



Argyll and Bute Council.



Biodiversity Duty Reporting 2011-2014



Image of Lismore from Port Appin, Argyll - © Marina Curran-Colthart



Biodiversity Duty Reporting- Argyll and Bute Council.

Key themes.

1. Governance – providing clear leadership and management on biodiversity.
2. Mainstreaming – integrating biodiversity into corporate projects, plans and strategies.
3. Action by Department – activities to protect and enhance biodiversity.

Appendix 1. Argyll and Bute Council Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan Monitoring Report

This report is based on the knowledge and evidence provided by key personnel with a remit for biodiversity conservation within Argyll and Bute Council. Thank to everyone who helped with providing information.

This report will be made available on the Argyll and Bute Council's website (www.argyll-bute.gov.uk), a copy can be requested from Council's Local Biodiversity Officer (E-mail: marina.curran-colthart@argyll-bute.gov.uk).



Introduction

Under the Nature Conservation Scotland Act, all public bodies are required to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities. Following an amendment in the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act, public bodies are also required to publish an available report on the actions they have taken to meet this biodiversity duty, every three years. Whilst these reports are welcome at any time, they must be available by 2015. Reports can be made available online, as a standalone document or as part of a larger report.

This guidance note provides a suggested format for such a report from local authorities and focuses on 6 key areas:

- Governance – providing clear leadership and management on biodiversity
- Action – taking action to protect and enhance biodiversity
- Mainstreaming – integrating biodiversity into corporate projects, plans and strategies
- Monitoring- recording data and reporting trends
- Partnership – developing effective partnership working through the Local Biodiversity Partnership and other stakeholders
- Communication – raising awareness and building capacity amongst stakeholders

The principles of effective reporting include:

- providing clear, consistent and comparable information
- showing clearly how biodiversity conservation is being integrated into Local Authorities and Community Planning agendas, especially through Single Outcome Agreements and Local Development Plans.
- highlighting key achievements and initiatives
- communicating with stakeholders, making the report easy to understand and available

1. Governance, Leadership and Management

Governance.

Overall governance is provided by the elected Members of Argyll and Bute Council. All policies and key strategies are reported to Council for discussion and approval. Environmental policies and initiatives will usually be reported to the relevant Council committee. Progress on delivering the Local Biodiversity Action Plan and on other key environmental initiatives is reported annually.



Leadership and Management.

Our elected members have championed biodiversity through representation on: the Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee, and the Local Nature Reserve Management Teams at Duchess Wood and Holy Loch and the Argyll and Bute Local Biodiversity Partnership. of environmental initiatives and given their support to a wide range of projects.

Argyll and Bute Council Corporate Plan:

Corporate objective 3 – Working together to realise the potential of our area

Argyll and Bute is an area of great natural beauty and diversity. We have huge natural potential for energy generation, food and drink, leisure and tourism. We need to develop the area further whilst protecting and enhancing what makes it attractive.

Argyll & Bute Council's Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

Conserving Biodiversity for the Community of Argyll & Bute is a 5 year plan and which is currently being reviewed in line with more recent developments such as the Aichi Targets Convention for Biological Diversity (CBD) at the COP10 in Nagoya, Japan see **Appendix 1** and the refreshed Argyll and Bute Local Biodiversity Action Plan and the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.

The Main aims are:

1. To assist the council in conserving and enhancing the natural environment of Argyll & Bute.
2. To use the benefits of biodiversity in delivering services such as education, social welfare and operational needs
3. To raise public and staff awareness of biodiversity

In conjunction with these documents the current and Local Plan and the emerging Local Development Plan take account of biodiversity through the Supplementary Guidance:

2. Mainstreaming

This section highlights the wide variety of activities undertaken by Argyll and Bute Council to further the conservation of biodiversity. While not exhaustive, it illustrates the range of activities that have taken place and continue to take place.

Biodiversity and the Law

To assist Argyll and Bute Council as the Planning Authority- a Biodiversity Checklist has been developed to ensure developers take biodiversity into account when carrying out site selection. The checklist includes, European Protected Species, Invasive Non-Native Species and a framework for eradication.

The Local Biodiversity Officer provides advice to:

- planners and developers on appropriate ecological surveys and assessment required for planning applications and in particular development activities likely to impact on European protected species and protected biodiversity,
 - to property colleagues on Bat surveys and mitigation,
 - to the public and community groups on biodiversity.
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Monitoring:

The Local Biodiversity Officer monitors the Argyll and Bute Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan which was devised in 2009 for 2010 implementation. Some of the Departments have been changed since its development; the changes will be reflected in the refreshed version in 2015.

See Appendix 2.



Partnership working:

Partnerships in Argyll and Bute have a number of common key principles openness, trust and honesty between partners

- agreed shared goals and values
- regular communication between partners openness and
- trust and honesty between partners
- **Argyll and Bute Local Biodiversity Partnership.**
This partnership has the responsibility for the delivery of the Argyll and Bute Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2010-2015 link: <http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/planning-and-environment/AandB%20BAP%20Draft.pdf>
- **Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership –**
The main aim of the Community Planning Partnership is to deliver the outcomes within the Single outcome agreement (SOA). The purpose of the SOA is to detail strategic or high level priorities, identify the outcomes which will be delivered by the partners either individually or jointly, and show how those outcomes will contribute to one or more of the Scottish Government national outcomes.

Single Outcome Agreement

Sustainability – Ensuring a sustainable future by protecting the natural environment and mitigating climate change.

Outcome 5. People live active, healthier and independent lives.

Outcome 6. People live in safer and stronger communities.

Ensuring the natural and built environment is safe, respected, valued and free of environmental crime.

The importance of the natural environment is indicated by the 121 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (Scottish Natural Heritage, as noted in December 2012) that have been designated within the area, which in total cover almost ten per cent of Argyll and Bute’s land area. Additionally, almost thirty per cent of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park area fall within the local authority’s boundaries.

The Council’s Biodiversity Officer provides support for a number of community groups involved in biodiversity projects most pertaining to habitat restoration and management for a variety of species. Some have issues with Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) and are currently making progress with eradication plans.

3 Action for Biodiversity by Department.

3.1. Development and Infrastructure.

3.1.1 Planning and Regulatory Services

- Local Development Plan: http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/dps_version_8_march_2014_v2.pdf
- Main Issues Report: <http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/local-development-plan-main-issues-report>

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) – As the “Responsible Authority” in the terms of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005, the Council has



a duty to determine whether the Local Development Plan will have significant environmental effects and therefore whether a full SEA is required.

<http://www.argyllbute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Strategic%20Environmental%20Assessment%20MIR.pdf>

- Green Networks: Provision for Biodiversity and Green networks has been mapped in each of our six main towns. More information to follow in early 2015.
- Holy Loch Local Nature Reserve declaration Scotland's 71st.
- Development of the Biodiversity Checklist which includes EPS, INNS for use by developers.
- Renewable Energy: Wind Farm Management agreements in place for Hen Harrier, Golden Eagle and Black Grouse

3.1.3. Road and Amenity Services.

- Waste disposal -each of our landfill sites (Gartbreck, Glengorm and Gott Bay) has a site specific environmental management plan, which also includes monitoring and reporting data and trends, these form part of our reporting requirements to SEPA; the abstract below is taken from SEPA's Annual Report and Accounts for 2013-14:

Landfill audit at Gartbreck, Islay – monitoring environmental performance.

Argyll and Bute Council own and operate three landfill sites which are all located on islands off the west coast. The largest of these is Gartbreck on Islay where approximately 2,000 tonnes per year of waste is disposed. This site was audited by SEPA in the summer of 2013. Despite the relatively small size and throughput of the site, officers were impressed to find a bespoke software package, developed by council officers, with assistance from consultants, which recorded and analysed all monitoring data relating to the site.

Each monitored parameter or substance was assessed against trigger and control levels with results plotted graphically for each substance. A large number of substances, ranging from ammonia to methane, were monitored in the groundwater or gases released from the site. Trends for individual parameters, displayed graphically, could be assessed over significant time periods and compared with what would have been expected from the land prior to conversion to landfill.

This gave the operator a chance to understand the environmental risks and impacts and react accordingly. The functionality and user-friendliness of the system compared very favourably with those seen at much larger sites, and those run by waste specialist companies. Argyll and Bute Council is to be commended for its efforts to develop a system to improve its understanding of the performance and impact of the site.

Restoration included some capping works on Gartbreck this year (the site is surrounded by a SSSI protected area), an area of 1400 square meters was permanently capped and seeded to return this ground for grazing.



Roadside Verges

- Changes in cutting regimes on council managed roads have increase plant diversity.
- Management Plan for West Bay Beach: Dunoon drafted with a Seminar/Workshop planned for February 2015.

Graveyard Policy.

- Woodland and Green Burials Policy with maintenance regimes are linked to enhancing biodiversity. <http://www.argyllbute.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s90833/Policy%20for%20Provision%20of%20Woodland%20and%20Green%20Burials%20-%20July%202014.pdf>

Buildings and Species.

- Property Services have a framework contract in place with Echoes Ecology. When necessary, this provides us with ecology surveys (bats, birds etc.), prior to capital improvement work being undertaken on Council buildings. As part of this contract, the firm have provided our technical staff with basic training to raise awareness of the circumstances when such surveys are required.

3.2. Economic Development

- Economic Development Action Plan- <http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/business-and-trade/economic-development-action-plan> , Identified Strengths: High quality natural environment and sustainable economic assets.
- Assisting with the establishment of the Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust in partnership with Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland, Highland NHS and Argyll and Bute Social Enterprise Network.

4.0. Customer Services.

4.1.0 Education

- Schools in Argyll and Bute deliver topics related to biodiversity in every one of our 88 operational schools as part of their curriculum. The format in each school will be different as each school has a different curriculum related to their local circumstance and learner needs (for example Luss P.S. has been working with the national park to help sustain a threatened fish species in Loch Lomond through a breeding programme in the school). Over 50 of the schools have also attained at least one Eco (Green Flag).
- Rivers in the Classroom project was originally promoted by the Argyll and Bute Local Biodiversity Partnership's Community Action for Biodiversity Grant Programme (led by the council) which was promoted, organised and supervised by the Argyll Fisheries Trust.
- The Growing Wild Project had thousands of free seed kits for groups to share throughout the UK, so people could transform local spaces into beautiful, inspiring and colourful wild flower havens. 6 Primary schools in Argyll and Bute took part in the project in 2014. ; All schools in Argyll and Bute have been encouraged to take part in the 2015 project.



4.1.2. Housing.

- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) – As the “Responsible Authority” in the terms of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005, the Council has a duty to determine whether the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) will have significant environmental effects and therefore whether a full SEA is required. To that end, applying the relevant criteria as set out in Schedule 2 of the Act, the Council carried out a screening of the consultative draft LHS 2011-16 and under Section 8(1) of the Act, and in consultation with the SEA Gateway, Historic Scotland, Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, it was agreed that the strategy is unlikely to have significant environmental effects. Within the hierarchy of plans and strategies relating to the LHS, the key documents requiring full SEA are the Local Development Plan, the SOA and the Council’s Corporate Plans. This screening report and formal determination are available on the Council website and are also available for reference by the public at local offices.
- Renewable energy is encouraged in housing developments thereby reducing the use of fossil fuels, cost and impact on biodiversity.

5 Communication

- Website: promoting School Holiday biodiversity activities.
- Liaising with Community Councils on Biodiversity issues and promoting opportunities

6 Scottish Biodiversity Strategy- contributions

Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.

Argyll and Bute Council assisted with the refresh of the current strategy and the Local Biodiversity Office is a representative on the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy -Invasive Non-Native Species Working Group.

The Council will be delivering some of the Strategy through activities relating to promoting and enhancing biodiversity.

7 Argyll and Bute Council’s Biodiversity Highlights of the Past Year.

- Emerging Local Development Plan, Biodiversity, Green Networks, Soils and Geodiversity policies
- Biodiversity gains through Planning conditions,
- Health and Wellbeing- NHS representative on the Holy Loch Local Nature Reserve management team
- Woodland and Green Burials Policy
- Roadside Verge Maintenance regime
- Eco-schools and school grounds biodiversity projects.

End.



Appendix 1.

Aichi Targets

Listed below are the 20 targets agreed by the 193 signatories to the Convention for Biological Diversity (CBD) at the COP10 in Nagoya in October 2010. These targets form the framework for biodiversity conservation for the next 10 years, until 2020.

The 20 targets are grouped under 5 main goals. The targets are listed in brief outline but a detailed explanation of what each target means is available on the CBD website.

Strategic Goal A:

Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society

Target 1

By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.

Target 2

By 2020, at the latest, biodiversity values have been integrated into national and local development and poverty reduction strategies and planning processes and are being incorporated into national accounting, as appropriate, and reporting systems.

Target 3

By 2020, at the latest, incentives, including subsidies, harmful to biodiversity are eliminated, phased out or reformed in order to minimize or avoid negative impacts, and positive incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity are developed and applied, consistent and in harmony with the Convention and other relevant international obligations, taking into account national socio economic conditions.

Target 4

By 2020, at the latest, Governments, business and stakeholders at all levels have taken steps to achieve or have implemented plans for sustainable production and consumption and have kept the impacts of use of natural resources well within safe ecological limits.

Strategic Goal B:

Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use.

Target 5

By 2020, the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero, and degradation and fragmentation is significantly reduced.

**Target 6**

By 2020 all fish and invertebrate stocks and aquatic plants are managed and harvested sustainably, legally and applying ecosystem based approaches, so that overfishing is avoided, recovery plans and measures are in place for all depleted species, fisheries have no significant adverse impacts on threatened species and vulnerable ecosystems and the impacts of fisheries on stocks, species and ecosystems are within safe ecological limits.

Target 7

By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity.

Target 8

By 2020, pollution, including from excess nutrients, has been brought to levels that are not detrimental to ecosystem function and biodiversity.

Target 9

By 2020, invasive alien species and pathways are identified and prioritized, priority species are controlled or eradicated, and measures are in place to manage pathways to prevent their introduction and establishment.

Target 10

By 2015, the multiple anthropogenic pressures on coral reefs, and other vulnerable ecosystems impacted by climate change or ocean acidification are minimized, so as to maintain their integrity and functioning.

Strategic Goal C:

To improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity.

Target 11

By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.

Target 12

By 2020 the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has been improved and sustained.

Target 13

By 2020, the genetic diversity of cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and of wild relatives, including other socio-economically as well as culturally valuable species, is maintained, and strategies have been developed and implemented for minimizing genetic erosion and safeguarding their genetic diversity.



Strategic Goal D:

Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Target 14

By 2020, ecosystems that provide essential services, including services related to water, and contribute to health, livelihoods and well-being, are restored and safeguarded, taking into account the needs of women, indigenous and local communities, and the poor and vulnerable.

Target 15

By 2020, ecosystem resilience and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks has been enhanced, through conservation and restoration, including restoration of at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to combating desertification.

Target 16

By 2015, the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization is in force and operational, consistent with national legislation.

Strategic Goal E:

Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building.

Target 17

By 2015 each Party has developed, adopted as a policy instrument, and has commenced implementing an effective, participatory and updated national biodiversity strategy and action plan.

Target 18

By 2020, the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and their customary use of biological resources, are respected, subject to national legislation and relevant international obligations, and fully integrated and reflected in the implementation of the Convention with the full and effective participation of indigenous and local communities, at all relevant levels.

Target 19

By 2020, knowledge, the science base and technologies relating to biodiversity, its values, functioning, status and trends, and the consequences of its loss, are improved, widely shared and transferred, and applied.

Target 20

By 2020, at the latest, the mobilization of financial resources for effectively implementing the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 from all sources, and in accordance with the consolidated and agreed process in the Strategy for Resource Mobilization should increase



substantially from the current levels. This target will be subject to changes contingent to resource needs assessments to be developed and reported by Parties.

Appendix 2. separate sheet