

## **NATURE RESTORATION FUND – SPEND OPTIONS**

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### **1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 In July 2021 the Scottish Government launched the Nature Restoration Fund, which provided £10 million in the financial year for projects addressing biodiversity loss and climate change, half of which was delivered via Local Authorities.
- 1.2 The Nature Restoration Fund aims to support large-scale, multi-year, multi-partner projects, which deliver transformative change to drive forward nature recovery.
- 1.3 Appendix 1 of this report sets of a number of projects which officers recommend are taken forward, utilising the funding allocated by the Scottish Government. The projects selected are time sensitive in terms of delivery and will provide a basis for further decision making by Members in relation to biodiversity and the remaining nature restoration funds.
- 1.4 The Scottish Government have a further fund available to Local Authorities and Scotland's National Parks for local nature restoration projects. This is a bidding process which is open to the Council, and is also open to projects that help Scotland's species, woodlands, rivers and seas back on the road to recovery.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that Policy and Resources Committee:-
- a) Note the allocation of Nature Restoration Funding received;
  - b) Agree to the recommended projects as set out in Appendix 1 of this report; and
  - c) Agree that officers bring forward a further list of projects for Members' consideration to the Policy and Resources Committee in December 2023.

### 3.0 DETAIL

3.1 The proposed strategic goal for the Nature Restoration Fund is “*to catalyse action at scale to protect and restore nature and Scotland’s biodiversity in land and at sea*”.

3.2 The fund has an increased focus on outcomes which address the main drivers of the decline in biodiversity – on land, over-exploitation of the natural environment and addressing its consequences, habitat loss and fragmentation, and invasive non-native species – particularly rural biodiversity.

3.3 The Fund has four strategic themes to be delivered across all the funding streams:-

- 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

3.4 The Council has been allocated £835,000 of funding since 2021.

<b>2021/22</b>	£108,000
<b>2022/23</b>	£238,000
<b>2023/24</b>	£489,000

3.5 The projects identified in **Appendix 1** are considered to fit the criteria of the fund, are time sensitive and within the control of the Council to deliver. They include research/consultancy to help refresh our biodiversity action plan and identify nature based solutions across Argyll and Bute. It will also demonstrate to the Scottish Government that the council is moving forward before the Council takes a final decision on remaining funds.

3.6 Should members of the Policy and Resources Committee agree to pursue the projects set out in **Appendix 1** this will leave £577,000 of funding to be determined following engagement with Members. When reviewing further project options, officers will also consider the opportunities associated with the Nature Restoration bidding fund which has been made available by the Scottish Government, and whether the Council should submit a bid for further funding.

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

4.1 This report recommends that the Council take forward a number of time sensitive and deliverable projects, utilising the Nature Restoration Fund allocated by the Scottish Government. The report also seeks agreement that officers bring forward a range of further projects for Members’ consideration.

## **5.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Policy - There are no policy implications arising directly from this report.
- 5.2 Financial - There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, however, it should be noted that some of the projects listed in Appendix 1 do remove a financial cost to the Council, and therefore can be classed as cost avoidance for the Local Authority.
- 5.3 Legal - There are no legal requirements arising directly from this report.
- 5.4 HR - There is a resource requirement for staff to implement the projects set out in Appendix 1.
- 5.5 Fairer Scotland Duty
  - 5.5.1 Equalities – Protected Characteristics – None.
  - 5.5.2 Socio Economic Duty – None.
  - 5.5.3 Islands - None – there are areas within the projects set out in Appendix 1 that cover some of the islands within Argyll and Bute.
- 5.6 Risk - There is a risk of loss of funding should the Council not spend this funding allocated by the Scottish Government. In agreeing to take forward the projects outlined in table 1, this will demonstrate to the Scottish Government that the Council are utilising the funds allocated
- 5.7 Climate Change - The Nature Restoration Fund aims to support large-scale, multi-year, multi-partner projects which deliver transformative change to drive forward nature recovery and address biodiversity loss and climate change.
- 5.8 Customer Service – communities across Argyll and Bute will benefit from this funding.

**Kirsty Flanagan, Executive Director with overall responsibility for Development and Economic Growth, and Road and Infrastructure Services**

**Douglas Hendry, Executive Director with overall responsibility for Commercial Services**

**Policy Lead for Climate Change and Environment Services, Councillor Ross Moreland**

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### **For Further Information:-**

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – List of Projects

## APPENDIX 1 – LIST OF PROJECTS

<b>OPTION</b>	<b>INDICATIVE COST</b>	<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>	<b>CATEGORY</b>
School Biodiversity Fund	£68k	Climate Change Board	Competitive fund for local schools to develop Biodiversity Action Plans for their respective grounds. Tree planting, food growing, education materials (Cooler Futures – potential partnership with ACT)	Habitat restoration
Woodland clearance and native replanting at Kilmory Estate / Kilmory Business Park	£50k	Commercial Services	Woodland around Kilmory Estate and Screening Business Park over mature and likely require felling and re-planting. Using a mix of native species that will enhance local biodiversity.	Habitat Restoration
Nature Networks Mapping project (as per NPF4)	£25K	Development and Economic Growth	The primary purpose of a Nature Network is ecological connectivity. This connectivity is required for fully functioning and healthy ecosystems. One of these priorities is establishing Nature Networks through Nature-based solutions, which provide multiple advantages supporting biodiversity, climatic resilience, and societal well-being. Contributes to 30 x 30 objectives <a href="https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/protected-areas-and-species/30-30-and-nature-networks/30-30-explained">https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/protected-areas-and-species/30-30-and-nature-networks/30-30-explained</a>	Habitat Restoration
Argyll and Bute Local Biodiversity Action Plan refresh	£30k	Development and Economic Growth	To develop a clear new framework for Local Biodiversity Action within Argyll and Bute for the next 10 years ( this is to ensure delivery) in order to contribute	Habitat Restoration

			to 30 x 30 , Nature Networks and contribute to the delivery SBS across Scotland by 2045.	
Reed bed restoration at Glengorm and Gartbreck landfill sites	£60k	Roads and Infrastructure	Restoration of reed bed filtration systems which are in place to filter and treat leachate from landfill sites	Coastal and Marine management
Perennial Plants – Bowmore Public Realm	£25k	Roads and Infrastructure	The purchase of native shrubs and perennial plants for the flower beds at Bowmore Public Realm.	Habitat Restoration
<b>TOTAL INDICATIVE SPEND: £258k</b>				

*The costings associated with each project in Appendix 1 are estimates, and may be subject to change as projects develop.*