

ANGUS COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 21 NOVEMBER 2023

TAYSIDE LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2016-26 PROGRESS REPORT

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

ABSTRACT

This report highlights the progress made on the delivery of the Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-26. Although this is a Tayside wide plan, this initial interim review focusses on Angus progress from 2016-2023 and appropriate cross boundary projects. The monitoring undertaken for this report illustrates that 75% of actions in the plan relevant to Angus, or 116 out of 155 actions, are in delivery or complete. The progress made will also be incorporated within the Tayside wide updates for the final 2026 monitoring report.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee:-

- (i) Note the contents of this report and progress to date on delivering the Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2026-26;
- (ii) Note the challenges and opportunities identified in delivering the Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-26 for both the nature and climate crisis and next steps; and
- (iii) Approve the commencement of scoping works by the Planning and Sustainable Growth Service to investigate the development of a third edition of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN

- 2.1 Delivery of projects and initiatives will contribute to the following priorities in the Angus Council Plan 2023-2028.

Caring for our Place:

- Enhance and restore Angus Biodiversity, corporately and with a range of stakeholders.
- Take action to mitigate against climate change by delivering our Transition to Net Zero.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan (TLBAP) was first published by the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership (TBP) in 2002 and guided the conservation and enhancement of the region's natural heritage for fourteen years. After a yearlong stakeholder consultation period, a second, 10-year plan, was developed and published in 2016. Its purpose is to facilitate local nature conservation and restoration action, taking into consideration threats to biodiversity identified by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, the ecosystem approach being pursued within the Scottish Government's 2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity (published in 2015) as well as, national legislation and policy. Its key objectives are as follows:

- **Objective 1:** Endeavour to reduce the direct pressures on ecosystems by implementing projects to protect and restore ecosystem health.

- **Objective 2:** Safeguard ecosystem species and genetic diversity by enhancing connectivity and where possible preventing their decline.
 - **Objective 3:** Mainstream biodiversity conservation action by raising awareness and the enjoyment of ecosystems.
- 3.2 The Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-26 consists of short, medium, and long-term actions. These are broken down into 155 overarching actions and 573 sub-actions over seven ecosystem themed sections, which are Water and Wetlands, Coastal and Marine, Urban, Upland, Farmland, Woodland, the Tayside Geodiversity Action Plan, and a People and Communications section. At the time of development, it was true reflection of stakeholder, local and national priorities.
- 3.3 The Tayside Biodiversity Partnership (TBP) will celebrate its 25-year anniversary in 2024. The longevity and successful endeavours of the Partnership has meant that 96 partners are named against the delivery of the TLBAP actions in the progress report. Updates have been collated by the Planning and Sustainable Growth Service through the TBP themed working groups and wider stakeholder engagement in 2022/23.

4. CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Since the launch of the Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-26 in summer 2016, progress on its delivery has been significant, with a wide range of projects occurring across Angus. Analysis has found that in 2023, 116 (or 75%) of the 155 total overarching actions are being progressed. The plan contains 573 Sub actions and of these 341 (or 60%) are being progressed. In conclusion, significant progress has been made with approximately 96 partners being engaged in delivery of these actions.
- 4.2 The full progress report to 2023 is contained within Appendix 1. The report provides further detail and contains an overall update on themed section delivery and 12 in depth cases studies. It is important to note that 28 (or less than 5%) of the sub actions are attributable to Perth and Kinross solely. Additionally, there has been difficulty in receiving updates which may have impacted minimally on overall progress calculations in 2023.
- 4.3 Progress can be broken down further by each ecosystem theme, detailed in Table 1 below and expressed in percentages. Partnership working is key to successful project delivery and the number of partner organisations working across Angus within in each theme is also highlighted.

Ecosystem Theme	% Overarching Actions in Progress	Sub-Actions in Progress	Number of delivery of Partners	Additional Information
Water and Wetlands Ecosystems	67%	59%	31	
Coastal and Marine Ecosystems	87%	91%	28	
Urban Ecosystems	85%	59%	39	
Upland Ecosystems	73%	55%	30	
Farmland Ecosystems	79%	49%	30	
Woodland Ecosystems	69%	55%	26	
People and Communications	75%	48%	17	* No of projects are Perthshire specific. The report reflects Angus or cross boundary projects only.

Tayside Geodiversity Action Plan	60%	35%	12	* No of projects are Perthshire specific. The report reflects Angus or cross boundary projects only.
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*Table 1 above shows the breakdown of Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-26 by ecosystem themes and progress on delivery of the actions expressed as a percentage. The number of delivery partners per theme is included.

4.4 Furthermore, the full 2023 progress report, contained in Appendix 1, includes 12 case studies, which highlight exemplar projects delivered in Angus, across the ecosystem themes, by partnerships and communities. Examples of key achievements include:

Angus Small Blue Butterfly

- The small blue (*Cupido minimus*) project was established as a five-year project in 2011 by the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership and Angus Council to conserve the UK's smallest butterfly's dwindling population. The project was such a success it is now in its 12th year.
- With more than 40 organisations, community groups and individuals involved, the project showcases how collaborative, community focused conservation can succeed and inspire further action. Woodlands Primary School in Carnoustie 'Small Blue Species Champion's' have been joined in conservation activities by Cllr David Fairweather, who is the Small Blue Elected Member Champion for Angus.
- In December 2019, the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership's project "Back from the Brink – Saving our Small Blue" won the much-coveted RSPB Nature of Scotland "Community Initiative Award". In the same week, the project achieved the Association of Local Government Ecologists' 25th anniversary "Local Government Biodiversity Project" UK wide Award.

Angus Coastal Festival

- The Tayside Biodiversity Partnership (TBP) held the first "Angus Coastal Festival" in September 2018. The festival's aims were to increase public understanding and awareness of issues impacting on coastal ecosystem health; empower communities to participate in safeguarding the coast; and to provide opportunities for communities to enjoy their coast.
- The TBP Coastal & Marine Working Group developed and delivered the festival programme, which included 43 free events through engagement with coastal communities and 21 partner agencies. The 11-day period in September 2018 was chosen to coincide with the Great British Beach Clean weekend. Community engagement and marine litter issues were at its core and local schools and businesses participated in a range of activities. During the weekend, nine beach cleans took place on the Angus coast with more than 170 participants removing 5175 items of marine litter.
- The festival proved to be very popular amongst Angus residents and visitors and the festival was attended by more than 700 people. The event was repeated in 2019 and was a great success.

Rottal Burn Restoration & UK River Prize

- The Rottal Burn is a tributary of the River South Esk Special Area of Conservation in Glen Clova, Angus, with headwaters in Cairngorms National Park. The lower burn was straightened around the 1830s for agricultural reasons and was subjected to regular dredging. To restore the Rottal Burn, a new channel was created in 2012, replacing 650m of straightened, embankment-lined channel with an open, meandering channel extended to 1200m in length, re-connected to its floodplain.

- The Rottal Burn Restoration delivers multiple benefits contributing to important issues from a global to local scale. The project was awarded the UK River Prize in April 2023 by the River Restoration Centre. The project is an example of what can be achieved when local partners, experts, academics, and landowners combine their strengths for the benefit of the local environment, biodiversity, and community. It continues to inspire new restoration projects across the River South Esk catchment and Angus.
- 4.5 Opportunities to deliver actions in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan have increased since 2016, especially since 2020 and the COVID19 pandemic. Wider awareness of our need to be part of a healthy ecosystem and how strong the connection between people and nature can be, has instilled in communities an increased desire to be involved in nature restoration and protection at a local scale.
- 4.6 Legislation and policy development has seen nature and climate become even more so important nationally. The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, 5-year Delivery Plans, the Natural Environment Bill and National Planning Framework 4 set a tone of urgency and scale of effort needed to address the ecological and climate crises. Funding streams now available to communities and local authorities such as the Nature Restoration Fund also make local and landscape scale project delivery a reality. Pace of action delivery has increased significantly due to the availability of funds, however, challenges still faced as application deadlines are tight and staff resources are stretched across many agencies.

5. PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Alongside noting the contents of this report and progress to date in delivering the actions, it is also important to recognise the challenges and opportunities identified in delivering action for both the nature and climate crisis in the existing 2016-26 plan, which are required to be refined and addressed. Therefore, the Planning and Sustainable Growth Service considers it important to commence an investigation and scoping exercise to establish the format of a third edition of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, to begin in 2024. This investigation and scoping exercise are required in order to allow appropriate time for stakeholder engagement and consultation before the preparation of, and consultation on, a third iteration of an area-wide Local Biodiversity Action Plan.
- 5.2 As recently as 2016, the interconnections between the nature and climate crises were not fully understood or embedded in local or national policy. For example, climate change featured infrequently in the Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-26. However, the links between the climate and ecological crises are now fully recognised and climate change adaptation will feature prominently in future Local Biodiversity Action Plans Action Plans.
- 5.3 The production of a new Local Biodiversity Action Plan will add legacy and ongoing value to the 2026-26 plan and meet the requirements of local and national policy including the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2014, the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and National Planning Framework 4.
- 5.4 In addition to the development of a new Local Biodiversity Action Plan, the next steps needed to address the nature and climate crisis in Angus have been identified by the Planning and Sustainable Growth Service and the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership. Key actions to address the nature and climate crisis include:
- The development of burgh scale action plans.
 - The mapping of strategic nature networks.
 - Working in partnership to prepare priority projects and be ready to apply for funding as it becomes available.
 - Horizon scanning for partnership and funding opportunities.
 - Working at a regional scale with neighbouring local authorities.
 - Sharing good practice locally and regionally.
 - Being inclusive, involving everyone in identifying the threats to biodiversity and in developing solutions.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. Work to progress actions is included within the work of the Planning and Sustainable Growth Service and external funding maximised where available.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Risks

- 7.1 The Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan has set a framework for the prioritisation of nature restoration and enhancement in Angus for almost 25 years. Working with partner organisations, agencies and communities has enabled the delivery of action that has made a positive difference for people and nature. Without focused partnership working and a clear action plan, Angus will not be fully supported in addressing the impacts of the nature and climate Crisis.
- 7.2 Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, all public bodies in Scotland are required to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their functions. Without a long-term Local Biodiversity Action Plan Angus Council will be unable to meet this duty fully. This risk will be monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis by the Planning and Sustainable Growth Service and the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership via statutory reporting and ecosystem themed Tayside Biodiversity Partnership working groups.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and is attached to this report.

NOTE: The background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) which were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

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Appendix 1: Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2016 -2026. 2023 Action Progress Review – Angus



Equality Impact/Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment Form

(To be completed with reference to Guidance Notes)

Step 1

Name of Proposal (includes e. g. budget savings, committee reports, strategies, policies, procedures, service reviews, functions):

Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2016 - 2026. 2023 Action Progress Review – Angus

Step 2

Is this only a **screening** Equality Impact Assessment Yes/~~No~~

(A) If Yes, please choose from the following options **all** reasons why a full EIA/FSD is not required:

(i) It does not impact on people Yes/~~No~~

(ii) It is a percentage increase in fees which has no differential impact on protected characteristics ~~Yes/No~~

(iii) It is for information only Yes/~~No~~
The majority of the of the report is 'for information only'.

(iv) It is reflective e.g. of budget spend over a financial year Yes/~~No~~

(v) It is technical Yes/~~No~~

If you have answered yes to any of points above, please go to **Step 16**, and sign off the Assessment.

Step 16: Sign off and Authorisation. Please state name, post, and date for each:

Prepared by: Kelly Ann Dempsey, Team Leader - Environment & Climate Change.
20.10.23

Reviewed by: Doreen Phillips - Senior Practitioner (Equalities). 20.10.23

Approved by: Antony McGuinness, Manager - Development Planning, Environment and Climate Change. 20.10.23

NB. There are several worked examples of separate EIA and FSD Assessments in the Guidance which may be of use to you.