

EDINBVRGH
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

City of Edinburgh Council Statutory Biodiversity Duty Report

2024 - 26

Green-veined White butterfly
Rory Chanter

November 2026

This report sets out how the City of Edinburgh Council had delivered the statutory duty for biodiversity in the period 2024-2026. This statutory duty applies to all public bodies under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, and requires public bodies to 'further the conservation of biodiversity'. A report is also required every three years and is presented below, using the recommended template from Scottish Government.



Edinburgh from Swanston

Introductory information

The City of Edinburgh Council is a local authority with responsibility for an area including the city of Edinburgh, surrounding countryside and the Pentland Hills Regional Park. The Council is made up of 63 elected councillors representing 17 wards. The Council is currently a minority Labour administration.

The Council is responsible for a range of statutory, regulatory and service functions, delivering over 700 essential services to more than half a million residents. The Council manages a large estate including schools, care homes, housing, offices, transport infrastructure, and parks and greenspace.

The Council is the lead body for the Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership. The Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership was one of the first in Scotland and has been in place for 25 years. The Council employs 1.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) Biodiversity Officers to facilitate the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan (EBAP) and support the Council to fulfil its statutory biodiversity duty.In February 2023, the Council declared a nature emergency. This was followed by the appointment of additional staff in 2024 to support the council's response to the nature crisis, with six new roles created across a number of Council services. This has resulted in greater capacity to accelerate nature recovery within Edinburgh.

The Council is a signatory to the Edinburgh Declaration. We are also a signatory to the Scotland Landscape Charter and Scotland's Geodiversity Charter.



Maiden Pink

Actions to Protect and Enhance Biodiversity

The relevant updates for Council Directorates and Services are included below.

Chief Executive – Climate and Nature Team

The Climate and Nature Team within the Chief Executive's Office leads on carbon, climate change adaptation and sustainability work within the Council. The team coordinates the development of corporate strategies, policies, action plans and projects, to respond to the climate emergency and accelerate delivery on net zero, climate resilience and the just transition. The work of the Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership and outcomes from the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan are integrated and embedded into wider sustainability and climate change work.



Kingfisher
Victor Partridge

2030 Climate Strategy: Delivering a net zero, climate ready Edinburgh

The Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and a nature emergency in 2023 and has committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2030. To achieve this emissions target and adapt the city to the impacts of climate change, a 2030 Climate Strategy and Implementation Plan were published in December 2021 and revised in 2025. The 2025 update included a new chapter on nature recovery, which recognised that the climate and nature emergencies are interlinked and align existing climate and nature workstreams across Council services.

The Strategy contains Council and citywide governance and reporting structures and strategic actions to achieve the 2030 net zero target and adapt the city. Key objectives in the Strategy include prioritising nature-based solutions to climate change and protecting and enhancing the city's natural assets including through delivery of Edinburgh's Million Tree Initiative, the creation of a green and blue network of connected waterways, greenspaces and active travel routes that will provide enhanced environments for citizens and protect the city's wildlife and delivering a Nature Network for the city.

Climate Adaptation

The high-level strategic actions identified in the Council's 2030 Climate Strategy, completion of an updated climate change risk assessment for Edinburgh and partner inputs informed the development of a Climate Ready Edinburgh Plan for 2024-2030.

The Climate Ready Edinburgh Plan sets out the key priorities and actions needed to take to adapt the city. One of the key priorities in the plan is safeguarding and enhancing Edinburgh's natural environment through measures to increase resilience, enable natural change, species mitigation, connectivity and enhancement, and through the installation of green infrastructure and nature based solutions, to reduce flooding, heat and drought risk. This includes building understanding of the interrelationships between existing pressures on wildlife, habitats and climate change and taking action to alleviate them, working with our key greenspace and biodiversity partners in the city.

Edinburgh's Adaptation and Nature Partnership was created in 2025 and replaced the original 'Edinburgh Adapts' group. This stakeholder group oversees implementation of the Climate Ready Edinburgh Plan. The Adaptation and Nature partnership reports directly upwards to the Net Zero Edinburgh Leadership Board. The Council's Nature Recovery and Climate Adaptation Working Group reports to the Adaptation and Nature Partnership, increasing integration of nature and climate adaptation work.



Wildflower Meadow at Inch Park
CEC

Place – Planning and Building Standards

This is a key service which leads the delivery of the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan, and includes a Senior Biodiversity Officer and 1.8 FTE Biodiversity Officer who provide advice and services to the Council relating to biodiversity and the natural environment. The Planning Service also delivers biodiversity conservation through Planning policies, guidance and designation of Local Nature Conservation Sites.

Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan

The Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan (EBAP) is the main delivery mechanism for biodiversity conservation across the city. The action plan is prepared by the Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership, supported and chaired by Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. The current EBAP (2022-27) was published in November 2022 and includes around 180 actions to be delivered in the five year period. These are a range of positive actions for biodiversity across the city. The Council's Place Development has a lead role in the governance and co-ordination of delivery and monitoring of the actions by the Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership, in collaboration with other services.

City Plan 2030

City Plan 2030, the Council's local development plan, was adopted in November 2024. This identifies preferred areas for development and includes key policies to protect and enhance biodiversity including ENV 21 "Protection of Biodiversity and ENV 37 'Designing in positive effects for biodiversity". The retention of existing features of biodiversity value is also supported by Env 3 "Development Design – Incorporating and Enhancing Existing and Potential Features".

Local Nature Conservation Sites

Locally important sites for nature continue to receive policy protection under City Plan 2030 as Local Nature Conservation Sites and Local Nature Reserves. The Wildlife Information Centre coordinate the assessment of designated of Local Biodiversity Sites on behalf of the Council, with designation undertaken by the Local Biodiversity Sites Steering Group. Local Geodiversity Sites continue to be monitored by the Lothians and Borders Geoconservation Volunteer Group, a sub group of the Edinburgh Geological Society.

Edinburgh has a well-established network of Local Nature Reserves which are managed by the City of Edinburgh Council to protect urban wildlife and offer nature rich greenspaces for the public. In 2026, Little France and Wester Craiglockhart Hill were formally designated as Local Nature Reserves alongside an extension to the existing Easter Craiglockhart Hill LNR.

Supplementary Guidance

Biodiversity is also embedded within supplementary guidance, including the Edinburgh Design Guidance and Place Briefs. The Edinburgh Design Guidance was updated and refreshed guidance was adopted in 2025. This sets out guidance for protecting and enhancing biodiversity in new developments,

including expectations around information to be provided with a planning application. The guidance was updated to reflect current best practice, and provides supporting information to demonstrate positive effects for biodiversity.

City Plan 2030 required the production of place briefs to support and inform development on key sites. Two place briefs have been developed during this reporting period – for Seafield to the east of the city and the Astley Ainslie site in the south. These new place briefs set out principles for development of these sites and consider how biodiversity can be both protected and enhanced as development comes forward. These place briefs will be presented to Planning Committee for approval prior to being formally adopted.

Development Management

Biodiversity and the wider nature crisis is a key consideration in the determination of planning applications. The Planning Specialist team includes biodiversity and landscape specialists who support Planning Officers through the provision of technical advice on the interaction of development proposals and the natural environment. The biodiversity specialists provided advice on 480 applications during this reporting period. The Council has a service level agreement with The Wildlife Information Centre, our local wildlife records centre, to access wildlife records for the authority area. This data is vital to support decision making.

Officers also review and provide comment as required on Scottish Forestry Felling Licence & Woodland Creation applications and Marine Directorate Marine License applications which regard to biodiversity impacts.

Both the Planning Specialist and Tree teams hold fortnightly drop-in surgeries for Planning Officers to discuss casework and identify where biodiversity and trees may be a consideration within a development proposal. This helps to quickly disseminate information without the need for a formal written response and can quickly triage cases where further resource may be required to support decision makers and secure positive outcomes for biodiversity.

City Plan 2040

The Council is now preparing the next local development plan, City plan 2040. The Evidence Report was written as the first stage of this process and included topic papers on Biodiversity and Natural Places. This considered evidence which is deemed to be relevant to inform City Plan 2040 and included information of protected and priority species, habitats, trees and woodlands, protected areas and biodiversity metrics. This was submitted and passed the gatecheck in October 2026. The nature crisis is a central theme in the ongoing discussions and development of City Plan 2040. The Council have had ongoing engagement with the public, key agencies, developers, landowners and other interested parties through consultation and engagement to support the Evidence Report and the Call for Ideas process.

As part of the Evidence Report for City Plan 2040, the Council undertook a habitat survey of the authority area. This was last undertaken in 2003. The existing habitat baseline was reviewed and consultants appointed to ground truth priority habitats and other key areas across the city. This survey provides vital information on the distribution and condition of habitats across Edinburgh and will inform the next local development plan, the revised nature network and support management of parks and greenspaces.

Forest & Woodland Strategy

In 2026, the Council produced a draft Forest and Woodland Strategy as required under the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. A key theme within the strategy is 'Place' which considers the local context, including important areas and features for biodiversity. The strategy proposes a number of principles to enhance woodland habitats and considers the resilience of this habitat to climate change. The strategy also provides a spatial framework to protect woodlands of high nature conservation value and direct tree planting to the most appropriate areas, ensuring that non-wooded biodiversity features are retained and protected.

Consultations

The Council has responded to a number of consultations from Scottish Government, NatureScot and others on a range of environmental matters, and specialist biodiversity and greenspace officers have provided input into Council responses on broader consultations. Biodiversity Officers have been engaging with NatureScot and Scottish Government on the development of the Scottish Planning Biodiversity Metric, the Marine and Coastal Restoration Plan and the Environment Bill.



Galachlaw Woods

Place – Housing

There has been a focus on investing in greenspace associated with housing land during the reporting period and identifying future improvement opportunities. Outcomes include nature positive interventions to enhance biodiversity, and nature-based solutions for adaptation measures. Work is also ongoing to support local communities and community gardens.

Environment Investment Programme

The available project data demonstrate that the Environment Investment Programme

(EIP) has delivered a significant range of interventions on housing land. EIP outputs have included tree planting, wildflower meadow creation, increased grassland, hedgerow planting, rainwater gardens and community growing areas. These represent material investment in the green infrastructure of Council housing areas. A quantitative summary is set out below for 2022 to 2026:

- 8,642 trees;
- 9,545 m^2 of wildflower meadow;
- 13,607 m^2 of increased grassland;
- 1,121 metres of hedgerow; and
- 144 rainwater gardens.

These interventions have the potential to enhance biodiversity by creating and connecting habitats, supporting pollinators, improving sustainable drainage, and increasing ecological diversity within existing residential greenspaces.



Community Led Improvement Programme

This is a new framework in development. This programme supports community and local groups delivering smaller projects, including biodiversity outcomes. This framework will also work to improve and support Community Garden sites. There are more than 35 community gardens on Council land associated with the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The size, design, facilities and use of these community gardens is varied, but the main focus of each is the involvement of local residents.

Place – Parks and Greenspace

The Council's Parks and Greenspace service are central to the delivery of positive biodiversity outcomes on Council managed land. A range of operational services, programmes and projects have been delivered in the reporting period, with nature recovery as a core aim. These are listed below. In addition, engagement and involvement of local communities is a key element of this work, as outlined below.

Natural Heritage Service – site management and community involvement

The Natural Heritage Service team manage many of the most important areas for nature in Edinburgh. These include the natural heritage parks, including nine Local Nature Reserves and the Pentland Hills Regional Park. The service also runs volunteer activities including practical conservation tasks and wildlife surveys.

This is a key service in the delivery of biodiversity conservation through greenspace management and habitat creation projects.

For community engagement, there is an annual programme of public events and species monitoring involving citizen science. The service also coordinates practical conservation projects for the corporate sector like the removal of invasive species, habitat management and tree planting across Natural Heritage Sites.

In the reporting period a new Local Nature Reserve (LNR) was declared at Wester Craiglockhart Hill, and an existing LNR at Easter Craiglockhart Hill was expanded. The total number of Local Nature Reserves is now nine.

A selection of highlights of the work of the team delivered during the reporting period include:

- Public volunteer surveys for breeding birds and priority butterfly species.
- Management of Bonaly Country Park to remove invasive species, clear gorse and plant young native trees.
- Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan Rare Plant Project work supported, including planting of 1,000 new native juniper to continue the long standing conservation work within the Pentland Hills. Other priority species have been planted within Local Nature Reserves as part of this partnership project with Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh, Historic Environment Scotland and other members of the Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership.
- Badger sett monitoring
- Amphibian and reptile surveys
- River Almond successful alteration of barriers to fish migration with breeding migratory fish found upstream for the first time in decades, as part of a catchment wide cross-boundary project funded by SEPA.
- Multiple sites with meadow creation and management, supported by Friends groups.

Thriving Green Spaces

Under the Thriving Green Spaces programme a number of initiatives are underway to support an increase in biodiversity in all city greenspaces, alongside other outcomes such as health and wellbeing, active travel, recreation and social cohesion.

The Edinburgh Nature Network initiative seeks to create resilient green networks on the Council Parks and Greenspace estate, delivering a healthy environment and increased accessibility for people. The inclusion of biodiversity in assessments such as Parks Quality Standards and Green Flag Award for parks and greenspace is also integral to the management of Council land. Delivery has focused on strengthening the ecological fabric of the city through joined-up planning, new pilots, and expanded habitat management approaches. Work has centred on developing the second phase of the **Edinburgh Nature Network (ENN)**, including updated ENN mapping, to align priorities with City Plan 2040 and ensure investment is targeted where it delivers most benefit for nature and people.

The Council is working closely with national partners to embed nature into urban design. Work is almost complete on our application to NatureScot to become the first accredited **Nature Towns and Citie**s place in Scotland by March 2027.

Our Nature Estate (ONE) trials in Forth, Sighthill/Gorgie and part of the Pentlands wards are complete, with an additional 7.6 hectares of grassland now managed for nature. Based on the learning from these trial areas, new mowing standards have started to be introduced across the whole estate this year. This shows how routine grounds maintenance can directly support biodiversity and climate adaptation.

Work has also started to improve the way natural value is measured and communicated. A Natural Capital Accounting approach is being tested to measure biodiversity value and support green investment opportunities.

The **Edinburgh Million Tree City (EMTC)** programme continues to make strong progress towards the 2030 target, with approximately 160,000 trees planted to date, ahead of target. An i-Tree Eco survey carried out this year will inform future planting.

The **Canopy Communities** project, launched in 2025, is expanding local involvement in priority housing neighbourhoods, with over 220 trees planted so far and residents harvesting fruit for the first time this autumn. Street tree planting is being increased due to an additional £200k Council budget allocation in 2026/27, and from support from several external programmes.

Targetted work to create pollinator habitat and support rare species is also underway at other sites such as the Cramond meadows where trials to restore meadows by 'oversowing' are underway, and in collaboration with the EBAP Rare Plants Project partners, rare plants are introduced at Council sites in the city centre.

Our partners are playing an important role in helping to deliver improvements for nature. For instance, Edinburgh and Lothian Greenspace Trust (ELGT) have begun nature improvements along two sections of the Burdiehouse Burn

corridor as part of the **Restore the Burn** project. The Conservation Volunteers have been running the **Urban Biodiversity Improvement Programme** for volunteers across Edinburgh, supporting habitat restoration, tree planting, and meadow management, as well as the **Green Skills** programme (below).

Spotlight on Our Nature Estate

Launched in March 2024, Our Nature Estate is a pilot programme to improve biodiversity in residential areas through revised grassland management standards. The project uses evidence-based data to maximise ecological and visual benefits while maintaining community use. During 2024, trials were implemented across three wards – Forth, Sighthill and Gorgie – and part of the Pentlands. Mowing frequences were reduced in selected plots to extend flowering periods and create improved habitats for pollinators. This shift from fortnightly mowing to six or twelve-week cycles has increased wildflower abundance and added visual variety across participating neighbourhoods.

Throughout 2024 data was gathered data on plant and pollinator species from plots in wards that were still cut every two weeks and compared these to plots that were cut approximately every six weeks in the trial areas. This data was then analysed by the University of Edinburgh to compare the effects of mowing grassland plots less frequently. The results showed:

- 14 additional species of flowering plants.
- 6,364 more individual flowering plants.
- A 4,167% increase in nectar availability for pollinators, with significant nectar resources in early spring (more than typical perennial meadows).
- Enhanced visual and structural diversity throughout the year.

This initiative continues to be supported by community engagement, including planting events with residents and community councils to introduce wildflower seed and perennial bulbs, alongside new communication materials and signage explaining the changes. Staff biodiversity training and investment in new equipment have further embedded sustainable practice within operational teams.

In autumn 2025, based on community feedback, work was expanded to enhance naturalised plots containing trees by planting perennial understory bulbs. The amount of yellow rattle seed sowing has been increased to directly combat areas where the grass is too dominant.

Green Skills Traineeships: boosting biodiversity along the John Muir Way

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) have initiated an ambitious Green Skills Traineeship program, backed by a £1.8 million grant from the National Heritage Lottery Fund. This initiative is designed to assist individuals who are farthest from the job market while simultaneously enhancing biodiversity along crucial segments of the John Muir Way—34% of which has been flagged for ecological improvement.

The project provides hands-on nature restoration training to local young people who are currently economically inactive over a period of three years. The first six trainees for the Edinburgh area were recruited in April 2025.

Each traineeship lasts 10 months and will provide practical experience and accredited qualifications, including First Aid and habitat management. As one of three local authorities, alongside Falkirk and East Dunbartonshire, the City of Edinburgh Council will engage with 18 trainees over three years to enhance biodiversity and gain training in green skills to improve employability.

The program focusses on seven key sites along the John Muir Way:

- Corstorphine Hill LNR
- Davidson's Mains Park
- The Meadows
- Bingham Park
- Magdalene Glen
- Donkeyfield Orchard
- Brunstane Path Park

Community involvement through Friends of Greenspace groups

Edinburgh has a network of over 70 Friends of Greenspace groups, supported by Parks and Greenspace staff. These groups are made up of volunteers who work closely with the Council and local parks officers to play a key role in enhancing and protecting local parks, woodlands and green spaces. The Friends have set up an umbrella Edinburgh Green Spaces Forum and operate in a semiautonomous way from the Council. They meet up to half a dozen times a year including an AGM.

Place – Roads and Infrastructure

Flooding, water quality and SUDS

The Council is a core member of the Edinburgh and Lothians Strategic Drainage Partnership, a multi-agency collaboration that brings together the City of Edinburgh Council with Scottish Water, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and other regional partners to sustainably manage surface water, reduce flood risk and improve climate resilience.

Through the Drainage Partnership, the Council's flood team , the Council flood team have delivered sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and nature based solutions at two priority locations. In Craigleith, work to create a swale at Orchard Park has been completed as part of the Climate Ready Craigleith project. The work includes landscaping and creation of nature-rich planting to increase amenity and biodiversity value.

The Leith Connections active travel infrastructure includes SUDS features such as rain gardens and trees.

Both of these schemes use nature based solutions to reduce surface water flooding and contribute to wider water quality improvements in the Water of Leith catchment. The Council's Flood Team are working collaboratively with other Council services to encourage and enhance SuDS provision in schools, roads, active travel and parks projects to manage drainage whilst also maximising associated benefits for biodiversity.

Children, Education and Communities – Outdoor Learning

Environmental education in schools is supported and delivered by the Outdoor Learning & Adventure Education Team, helping to support the Curriculum for Excellence. Additional biodiversity-related activities include the Wilding Wee Spaces project. The Eco-schools programme and the John Muir Award are largely delivered directly by their respective parent organisations; Keep Scotland Beautiful* and the John Muir Trust.

The Wilding Wee Spaces project delivered by this service aims for all schools in Edinburgh to have an ecologically rich space developed and stewarded by pupils in which teachers are confident to teach the curriculum outdoors. In September 2024, one FTE permanent development officer role was appointed to develop and lead on this project. As at October 2026, 85 schools have registered their space with Wilding Wee Spaces with over 6000m^2 developed for biodiversity, with appropriate ecological features created by pupils. A website, tool library and training programme have been created to support school communities with their biodiversity improvement projects in school grounds, local parks and housing land contributing to the Edinburgh Nature Network.



Corporate Services – Procurement Services

The City of Edinburgh Council's Sustainable Procurement Strategy 2025 to 2030 (the Strategy) was approved at Committee on 13 March 2025 and applies to all procurement activity undertaken by the Council from 1 April 2025. The Strategy sets out how the Council will use its spending power to procure goods, services and works in a responsible way that delivers economic, environmental and social outcomes that support growth, and assist the Council in addressing the challenges that the City is facing. This includes the use of community benefits as an opportunity to support a fair transition to net zero through initiatives which prioritise regeneration of natural habitats, rewilding, tree planting and enhancements of green and urban spaces and training in green skills.

The Procurement Annual Report 2026 is the first annual report on delivery against the Sustainable Procurement Strategy 2025-2030. Annual procurement reporting provides a record of performance and achievements in delivering the Council's Strategy, including the delivery of contracts that help meet the Council's commitment to the climate and nature emergencies and deliver a just transition.

The Council is committed to using its purchasing power to help address the climate and nature emergencies. During 2025/2026, environmental consideration continued to be built into procurement projects strategies, specification and tender evaluations where relevant and proportionate. The Council's procurement activity plays a key role in reducing Scope 3 emissions, decarbonising supply chains, minimising the environmental impact of goods and services and facilitating circular economy practices.

The Strategy continues to prioritise circular economy as part of nature and climate commitments. A key aim of this is to ensure every procurement considers how the Council's spending power can drive positive environmental and social change, encourage innovation and reflect just transition principles.

Updated Community Benefits guidance now includes a Community Engagement, Environment and Nature theme, encouraging suppliers to contribute to local environmental and social projects. Examples include support for the Million Trees Project, Wee Wilding Spaces, Nature Network Pilot, Edinburgh Tools Library, and Edinburgh Shoreline.



The Council's Procurement and Commercial Services (CPS) promote ethical and environmentally conscious buying principles within schools and early years centres. A Schools Procurement Forum continues to provide regular focus on sustainability and environmental issues, with these themes included on each agenda alongside specific initiatives and practical guidance for schools. This has included work to reduce the use of glitter and other environmentally harmful products, with spending on glitter now negligible, as well as promoting recycling initiatives and more sustainable purchasing choices, such as practical ways to recycle hard to treat waste through the Edding white board pens recycling scheme and getting a process in place to ensure white goods recycling. CPS also supports schools through the Schools Sustainability Hub, which brings together guidance, information and resources to help schools and Early Years Centres make more sustainable purchasing decisions and reduce their environmental impact.

The Council's environment-focused procurement activities include representation and influence across the Council and with public sector colleagues through knowledge sharing and resources leading to opportunities for carbon reductions, resource efficiency and eco-systems restoration. CPS regularly engage with the Scottish Government to showcase case studies featuring sustainable procurement in practice as well as participating in the Research Action Group for Scope 3 Group 2 and wider Council's NRC (Nature Recovery), SOAR (Source to Ocean Action for Recovery), GFN (the Good Food Nation) groups, as well as external LACE forum (Zero Waste Scotland reuse and circular economy forum).



Edinburgh from Braid Hill
Caoimhe Wilson

Mainstreaming biodiversity

The conservation of biodiversity is embedded in Council policies, plans and strategies. One of the Council's strategic priorities is to tackle the twin climate and nature crisis by 2030, as set out in the Council's business plan 2023 – 2027. The business plan includes outcomes for delivery that will support Edinburgh to become a climate adapted, nature positive city.

The Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan 2022-27 sets the framework for biodiversity action and includes key Council services such as Planning and Building Standards, Parks and Greenspace, Schools and Housing. Many of the long running conservation activities included within the Action Plan are now embedded in core activities and work programmes. This ensures that land use planning and the management of Council-owned land deliver protection and enhancements for biodiversity. The role of the natural environment and biodiversity is further reflected in the Council's Climate Strategy 2030 and Climate Ready Edinburgh Plan 2024-2030.

The planning policy framework supports the protection and enhancement of designated nature conservation sites, protected species and biodiversity in the wider landscape.The statutory Local Development Plan includes relevant policies to protect and enhance the natural environment and accelerate nature recovery. This is supported through supplementary guidance and planning advice.

Biodiversity is included as part of assessment such as the Green Flag Award and Parks Quality Assessments, which are integral to the management of Council land. Work is ongoing to produce parks management plans for all parks.

All committee reports include a section on Climate and Nature Emergency Implications. This requires all officers to consider the environmental impact of the contents of their report. In addition, every new project, policy or strategy is subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment. This process was updated during this reporting period to include greater consideration to the impacts on nature recovery and climate change.

A list of plans, policies and strategies which reflect biodiversity objectives are given below:

- Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan 2022-27
- Open Space Strategy
- Climate Ready Edinburgh Plan 2024-2030
- Local Development Plans
- Edinburgh Design Guidance
- Draft Forest and Woodland Strategy
- Climate Strategy 2030
- Thriving Green Spaces
- Sustainable Procurement Policy

Nature-based solutions, climate change and biodiversity

In 2019, the Council set a new ambitious target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and declared a Climate Emergency. In February 2023, a Nature Emergency was declared. Sustainability and climate emergency action is being championed within the Council and across the city through a significant programme of corporately led activity as detailed above. As well as biodiversity focussed action in the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan, Nature Network and other projects, nature-positive outcomes are integrated into other initiatives which tackle the Climate Emergency. This includes specific actions in relation to tackling the nature emergency in the 2030 Climate Strategy, embedding of biodiversity and nature-based solutions into the Climate Ready Edinburgh Plan, Edinburgh's Sustainable Food Plan, Growing Locally, and other related plans and policies.

Other strategic work to support a resilient natural environment includes the Edinburgh Nature Network and Strategic Green-Blue Network, which model habitat networks and ecosystem services across this city, to identify where nature-based solutions can deliver multiple benefits. A Million Tree City project is supporting the zero carbon 2030 target and other adaption objectives, recognising that trees and woodlands provide nature based solutions to climate impacts. Nature-based solutions for managing water and drainage issues covering SUDS design, surface water drainage, flooding and water quality.

A new grant fund has also been launched to educate about ocean literacy and inspire action for ocean recovery – the Source to Ocean Action Recovery (SOAR) grant – open to organisations based or operating in Edinburgh for grants between £2,500 - £10,000.

The Council also launched its first Community Municipal Investment (CMI), with a target of £1million in September 2026. The funds raised have been identified for use in delivering biodiversity enhancements across the Council boundary area. The CMI raise window closed early due to hitting the target sooner than expected and was the fastest CMI raise in the UK to date under normal market conditions.



Orchard Park swale Nature Based Solution

Public engagement and workforce development

Public engagement

The Council is lead partner for the Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership. The Partnership comprises approximately 30 organisations and bodies, including government agencies, conservation bodies, environmental trusts and local volunteer conservation groups. The group is responsible for the production and delivery of the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan. The current Plan runs from 2022 to 2027 and includes over 250 actions for priority habitats, species and projects. Many actions involve public engagement and volunteer activity through Council Services and partner organisations. Most of the species conservation work

More information on the Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership's work, including public engagement, can be found in the latest progress report.

The Council and Partners engage the public and volunteers through the network of 'Friends' groups who actively participate in biodiversity projects within parks and open spaces. There are public events and engagement activities throughout the year, and engagement with local community groups through project work. There is also significant volunteer resource engaged in species monitoring and recording through partners. Much of this activity in Edinburgh is led by expert volunteers and a significant amount of the species conservation activity within the EBAP is delivered through volunteers.

Communication and engagement

Awareness-raising, communication and engagement are a key element of biodiversity work within Edinburgh. The Council has undertaken a range of work to promote biodiversity, including:

- Publication of web-based information and use of social media;
- Co-ordination of 'Friends of Parks' programme and support for community projects within parks;
- A Council-run website for Edinburgh's parks, EdinburghOutdoors.org.uk, contains a wildlife by month calendar for Edinburgh
- A programme run by the Natural Heritage Service of annual events, conservation tasks and wildlife surveys;
- Work with members of the Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership on awareness activities and events, such as supporting ad-hoc Bioblitz events and engaging volunteers with wildlife surveys.

External Partnerships

Council Officers represent the Council on external partnerships and groups to support the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and share best practice. These groups include the Scottish Local Biodiversity Network, Forth Estuary Forum, the Water of Leith Action Group and the Nature Towns and Cities programme.



Workforce development

Training activities have been undertaken to support the development of the workforce, particularly in relation to skills and capacity building relevant to biodiversity, nature, outdoor learning and community engagement. Cross-service collaboration is strengthened through the internal Nature Recovery and Climate Adaptation group. Biodiversity and Greenspace Development Officers support learning and development for both City of Edinburgh Council and non-Council staff on biodiversity matters. For example, the Planning Service ran an awareness session for the Council's Active Travel team in September 2026. This included a section on biodiversity.

The Council encourages all employees to undertake Climate Literacy training, using the Climate Fresk approach which includes some consideration of biodiversity.

Planning Service Continued Professional Development

The Planning Service has an internal Continued Professional Development (CPD) programme. Training has been provided on an annual basis by the biodiversity staff on general biodiversity principles and the use of metrics in development management to support decision making.

Planning Committee also received training on biodiversity in November 2024, as part of their annual training programme.

Other Training & Development

Officers have attended a number of workshops and conferences from providers including Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), Regional Marine Planning Forum, Tree and Design Action Group, Greenspace Scotland, and Edinburgh Forests and Landscapes Network.

Research and monitoring

In the period of this report, ongoing collection of data on priority species/ groups, often as part of national schemes such as pollinator transects, has been carried out. There is a rolling programme of assessment for Local Nature Conservation Site designations.

An updated habitat baseline survey has been carried out for the entire authority area, including ground truthing surveys of priority habitats and all Local Nature Reserves. A climate change risk assessment for the city has also been carried out.

Most of the species recording data is routinely passed to The Wildlife Information Centre, who manage and provide ecological data for the Council under a Service Level Agreement.

The Council collaborates with academic partners including the University of Edinburgh and Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh on topics including pollinators, biodiversity metrics and nature based solutions. The Council also participates in research initiatives including Circhive and GroundsWell on key urban greenspace initiatives including the Edinburgh Nature Network.

The status of biodiversity, and activity on biodiversity conservation, in Edinburgh is monitored through:

- Annual progress report on delivery of the Edinburgh Local Biodiversity Action Plan;
- Annual report on Nature Conservation produced by the Parks and Greenspace Natural Heritage Service; and
- A programme of species monitoring and survey work is carried out by Council staff, volunteers and partners to provide data. This includes regular surveying such as butterfly and bumblebee transects, as part of national monitoring programmes, and surveys to support the production of species atlases, as well as site-based monitoring. These data are managed by The Wildlife Information Centre and from there passed to the National Biodiversity Network Gateway.



Meadow survey training, Water of Leith

Biodiversity highlights and challenges

Biodiversity highlights

The report above demonstrates the breadth of activities delivered by the Council which help to protect and increase Edinburgh's biodiversity. Particular strengths in Edinburgh are the high level of community involvement in greenspace projects, and the extent of partnership working both within and out with the Council. Highlights of biodiversity delivery from the last three years are:

- Appointment of additional staff in 2024 to support the Council's response to the nature crisis with six new roles created across a number of Council services. This has resulted in greater capacity to accelerate nature recovery within Edinburgh.
- Nature Restoration Fund Edinburgh Process funding allocation direct to Local Authorities, supporting additional delivery of capital projects and additional baseline habitat surveys
- Continued delivery of the sixth Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan 2022- 2027, which contains actions being delivered by the Council and Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership
- Closely aligning biodiversity conservation and climate change work by incorporating the natural environment within the revised Climate Ready Edinburgh Plan 2024-2030 having the natural environment aims embedded in the revised Edinburgh Climate Strategy 2030;
- Realisation of the 2020 Vision for Water Management through delivery of Green-blue infrastructure targeted SUDS interventions in Craigleith and Leith pilot areas.
- Securing staff resource for the Wilding Wee Spaces initiative in school grounds across the city;
- Development of the Edinburgh Nature Network and Our Nature Estate to improve Council owned greenspace for nature.
- Designation and expansion of Local Nature Reserves at Wester Craiglockhart Hill and Easter Craiglockhart Hill. We now have 9 Local Nature Reserves managed by the Council;
- Working in partnership with The Conservation Volunteers on the Green Skills and Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Group initiatives;
- Delivery of Million Tree City project;
- Multiple examples of partnership and local community greenspace projects, such as the Restore the Burn project.

Challenges

Looking ahead, the main challenges are:

- Pressure on resources required for appropriate management of existing sites and development of new green infrastructure;
- Increasing understanding of biodiversity in the city through data, research and metrics and improving access to this data to inform site management and project delivery
- Increasing knowledge and understanding of risks to priority habitats and species from climate change impacts, and how to mitigate these;
- Upskilling of maintenance staff to look after new green infrastructure and habitats.
- The lack of specialist enforcement officers to support successful implementation of NPF4 Policy 3, alongside existing biodiversity specialists.



7 spot Ladybird
Victor Partridge



Red Moss Nature Reserve
CEC Natural Heritage Service

City of Edinburgh Council Statutory Biodiversity Duty Report

2024 - 26

Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership

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