

Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan 2022 - 27

3 small pearl bordered fritillaries
Victor Partridge

Annual Report 2025

Chair's foreword

I am pleased to present this 2025 annual report for the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan 2022-27. It has been an auspicious year for the partnership - a year which marked 25 years since the first action plan, which was launched in the year 2000.

In November, the Lord Provost hosted an event in the City Chambers to mark the 25-year anniversary of the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan. During the event, council services, partners and volunteers came together to celebrate the successes of the past 25 years, take stock, and look forward to the future of the action plan and partnership. This provided an opportunity to gather with partners past and present, meet volunteers face to face, showcase successes, and discuss the challenges of the past quarter century of action for nature in Edinburgh. It is encouraging to see that most of the founding members are still active partners today, and to see the large number of committed long-term volunteers, without which much of this work would not be possible. I would like to express my gratitude for the amazing commitment of partners, volunteers, and all people who support the action plan, as we celebrate this important milestone and take the first steps of the next 25 years.

This report details a wide range of actions that have been undertaken in 2025 to support and increase biodiversity in Edinburgh. From the Pentland Hills to the Firth of Forth, partners have once again been busy carrying out habitat creation, habitat management, protected species monitoring, scientific research, community engagement and volunteer activities.

Looking forward to the coming year, 2026 will be a time of refinement, reflection and preparation as the current action plan approaches an end, and we begin preparation of the next action plan, which will cover the period 2028-2033. Many of the National and International nature restoration targets are based around the year 2030. The next Plan will therefore cover a critical time in biodiversity conservation and restoration, and we must ensure that our actions are effective in achieving local scale targets which align with national and international nature restoration objectives.

I am optimistic about the future of biodiversity in Edinburgh. The 25-year anniversary shows that Edinburgh has a proven history of effective partnership working and action plan implementation. For 25 years the partnership has been a key delivery mechanism for biodiversity conservation and restoration. The acknowledgement of the nature crisis has led to an enhanced commitment to biodiversity restoration, including provision of additional resource. The combination of effective partnership working, a renewed national emphasis on combatting the nature crisis, and provision of additional resources bodes well for nature recovery in Edinburgh.

Dr Max Coleman

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

Chair of the Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership

Introduction



Lord Provost Robert Aldridge
hosting the EBAP 25 Year
Anniversary Event, CEC

The Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership (EBP) was established in 1997 and brings together over 30 organisations working for Nature within the City of Edinburgh. The Partnership is led by the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) and is currently Chaired by the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. The overarching vision of the EBP is to make Edinburgh a greener city with more opportunities for wildlife, enabling people to engage with nature.

The continued delivery of the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan supports the Council's commitment to addressing the nature crisis, delivering the [Scottish Biodiversity Strategy](#) and meeting the statutory Biodiversity Duty under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004.

2025 marked the 25 Year Anniversary of the first EBAP. This was marked by two celebration events. The first consisted of a partner and volunteer focussed event inside the Holyrood Park Education Centre, which showcased the work of the Partnership, and ended with a guided walk of conservation work in Holyrood Park lead by the Historic

Environment Scotland Ranger Service. The second event was a Lord Provost Reception for partners and volunteers, hosted by the Lord Provost at Edinburgh City Chambers. The 25 year Anniversary was also celebrated by the creation of a [25 Years of EBAP](#) video, which marked the occasion and captured the feelings, successes and aspirations of key partners.

There has been a continued global focus in 2025 on the twin climate and nature emergencies. The work of the EBP has mirrored this focus. The Council and Partners have been:

- Contributing to [Scottish Biodiversity Strategy](#) objectives and response to the ecological crisis, including the [biodiversity metric consultation](#), national [Nature Network toolkit](#) and the [Natural Capital Tool](#).
- Inputting to City wide programmes such as the Nature Vision Chapter of the Climate Strategy, the CityPlan 2040 Evidence Report, a City wide Habitat Survey, the [Circhive](#) program, ensuring positive outcomes for biodiversity through [CityPlan 2030](#), starting the creation of a revised Nature Network, and approval of the new [Edinburgh Design Guidance](#).
- Working with local communities and volunteers to enhance parks and greenspace to increase biodiversity and wellbeing.
- Delivering ongoing site management activities on our most important sites for nature, managed by Partners such as the Council Natural Heritage Service, [Historic Environment Scotland](#) and the [Water of Leith Conservation Trust](#).

- Securing funding and additional staff resources for project work to increase biodiversity through habitat creation and other improvements. This includes allocation of national Nature Restoration Funds to projects.

A healthy natural environment is essential for resilience to deal with the challenges of climate change. Green surfaces, trees and vegetation can all offset the problems caused by climate change in urban areas such as extreme rainfall events, flooding, pollution, poor air quality and urban overheating. Habitats and soils also act as carbon stores.

The work of the Partnership is reflected in plans and strategies and will continue to respond and collaborate on emerging priorities.

7 spot Ladybird
Victor Partridge

Delivery for biodiversity in 2025

This report highlights outcomes and actions delivered by the Partnership in 2025. Further information about the overall programme and aims is available from the [Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan 2022-27](#).



Kingfisher
Victor Partridge

City of Edinburgh Council Services

Council Planning Service have embedded additional policy requirements for biodiversity in [City Plan 2030](#), which is now adopted. The [Edinburgh Design Guidance](#) document went out for consultation in early 2025, and was finalised and approved by Planning Committee in September 2025. The document includes guidance on how to design new developments to meet City Plan 2030 biodiversity policy requirements, improving outcomes for nature.

Edinburgh's most important places for nature continue to be managed and improved by the Council's Natural Heritage Service. This includes 9 Local Nature Reserves (two of which are approved but pending formal designation) and the Pentland Hills Regional Park. Activities include habitat management, habitat creation, priority species monitoring and conservation, and community and volunteer engagement. The Service staff work closely with Friends groups and volunteers - for example, more than 30 volunteers supported the annual programme of priority species surveys in the Pentland Hills Regional Park.

The Council's Planning Biodiversity Officers provided expert biodiversity advice on over 200 planning applications, ensuring that species, habitats and designated sites were protected and enhanced throughout the development process.

Biodiversity Officers continue to actively engage with the Scottish Local Biodiversity Network, with one officer Chairing the group throughout 2025. This role involves working closely with Scottish Government, NatureScot and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) to shape policies and decision making on a national stage.

The Council Parks and Greenspace Service have delivered project work to enhance nature in urban parks and greenspace. This includes work under the Million Tree City project, and the Edinburgh Nature Network. The Million Tree City project continues to make strong progress towards the goal. 131,014 trees have been planted since the launch of the program. A new project “Canopy Communities” has been launched which aims to drive forward community led planting on Council Housing Land. Communities are being encouraged to engage and participate in their local greenspace development to increase biodiversity. Supported by The Conservation Volunteers and Parks staff, local groups have been active in meadow development, Yellow Rattle trials, tree and hedgerow planting and [Bioblitz events](#). Funding has been allocated to secure a gardening officer position at the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society to support the upskilling of groups in Edinburgh Nature Network pilot parks for long term care of spaces. These activities are supported by Park Officers and Park Ecologists to provide advice.

The Council Outdoor Learning team have been busy delivering the Wilding Wee Spaces project. This learner-led project creates habitats and natural areas in or near our schools, across the Council Schools estate. Wilding Wee Spaces completed the research and development phase (April 2024 - April 2025). During this phase Project Officers engaged with 440 learners from 8 primary schools, 2 high schools, 1 special school and 1 early years centre to support them to lead on developing a Wild Wee Space. 201 trees have been planted, 38m² of dead hedge installed, 5m² wildflower meadow planted, 1 pond created and 13 bug hotels created with pupils. These works educate pupils and improve biodiversity in their playground or local park.

The Council Forestry Service continued to carry out Dutch Elm disease control work. This is a successful long-running programme of works which has ensured that Edinburgh continues to have a large number of surviving Elm trees, unlike many other parts of the UK.



*Dead hedge created within a
Wilding Wee Space site
Emma Locke*



*Guttit Haddie, Holyrood Park
Graham Checkley*

Partners

In Holyrood Park, [Historic Environment Scotland Ranger Service](#) have actively undertaken survey work, conservation management and interventions for some of our rarest priority species. This includes surveys for the rare Northern Brown Argus butterfly, bird and pollinator surveys, rare plant survey and propagation, and wildflower meadow management. The Ranger Service has delivered a huge amount of public engagement and education. In total, the team has delivered 80 education group events with 2057 attendees, along with a programme of 196 public events with 2533 attendees.

[The Wildlife Information Centre](#) (TWIC) is the local environmental records centre for South-East Scotland, and provides a vital informative service to biodiversity work in Edinburgh. The Centre promotes and supports wildlife recording and surveying, and manages biodiversity data for the Edinburgh area. There was an increase of approximately 50,000 records within the Council area in 2025, bringing the total number of species records for Edinburgh to approximately 500,000. These records are mainly created by expert volunteers and also through public citizen science surveys. The data is used under licence by the Council and other partners. It supports the identification and designation of Local Nature Conservation Sites, among other priorities. TWIC promotes and organises wildlife recording events across the region. Two events were held in the Edinburgh area in 2025, both on Local Biodiversity Sites (LBS). One was held on Kirkliston to Dalmeny Walkway LBS, and another was held at Wells o' Wearie and Disused Railway to Bawsinch LBS. TWIC attended the Community Environment Fair at Northfield Community Centre in Edinburgh with the TWIC information stand, which was visited by 53 adults and 44

children. TWIC provided flyers and leaflets at the Scottish Botanists Conference at the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh, which was attended by over 200 delegates.

Water of Leith Conservation Trust delivered a huge amount of conservation and education work along the Water of Leith Corridor. The Trust has delivered a suite of biodiversity monitoring projects which benefit nature and the public. These include riverfly monitoring, meadow surveys and pollinator surveys, which provide benefits through education and volunteer engagement. The Trust carried out 116 clean-up activities, continuing its ongoing work to keep the river free from litter. The number of “biodiversity boost sites” along the river corridor has been extended to include 8 meadows and 3 community gardens. These sites are the focus of community engagement, biodiversity enhancement and monitoring. The Trust has continued work to remove, monitor and prevent the spread of Invasive Non-Native Species in the catchment, and has effectively reduced the distribution of Himalayan Balsam

and Giant Hogweed in the catchment. 2025 saw the start of a new trial for control of Giant Hogweed, which is carried out using a new method of root cutting. 2025 also saw the review of the Trust Management Plan. The review has been concluded and updated actions for 2026-2030 have been approved by Water of Leith Action Group.

Edinburgh Lothian Greenspace Trust have been working on numerous greenspace projects around Edinburgh. They have supported tree planting and habitat creation in parks, delivered woodland planting projects, and engaged with many Friends Groups to undertake improvements such as wetland creation and tree planting. The “Restore the Burn Project” is progressing, and is at a concept design stage, ready to progress in 2026. This project focuses on habitat and community improvements to the Burdiehouse Burn. 2025 saw the design for West Pilton Park improvements completed, with planning permission granted. Delivery of habitat creation in West Pilton Park is due to take place in 2026.



*The Big Clean Up
Water of Leith Conservation Trust*

Scottish Wildlife Trust Lothian members branch continues to manage their nature reserves in the city and Pentland Hills. The Branch carries out conservation work with volunteers and members, such as habitat management, monitoring priority species of plants and insects, and reintroductions. A reintroduction of a priority plant species (Pillwort) is underway at Bawsinch, and a Pond Mud Snail reintroduction is underway at Red Moss Nature Reserve. Other work includes habitat management for Small Pearl-Bordered Fritillary in the Pentlands, and grassland restoration at Murder Acre using grazing.

Over the past year, the **RSPB** has continued to deliver for priority species while working to improve access to nature for local communities. Through the Nature Neighbourhoods programme, RSPB has supported engagement with Granton Community Gardeners, empowering people to take action for climate and nature. The RSPB Nature Connections Officer has continued to work in partnership with the Western General Hospital, helping to improve health, wellbeing and biodiversity for staff and patients. RSPB has also carried out invasive species management on Inchmickery Island, with a particular focus on Tree Mallow, to support improved seabird breeding success across the Firth of Forth. Alongside this, RSPB continues to work with local partners to promote and raise awareness of the conservation of priority species, including Swifts, Terns and waders.

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) continues to run and support a range of initiatives and programs to improve biodiversity outcomes. Within the RBGE, biodiversity has been increased by converting amenity lawns to short, species rich lawns and reducing grass cutting. The research work at the

garden supports increasing biodiversity across the city and studies includes green roofs and Sustainable Urban Drainage System ponds research. The 'Plants with Purpose' initiative has continued to focus on research and guidance for biodiverse nature-based solutions in the urban setting and will continue to inform partners on planting choices. In addition, RBGE staff continue to support the ambitious Restoration Forth project, to expand seagrass beds and native oysters to the Firth of Forth. The John Hope Gateway Building in the RBGE now hosts a Restoration Forth Exhibit to engage with the public. The RBGE continues to support rare plant project work across Edinburgh, including provision of expert advice on monitoring, site selection, translocations and more. The RBGE continues to provide community engagement programmes which engage a diverse range of communities in local and global biodiversity issues.

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) secured funding in 2024 for a four-year Green Skills John Muir Way project, with City of Edinburgh Council as one of four Council partners. The project continues to deliver a work training programme for 24 young people, supporting a programme of biodiversity improvements in Council parks. Supported by TCV and Parks staff, local groups have been active in meadow development, rare plant translocations, Yellow Rattle trials, tree and hedgerow planting and bioblitz events

Edinburgh Natural History Society (ENHS) is a volunteer group of experts in wildlife recording. They run a programme of events and site visits to identify and record species in important places for nature, including parks and cemeteries. They also promote new Apps and tools to record wildlife wherever it occurs, such as iNaturalist. During 2025 ENHS has continued to

promote working with other groups and using recording tools to increase the number of individuals observing and recording nature in Edinburgh. The members work with partners and also Friends of greenspaces groups to support recording of nature in local parks and cemeteries. These have mainly encouraged the use of iNaturalist and occurred through running Bioblitz events. The work of the Society also links to national biodiversity recording programmes.

The [University of Edinburgh](#) and [NHS Lothian](#) supported biodiversity improvements through changes in estate management, and other initiatives. University of Edinburgh has been implementing their biodiversity strategy, and contributing to biodiversity projects and habitat restoration through ongoing research, such as meadow creation and pollinator research. The University has completed a habitat baseline of the University's estate, altered management practices across their urban greenspace, created a 7000m² wildflower meadow at Peffermill Playing Fields, and created 900m² of meadows on other campuses. Staff volunteers have installed and planted planters on the roof terrace of the University Main Library to support pollinators, and re-planted a roof garden on the Informatics Forum building. The University has also developed new environmental sustainability design guides for Estates Development projects which include the use of Urban Greening Factor and the Statutory Biodiversity Metric for every project.

[Marine Conservation Scotland](#) are a lead partner in the Restoration Forth project, which aims to expand the important areas of seagrass beds in coastal areas around Edinburgh and the wider Forth. Seagrass is an important coastal habitat and also an important plant for carbon sequestration. Throughout 2025

volunteers have carried out introduction of new plants to intertidal areas. The project has also started to reintroduce native oysters, which have been absent from the Forth for decades.



*Restoration Forth Seagrass Bed
Jamie McDermaid*

Global and national context

The [Global Biodiversity Framework](#) was agreed at COP 15 in December 2022. It included 23 global targets for biodiversity, and many of these are directly supported by the work of the Council and the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan, detailed in Table 1 below.

Scottish Government and NatureScot have both published documents supporting this transformational change. The finalised [Scottish Biodiversity Strategy](#) and [new 5-year delivery plans](#), alongside [Nature Networks and 30x30 frameworks](#), were published in 2024. The Scottish Government's [National Planning Framework 4](#) and supporting [Developing with Nature](#) guidance from NatureScot, both seek the scale of change required to create a 'Nature Positive' future. NatureScot also continued to manage the Scottish Government funding for the whole of Scotland through the [Nature Restoration Fund](#).

City of Edinburgh Council signed the 'Edinburgh Declaration', which was developed when the Scottish Government held a meeting for Post 2020 Global and Sub-national Biodiversity Targets in May 2020. In order to enact national and international nature restoration objectives, the Council created a Nature Vision during 2025. This sets out the overarching vision for nature in the Council area, in line with national targets and local objectives. The Nature Vision is featured as a Chapter within the revised Edinburgh 2030 Climate Strategy.

Wildflower Meadow at Inch Park
CEC

Table 1 - Global Biodiversity Framework 2030 targets relevant to Edinburgh

Global Biodiversity Framework 2030 target	Summarised aim	Supporting mechanisms available in Edinburgh
Target 1	Bring loss of high biodiversity areas to development or land use change close to zero by 2030.	NPF4 and City Plan 2030
Target 2	Ensure by 2030 at least 30% of degraded ecosystems are under effective restoration, to enhance biodiversity ecosystem function, ecological integrity and connectivity	EBAP 2022-27 Edinburgh Nature Network
Target 3	By 2030 at least 30% of land and water is effectively conserved and managed through both protected areas and OECM.	EBAP 2022-27 Local Nature Conservation Site designation system
Target 4	Urgent action to halt extinctions and for recovery and conservation of species under threat, including restoration of genetic diversity.	EBAP 2022-27 2030 Climate Strategy
Target 6	Reduce impacts of invasive non native species, reduce introductions by 50%, eradicate or control from priority sites.	EBAP 2022-27 CEC Parks and Greenspace operations
Target 7	Reduce pollution levels until not harmful to biodiversity and ecosystems by 2030 – chemical and plastic.	Regulation, SEPA Council chemical use policy EBAP 2022-27
Target 8	Minimise climate change impacts on biodiversity; increase resilience through nature-based solutions.	EBAP 2022-27 Climate Ready Edinburgh Plan Green-blue Strategy

Global Biodiversity Framework 2030 target	Summarised aim	Supporting mechanisms available in Edinburgh
Target 11	Restore maintain and enhance nature's services to people, such as regulation of air, water, climate, soil health, pollination and protection from natural hazards.	EBAP 2022-27 Green-blue Strategy Edinburgh Nature Network Climate Ready Edinburgh Plan
Target 12	Significantly increase area and quality and connectivity, access and benefits from green-blue spaces in urban areas. Ensure biodiversity inclusive urban planning. Increase wellbeing through provision of ecosystem services.	Thriving Green Spaces Green-blue strategy. Edinburgh Nature Network. City Plan 2030. EBAP 2022-27 Active Travel Action Plan
Target 14	Ensure full integration of biodiversity into policy, regulation, strategies, assessments and national accounting.	NPF4, City Plan 2030 Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and Delivery Plans
Target 21	Ensure that the best available data information and knowledge are accessible to decision makers.	Maintain access to local ecological data sources through Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership and The Wildlife Information Centre.

Looking forward to 2026 and 2027

Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan
Annual Report 2025

2025 marked the 25th Anniversary of the first Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan. This provided a good opportunity for reflection, and looking ahead. The next Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan is due to commence at the start of 2028. Although this is some time away, preparatory work will commence in 2026 to ensure that the process of creating next Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan is thorough and well thought out. This will include a review of work areas and project development, and possible revisions to how we track progress and success against objectives. A review of priority species for Edinburgh is underway and will be reflected in the new Action Plan. Work will link to planning policy requirements of National Planning Framework 4 and City Plan 2030, as well as wider conservation work. The city-wide habitat baseline work will be used to inform a revised Nature Network, which will identify opportunities areas on which the new Action Plan can focus. Work to improve monitoring and develop metrics and indicators for biodiversity will also be carried out and included within the new Action Plan where possible.

As the wider national and international objectives around nature recovery begin to stabilise, 2026 will be a key year in aligning Council and Partner processes. It will be a year of consolidating, streamlining, improving and expanding processes to accelerate nature recovery in Edinburgh.



*Edinburgh from Braid Hill
Caoimhe Wilson*

Red Moss Nature Reserve
CEC Natural Heritage Service

Edinburgh 
Biodiversity
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Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan

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