



**REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE ON
8 MAY 2018**

**SUBJECT: BIODIVERSITY DUTY REPORTING 2015-2017 AND
SUSTAINABLE ENERGY ACTION PLAN**

**BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
PLANNING & INFRASTRUCTURE)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report asks that Committee consider and note the content of the Biodiversity Duty Report for 2015-2017 and to note progress in relation to identified actions within the Moray Sustainable Energy Action Plan.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section II (37) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to consideration of any new policy matter which does not fall within the terms of reference of any other Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **It is recommended that Committee consider and note:**
- (i) **the content of the Biodiversity Duty Report 2015-2017 set out in Appendix 1; and**
 - (ii) **progress in relation to actions set out with the Moray Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP).**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Under the Nature and Conservation (Scotland) Act (2004), all public bodies are required to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities. The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 requires public bodies in Scotland to produce a publicly available report every three years. This duty is aimed at connecting people and their environment and not about protecting specific species or sites.
- 3.2 Moray benefits from a wealth of natural heritage and areas of importance to nature conservation. The challenges facing biodiversity in Moray are similar to those across Scotland. Moray's use of land and natural resources support our economy through agriculture, forestry, fisheries, tourism and sporting estates. It is recognised that biodiversity is crucial to attracting investment

and marketing of our food and drink and adds variety to our urban green spaces and contributes hugely to our health and wellbeing.

- 3.3 The report set out in **Appendix 1** provides an overview of the work the Council has undertaken to meet biodiversity duties from 2015 to 2017 and is structured around actions, mainstreaming, highlights and challenges. The report has been publicly available on the Council's website since 31 December 2017. A summary of the content of the Report is provided below.

4. SUMMARY OF BIODIVERSITY DUTY REPORT 2015-2017

Actions taken to improve biodiversity conservation

- 4.1 A number of actions have been undertaken by the Council to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Completion of a pedestrian/cycle network along the Elgin flood scheme that runs to the edge of the settlement promoting improved access to the countryside.
 - The Core Paths Plan has been reviewed and issued for public consultation in 2018.
 - The Council approved Open Space Strategy Supplementary Guidance in 2017 which sets out a strategic vision for protecting, enhancing and managing publicly usable open space in Moray. The guidance will be used when making planning decisions related to open space and assist in promoting and enhancing biodiversity in new developments.
 - Moray Woodland & Forestry Strategy was approved in 2017 and encourages a greater diversity of tree species and management practices. The Strategy will ensure that new woodland creation and restructuring proposals are resilient to the negative effects of climate change and tree disease. Our woodlands and forests are recognised as being vital in terms of contributing to protecting and enhancing biodiversity and securing a future for rare and protected species and habitats.
 - Masterplans have been produced for large expansions to the north and south of Elgin and Dallas Dhu in Forres and identify green corridors, allotments and new habitat creation in the form of wetlands and wildflower meadows across the various areas.
 - The Council's Ranger section runs a series of educational workshop events which are open to the general public and liaises closely with the local secondary schools and their curriculum. Within its available budget the Council works with communities to involve them more in decisions about their environment.

Future Actions to improve biodiversity conservation

- 4.2 The report also identifies future actions for biodiversity. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity is an identified main issue for the Moray Local Development Plan (MLDP) 2020, which is currently being prepared. The MLDP aims to support healthier ecosystems, connect people with nature to improve health and wellbeing, maximise the benefits of a diverse natural environment, contribute to sustainable economic growth and promote green corridors and planting for biodiversity in new developments.
- 4.3 It is proposed to focus on embedding biodiversity within the MLDP 2020 in the following ways.
- Adopt a specific policy on biodiversity and geodiversity seeking the creation of new natural habitats for their ecological and amenity value. Developers must demonstrate that they have included habitat creation in the design of new developments and provided links into existing green and blue networks wherever possible. There are also policies promoting health and wellbeing and supporting Mobility, Mood, Place initiative.
 - Embed provision of green networks within policy and support this with green network mapping for main towns identifying linkages to create habitat connectivity and link people with the wider countryside and nature.
 - SNH to input into Quality Audit process advising on effective ways of embedding biodiversity enhancement into new developments. This has already been actioned and began in 2018.

Biodiversity highlights and challenges

- 4.4 The following biodiversity highlights and challenges have been identified.
- Highlights - Completion of a cycle/pedestrian path along the Elgin Flood Scheme will allow enhanced access to the countryside and allow more people to access and connect with nature. The addition of Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) to the Council's quality audit panel will assist in identifying meaningful ways to embed biodiversity into new developments through blue and green networks, green walls and roofs and wildflower meadows and verges.
 - Challenges - At a time of significant financial constraint the Council has very limited resource to allocate to developing biodiversity beyond the mainstream work associated with the Local Development Plan. Direct action associated with Lands and Parks may continue to reduce under the current financial forecasts. It is also important to recognise that there is a lack of local data available to monitor biodiversity and evidence that actions are having a beneficial impact.

5. SUSTAINABLE ENERGY ACTION PLAN (SEAP)

- 5.1 Moray has been working with Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Angus in preparing a Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP) for the whole North East of Scotland entitled “Empowering the North East.” Participation in the SEAP was reported to this Committee on 10 June 2014 (paragraph 7 of the minute refers).
- 5.2 A SEAP is a high level strategic document which covers all areas of sustainable energy across business and commercial, domestic and transport including certain aspects of land use and fuel supply. It provides a baseline for the area in terms of carbon emissions and provides an action plan to meet emission reduction targets whilst providing opportunities for sustainable economic growth.
- 5.3 In addition to the North East SEAP there is a Moray specific SEAP which covers the time period 2015 to 2030. The target within this plan is for Moray to aim to achieve greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions of 35% by 2030 compared with the baseline year (2005). For this to be achieved the Council, public and private sector, energy utilities, transport organisations and the general public will need to take ambitious and meaningful action to reduce energy consumption and resource use and to use cleaner forms of energy to the extent possible. This will require investment to make the transition, but the benefits of action are way beyond contribution to mitigating the impacts of climate change and can benefit the region economically, socially and environmentally. The ultimate goal of the SEAP is to improve the quality of life for citizens of Moray.
- 5.4 To achieve this ambitious reduction in emissions, various actions are set out within the Moray SEAP. The projects, responsible organisations and progress are set out within the table below.

Project	Lead Organisation	Progress
Biomass installation in rural municipal buildings (30 buildings by 2030)	Moray Council	In progress. Property and Energy Biomass installed at Speyside High School, Milnes High School. Biomass heating from external sources feeding Lossiemouth Town Hall and Newmill Primary.

Project	Lead Organisation	Progress
Biomass installation in rural domestic buildings (50 properties by 2030)	Housing Developers	In progress. Planning Local Development Plan 2020 Main Issues Report includes draft policies requiring all new developments to install renewable technologies to reduce emissions.
Behavioural change campaign	SCARF	Ongoing.
Public Lighting LED Replacement Programme	Moray Council	In Progress Street Lighting Since 2016/17, 7,630 LED street lights have been installed, with a further 5,000 scheduled for completion this year.
Modal Shift to increase share of walking and cycling	Moray Council	In progress Transportation Active Travel Strategy and Elgin Transport Strategy agreed in 2017.
All public sector fleet to be electric or hybrid by 2030	Moray Council	In progress. Fleet Services National legislation driver for change.
Full network of electric vehicle charging points across North East	Aberdeenshire Council	In progress. Key charging points in Moray have been established and further points will be installed as required when the take up of electric vehicles increases.
Railway Upgrades Inverness to Aberdeen	Network Rail	In progress. Forres and Elgin upgrades underway.
Energy from Waste Plant	Aberdeen City Aberdeenshire and Moray	In progress. Currently at tender stage.

Project	Lead Organisation	Progress
Local electricity generation	Moray Council/Renewables Industry	In progress. Planning Local Development Plan 2020 Main Issues Report includes draft policies requiring all new developments to install renewable technologies to reduce emissions. Onshore wind energy guidance in place to direct wind energy proposals to the least environmentally sensitive locations.
Dailuaine Distillery Combined Heat and Power Plant (CHP)	Diageo	Completed.
Biomass Plant Rothes CoRDE	Helius Corde	Completed.
Glenlossie Distillery Local heat/cold production	Diageo	Completed.
Speyside Combined Heat and Power Plant (CHP)	Macallan/Speyside Renewable Energy Partnership	Completed.

5.5 Progress has been made in relation to the majority of actions identified within the SEAP. The projects that have the most significant impact in terms of emission reductions relate to the large scale energy centres proposed by the private sector. The Council has limited staffing and financial resources to contribute significantly to reducing emissions.

6. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

Protecting and enhancing biodiversity contributes to making Moray an attractive place to live and work as well as contributing to improving the health and wellbeing of residents.

The SEAP is likely to give rise to investment opportunities and promote the region for the development of renewables and energy infrastructure which will contribute to sustainable economic growth and diversification.

- (b) Policy and Legal**
There is a mandatory requirement to prepare the Biodiversity Duty Report. With regard to the SEAP the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 places a duty on public bodies to act in a way they consider most sustainable and in the way best calculated to deliver emission reduction targets set in the Act.
- (c) Financial Implications**
There are no financial implications arising directly from the report.
- (d) Risk Implications**
None.
- (e) Staffing Implications**
The preparation of the Biodiversity Duty Report has been absorbed into existing Development Plan staffing workloads. With regard to the SEAP the Council does not have dedicated staff resource for the wider aspects of sustainability/climate change.
- (f) Property**
None.
- (g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**
The Equalities Officer has advised that there is no need for an equality impact assessment. The SEAP has the potential to impact positively on issues such as fuel poverty and rural fuel and transport costs.
- (h) Consultations**
The Corporate Director (Economic Development Planning & Infrastructure), the Head of Development Services, the Legal Services Manager (Property & Contracts), the Equal Opportunities Officer, and Moira Patrick (Democratic Services Manager) have been consulted, and comments received have been incorporated into the report.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 A Biodiversity Duty Report covering 2015 to 2017 has been prepared by the Council and sets out actions taken to improve biodiversity conservation in Moray. Future actions will see further mainstreaming of biodiversity within the Local Development Plan, embedding the protection and enhancement of biodiversity in all new developments.**

7.2 Progress has been made across the majority of projects identified within the Moray Sustainable Energy Action Plan. Private sector investment in renewable technologies is contributing significantly to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Moray.

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