actions under the three big moves of energy, resilience and community. Biodiversity spans across all three big moves, though predominately under the big resilience move. This includes actions such as progressing the Nature Finance Fife and Fife Climate Forest projects as well as supporting community growing. Climate Fife outlines ambitions to work closely with public sector partners to manage land assets for the benefit of the climate.

The Local Biodiversity Action Plan plays a key role in addressing climate change and helping communities adapt to a changing environment. This is important to ensure Fife's communities are resilient to the impacts of climate change and should be approached through applying nature-based solutions where possible. The connection between biodiversity and climate change will be reflected through the actions identified in the delivery plans.

22 Biodiversity - our strongest natural defense against climate change | United Nations
23 Impacts on species | NatureScot
24 Climate Fife 2024 Strategy and Action Plan

Priority six: Awareness and Engagement

Promote public understanding of biodiversity through programmes designed to increase community involvement, profile raising and outreach.

A critical component of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan is to empower communities to understand, value and actively participate in biodiversity conservation. This can be achieved through engagement activities, educational programmes and local events. Education initiatives play an important role in shifting individuals from passive awareness to active stewardship. This should be done through schools, community outreach, or interpretive signage. The Convention on Biological Diversity[25] highlights education and awareness as enablers for achieving its global targets. This reinforces their relevance at the local level. By embedding education and outreach into the Local Biodiversity Action Plan framework, local authorities can create a culture of conservation that supports long-term ecological resilience and community ownership of biodiversity goals. The dedication of volunteers is critical to the success of biodiversity protection, restoration and enhancement across Fife.

Fife is fortunate to have a number of skilled ecologists, educators and individuals who gather significantly important data from across the Kingdom. This involves many of the Fife Biodiversity Partnership members who have a wealth of knowledge on the range of species and habitats across Fife. The Local Biodiversity Action Plan will continue to support research and studies into biodiversity trends and threats and evaluate conservation efforts. It will monitor the successes and lessons learned from those projects identified throughout the 5-Year Delivery Plans which form part of this Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

25 Home | Convention on Biological Diversity

Measuring indicators – Biodiversity Monitoring Framework

To be able to measure the success of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan priorities, a Biodiversity Monitoring Framework will be created. The framework will be guided by the six priorities of: species, habitats, connectivity, invasive and non-native species, climate change, and awareness and engagement. The framework will be used to develop a list of indicator species and habitats that are able to be recorded and are good indicators of a healthy ecosystem. The draft framework process can be found in Appendix E. A detailed version will be co-designed with the Fife Biodiversity Partnership members after the publication of this Plan. Ideas for the framework include the creation of a connectivity metric, sequestration opportunities and tracking the condition of priority habitats to name a few.

This Local Biodiversity Action Plan aims to set the standard for measuring progress towards nature protection, restoration, conservation and enhancement in Fife. As well as creating the framework, a nature portal will be developed where the success of the actions can be tracked. This will ensure that all progress moves in the right direction from a new baseline to be set in 2026. The progress of the actions will help to inform Biodiversity Duty reporting and the next iteration of the Plan.

Working Partnerships

The Fife Biodiversity Partnership

The Fife Biodiversity Partnership is a group of individuals and organisations from across Fife with expertise in the natural environment. The Partnership is made up of a variety of members including Fife Council, key statutory bodies and organisations and individuals who are themselves experts in the field of nature and biodiversity. The purpose of the Partnership is to share and champion best practice for biodiversity amongst not just its own membership, but widely across Fife with a variety of stakeholders to make positive change for nature across the Kingdom.

A map with the locations of Fife Biodiversity Partnership members can be found online at **our.fife.scot/nature**

Measuring, monitoring and delivering progress

It is important that the Local Biodiversity Action Plan remains flexible and responsive to protect biodiversity. Running over a 20-year lifespan, the Local Biodiversity Action Plan will include a series of shorter delivery plans updated at 5-year intervals. The delivery plans will focus Fife's efforts in line with the national strategy, to ensure any actions remain relevant and impactful to the challenges of the day.

Fife Council will provide governance and support for development and delivery of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan. The council will support the Fife Local Biodiversity Partnership, and actions will be undertaken by both Fife Council and the Partners. The reporting process will be monitored and coordinated by Fife Council and published online at **our.fife.scot/nature**

Investing in Nature

Fife Coast and Countryside Trust, with support from Fife Council, is leading the Nature Finance Fife[26] initiative. This is a coalition that seeks to channel a blend of public, private, and philanthropic finance into a regional programme of reliable, high integrity projects for the benefit of climate, nature, and people. Nature Finance Fife is a convening body that works with people on the ground to aggregate the supply of projects that deliver resilient landscapes and to connect them with investors and buyers of ecosystem services and environmental outcomes.

26 Nature Finance Fife - Fife Coast & Countryside Trust

Ecosystems

All life, including humans, relies upon a healthy, complex, interconnected environment. A fragmented approach to nature conservation cannot be effective.

An ecosystem - or a living system - can be anything from a pond or a forest to a river catchment, an island or even an ocean. As it functions as a highly interconnected system, actions to one part of an ecosystem can lead to effects on other parts. Healthy, resilient ecosystems are the basis for sustaining people and biodiversity. Ecosystems provide vital services for all life such as clean air, food, water and resources[27]. A healthy ecosystem, like a healthy person, is one where all parts work well individually and together. It has ecological integrity.

Freshwater & Wetland

Woodland

Urban

Upland

Marine & Coastal

Lowland

Ecosystem resilience

Ecosystem resilience is its ability to absorb disturbances while retaining its structure and way of functioning. It is based on an ecosystem's ability to adapt to stress and change, such as invasive non-native species or the effects of climate change. A healthy, resilient ecosystem can continue to provide Fife with the ecosystem goods and services it relies on.

The UK Government commissioned a research study[28] into the impact of ecosystem degradation on national security. Findings suggest ecosystem degradation is happening across the UK with the impact on food security, national security and prosperity identified as areas at high risk. This stresses the importance of ensuring ecosystem resilience and reversing biodiversity decline as a critical global function.

27 Ecosystem services - nature's benefits | NatureScot

28 National security assessment - global biodiversity loss ecosystem collapse and national security

Our Ecosystem Approach

The structure of this Local Biodiversity Action Plan follows an ecosystem approach. This can be defined as:

> "a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way, and which recognises that people with their cultural and varied social needs are an integral part of ecosystems."[29]

The ecosystems provide a focus for the Local Biodiversity Action Plan's priorities and actions and for wider biodiversity projects across Fife. As projects are often dependant on outside factors such as funding, the key actions will be further defined in the Delivery Plans. This will include specific actions developed in a targeted and measurable manner.

An ecosystem approach can be applied at any scale and requires joint working. It should be applied to any policy, plan or action which affects the environment, for example building a new road, setting up a fishery or putting together a development plan. It requires integration of policies and actions at different levels and across different sectors.

The three principles required for an Ecosystem Approach:

- **Take account of how ecosystems work.**
  Nature connects across landscapes; any implications must be considered in the short and long-term, locally and beyond. For instance, consider the importance of a floodplain in flood regulation when making land-use decisions in a catchment.
- **Take account of services that ecosystems provide to people.**
  This includes regulating climate and flooding, providing food, fuel and water, and breaking down waste. Remember ecosystem services underpin our health, wealth and wellbeing. Consider how an activity could affect the environment such as the role of pesticides which can harm crop pollinators and pollute drinking water.
- **Involve people.**
  Those who benefit from the ecosystem services and those managing them need to be involved in decision-making. This means valuing people's knowledge, encouraging and facilitating public participation, and giving people greater ownership and responsibility.

It is important to consider the social, economic and often deeply personal importance of nature and biodiversity when it often feels that it is the forgotten element in an exceptionally intricate system. Restoring damaged ecosystem functions or paying for their loss is far more costly than protecting and enhancing what we have in the first place. While this Local Biodiversity Action Plan has taken an approach that considers the ecosystems separately, it must be recognised that each exist as part of an interconnected and inter-reliant system.

Maps showing key ecosystems are available online at **our.fife.scot/nature**

29 Applying an ecosystems approach to land use: Information Note

Freshwater & Wetland Ecosystem

Shaped by Fife's glaciated landscape and high rainfall, freshwater and wetland habitats are among the region's most ecologically valuable and diverse ecosystems.

From small ponds, burns, and bogs to rivers, reservoirs, and lochs, these habitats support a rich variety of wildlife and are deeply valued by local communities. Each provides essential ecosystem services: filtering and supplying clean water, regulating floods, storing carbon, supporting biodiversity, and maintaining river flows during dry periods. These natural systems also offer cultural and recreational benefits including angling, wildlife-watching, and water sports that contribute to health, wellbeing, and the local economy.

Fife is home to three main river systems - the Eden, Leven, and Ore - and around 400 waterbodies covering approximately 831 hectares. Despite this, the average number of ponds per square kilometre remains below the national average of 2.8[30]. The region contains 348 hectares of mire and 197 hectares of swamp and marginal wetland habitats. These areas support a wealth of species, including frogs, toads, great crested newts, otters, water voles, kingfishers, and overwintering wildfowl. Wetlands such as raised bogs are especially important for carbon storage and water retention, playing a vital role in the face of climate change.

Freshwater and wetland ecosystems are interconnected with all other habitats in Fife. Their protection and restoration are essential not only for biodiversity but also for the resilience and wellbeing of communities across the Kingdom.

A healthy freshwater and wetland ecosystem is characterised by clean, well-oxygenated water, stable hydrological cycles, and a rich diversity of aquatic and semi-aquatic species. These ecosystems support a variety of life including amphibians, aquatic invertebrates, wetland birds, and native plant communities. Natural flow regimes are maintained, allowing for seasonal flooding, sediment transport, and groundwater recharge. Wetlands act as natural filters, improving water quality and reducing nutrient runoff. The presence of buffer zones and riparian vegetation enhances habitat connectivity and resilience.

30 https://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/?id=7148

Fife Rivers Programme

Across Fife's freshwater systems, several restoration and regeneration projects are breathing life back into rivers and watercourses as they make their way across the landscape. From community and grassroots efforts in places like the River Eden[31] being championed by groups such as Sustainable Cupar and partners, to larger scale restoration in the River Leven[32] and its tributaries. Restoration efforts are being undertaken through Fife Council and Fife Coast and Countryside Trust amongst many other partners.

31 The River Eden Sustainability Partnership | RESP
32 Restoring the River Leven | The Leven Programme

Woodland Ecosystem

Fife's woodlands reflect the rich diversity of Scotland's forest habitats, shaped by the region's varied geology, soils, climate, and topography.

From ancient woodlands tucked into steep-sided dens like Craighall and Keil's, to wet carr woodlands at Dalbeath and St Michael's Wood marshes, and coastal broadleaved woods such as Flisk. Large plantations like Devilla and Tentsmuir, remnant aspen stands in the Lomond Hills, and veteran trees in historic parklands all contribute to this mosaic of habitats.

The woodlands are home to a wealth of species, including red squirrels, bats, tawny owls, woodpeckers, bluebells, fungi, and lichens. Around 11% of Fife's land area is wooded, including approximately 190hectares of ancient woodland and 243hectares of long-established semi-natural woodland. Much of it is concentrated in dens where historical inaccessibility preserved these habitats. Though often small and fragmented, these wooded corridors are vital for biodiversity, acting as stepping stones for wildlife and strengthening ecological networks. Woodlands are connected to other habitats, forming corridors that allow species to migrate and adapt to environmental changes.

Beyond their cultural and recreational value, woodlands provide essential ecosystem services. This includes storing carbon, regulating water flow and reducing flood risk to name a few. This is not just the woodland species themselves but also woodland soils that are critical carbon stores. All woodland types, including open and edge habitats, are included within this ecosystem.

A functioning woodland ecosystem in Fife is structurally diverse with a mix of native tree species, age classes, and vertical layers from canopy to understorey. Deadwood and decaying matter are present which support fungi, invertebrates, and cavity-nesting birds. The woodland floor hosts a rich variety of ground flora contributing to nutrient cycling and soil health. Management practices such as deer control and sustainable forestry are in place to prevent overgrazing and maintain ecological integrity.

Fife Climate Forest

Fife's woodlands are a network that spreads across the whole of the area, linking North to South and East to West. Fife's Climate Forest aims to strengthen that connectivity as well as linking Fife's woodlands to those across the central belt of Scotland. This is assisted by efforts in identifying and planting trees in communities, including where fruit trees through the Fruit Tree in every Garden project, where they can add value to an area both for people and for nature.

Urban Ecosystem

As Fife's towns and cities continue to grow, the importance of our urban environment for both people and nature becomes ever more apparent.

Urban green spaces such as parks, woodlands, street trees, or community gardens play a vital role in supporting health and wellbeing. They provide places for recreation, reduce stress, improve air quality, and help cool our towns during extreme heat events. Urban trees are increasingly recognised for their role in mitigating the effects of climate change. This is through providing shade, reducing surface temperatures, and absorbing carbon dioxide.

Urban areas are home to a surprising diversity of wildlife. Birds such as swifts and peregrine falcons have adapted to nest on buildings while pollinators, bats, and hedgehogs find refuge in gardens, verges, and green corridors. Many of these species remain vulnerable to pressures beyond the urban ecosystem. This includes habitat loss, pollution and declining prey availability. Impacts are also felt during the night. Urban lighting can change or challenge behaviours from species lesser seen, but no less impactful in terms of natural processes, such as pollination by moths or insect control by bats.

The population of Fife is over 370,000 people with nearly half living in Kirkcaldy, Glenrothes, and the City of Dunfermline. This makes urban biodiversity a priority for both ecological health and for the wellbeing of communities. The benefits of access to nature are well documented with evidence showing that time spent in green spaces can reduce anxiety, improve mood and encourage physical activity[33].

Urban green spaces face growing pressures. Antisocial behaviour and neglect can damage habitats and reduce the quality of green infrastructure. Yet, communities across Fife continue to make a positive difference through local clean-ups, tree planting, wildlife gardening, and stewardship of shared spaces.

Urban biodiversity is not just about protecting wildlife but creating healthier, more resilient places for people. By valuing and enhancing the nature on our doorstep, we can ensure that Fife's towns and cities remain vibrant, liveable, and ecologically connected for generations to come.

33 https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-032013-182443

Transforming Fife's Greenspaces

Urban biodiversity is not 'new', but it is an emerging area of interest, especially here in Fife. Transforming Fife's Greenspaces is a new multi-year project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund under the Nature Towns and Cities funding stream. This programme aims to unlock the potential of natural spaces across the Kingdom to support not only biodiverse outcomes, but also social and community. Focusing on the settlements of Kirkcaldy, Dunfermline, Rosyth and Glenrothes it is hoped that many communities can be assisted to unlock the vast co-benefits of well managed and high quality green and blue spaces.

Transforming Fife's Greenspaces

Made possible with Heritage Fund

Part of Nature Towns and Cities

Upland Ecosystem

Scotland's uplands are a globally rare and culturally iconic landscape, with vast swathes of heather moorland found almost exclusively in Great Britain.

Upland habitats cover a small proportion of Fife, primarily across the Lomond, Benarty, Glenduckie, and Cleish Hills. These hills offer dramatic views, recreational opportunities, and a rich tapestry of wildlife and habitats. Fife's upland ecosystems support a diverse array of species including:

- Red grouse
- Ravens
- Short-eared owls
- Water voles
- Poplar hawk-moths
- Green hairstreak butterflies
- Waxcap fungi
- Fragrant orchids
- Heather
- Aspen stands and upland grasslands add further ecological value.

Beyond their scenic and recreational appeal, upland ecosystems provide several vital ecosystem services. For example, supporting carbon storage, particularly in peat-rich soils, helping regulate water flow and reducing flood risk downstream. These services are increasingly recognised in national conservation strategies including the "30 by 30" commitment to protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030.

The uplands are also a popular destination for outdoor activities such as hillwalking, angling, and wildlife-watching. However, these landscapes are sensitive to pressures including overgrazing, inappropriate land management, and climate change. Maintaining the health of upland ecosystems is essential not only for the species but also for the wider environmental benefits to communities across Fife. These areas are often remote and less disturbed by development, making them ideal candidates for conservation on a larger scale in the landscape. If pressures such as grazing can be balanced, vegetation can recover and allow soils to recover and stabilise. This can reduce erosion, maintain more natural water movement and allow re-wetting of peatlands, leading to restoration of important and fragmented habitat.

Lomond Hills Regional Park

Fife's uplands are small in coverage, but intense in their land use. From active recreational use to agriculture, the Lomond Hills are a busy yet small part of Fife. To ensure this landscape is protected and productive, the Lomond Hills Regional Park Partnership works to balance the pressures felt over these uplands. This partnership has been decades in the making and will continue to play an important role in balancing biodiversity, agriculture and recreation in the Future, with Fife Council and Fife Coast and Countryside Trust continuing to facilitate this group as a knowledge sharing partnership and forum for effective land management.

Marine & Coastal Ecosystem

Scotland's coast and seas are among the most dramatic and ecologically rich in the world. They are positioned at the edge of the continental shelf, where warm and cold currents mix.

Fife's coastline stretches for 179 kilometres, encompassing a wide range of habitats from the sand dunes of Tentsmuir, Britain's fastest-changing dune system, to the cliffs and reefs of the Isle of May. Coastal habitats include saltmarshes, mudflats, maritime cliffs, islands, and intertidal zones. The Eden Estuary's rich mud and sand flats are teeming with microscopic life that sustains thousands of birds, including black-tailed godwit, redshank, and grey plover. The Isle of May is a hotspot for biodiversity, home to rare and threatened species such as puffins and sandwich terns and is considered one of the UK's most important sites for grey seals.

The Firth of Forth is internationally recognised for its invertebrate-rich intertidal habitats, which support migratory and overwintering birds like the red-throated diver and golden plover. Other key areas include St Andrews Bay and Largo Bay which offer some of the richest feeding grounds for fish and seabirds in Scotland.

Marine and coastal ecosystems provide vital services such as regulating the climate, storing carbon, supporting fisheries and acting as a buffer for coastal erosion. Such environments face growing pressures from climate change, pollution and overfishing.

Recognising the vulnerability of seabird populations, the Scottish Seabird Conservation Action Plan[34] was developed to identify and address key threats, including climate change, depletion of forage fish, and invasive predators. The plan outlines targeted actions such as ecosystem-based fishery management, biosecurity for seabird islands, and habitat restoration to support seabird recovery across Scotland.

Fife's marine and coastal habitats are not only vital for biodiversity but also for the wellbeing and prosperity of its communities. The Local Biodiversity Action Plan recognises that many people still rely on the sea as a source of income for example through fishing. It is also a link to the distinct heritage of the fishing villages that line Fife's coast. Areas such as the Isle of May National Nature Reserve in the Firth of Forth attract visitors to Fife. The island is home to many species including puffin, grey seals and eider ducks.

Marine and coastal ecosystems are diverse and dynamic, encompassing saltmarshes, dunes, seagrasses, and intertidal zones. A healthy system supports abundant marine life, including fish, seabirds, seals, and cetaceans. Water quality is high, with low levels of pollution and nutrient loading. Coastal processes such as sediment movement and tidal flow are unimpeded, allowing for natural erosion and deposition.

34 Scottish Seabird Conservation Action Plan

Dune Restoration at West Sands – SALT

Fife's coast continues to bear the brunt of a changing climate. Ever increasing storm frequency and strength batter the fragile habitats across the Kingdom and none more so than our most easterly coasts. In an effort to build resilience to a changing climate, protect fragile habitats on the fringes of the coast and to defend important cultural, tourism and business interests, St Andrews Links Trust have engaged in a variety of dune recharge efforts. This includes building back dune systems that have been eroded and undermined by wave and wind action. A never-ending task, but one of vast importance where the land meets the sea.

Lowland Ecosystem

Fife's lowlands form a broad and diverse ecosystem that includes both farmland and urban areas. These are landscapes shaped by centuries of human activity. Despite their intensive use, lowlands support a richness of wildlife and habitats.

From species-rich grasslands and hedgerows to traditional orchards and agricultural land, the lowlands are vital for biodiversity and for the people who live and work among them.

Lowland farmland which covers around 65% of Fife, the highest proportion of cultivated land in Scotland, is a key part of this ecosystem. While much of this land is intensively managed, biodiversity often thrives in the less disturbed areas such as along field margins, in hedgerows, long-established pastures, and uncultivated corners. These features provide food, shelter, and movement corridors for species such as bats, butterflies, brown hares, barn owls, and pollinators. More extensive systems, such as hill farming, can also support a high diversity of species and semi-natural habitats.

One of the most threatened habitats in this ecosystem is species-rich grassland. The UK has lost around 98% of its flower-rich meadows and grasslands since the 1930s. In Fife, these grasslands support orchids, bumblebees, butterflies, and birds of prey, but they remain vulnerable to agricultural intensification, land-use change, and habitat fragmentation.

Traditional orchards are another declining habitat. Mature fruit trees, grassland, and hedgerows support a wide range of wildlife including:

- Moths
- Bees
- Bats
- Fungi
- Lichens

Development pressures, changes in farming practices, and neglect have led to widespread loss. A survey of around 160 orchard sites in North Fife found that only 36 retained significant heritage and biodiversity value[35].

Despite these challenges, the lowland ecosystem offers enormous potential for biodiversity recovery. Through restoring field margins, planting hedgerows, managing grasslands, and protecting urban greenspaces, individuals and communities can make a difference. These landscapes are not just working and living spaces but are vital ecological networks that support pollination, water purification, soil health, and climate resilience.

A healthy lowland landscape includes hedgerows, field margins, ponds, and wildflower meadows. Each of these play a key role in supporting pollinators, farmland birds and mammals. Soil health is maintained through crop rotation, reduced chemical inputs, and organic matter enhancement. Agri-environment schemes are widely adopted and incentivised by financial backing for habitat creation and conservation.

35 Hayes 2010 Fife Tay Coast Orchards web.pdf

Amenity Grassland Project

In 2020, Fife Council's Grounds Maintenance Service set itself the challenge of developing an approach to manage 1 million square meters of amenity grassland in a way that benefits nature. This was to be achieved across a variety of sites that had the potential to be managed differently, predominately through creating grassland meadows. Through consultation with local communities and valuable support from Fife Coast and Countryside Trust, the project has to date, successfully seen over 700,000m^2 of grasslands across the Kingdom doing their bit for biodiversity and wider co-benefits, such as carbon sequestration and a reduction in fuel use through more limited cutting regimes.

Appendix A
Delivery Plan 2026-2030

Below is a list of actions either delivered by or funded by Fife Council. The actions are split into each of the six priority areas. The full delivery plan which includes all Fife Biodiversity Partnership actions can be found at **our.fife.scot/nature**

Each of the actions within this delivery plan has an indicative timescale attached. This is either short-term, medium-term, or ongoing actions. Below is a description of each of the timescale options.

- Short-term: any actions that will be completed within the first year.
- Medium-term: any actions that will be completed by the end of the delivery plan period (2030).
- Ongoing: any actions that are considered business-as-usual that will continue beyond the end of the delivery plan period (2030+).

Habitat actions

Action	Measure	Action Owner	Relevant ecosystem(s)	Timescale
Continue to manage and extend the woodland at Harran Hill Wood	Continued management.	Fife Council	Woodland	Ongoing
Manage the 28ha of new habitats created through the Seven Golf Courses for Nature programme completed in 2025 to protect and enhance biodiversity, including: ● 8.7ha native woodland; ● 17ha species-rich grassland; ● 1070m hedgerows; ● five wetland mosaics; ● two wetland scrapes; ● four ponds; ● and 560m^2 naturalised reprofiled watercourses.	All features under active management; condition assessments annual.	Fife Golf Trust	Urban Lowland Woodland Freshwater & Wetland	Ongoing
Create a deadwood management policy to protect standing dead trees and retain fallen deadwood to support woodland biodiversity on the golf courses.	Policy approved and implemented; Percentage of sites with mapped deadwood retention areas.	Fife Golf Trust	Woodland Urban	Medium

Action	Measure	Action Owner	Relevant ecosystem(s)	Timescale
As a member of the Scoonie Burn Stakeholder Group, work collaboratively across the catchment to identify river restoration or enhancement opportunities.	List of opportunities; at least one project scoped per year.	Fife Golf Trust	Freshwater & Wetland Urban Lowland	Medium
Undertake annual freshwater quality monitoring using biotic indices at watercourses and ponds (started 2018).	Annual biotic index results; action triggers defined.	Fife Golf Trust	Freshwater & Wetland Urban Lowland	Ongoing
Develop and periodically review a priority habitats and ecosystems list for Fife. This will be used to guide actions.	Publicly accessible list reviewed yearly.	Fife Biodiversity Partnership Fife Council	All	Medium
Develop and maintain ecosystem indicators for monitoring and reporting.	Publicly accessible list reviewed yearly.	Fife Biodiversity Partnership Fife Council	All	Medium
Deliver on the actions identified within the Fife Climate Forest	Progress reporting towards actions.	Fife Council Fife Coast & Countryside Trust	Woodland	Ongoing
Undertake mapping of priority woodland areas	Percentage of woodlands mapped.	Fife Council Fife Coast & Countryside Trust	Woodland	Medium
Create a 'woodlands of high nature conservation value' database Align with the actions identified in the Fife Forest and Woodland Strategy.	Number of woodlands of high conservation value protected.	Fife Council Fife Coast & Countryside Trust	Woodland	Short
Restore and enhance existing Fife Coast and Countryside Trust and linked project woodlands	Protect and enhance ancient woodlands. Ensure woodlands on own and partner lands are managed sensitively and appropriately through advice and action.	Fife Coast and Countryside Trust	Woodland	Ongoing

Action	Measure	Action Owner	Relevant ecosystem(s)	Timescale
Deliver new woodland	100-250 hectares per year through small farm woodland, hedgerows, orchards and support of agroforestry.	Fife Coast and Countryside Trust	Woodland	Medium
Enable positive site habitat management	Continue to develop and maintain site management plans for own sites and enable partners through knowledge sharing to do the same.	Fife Coast and Countryside Trust	All	Ongoing
Identify and assess previously developed or post-industrial land with potential for biodiversity enhancement, using ecological appraisal and natural capital evaluation to guide future restoration and connectivity opportunities.	Number of biodiversity enhancement projects undertaken on site(s).	Fife Council	All	Ongoing

Connectivity actions

Action	Measure	Action owner	Relevant ecosystem(s)	Timescale
Deliver the Back Burn River Restoration Project	Progress reporting.	Fife Council Fife Coast and Countryside Trust	Freshwater & Wetland	Ongoing
Deliver the Rosyth Rivers Restoration Project through its feasibility and design stage	Progress reporting.	Fife Council Fife Coast and Countryside Trust	Freshwater & Wetland	Ongoing
Develop and maintain nature networks for Fife. This will include a detailed map and an accompanying strategy.	Develop, monitor and periodically review the identified nature networks. Work with partners to deliver. Look to incorporate into the planning process for new developments.	Fife Council	All	Medium
Manage Long Distance Paths sensitively for biodiversity	Ensure biodiversity is accounted for in access provisions across Fife.	Fife Coast and Countryside Trust	Marine & Coastal Lowland Upland Urban	Ongoing
Support Nature Networks across various ecosystem types	Work with partners to support and expand landscape scale connectivity across various ecosystems and influence participation in meeting targets.	Fife Coast and Countryside Trust	All	Ongoing
Support urban woodland creation	Through funded projects including Fife Climate Forest and partner projects (Climate Action Fife) support woodland canopy connectivity across low tree equity areas.	Fife Coast and Countryside Trust	Urban Woodland	Medium

Invasive and non-native species actions

Action	Measure	Action owner	Relevant ecosystem(s)	Timescale
Support Eastern Lowlands Red Squirrel Group with red squirrel conservation, by assisting with monitoring and allowing grey control on the courses.	Number of monitoring sessions; Reduction in grey squirrel sightings.	Fife Golf Trust	Woodland Urban	Ongoing
Develop and deliver invasive and non-native species management across managed sites providing best practice advice and experience	Map priority invasive and non-native species on managed sites. Enable Nature Finance Fife to provide a mechanism for invasive and non-native species control through private finance. Raise awareness of invasive and non-native species.	Fife Coast and Countryside Trust	All	Ongoing
Develop and periodically review an invasive non-native species list for Fife. This will be used to guide actions.	Publicly accessible list reviewed every year.	Fife Council Fife Biodiversity Partnership	All	Medium

Climate change actions

Action	Measure	Action owner	Relevant ecosystem(s)	Timescale
Manage coastal erosion along the Fife Coast where Council has direct management input, specifically at problematic areas		Fife Council	Coastal & Marine	Ongoing
Support the development of the Coastal Change Adaptation Plan. Identify and include nature-based solutions where relevant.		Fife Council	Marine & Coastal	Medium
Support the delivery of the Resilience Delivery Programme. Focus on theme one which includes actions on nature-based solutions.		Fife Council	All	Medium
Include a section on biodiversity within the Climate Literacy course. This will also promote biological recording and its benefits, including the use of tools such as iRecord.	Inclusion in learning, to be delivered under the Big Community Move.	Fife Council	All	Ongoing
Undertake the Transforming Fife's Greenspace project, awarded through Nature Towns and Cities Lottery Funding.	Develop and publish a Greenspace Transformation Plan.	Fife Council	Urban	Medium

Awareness and engagement actions

Action	Measure	Action owner	Relevant ecosystem(s)	Timescale
Secure GEO Certified recertification in 2026, the internationally recognised ecolabel for sustainable, environmental and socially responsible management of golf courses.	GEO Certified achieved by 2026.	Fife Golf Trust	Urban Lowland	Short
Continue to deliver the Allotments Programme across Fife, promoting positive nature and biodiversity measures.	Programme delivery	Fife Council	Urban	Ongoing
Continue to promote and support community food growing across Fife, enabling communities to make green spaces more diverse and productive.	Engagement through the Climate Fife Big Community Move	Fife Council	Urban Lowland	Ongoing
Arrange at least six sessions per annum to engage members of the community in practical conservation on the golf courses.	More than six sessions/year; participant hours.	Fife Golf Trust	Urban Lowland	Medium
Encourage community participation in wildlife monitoring and conservation efforts to help people connect with nature.	Host a yearly event to spread awareness of opportunities for engagement.	Fife Council	All	Medium
Promote outdoor experience, learning and education through various projects.	volunteering; explore outdoors; branching out.	Fife Coast and Countryside Trust	All	Ongoing

Policy and governance actions

Action	Measure	Action owner	Relevant ecosystem(s)	Timescale
Coordinate the development, maintenance and monitoring of Delivery Plans at five-year intervals.	Production of a delivery plan and progress reporting. Provide in a publicly accessible format.	Fife Council	All	Ongoing
Coordinate delivery of the Fife Forest and Woodland Strategy and Fife Climate Forest	Establish clear governance, delivery, funding and monitoring structures and alignment with wider strategies.	Fife Coast and Countryside Trust	Woodland; Freshwater and Wetland; Urban	Ongoing
Continue to support and participate in key landscape and access partnerships	Contribute to: Lomond Hills Regional Park Partnership Fife Access Forum Fife Nature.	Fife Coast and Countryside Trust	All	Ongoing
Create a deadwood management policy to protect standing dead trees and retain fallen deadwood.	Policy approved and implemented; Percentage of sites with mapped deadwood retention areas.	Fife Golf Trust	Woodland; Urban	Medium
Review policy to ensure biodiversity is included as a priority across the council. Incorporate National Statutory policy and / or powers into local policy where need is identified.	Evidence of national policies in local strategies and policy documents.	Fife Council	All	Ongoing
Incorporate biodiversity net gain and a minimum canopy cover into all new developments in Fife.	Mandate for biodiversity net gain in the planning system / local development plan.	Fife Council	All	Ongoing
Development and delivery of the Fife Forest and Woodland Strategy.	Publication of the strategy.	Fife Council	Woodland	Short
Continue to promote and enable biodiversity improvement and net gain on vacant, derelict and brownfield sites across Fife.	Inclusion in best practice approach.	Fife Council	Urban; Lowland	Ongoing

Action	Measure	Action owner	Relevant ecosystem(s)	Timescale
Identify positive effects for biodiversity across all travel infrastructure including walking, wheeling and cycling. This could be achieved through green verges, native planting and biodiversity SuDS.	Number of projects undertaken.	Fife Council	All	Ongoing
Integrate biodiversity into decision making around site management, coastal path and Pilgrim Way management and future developments.	Promote and embed biodiversity advice across Fife Coast and Countryside Trust and provide advice when requested.	Fife Coast and Countryside Trust	All	Ongoing

Appendix B
Ecosystem mapping and getting involved

To follow the pace of change of Fife's ecosystems, this version of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan will not include images of maps. Instead an interactive platform has been developed that can be updated as the landscape changes. To view the ecosystem mapping, please visit **our.fife.scot/nature**.

Anyone with an interest in biodiversity restoration, conservation or enhancement can get involved with the Fife Biodiversity Partnership. For more information on the partnership, please contact **biodiversity@fife.gov.uk**

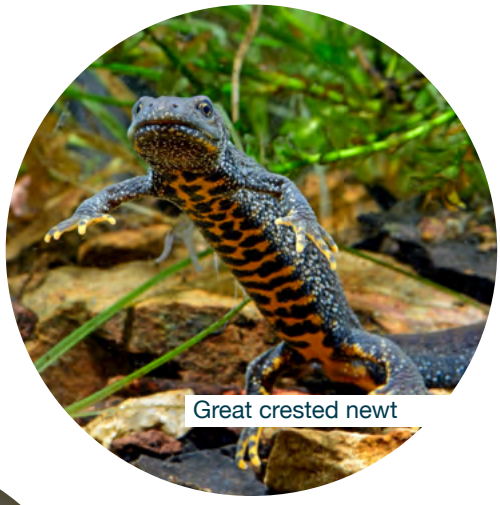
Appendix C
Priority species list

The table below represents those species and habitats judged to be of specific importance for Fife carried over from the fourth edition of the Fife Local Biodiversity Action Plan. An action included in the Delivery Plan (2026-2030) is to update this list with regards to the newly updated Scottish Biodiversity List and to keep it updated and relevant to Fife throughout the life of this Local Biodiversity Action Plan. These lists will be hosted online, making it easier to maintain and update on a regular basis.

Ecosystem	Priority Habitats: from 4th edition LBAP from UK BAP List	Associated UK BAP habitat if different	Priority Species * If UK BAP Priority ^ If on Scottish Biodiversity List
Upland	Heath and moorland	Upland heathland	
	Blanket bog		
	Upland calcareous grassland		
	Upland flush fen and swamp		
Freshwater & Wetland	Inland freshwater	Eutrophic standing waters Oligotrophic & dystrophic lakes Mesotrophic lakes	Great crested newt*^ Water vole *^
	Lowland fen		
	Lowland raised bog		
	Rivers		
	Ponds		
	Reedbed		
Lowland & Farmland	Species-rich grassland	Lowland calcareous grassland Lowland dry acid grassland Lowland meadows Upland hay meadows	Corn bunting*^ Bats: ● Brown long-eared*^ ● Common pipistrelle ^ ● Daubenton's^ ● Nathusius pipistrelle^ ● Natterer's^ ● Soprano Pipistrelle*^
	Field margins & boundaries	Arable field margin Hedgerows	
	Parks & veteran trees		
	Golf courses		
	Traditional orchards		
	Lowland heathland		

Ecosystem	Priority Habitats: from 4th edition LBAP from UK BAP List	Associated UK BAP habitat if different	Priority Species * If UK BAP Priority ^ If on Scottish Biodiversity List
Woodland	Ancient, semi-natural & long-established woodland	Lowland mixed deciduous woodland Native pinewoods	Aspen Bluebell Red squirrel*^
	Mixed lowland woodland	Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	
	Urban woodland		
Marine & Coastal	Intertidal communities	Intertidal mudflats	
	Marine		
	Maritime cliffs & islands	Maritime cliffs & slopes	
	Saltmarsh	Coastal saltmarsh	
	Strandline, sand dune & shingle communities	Coastal sand dunes Coastal vegetated shingle	


Nathusius pipistrelle


Great crested newt


Bluebell

Appendix D
Complementary Strategies

Below is a list of complementary strategies which themselves (and their associated actions) support or have been supported by the Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

- **Active Travel Strategy and Action Plan (2025-2035)**[36]: Sets out the vision for active travel infrastructure across Fife for walking, wheeling and cycling. The strategy prioritises safe travel routes as well as emphasising the health and environmental benefits. The action plan sets out several targets to meet the vision including increasing active travel trip to 30% by 2033.

- **Air Quality Strategy for Fife (2025-2030)**[37]: The strategy sets out how the council will protect public health and the environment by maintaining and improving air quality across the region. Commitments within the strategy include reducing pollution levels and integrating air quality considerations into wider council policies.

- **Biodiversity Places**: A community initiative designed to assist and promote nature and biodiversity positive initiatives in community settings at both a small and large scale. It aims to reward community impact through accreditation as a 'biodiversity place' where tangible impacts are seen.

- **Climate Fife 2024 Strategy and Action Plan**[38]: The vision for Fife is to be "Climate Friendly, Climate Ready and Climate Just" by 2045. This will be achieved through the three big moves of Energy, Resilience and Community which focus on policy development and project delivery. Biodiversity spans across all three big moves.

- **Community Wealth Building**: A policy commitment made by Fife Council and the Fife Community Planning Partnership to facilitate and support the generation, circulation and retention of wealth in the local economy. Community Wealth Building aims to put more control and ownership in the hands of local people and in the decisions that affect them to provide greater financial, social or environmental benefit to the community, which can include biodiversity benefits.

- **Design guidance on flooding and surface water drainage requirements**[39]: Fife Council's guidance provides the standards and technical expectations that all development proposals must meet to avoid increasing flood risk, ensure appropriate surface water management, and comply with national policy and SEPA requirements. It outlines detailed design requirements such as climate change allowances, SuDS design and access/egress criteria to name a few measures.

- **Fife Allotments & Growing Spaces Strategy**[40]: The strategy aims to increase access to allotments and community growing spaces across Fife. Access to allotments promotes improved health and wellbeing, enhances biodiversity, and supports food culture and security. The strategy is aligned with the council's climate change and biodiversity duties and recognises allotments as a mechanism to drive resilience of the nature environment.

36 Active Travel Strategy and Action Plan 2025
37 Fife Council Air Quality Strategy 2025 - 2030
38 Climate Fife 2024 Strategy and Action Plan
39 FC Flooding and SWMP Guidance v3
40 Allotments and Community Growing Strategy 2024 - 2029

- **Fife Electric Vehicle Strategy**[41]: Fife Council's Electric Vehicle Strategy sets out how the region will expand a reliable, accessible and financially sustainable EV charging network to support the transition away from petrol and diesel vehicles.
- **Fife Forestry & Woodland Strategy**: The Fife Forest and Woodland Strategy sets the direction for managing, maintaining and delivering forests and woodland across Fife. It includes a 50-year vision with a focus on well-connected ecosystems, mitigation against the climate and nature crises, and realising the social and economic benefits of trees.
- **FifePlan Local Development Plan**[42]: The Local Development Plan sets out plans and policies that guide development across Fife. The Local Development Plan embeds the mitigation hierarchy and supports nature recovery through habitat creation, connectivity, and protection of priority species. Policy 13 ensures that Fife's environment is maintained and enhanced, with a reduction on ecosystem pressures to support adaptability and resilience of nature systems.
- **Food4Fife Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029**[43]: The strategy sets out a collaborative plan to create a fair, healthy and sustainable food system in Fife. This will be achieved by empowering communities, supporting local producers and transforming how food is grown, accessed and procured.
- **Fife Tourism Strategy 2019-2029**[44]: This strategy aims to position Fife as one of Scotland's leading tourist destinations by 2029. A key attractor for tourism in Fife is the biodiversity. The strategy recognises its importance and suggests collaboration between partners is required to protect, promote and maintain.
- **Local Transport Strategy for Fife 2023-33**[45]: Sets out the 10-year plan to deliver fair, sustainable access for all with a focus on improving walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport. The strategy includes four overarching objectives: fair access, safe and secure travel, reaching net zero and transport network resilience.
- **NHS Fife 2030 Greenspace Strategy**[46]: This strategy aims to transform NHS Fife's outdoor estate into a resource that improves health and wellbeing, tackles the climate and nature emergencies, and supports local communities through equal access to greenspace.

41 Microsoft Word - B2340245-Fife Council EV Strategy- Draft V1.5 Final Draft
42 Local development plan (FIFEplan) | Fife Council
43 Food-4-Fife-strategy-2024-29-SFPaward-a.pdf
44 fife_tourism_events_strategy_2019_29_digital-1.pdf
45 Local Transport Strategy for Fife 2023-2033
46 NHS Fife Greenspace strategy - Draft 2 May 23

Appendix E
Biodiversity Monitoring Framework

To help monitor the health of the six ecosystems in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, a draft Biodiversity Monitoring Framework has been developed. This is a guide framework which will be developed in detail with the Fife Biodiversity Partnership during 2026.

Ecosystem	Species	Habitats
Freshwater & Wetland	• Identify indicator species • Measuring method	% increase % decrease
Woodland	• Identify indicator species • Measuring method	% increase % decrease
Urban	• Identify indicator species • Measuring method	% increase % decrease
Upland	• Identify indicator species • Measuring method	% increase % decrease
Marine & Coastal	• Identify indicator species • Measuring method	% increase % decrease
Lowland	• Identify indicator species • Measuring method	% increase % decrease
All ecosystems	• Identify invasive and non-native indicator species • Measuring method	% increase % decrease

Priority	Measure
Connectivity	• Hectares hedgerow planted • % increase in nature networks developed
Awareness & Engagement	• Number of events attended / hosted • Number people engaged

Appendix F
Small Actions; Big Impacts

Everyone has a part to play in protecting and enhancing biodiversity. A land manager restoring habitats, a teacher inspiring young minds, or a resident planting wildflowers. All actions matter. When multiplied across communities, even the smallest efforts can create powerful, lasting change. Together, these actions form a network of care that strengthens nature's resilience and brings wildlife back into our lives. Biodiversity is something we can all help shape, protect, and pass on.

"No one can tackle the nature emergency alone… This [Scottish Biodiversity] Strategy articulates a vision for a future where Scotland's natural environment is restored and is supporting thriving communities and wildlife alike."[47]

Rodger Pheely
Volunteer,
Fife Coast and Countryside Trust

Q: What inspired you to get involved?

A: "I Love the outdoors, nature and care about the environment. We all need to do our bit to save the planet. I also enjoy working with interesting, like-minded and diverse people towards reaching common goals."

Q: What have you learned from your involvement in biodiversity work?

A: "Biodiversity ensures all aspects are discussed, debated and understood. This supports stronger decisions and projects. Make sure everyone is heard."

Q: What motivates you to give your time to biodiversity efforts?

A: "We need to give back to the environment what we have stolen from it and stop the planet bleeding to death. If everyone does even a small bit this will go a long way. Education and learning is key for me and sharing and helping others develop."

Q: What's been your most rewarding experience as a volunteer?

A: "The other people I have met, the fun and satisfaction of being in a group of interesting and like-minded people working towards common objectives. FCCT staff are also amazing and have taught me a lot about nature and biodiversity."

47 Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045: Tackling the Nature Emergency in Scotland

Ranald Strachan
Lead West Sands and Environment Ranger, St Andrews Links Trust

Q: Can you describe a project or action you've been involved in that supports biodiversity?

A: "There's been a few, but two I am proud of, the sand dune restoration programme along the St Andrews coast and the Outhead Meadows and grazing project on West Sands. Both have seen improvements in biodiversity outstripping expectation."

Q: What challenges have you faced in your work, and how have you addressed them?

A: "The primary challenges are in two camps, dealing with the chronic issue of people and our influence in the natural environment and dealing with the acute natural impacts. There is a skill in balancing conservation and public access over the same habitats and landscapes, requiring that line managers and the public are informed of the need to adjust this balance continually, it is not a one-time fix but requires constant adjustment.

Natural impact is far more acute. Working in the coastal environment there is potential for rapid and substantial change within hours. This throws up significant challenges but also allows for a process of renewal. Utilizing nature-based techniques is preferred, although we must accept that no ideal or single pathway always leads to the best outcome for people and nature, there may need to be compromise on the coast. Any compromise should not be one which builds in future problems, but equally some respect and consideration should be given to communities facing the loss of land, income and livelihood and how they deal with these may result in some compromise to a fully nature-based approach.

Adaptation and acute natural change do not always fit in the same timeframe. We all need to reflect that time is not on our side and to support those who seek to restore and nurture, over the longer term, the goal should be increased biodiversity and habitat longevity. How we get to that point may require compromise and trust."

Q: What are your hopes for the future of biodiversity in your area?

A: "I hope that we can solve our slow response to coastal change, that we can be guided by good science and experience to allow faster, pragmatic solutions to be applied, keeping pace with impacts and changes. I sincerely hope that all coastal habitats and communities can keep pace with climate impact and coastal change. That we support those willing to stand up and try to sustain and restore habitats all around our fantastic coastline. Away from the coast I would love Fife to remain a diverse and hugely important natural landscape. To improve, to grow and to be resilient to what may come to our children."

Craig Leitch
Conservation Officer, Fife Coast and Countryside Trust

Q: What does your local environment mean to you personally or professionally?

A: “There is nothing better than spending time in nature and taking a moment to slow down and really experience it. I feel lucky to be able to live and work in wild places.”

Q: What changes have you seen as a result of your efforts—either in the environment or in the community?

A: “It is satisfying and inspiring to be part of long running management projects. Grassland has long been a focus for Fife Coast and Countryside Trust and it is amazing to see how many diverse grasslands we manage. It is also rewarding to see how much the volunteers enjoy and take pride in being involved in their management each year.”

Q: What are your hopes for the future of biodiversity in your area?

A: “I hope that awareness of the biodiversity and climate crisis continues to grow. We can achieve so much more for biodiversity if we have support from the public. It would be great to see more communities come together to tackle local issues with support from organisations such as ourselves. It would be amazing if every village in Fife had a group taking action.”

Q: What role does your organization play in local biodiversity efforts?

A: “The Fife Coast and Countryside Trust is an independent charity working with partners for a healthy environment that supports wellbeing and sustains the balance between people and nature. We deliver local biodiversity planning, engage communities in conservation, manage local nature reserves, carryout wildlife surveys and support climate resilience through habitat restoration and tree planting. They also work closely with partners to secure funding and deliver nature-based projects.”

Fiona Cross
Little Ballo Farm, Lomond Hills Regional Park

Q: What does your local environment mean to you personally or professionally?

A: “It is both home and workplace so it’s a big part of life. My family and I are exceptionally lucky to spend every day in such beautiful surroundings and feel privileged to have the opportunity to manage such amazing and varied habitats”.

Q: What have you learned from your involvement in biodiversity work?

A: “Biodiversity and farming can complement each other and that sometimes a small change can bring significant benefits to both e.g. cutting rush pasture to establish a mosaic of dense and open areas to encourage waders can also provide great shelter for newborn lambs”.

Q: Why do you think biodiversity is important for your area and its people?

A: “I think people are increasingly interested in encouraging biodiversity and preventing its loss. Many locals see the Lomond Hills as “wild space on their doorstep” and, with the help of volunteering opportunities, are keen to get involved in projects that benefit nature”.

Q: What are your hopes for the future of biodiversity in your area?

A: “That it will continue to thrive and be given the protection and encouragement to do so through careful land and visitor management”.

Notes

Our nature matters

Fife's Local Biodiversity Action Plan
Fifth Edition • 2026-2045

For more information visit
our.fife.scot/nature

Alternative Formats

Information about Fife Council can be made available in large print, braille, audio CD/tape and Gaelic on request by calling **03451 55 55 00**

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Language lines

Arabic	خط هاتف اللغة العربية: 03451 55 55 77
Bengali	বাংলায় আলাপ করার জন্য টেলিফোন লাইন: 03451 55 55 99
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