

ANGUS COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 22 NOVEMBER 2022

ANGUS COUNCIL NATURE RESTORATION FUND ALLOCATION 2022/23

REPORT BY ALISON SMITH, DIRECTOR OF VIBRANT COMMUNITIES & SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

ABSTRACT

This report updates the Committee on the capital grant allocation to Angus Council from the Scottish Government for the Nature Restoration Fund. It recommends projects for approval to use the grant allocation for the current financial year 2022/23.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) agrees the list of the projects/proposals for use of the Nature Restoration Fund allocation of £150,000 for 2022/23.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN

2.1 Delivery of the projects will contribute to the following priorities in the Council Plan:

Place: We want our communities to be strong, resilient, and led by citizens

- continue to reduce the council's carbon footprint with the aim of reducing our net carbon emissions to zero by 2045;
- engage with citizens and communities to deliver the right services in the right place at the right time.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Nature Restoration Fund

The Scottish Government set aside additional funding of £10million to support a wide range of projects that will deliver nature restoration, safeguard wildlife and tackle the causes of biodiversity loss especially as a result of habitat loss and climate change. Strands of the Nature Restoration Fund are open to the public, NGO's and Public Bodies.

All Local Authorities, plus the National Parks, receive a capital allocation directly from Scottish Government. The total value of the allocation to Local Authorities is £5m in 2022-2023 (which is the same allocation as 2021-2022). Given the strategic themes and the priority of ecological connectivity, the distribution methodology for 2022/23 is based on: 50% on 'area of natural greenspace' and 50% on NatureScot composite indicator.

The allocation of funds for Angus Council in 2022-23 is £0.150 Million rounded (£150,000), paid as a General Capital Grant.

3.2 The capital funding allocated to Angus Council is to support new, or to enhance existing, approaches that further biodiversity and deliver positive effects for biodiversity and enhance local ecosystems. Addressing the climate emergency and its impacts through mitigation and adaptation and by promoting nature-based solutions is central to delivery. Projects must be completed by 31st March 2022.

- 3.3 The purpose of the fund is to support actions that help nature recover across Scotland. In 2022/23 it will run across two themes:
- Making Space for Nature (urban focused nature-based solutions for biodiversity and climate change); and
 - Helping Nature Recover (rural focused biodiversity enhancement, climate resilience and reinstatement).

3.4 To deliver the purpose, this year the Fund has four strategic themes:

- Habitat restoration – management for enhancement and connectivity.
- Freshwater restoration, including hydrological change.
- Eradication of invasive non-native species impacting on nature.
- Coastal and marine management to promote restoration and resilience.

These themes are areas in which Angus Council has a strong track record of delivery.

3.5 The Fund does not exclude projects from urban areas which can be shown to address its purpose and strategic themes. The Scottish Government's draft Local Development Plan guidance (para 459) sets out that ecological connectivity is provided by wildlife sites, corridors, and stepping stones, landscape features, watercourses, green and blue spaces that together form integrated nature networks.

Capital items that could form that basis for spend may include, but are not limited to:

- Action for pollinators (equipment for maintaining wildflower areas/verges plus planting).
- Improving condition and use of Local Nature Reserves (purchase and planting, equipment for outdoor learning, small access improvements).
- Developing a local nature network through planting of wildlife corridors, removal of barriers to movement, pollinator planting.
- Greening active travel routes (purchase and planting).
- Natural flood management actions such as connecting rivers with flood plains, pond creation, deculverting, in-stream works for habitat and flow variability.
- Removal of invasive non-native species to improve the biodiversity value of the remaining habitat.
- Habitat and species enhancement works using native stock, enhancing natural coastal defences through marram, addressing coastal squeeze.

3.6 Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, public bodies have a duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Angus Council has a strong commitment through the Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-26 which sets out 140 projects to protect the multitude of flora and fauna across the area and brings together organisations, communities, and individuals. Species champions also further support activity across the area. The projects identified for delivery in section 5.1, in addition to fulfilling requirements of the Nature Restoration Fund, will deliver Biodiversity Action Plan priorities, identified through wide public consultation.

3.7 In addition to the Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-26 which sets out key priorities to protect and enhance nature in Angus, in the coming months, a Shaping Angus 'Space for Nature' consultation will be launched. The simple consultation exercise will allow Angus residents and communities to provide comment on where they enjoy nature and share thoughts on how it can be cared for future generations. Tayside Biodiversity Partnership provides advice and support to communities and businesses, Community Councils and businesses on how to develop projects that can deliver the most for nature and, supported by Angus Council staff, will identify opportunities for further project development considering consultation responses.

4. CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 The timelines for the delivery of capital projects and associated spend for the Fund is very tight. In order to ensure that the council can fulfil the requirements of the grant, the focus has to be on projects that can be delivered within the timeframe and the necessary staff resources available for delivery. A wide-ranging corporate working group has met regularly in 2022 to develop the suite of proposals in section 5.1. Projects were proposed by staff, refined, aligned to Nature Restoration Fund and Biodiversity Action Plan priorities and importantly, can be delivered where staff capacity allows and can be delivered in short time frame.
- 4.2 The Edinburgh Declaration, of which Angus council is a signatory ([Report No 52/22 refers](#)) and funding streams including the Edinburgh Process Fund, provide opportunities to be guided by a globally shaped framework, to deliver local action, at critical point at the beginning of the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration. The Council's journey to net-zero by 2045 focusses on key themes including nature-based solutions, and working with businesses, land managers and communities to secure nature rich, resilient places.

5. PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Officers have identified projects, which would meet the criteria set out in the funding allocation, can be delivered within existing resources and the Scottish Government's timeframe, and will provide the most benefits for people, nature and reaching Net Zero. The following projects are recommended for the use of the £150,000 funding allocation for this financial year:

Space for Nature Urban Trees

A continuation of 2021/22 Nature Restoration Fund project spend. Enhancement to green network connectivity in tree lined corridors across Angus settlements will provide benefits for people, nature and make Angus greenspaces more climate resilient.
£28,000 (Angus wide)

Montrose Basin Local Nature Reserve Saltmarsh Enhancement

Enhancement to saltpan area including wetland and saltmarsh restoration. The project will create varied habitats improving biodiversity on Angus' only Local Nature Reserve.
£14,000 (Montrose Basin Local Nature Reserve)

Borrowfield Pond Habitat Enhancement

Wetland habitat enhancement is a key priority of the Nature Restoration Fund. Angus has a small number of urban ponds. Borrowfield Pond, through sensitive enhancement, has potential to an accessible, nature rich amenity space. Currently access into the pond and out is restricted for animals and creating access and refuge for birds and amphibians is a priority.
£42,000 (Montrose)

Curlie Pond Habitat Enhancement

The Curlie Pond in Montrose plays a critical role on linking Montrose Golf Links, amenity space and the wider mid-links are of Montrose. The pond is critical for amphibians and breeding birds and needs enhancement that allows species to thrive in this urban setting. Climate Change can impact negatively on our wetland habitats and the Nature Restoration Fund provides an opportunity to make our urban wetland areas climate resilient.
£25,000 (Montrose)

Scoping study and design - Naturalising Urban Watercourses

Urban watercourses are threatened by many factors including erosion, pollution, and containment. Angus has small urban watercourses where biodiversity value and public enjoyment can be enhanced through creative restoration. A scoping study and design are needed to identify opportunities that will deliver the most benefits for people, nurture and climate resilience.
£31,000 (Arbroath & Kirriemuir)

Rosemount Estate Rhododendron Removal Phase 1

Invasive Non-native Species are detrimental to native species and can reduce people's enjoyment of amenity spaces. Rosemount Estate in Hillside has large numbers of the invasive Rhododendron which is outcompeting native flora reducing opportunities for native wildlife to thrive. Large scale, phased removal is needed to tackle this ongoing issue.

£6,000 (Hillside)

Space for Nature Hedgerow Creation

Hedgerows offer a different environment for wildlife to woodland and a range of species are hedgerow specialists. Sites in a number of Angus settlements are suitable for hedgerow creation on a small scale as opposed to standard tree planting. Hedgerows are a threatened habitat and planting will take place where they can complement existing habitat networks.

£4,000 (Angus wide)

All projects will complement the 2021/2 Nature Restoration Fund spend of £95k which included Brechin Den biodiversity improvements, Angus wide cut and lift machinery for wildflower meadows and Angus wide standard tree planting ([Report No 390/21](#) refers).

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Whilst there are no direct financial implications, as all proposals are contained within the allocated funding, there are indirect financial implications through officer time to support the delivery of projects supported by the funding and any administration of these to third parties.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed – see Appendix 2.

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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List of Appendices:

Appendix 1: Nature Restoration Fund Project Proposals 2022/23

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment