

North Lanarkshire Council Report

Environment and Climate Change Committee

Does this report require to be approved? Yes No

Ref AM/NP/VA/HA Date [09/11/22](#)

PoW P025.1(2) update: Using Greenspace to Improve Health, Wellbeing, and Social Outcomes.

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Executive Summary

The report highlights the work undertaken in the last 12 months to improve health and wellbeing activity in Greenspaces, a key outcome for this element of the programme of work.

Using Scottish Government Nature Recovery and Smarter Choices Smarter Places funding and one-off funds awarded to improve sustainability in parks the Community Greenspace and Greenspace Projects teams continue to deliver more accessible, more biodiverse spaces for the residents of North Lanarkshire and beyond to enjoy.

The report also outlines work that has been achieved through the additional temporary staff resource, including the biodiversity enhancement of sites and large-scale public engagement projects. Some detail on upcoming projects to enhance the local greenspaces of North Lanarkshire is also provided.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Environment and Climate Change committee:

- 1) Acknowledge the continued significant effort to improve health, wellbeing and social outcomes through effective use of our greenspace.
- 2) Recognise the planned investment this year across a further range of engagement exercises including participatory budgeting, and research into changing behaviours around active travel together with the delivery of further projects which will contribute to tackling the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change through investing in our greenspaces.
- 3) Recognise the impact these interventions can have on addressing inequalities in accessing greenspace

The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority [Improve the health and wellbeing of our communities](#)

Ambition statement (15) Encourage the health and wellbeing of people through a range of social, cultural, and leisure activities

1. Background

- 1.1 The Community Greenspace team, and more recently with the addition of the Greenspace Projects team, have for many years been proactive and extremely effective at securing external funding to enhance delivery of important projects in our local greenspaces.
- 1.2 The council has been part of one of four pilot Green Health partnerships across Scotland focused on how better cross-sector co-ordination can bring forward approaches to increasing physical activity and improving mental health through engagement with the natural environment.
- 1.3 A recent report from Public Health Scotland (July 2022) reports that socio-economic inequality in relation to use of greenspace increased during the pandemic. Data from the University of Glasgow shows greater rises in reported use of greenspace among more advantaged groups than disadvantaged. The report concluded that 'People who used greenspaces during the pandemic reported positive benefits, particularly for their mental health and wellbeing. However, not everyone experienced these benefits equally. While many people's use of greenspace increased, some people, including those that did not have access to a garden or shared outdoor space at home, did not access or use parks and other public greenspaces.'
- 1.4 It is clear that we have to continue to focus on how we can reduce this inequality through both improving physical access, but also in increasing community confidence and familiarity with utilising this major council asset.
- 1.5 This report provides a brief overview of how some of the money secured both internally and externally has been used to deliver towards PoW 25.1 (2) using greenspace to improve health, wellbeing and social outcomes over the last 12 months.

2. Report

Nature Restoration Fund 2021/22 £369k and 2022/23 £274k

- 2.1 In 2021/22 we received this funding as a part of the Scottish Government's wider £500m investment in Scotland's natural environment. These funds support projects that will help to deliver nature restoration, safeguard wildlife, and tackle the causes of biodiversity loss due to climate change.
- 2.2 In North Lanarkshire the investment from 2021/22 was used over a wide variety of projects to enhance biodiversity and improve conditions in local areas, including:
 - The introduction of areas of wilfdlower and hedgerow enhancement as part of bigger access projects in urban areas;
 - A feasibility study into 'no mow' projects across our 3 country parks, which will inform best practice and techniques for future planned projects following the outcome of these trials.
 - A contribution to a large-scale river restoration project at Dumbreck Marsh LNR with SEPA as partners.
 - A contribution to the removal and treatment of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)
 - Restoration of a key native woodland link.
- 2.3 In 2022/23 the planned spend has begun and includes:

- £50k investment to deliver projects chosen through a North Lanarkshire wide participatory budgeting exercise to encourage our communities to make suggestions for projects to improve biodiversity and recovery of nature in their local spaces.
- A catchment wide project to manage invasive species in Kilsyth (with opportunities and access to training for local people to assist in future maintenance).
- A project proposing to create new ponds (at investigation stage) at: Newarthill & Hillrigg and undertake pond restoration works (large scale works) at Perchy Pond (Greenhead Moss Local Nature Reserve (LNR)) and St Maurice's pond (LNR); and smaller scale works at the dipping pond at Strathclyde Country Park; the curling pond at Colzium Lennox Estate and 3 smaller ponds at Riccard Johnstone.
- Planting of 2 avenues of trees (for the Queen's Green Canopy project)
- Enhancement tree planting at the Dalzell Estate Arboretum
- A project to enhance our town parks through the introduction of biodiversity meadows.
- A contribution to a bog restoration project in Cumbernauld, also drawing in funds through the Peatland Action programme administered by Nature Scot.

2.4 Scottish Government have indicated that this fund will continue for a further three years at a similar level. In 2023/24 we intend to build on the participatory budgeting approach to further engage communities with nature recovery and are hopeful that we can fund a greater number of projects next financial year.

Smarter Choices Smarter Places

- 2.5 Between September and November 2021 over 13,300 North Lanarkshire residents took part in a game that was designed to embed behaviour change in relation to active travel choices with the people who take part. The initiative was funded by Smarter Choices Smarter Places - Scottish Government funding received from Paths for All to be used to encourage more people to reduce their car use in favour of more sustainable travel choices (walking, cycling, wheeling and public transport).
- 2.6 Participants registered to earn points by tapping a card on a beatbox that allocated those points to a team (often a school but can be a community team). The beatboxes were spaced 0.5miles apart and participants must travel on foot, by bike or scooter between the boxes to score points for their team. Healthy encouragement was provided by way of prizes to be won at the end of the 6-week game period. There were several themes to encourage participants to visit new places and try new routes throughout the game period. This game included beatbox locations around Bellshill, Motherwell, Newmains, Shotts and the surrounding area and 48 primary schools took part.
- 2.7 Surveys from after the game period showed that there was a 7% decrease in adult participants reporting inactivity and there was a 5% increase in children walking to school daily. This is one of several Beat the Street games that have taken place in North Lanarkshire over the last 10 years and this year we are using Smarter Choices Smarter Places funding to evaluate their effectiveness. The research will provide data on what other activities or interventions we may be able to introduce to further reduce the reliance on the car, particularly for shorter journeys and how we can improve the equity of access to those opportunities in the areas of North Lanarkshire with the highest levels of deprivation and where communities have shown not to engage with

active travel programmes in the past. Some focus for potential new interventions will be on the location of proposed hubs across North Lanarkshire.

One off Funding – additional Countryside Rangers

- 2.8 In March 2021 Nature Scot made available funding to support visitor management at hot spot locations. The funding was made available due to the realisation of the importance that local greenspaces had played in people's lives throughout lockdown. Appointment of 2 Assistant (seasonal) Countryside Rangers took place for temporary posts to October 2021, then were successfully extended to March 2022.
- 2.9 These posts have subsequently been extended to the end of March 2023 with 2 further posts also possible through one off funding being made available to further support the work that these posts have been undertaking.
- 2.10 Specific duties that have been supported through this additional resource have included:
- Providing additional site stewardship visits to ensure a welcome environment for visitors and to monitor the impact that visitors have in our local greenspaces. Stewardship takes place at our 10 designated Local Nature Reserves and another 20 priority sites throughout the council area.
 - Assisting in the delivery of the Outdoor Education Programme at Strathclyde Country Park, providing a bushcraft activity for all the P7 children attending the programme. Additional staffing allowed the service to expand provision as Education increased the numbers of children taking part in the programme.
 - Assisting in the provision of the Branching Out initiative, which was particularly important following the impacts of the pandemic on people's mental health.
 - Providing a renewed Greenspace diary of events for the public to be involved in throughout the autumn of 2021 and the spring and summer of 2022.
 - Assisting in the running of regular Countryside Ranger led volunteering programmes at 3 sites across the area.

Lanarkshire Green Health Partnership

- 2.11 The Get Walking Lanarkshire Health walk programme continues to deliver a weekly programme of over 30 health walks, with additional specific walks for people living with or affected by cancer, those living with or affected by dementia and we offer walks with British Sign Language for deaf people and their families. One of our walking groups recently won "Paths for All's Ian Findlay Outstanding Achievement Award 2022". The project has also trained 11 new walk leaders between May and July 2022, and now supports 2661 walkers on a regular basis.
- 2.12 The partnership is also working to deliver improvement projects and during 2021 embedded green health within the Lanarkshire Weight Management Service to tighten links to other opportunities within NHS Lanarkshire.
- 2.13 Smaller projects that the partnership have supported recently include the delivery of a dementia friendly garden on Airbles Road and an investment in a community garden at King George V Park, Wishaw.
- 2.14 The Open Space audit and strategy will help us better focus interventions close to communities that will most benefit from them. We will also work with NHSL Lanarkshire to apply Health Inequalities Impact Assessment to Greenspace improvement projects to ensure we are targeting them effectively.

3. Measures of success

- 3.1 Increased numbers of people accessing Wellbeing activities in parks (including Get Walking Lanarkshire, Branching Out, Greenspace Diary activities).
 - 3.2 Continued success in drawing in external funding to support greenspace projects in country parks and open spaces.
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Andrew McPherson
Head of Regulatory Services and Waste Solutions

5. Impacts (<http://connect/report-template-guidance>)

<p>5.1 Public Sector Equality Duty and Fairer Scotland Duty Does the report contain information that has an impact as a result of the Public Sector Equality Duty and/or Fairer Scotland Duty? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact? If Yes, has an assessment been carried out and published on the council's website? https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/your-community/equalities/equality-and-fairer-scotland-duty-impact-assessments Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>5.2 Financial impact Does the report contain any financial impacts? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, have all relevant financial impacts have been discussed and agreed with Financial Solutions? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p>
<p>5.3 HR policy impact Does the report contain any HR policy or procedure impacts? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, have all relevant HR impacts have been discussed and agreed with People and Organisational Development? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p>
<p>5.4 Legal impact Does the report contain any legal impacts (such as general legal matters, statutory considerations (including employment law considerations), or new legislation)? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, have all relevant legal impacts have been discussed and agreed with Legal and Democratic Solutions? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p>
<p>5.5 Data protection impact Does the report / project / practice contain or involve the processing of personal data? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, is the processing of this personal data likely to result in a high risk to the data subject? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, has a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) been carried out and e-mailed to dataprotection@northlan.gov.uk Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>5.6 Technology / Digital impact Does the report contain information that has an impact on either technology, digital transformation, service redesign / business change processes, data management, or connectivity / broadband / Wi-Fi? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p>

Where the impact identifies a requirement for technology, has an assessment been carried out (or scheduled) by the Enterprise Architecture Governance Group (EAGG)?

Yes No

5.7 Environmental / Carbon impact

Does the report / project / practice contain information that has an impact on any environmental or carbon matters?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

Many of the projects mentioned help to reduce the impacts of climate change by enhancing biodiversity in our local greenspaces.

5.8 Communications impact

Does the report contain any information that has an impact on the council's communications activities?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

5.9 Risk impact

Is there a risk impact?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the key risks and potential impacts, highlighting where the risk(s) are assessed and recorded (e.g. Corporate or Service or Project Risk Registers), and how they are managed?