

ANGUS COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 16 APRIL 2019

TAYSIDE BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITIES

Abstract:

This report provides an update on the work of the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership and the Council's financial contribution towards the Partnership. It seeks agreement for the continued commitment to the work of the Partnership and delivery of the Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-26. In addition it seeks authorisation for the Service Leader - Planning & Communities to work with colleagues at Perth & Kinross Council to investigate alternative arrangements for the resourcing of the Partnership for the period beyond March 2020.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee: -

- (i) notes the work of the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership and the Council's current direct financial contribution towards the Partnership;
- (ii) reaffirms the Council's commitment to the work of the Partnership and to the delivery of the Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-26;
- (iii) authorises the Service Leader - Planning & Communities to work with colleagues at Perth & Kinross Council to investigate alternative arrangements for the resourcing of the Partnership for the period beyond March 2020.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS LOCAL OUTCOMES IMPROVEMENT PLAN/CORPORATE PLAN

- 2.1 This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Local Outcomes Improvement Plan and Locality Plans:

ECONOMY

- A skilled and adaptable workforce

PEOPLE

- The best start in life for children
- More opportunities for people to achieve success
- Improved physical, mental and emotional health and well-being

PLACE

- Safe, secure, vibrant and sustainable communities
- A reduced carbon footprint
- An enhanced, protected and enjoyed natural and built environment

- 2.2 This report also aligns to the Council Plan 2017-2022 priority for the Council to be effective and efficient, specifically for our services to represent best value and to be focused on the greatest need.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Tayside Biodiversity Partnership is a voluntary, non-statutory Local Biodiversity Partnership established in 1998. Funded jointly by Perth and Kinross Council and Angus Council, it brings together both national and local organisations and individuals dedicated to promoting the protection and enhancement and enjoyment of Tayside's valuable natural assets and species. The Partnership (TBP) exists to:

“Co-ordinate the further development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of biodiversity in Tayside to conserve and enhance the region's biodiversity, taking account both local and national priorities”

3.2 In December 2018 the TBP celebrated 20 years of Partnership led biodiversity enhancement and engagement across Tayside, predominantly delivered through the first Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan (TLBAP). In 2016 the Partnership published the second TLBAP 2016-26 ([Report 288/16](#) refers) which engages more than 100 partners, has over 140 overarching projects and has been received well by stakeholders and the community. More than 88% of the TLBAP 2016-26 projects can be delivered in Angus through continued stakeholder and community support.

3.3 Although delivering projects on a local and regional scale, the TLBAP 2016-26 was written with national and global strategy in mind, delivering many of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets which arose from the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Japan in 2011. These targets are known as the “Big Six Steps for Nature” and include: Ecosystem restoration; Investment in Natural Capital; Quality greenspace for health and education benefits; Conserving wildlife in Scotland; Sustainable management of land and freshwater; and Marine and coastal ecosystems restored. The targets are integral to partnership project delivery, publications, training events and seminars and community engagement.

3.4 The Partnership has, amongst other things, supported: -

- East Haven Together to deliver a BioBlitz as an innovative means of involving the community in nature conservation. The event brought together scientists and experts to work alongside members of the public to identify as many species of animals, insects, plants and marine life as possible. Over the two day event a total of 636 biological records comprising 347 different species were verified;
- the Council to establish local elected member Habitats and Species Champions to encourage councillors to focus on action incorporating the “Big Six Steps for Nature” for our priority habitats and species. There are 15 elected members representing 30 habitats and species supporting initiatives in schools, businesses and communities;
- organisation of the Angus Coastal Festival 2018. The Partnership's Coastal & Marine Working Group and 21 partner agencies developed and delivered the festival programme, which included 43 free events at 14 Angus locations. The 11 day period in September 2018 was chosen to coincide with the Great British Beach Clean weekend (GBBC) 2018. Community engagement and marine litter issues were at its core and the number of volunteers taking part in beach cleans in Angus during GBBC increased by almost 50%. More than 5,157 items of marine litter were removed from Angus beaches.
- a contour tree planting project in Glen Clova. Following a successful pilot project a £3.2M follow on project is to begin in April 2019. More than 165Ha of tree planting will take place, a mixture of both broadleaf and commercial forestry. The total number of trees planted will be around 264,000. This is a collaborative project with the three main landowners in Glen Clova working towards a common aim. The tree planting will work as a natural flood management scheme by reducing the rate of water runoff into the river, flattening peak flows, increasing water storage in upland areas, and improving the sustainability of agriculture in the glen. The project will provide multiple biodiversity benefits and contributes to actions in the Woodland, Water & Wetlands, Farmland and Upland sections on the TLBAP.

3.5 The Council currently contributes £26,000 on an annual basis towards the costs of the Partnership through a formal agreement with Perth & Kinross Council. Perth & Kinross makes a similar contribution and the funding is used predominantly to meet the costs associated with the employment of a full-time biodiversity co-ordinator. The biodiversity co-ordinator steers working group activity towards delivering actions in the plan and monitors progress. Reports

are produced for the management group and the Scottish Government when required. The existing funding agreement requires any amendment to be agreed between the partners but it also allows either party to terminate the agreement upon six months written notice, in the event of any change in priority.

4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The Partnership is a key mechanism for the Council in furthering the conservation of local biodiversity and fulfilling its duties under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 and the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011. The 2011 Act in particular includes a requirement for all public bodies to report every three years on how they comply with a statutory biodiversity duty. Delivery of the TLBAP 2016-26 is a key mechanism for providing a wide range of evidence to demonstrate how the council complies with that duty.
- 4.2 The Partnership also allows the Council to work with a wide range of statutory bodies, NGO's, charities, interest and community groups to improve the natural environment and to promote education and understanding. It supports projects of varying scale from gardens at care homes to large parkland meadows, and from hedgerows to forests. The wide range of projects and their varying scale allows participation from a broad cross section of the community who have different interests and different abilities to commit time. In addition, the Partnership allows the Council, and other partners access to a wide range of expertise that may not always otherwise be available to individual organisations or groups.
- 4.3 The TLBAP 2016-26 facilitates a range of works essential to co-ordinating and promoting the sustainable protection and enhancement of Tayside's biodiversity. Angus Council commits staff resource to assist with the delivery of actions and the Partnership has assisted in the mainstreaming of the biodiversity process across council departments.
- 4.4 The Partnership approach reflects good practise and provides clear benefits. The work of the Partnership and the TLBAP provides a framework for delivering specialist and community based biodiversity protection and enhancement with a range of stakeholders and communities over the next decade. There are clear and demonstrable benefits for the Council and its communities in maintaining that approach and it is considered important for the Council to remain committed to the Partnership and to the delivery of the TLBAP.
- 4.5 It is anticipated that the Council will continue to make staff time available for the work of the Partnership and for the delivery of the TLBAP. However, in the current financial climate it is appropriate to explore different funding models for the period beyond March 2020. Report 56/19, which was approved at the special meeting of Angus Council on 21 February 2019, identified potential for budget savings in 2020/21 through a review of commissioned services and that will include a review of direct funding to the TBP.
- 4.6 As indicated above funding for the Partnership is provided jointly by Perth & Kinross and Angus Councils through a formal legal agreement. It is therefore appropriate that any review is undertaken in conjunction with colleagues from the partner Council and preliminary discussions have been held. Any review should also involve discussion with other partner agencies and stakeholders in order to explore different funding options.
- 4.7 The agreement confirms that Perth & Kinross Council is solely responsible for the employment and housing of the biodiversity co-ordinator and that Angus Council shall incur no responsibility or liability for the post. Notwithstanding, the agreement also confirms that in the event the funding for the co-ordinator post ceases and the post is terminated, any redundancy and associated costs shall be borne equally between the councils. It is understood that the Partnership accounts currently hold reserves to deal with such an eventuality but if that circumstance arose the matter would be subject of further discussion with colleagues at Perth & Kinross.

4.8 It is anticipated that the funding review will be concluded by 30 September 2019 and a further report will be brought before this committee at that time.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The review of the Council's funding of the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership could give rise to financial implications and that will be dealt with in a separate report following conclusion of the review.

NOTE: No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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