

# Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 22 August 2023

## Declaring a Nature Emergency

Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments	Executive All
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### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 Policy and Sustainability Committee is asked to:
  - 1.1.1 Agree that the Council should progress signing the Berlin Urban Nature Pact;
  - 1.1.2 Note the information included in the report responds to a motion approved by the Council on 9 February 2023 titled Declaring a Nature Emergency; and
  - 1.1.3 Note the timescale for preparation of a draft Vision for Nature.

**Paul Lawrence**

Executive Director of Place

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# Report

## Declaring a Nature Emergency

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 This report responds to the adjusted motion by Councillor Parker on Declaring a Nature Emergency, which was agreed by the Council on 9 February 2023. The report recommends that the Council becomes a signatory to the Berlin Urban Nature Pact.

### 3. Background

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- 3.1 On [9 February 2023](#), the Council approved an adjusted motion by Councillor Parker on Declaring a Nature Emergency. The approved motion requested a report which:
- 3.1.1 Explores the possibility of the Council signing up to the Berlin Urban Nature Pact;
  - 3.1.2 Outlines how existing Council strategies map to the Global Biodiversity Framework, Scottish Biodiversity and notes changes or additional resources required; and
  - 3.1.3 Provides an update on the development of Vision for Nature, including Partnership work.

### 4. Main report

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- 4.1 The motion recognises the need for an accelerated response to the nature crisis, to reverse biodiversity loss.
- Berlin Urban Nature Pact**
- 4.2 The motion asks for consideration to be given to Edinburgh signing up to [Berlin Urban Nature Pact](#). This Pact is a global initiative for cities, which follows on from the [Edinburgh Declaration](#) (which the Council signed in 2020).
- 4.3 The Pact is still in development, with draft text available. Based on the information available, as a signatory, the Council would be required to identify specific Berlin Pact Actions for the city within one year of signing, and these would be presented at COP16 in 2024.

- 4.4 The aim is for a transformational, accelerated approach to delivering biodiversity improvements in cities, and using nature-based solutions to address nature, climate and health emergencies.
- 4.5 It will be possible to identify suitable actions from the breadth of work already underway or in development in Edinburgh and therefore it is recommended that the Council progresses with signing up to the Pact.

### **Strategy Alignment**

- 4.6 The motion also asks for information on how the [Global Biodiversity Framework](#) (GBF) and draft [Scottish Biodiversity Strategy](#) (SBS) link with Council strategies. Both these strategies are in alignment with the broad approach to nature conservation in Edinburgh. The Council's long running Partnership programme, the [Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan](#) (EBAP), is the framework for nature conservation in the city. The widely understood principles to reverse biodiversity decline are to make habitats "bigger, better, more joined up". This approach underpins the aims of the EBAP, GBF and draft SBS. More recently, the [Edinburgh Nature Network](#) (ENN) has identified priority areas to deliver further improvements for nature and nature-based solutions, applying the Ecological Coherence Protocol.
- 4.7 The EBAP aligns with the 2050 Goals A and B of the GBF, which aim to increase natural ecosystems, reduce species loss, protect genetic diversity, and restore ecosystem services. The GBF also has 23 targets for 2030. Where these are relevant to Edinburgh, the table in Appendix 1 shows how these targets link to existing Council strategies, national or local policies and plans.
- 4.8 When the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and Delivery Plans are published for consultation later this year, the Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership will review the EBAP 2022-27 and other programmes, to identify any additional actions required. Any updates or changes will be included in the next annual EBAP report.
- 4.9 Other Council strategies and programmes align with the GBF and SBS, particularly around resilient habitats and using nature-based solutions to address both the Climate and Nature Emergencies. Edinburgh's draft Climate Ready Edinburgh Adaptation plan identifies the risks and impacts to nature from climate change, and has developed actions to alleviate them, working with the Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership and others. Other plans include the [Green-Blue Network](#), [Thriving Green Spaces Strategy](#), [Edinburgh Nature Network](#) programmes and draft [City Plan 2030](#). A summary of these, and the further development currently underway to address the nature emergency, is in Appendix 2.

### **Outcomes**

- 4.10 Within the Council, using existing staff to deliver better outcomes for nature is a priority. In particular, in Neighbourhood Environmental Services, the Thriving Green Spaces Strategy aims will be delivered, with the following proposals agreed to address the nature crisis:
- 4.10.1 Expand the areas of parks and openspace being naturalised as part of the Living Landscapes initiative, in connection with the Thriving Green Spaces and Edinburgh Nature Network programmes;

- 4.10.2 Review of Landscape Quality Standards, potentially re-categorising amenity grassland sites, with biodiversity enhancement opportunities a key consideration;
  - 4.10.3 Reduction in chemical use for weed removal, increasing mechanical removal as an alternative treatment; and
  - 4.10.4 Additional funding has been secured for road verge and cycleway maintenance. The additional maintenance will be designed to deliver biodiversity benefits and optimise biodiversity value and maintain corridors for wildlife.
- 4.11 Future priorities will include capacity building and training for operational maintenance staff and accessing the Nature Restoration Fund for future projects. The Green-Blue Network and Climate Ready Edinburgh Plan will be carrying out a natural capital assessment of the city. This work will be used to identify gaps in provision, and inform future priority work to address the nature emergency by improving the area, quality and connectivity of habitats.

## **5. Next Steps**

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- 5.1 The draft Vision for Nature is in development and will be included in a future report to Committee by end of 2023, prior to consultation.
- 5.2 The evolving governance structures shown in Appendix 3 will be developed to include the Nature Emergency response and align with the Climate Strategy board. This will include the existing Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership model and other stakeholder groups.
- 5.3 In addition, subject to committee approval of the recommendations, officers will also:
  - 5.1.1 Progress signing the Berlin Urban Nature Pact; and
  - 5.1.2 Respond to the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and Delivery Plans consultation later in 2023, and review Council plans and strategies where needed based on the final versions.

## **6. Financial impact**

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- 6.1 The activities outlined in this report have been met from existing financial resources. As noted in paragraph 4.11, future priorities will include accessing the Nature Restoration Fund for suitable projects.

## **7. Stakeholder/Community Impact**

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- 7.1 The work on biodiversity and nature across the city is delivered in partnership with stakeholders, particularly the Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership. As a public body,

the Council is required to 'further the conservation of biodiversity' under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004.

- 7.2 Responding to the nature emergency declaration will continue the city-wide programme of work to improve and expand natural habitats, increasing the extent and connectivity of natural areas to support species, habitats and the ecosystems they form. These measures also support climate objectives through carbon storage and sequestration. They adapt the city to climate change impacts of flooding and heating. Vegetation and soils absorb water and cool the city in extreme heat events.

## **8. Background reading/external references**

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- 8.1 [Thriving Green Spaces](#)
- 8.2 [Vision for water management](#)

## **9. Appendices**

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- 9.1 Appendix 1: Global Biodiversity Framework targets
- 9.2 Appendix 2: Table of strategies and plans delivering for nature.
- 9.3 Appendix 3: Current draft governance structure.

Nature Emergency

[Global Biodiversity Framework 2030](#) targets mapped to Edinburgh strategies and plans

<b>Global Biodiversity Framework 2030 target</b>	<b>Summarised aim</b>	<b>Supporting mechanisms available in Edinburgh</b>
Target 1	Bring loss of high biodiversity areas to development or land use change close to zero by 2030.	NPF4 and <a href="#">City Plan 2030</a>
Target 2	Ensure by 2030 at least 30% of degraded ecosystems are under effective restoration, to enhance biodiversity ecosystem function, ecological integrity and connectivity	<a href="#">EBAP 2022-27</a> <a href="#">Edinburgh Nature Network</a>
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 <a href="#">Climate Ready Edinburgh Strategy</a>
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 City and environmental organisations and community groups.
Target 8	Minimise climate change impacts on biodiversity; increase resilience through nature based solutions.	EBAP 2022-27 Climate Ready Edinburgh (Adaptation) Plan <a href="#">Green-blue Strategy</a>
Target 11	Restore maintain and enhance natures services to people, such as regulation of air, water, climate, soil health,	EBAP 2022-27 Green-blue Strategy Edinburgh Nature Network

## Appendix 1

	pollination and protection from natural hazards.	Climate Ready Edinburgh (Adaptation) 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.	<a href="#">Thriving Green Spaces</a> Green-blue strategy. Edinburgh Nature Network. City Plan 2030. EBAP 2022-27 <a href="#">Active Travel Action Plan</a>
Target 14	Ensure full integration of biodiversity into policy, regulation, strategies, assessments and national accounting.	NPF4, City Plan 2030 <a href="#">Scottish Biodiversity Strategy</a> and Delivery Plans
Target 21	Ensure that the best available data information and knowledge are accessible to decision makers.	Improve accessibility and use of GIS spatial data from open sources, agencies and specialist data suppliers. Maintain access to local ecological data sources through Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership and The Wildlife Information Centre.

# Governance of Blue Green Infrastructure - Interim

## Investment and Infrastructure Project Board Place and Corporate Services Directorates

**Edinburgh and Lothians Strategic Drainage Partnership Board**  
 Scottish Environment Protection Agency  
 Scottish Water  
 Nature Scot ( future)  
 City of Edinburgh Council

**Climate Adaptation**  
*run by Policy and Insight /chaired Scottish Water*

**CEC Steering Group**  
*CEC Senior Management*

**CEC Sustainability Board**  
*CEC Directors*

**Nature Recovery Climate Adaptation Council wide working group ( NRCA group)**

**Blue Green City Partnership working group**  
 CEC Flooding Management  
 CEC Planning and landscape  
 SEPA - Planning  
 SW – Project management and Catchment Flooding Management

**Roads and Infrastructure**  
 Flood Prevention  
 Surface Water Management planning  
 Coastal Adaptation Plan

**Planning Service**

- Open Space Strategy
- Blue Green Infrastructure policy/projects  
City Plan team
- Trees and Woodland Strategy
- Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership and Action Plan  
Specialist team in Planning

**Parks and Greenspace**  
 Thriving Greenspaces Investment programme

**Policy and Insight**  
 Climate Strategy 2030  
 Climate Ready Edinburgh – Adaptation Plan

**Placemaking and Mobility**  
 20 minute Neighbourhood Team  
 Strategy and Development Team

Water Management Vision  
 City wide Green Blue Network/  
 Thriving Green Blue Neighbourhood projects  
 Support for other CEC projects for GBI enhancement  
 Communication Strategy for BGI ( Active travel / Roads )

Nature Vision in progress  
 Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership projects

Living Landscape projects ( with SWT)  
 Edinburgh Nature Network and projects ( with SWT)  
 Million Tree projects ( with partners)

20 minute neighbourhood projects with BGI

**On-going care for Green Blue Infrastructure - CEC Parks department / Scottish Water/ Section 7**

## The City of Edinburgh Council's Strategies, plans and programmes linked to nature emergency.

Name	Programme description	Description of links, requirements and opportunities for biodiversity	Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership links	2023 Status	Next steps
<a href="#">Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan 2022-27</a>	Framework for nature conservation delivered by Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership.	Identifies priority species and habitats for the city. Sixth EBAP published in 2022. When the final Scottish Biodiversity Strategy is available, the EBAP will be reviewed to assess if changes are required.	EBP	Main action programme underway. Some strategic work is in development. Some partner projects are supported by external funding.	Review action programme once updated Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and Delivery Plans are available. Continue to develop strategic projects. Prepare delivery update report for 2023/4.
<a href="#">2030 Climate Strategy: delivering a net zero, Climate Ready City.</a>	Overarching strategy for climate change including net zero targets and adaptation requirements.	Natural environment is a critical part of the solution for net zero, through carbon sequestration in soils and habitats, and adapting to the impacts of climate change. Knowledge exchange, capacity building, research and demonstration projects to be developed.	The City of Edinburgh Council (the Council), NatureScot, University of Edinburgh, RBGE.	Strategy published.	Finalise new adaptation plan with actions linked to nature based solutions.

<a href="#">Edinburgh Adapts Action Plan</a>	Plan outlining necessary adaptation measures	A resilient natural environment is required for adaptation to the impacts of climate change. Urban overheating is alleviated by cooling and shading from vegetation. Parks, street trees, raingardens, living roofs all provide urban cooling. These examples of nature based solutions also slow water run off during extreme weather events, to reduce flood and pollution risk. They also help reverse the nature crisis. Shared actions across the Adaptation plan and EBAP have been identified.	The Council NatureScot	New plan in production in 2023. Shared actions across the Adaptation plan and EBAP have been identified to address the nature and climate crises.	The replacement Adaptation plan is in the final stages of preparation and will be presented to Committee before going to public consultation before the end of 2023. Shared actions for nature and adaptation have been included.
Climate Change Risk Assessment	City wide modelling of the risks from climate change, report produced summer 2022.	Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership members to review final report to prioritise areas which would benefit from nature based solutions.	The Council, NatureScot, SEPA.	Next steps to review report and identify priority areas for nature based solutions.	Identify priority areas for nature based solutions to address key risks of urban overheating and flooding.
<a href="#">City Plan 2030</a> <a href="#">Edinburgh Design Guidance and other</a>	New Local Development Plan for Edinburgh.	New draft policies on biodiversity included. Now that NPF4 is published, as City Plan progresses, policy	The Council's Planning team	NPF4 was adopted Feb 2023. City Plan 2030	City Plan 2030 examination is underway.

Appendix 3

<a href="#">associate planning guidance</a>		<p>wording will be finalised through the plan examination process. Clear links to EBAP priorities and opportunities to deliver the Edinburgh Nature Network and Green Blue Network can be identified when detailed guidance is produced. Edinburgh Design Guidance to be reviewed 2023/24.</p>		<p>submitted for examination.</p>	<p>The Edinburgh Design Guidance refresh is underway.</p>
<a href="#">Thriving Green Spaces</a>	<p>To create a vision and 30-year strategy for Edinburgh’s green environment.</p>	<p>Working together to identify opportunities to increase biodiversity in Edinburgh’s parks and greenspaces.</p>	<p>The Council’s Parks and Planning teams.</p>	<p>Develop pilot projects. Next phase of external funding and staffing underway in 2023.</p>	<p>Deliver pilot project in Leith area. Secure funding for wider delivery. Identify priorities within Parks &amp; Greenspace review which support Thriving Greenspaces outcomes.</p>
<a href="#">Edinburgh Nature Network</a>	<p>Map and deliver an improved Nature Network for Edinburgh.</p>	<p>Members of the Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership have been involved in the core project group and in the wider stakeholder group. Data on designated sites and priority habitats from EBAP work has</p>	<p>The Council, Scottish Wildlife Trust, all EBP.</p>	<p>Develop projects in priority areas from the Nature Network map outputs.</p>	<p>Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework. Identify delivery mechanisms</p>

### Appendix 3

		been incorporated into the model.		External funding in place until spring 2024.	and opportunities.
<a href="#">Green-blue Network</a>	Identify green-blue infrastructure requirements to address drainage and flooding issues.	Members of the Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership have input to the wider stakeholder group. Data on designated sites and priority habitats from EBAP work has been incorporated into the Green Blue Network model.	The Council, SEPA, NatureScot.	Pilot areas identified and funding being sought for delivery.	Model is being updated. Pilot projects are in development in Craigleith. Further studies are being developed in collaboration with Climate Adaptation programme.
Forest and Woodland Strategy	Requirement of Planning legislation to produce a refreshed strategy to identify areas for protection, management and creation of woodland.	Important to use data and expertise of Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership to protect and expand the woodland areas of greatest ecological value.	The Council, Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust ((ELGT).	Early stages of development 2023/24	Work to commence late 2023/early 2024.
Million Trees & Wilding Wee Spaces projects	To become a Million Tree City by 2030 and continue to create 'Wee Forests'. Deliver Wilding Wee Spaces projects in schools.	Members of the Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership, and relevant Council services, are involved in opportunities and site identification.	The Council, ELGT.	Progressing as part of project plan. Partial external funding in place.	Dependent on funding.