

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Climate Change & Sustainability Committee

23 August 2023

NATURE RESTORATION FUND 2023-2024

Report by Head of Planning & Development (Report No. 23/220)

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Nature Restoration Fund (NRF) allocation received by Perth and Kinross Council for the 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years. The report sets out a proposed revised process to use the funds in the current financial year.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- Approves the proposed revised process to allocate NRF funding and
 - Delegates the award of funding to the Executive Director (Communities)

3. STRUCTURE OF REPORT

- 3.1 This report is structured over the following sections:
- Section 4: Background
 - Section 5: Proposals
 - Section 6: Conclusion
 - Appendices

4. BACKGROUND – 2022/23 & 2023/2024 ALLOCATION

- 4.1 The Nature Restoration Fund (NRF) is a 5-year commitment to fund projects aimed at “restoring nature and improving biodiversity on land and in the seas.” The fund includes capital grant funding for local authorities which is now known as the “Edinburgh Process” strand of the NRF. Originally announced in the Scottish Government budget 2021/2022, £5m was granted to local authorities.
- 4.2 As reported to this Committee on 24 August 2022 (Report 22/192), in 2022-2023, Perth & Kinross Council received £176,000. Subsequently, through the Helping Nature funding stream, the Council applied directly to NatureScot and received an additional grant of £13,000 for Community Greenspace projects. The Council therefore received a total of £189,000 in 2022-2023.
- 4.3 The final spend allocation was in line with this Committee’s decision in August 2022 for a ratio of up to 60% to Community Greenspace projects and a

minimum of 40% to community led projects (Report 22/192 refers). This is as follows:

- Community Greenspace £99.5k (53%)
- Tayside Biodiversity Partnership community projects £22.6k (12%)
- Other community projects £66.9k (35%)

- 4.4 The detail of the projects supported by the 2022-2023 allocation is contained in Appendix 2 which has been uploaded to the Council's website.
- 4.5 In 2023-2024, £10 million was granted to local authorities, an increase of £5 million from the previous two years. This constitutes £5 million of capital funding to be spent in supporting new, or enhancing existing, approaches to restoring biodiversity, complemented this year by an additional £5 million with a specific focus on creating Nature Networks.
- 4.6 The fourth National Planning Framework set out the Scottish Government's expectation that Nature Networks will be put in place in every local authority in order to enhance biodiversity and better connect areas for nature.
- 4.7 A Nature Network is a joined-up system of places important for wild plants and animals, on land and in water. It allows plants, animals, seeds, nutrients and water to move from place to place and enables the natural world to adapt to change, providing plants and animals with places to live, feed and breed. Effectively functioning nature networks will connect existing nature rich areas through habitat corridors, habitat 'stepping stones', or habitat restoration areas. Ecological connectivity is provided by wildlife sites, corridors and stepping stones, landscape features, watercourses, green and blue spaces that together form integrated nature networks.
- 4.8 In 2023-2024, Perth & Kinross Council received £353,000, at least half of which should be directed towards projects which contribute to a Nature Network. The allocation was notified in late June 2023, as set out in Appendix 1.
- 4.9 The priority themes remain similar to those expressed in the letter allocating funding for 2022/23. In addition, NatureScot are encouraging nature positive applications in urban areas. The ambition to encourage partnership projects that work at scale and facilitate nature networks to improve habitat connectivity has also increased. The themes of the 2023/24 fund are:
- Habitat and species restoration: Management for enhancement and connectivity.
 - Freshwater restoration, including restoration of natural flows in rural catchments.
 - Coastal and marine initiatives which promote restoration, recovery, enhancement or resilience.
 - Control of invasive non-native species (INNS) impacting on nature.
 - Urban: Enhancing and connecting nature across, and between towns and cities.
- 4.10 The fund will seek to deliver these five strategic priorities through local delivery, in line with the principles of the Edinburgh Process declaration. This

approach can deliver multiple benefits, supporting health and well-being, green jobs, air and water quality improvements in addition to supporting nature recovery.

5. PROPOSALS

5.1 As with previous years, the grant has been awarded as General Capital Grant, with which the Scottish Government has afforded discretion to Local Authorities to apply the grant within their own rules.

5.2 Committee agreed in August 2022 the process to allocate NRF funding including the ratio 60/40 for Greenspace projects and community led projects respectively (Report No. 22/192 refers). However, following Members' feedback, it is proposed to select projects with maximum biodiversity impact for Perth and Kinross and remove the ratio. As such, there will be no proposed split between Community Greenspace and Community projects, as those that best support outcomes for nature, in line with our scoring criteria, will be recommended for approval.

5.3 The main points of the proposed process are:

- Projects by Community Greenspace and other internal departments are to set out their individual projects with a description, outline of biodiversity benefits, any positive co-benefits, if/how they contribute to a nature network, cost, details of location, maintenance agreement, and community involvement in a spreadsheet.
- Projects in the community must submit a detailed application form.
- Project applications will be invited with a minimum value of £1,000. There will be no upper limit to promote accurately costed proposals.
- At the end of the application deadline, the NRF co-ordinator will assess the projects against the project checklist and provide comments for the internal Council NRF working group. All applications will be assessed by the NRF working group against set scoring criteria. This criteria matrix is shown in Appendix 3.
- The NRF working group will review all applications and recommend those that score the highest to the Executive Director (Communities).
- The NRF working group will also take into consideration the geographic spread of projects and aim to encourage projects across Perth and Kinross.
- Once recommendations have been approved by the Executive Director (Communities), funding will then be made available to successful applicants.
- The NRF working group will work with all applicants to ensure approved nature restoration projects are taken forward.

- 5.4 Use of the Nature Restoration Fund to support community groups, Community Greenspace and other services, the Council is helping to deliver on its obligations in accordance with the Biodiversity Duty under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004. It also empowers communities to undertake projects that will make a significant difference in areas that are of value to them, in line with the Perth and Kinross Offer.
- 5.5 Due to the seasonal nature of many biodiversity projects, to avoid delays and maximise the ability to deliver, particularly for community led projects, and in consultation with the Committee's Convener, the NRF application process has already been opened with a deadline of 4 September 2023 ([Nature Restoration Fund - Perth & Kinross Council \(pkc.gov.uk\)](https://www.pkc.gov.uk/nature-restoration-fund)).
- 5.6 It is recommended that the Committee approves the proposed revised process and notes that that award of funding be delegated to the Executive Director (Communities) in line with previous practice.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Council and community partners successfully delivered on the 2022/23 Nature Restoration Fund grant award, delivering biodiversity enhancement across Perth and Kinross. In 2023/24, the Council has been allocated £353,000 to support nature restoration and the development of nature networks. A revised process including removing the ratio between Community Greenspace and community groups projects is proposed based on feedback from elected members last year.

Authors

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Approved

Name	Designation	Date
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APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 – Letter from Scottish Government to Chief Executive Perth & Kinross Council 29 June 2023.
- Appendix 2 – Nature Restoration Fund 2022-2023 Report
- Appendix 3 – Criteria Scoring Matrix

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	Yes
Workforce	None
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	None
Assessments	
Climate Change Assessment	Yes
Strategic Environmental Assessment	None
Sustainable Procurement & Supply Assessment	None
Equality & Fairness Assessment	None
Child Rights & Wellbeing Assessment	None
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	None
Communication	
Communications Plan	Yes

1. Strategic ImplicationsCommunity Plan/Single Outcome Agreement

- 1.1 The outcomes of the proposal whether led by Community Greenspace or organisations in the Community will help create a safe and sustainable place for future generations by enhancing areas of nature so that people can enjoy these into the future. Habitat restoration accompanied by additional planting also provides climate change mitigation; and by restoring native habitats wildlife and plant life is provided resilience in the face of a changing climate supporting their ability to in turn sustain their ecosystems and the services they provide. The proposal to support communities in delivering nature restoration projects of importance to them, helps develop educated and informed citizens, and supports people to lead independent healthy and active lives by increasing awareness of and engagement with nature, and promoting ownership and a sense of inclusion and ownership of projects they and their communities are involved in.

Corporate Plan

- 1.2 See above.

2. Resource ImplicationsFinancial

- 2.1 In 2023-2024, Perth & Kinross Council received £353,000. The allocation was notified in late June 2023, as set out in Appendix 1.

Workforce

- 2.2 None.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.3 None.

3. Assessments

Climate Change Assessment

- 3.1 Under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019, the Council has a duty to contribute to reducing Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions in line with national targets, help deliver Scotland's climate change adaptation programme and act to promote sustainable development. To comply with this duty, it is essential that climate change be considered at the heart of all Council processes and decisions using climate change impact screening.
- 3.2 This proposal was considered to have a positive impact on how Land Use and Land Use Change processes respond to climate change. For example, promoting more sustainable management and maintenance regimes for greenspace (reduced herbicide use, increased grassland, reduced cutting). The proposal was also considered to have a positive impact on reducing emissions through carbon capture. The proposal also considered a positive Climate Resilience & Engagement Impact in ensuring biodiversity, ecosystems and landscapes are protected from and adaptable to the changing climate.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.3 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.
- 3.4 The proposals have been considered under the Act and no further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

Sustainable Procurement & Supply Assessment

- 3.5 Under the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014, the Council has a duty to consider sustainable procurement as part of its procurement process. The Council is required to consider how in conducting the procurement process it can - (i) improve the economic, social, and environmental wellbeing of the authority's area, (ii) facilitate the involvement of small and medium enterprises, third sector bodies and supported businesses in the process, and (iii) promote innovation.

- 3.6 This proposal was considered under the Council's Impact and Value Assessment. No impacts on sustainable procurement and supply were identified.

Equality & Fairness Assessment

- 3.7 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Under Part 1 of the Act 'The Fairer Scotland Duty', the Council is required to actively consider how it can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socioeconomic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions.
- 3.8 This proposal was considered under the Council's Impact and Value Assessment. No impacts on equality were identified and the document was assessed as not relevant for the purposes of EFIA.

Child Rights & Wellbeing Assessment

- 3.9 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was ratified by the UK Government in 1991. It sets out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all children, everywhere, are entitled to and is regarded as the global "gold standard" for children's rights. Screening for Child Rights and Wellbeing Impacts, alongside the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) wellbeing indicators ensures that Council policies protect and promote the rights and wellbeing of children and young people.
- 3.10 This proposal was considered under the Council's Impact and Value Assessment. No impacts on Child Rights and Wellbeing were identified.

4. Consultation

Internal

- 4.1 This report has been informed by discussions with members of Planning & Housing Strategy, Climate Change & Sustainable Development, Community Greenspace, and Tayside Biodiversity Partnership.

External

- 4.2 N/A.

5. Communication

- 5.1 A webpage has been set up on the Council website at www.pkc.gov.uk/naturefund. Social media has been used by the Council and TBP to promote the success of the previous year's fund. These channels will be used once receipt of funding from NatureScot has been received to invite applications for the current year. Further ongoing communications will inform the public of key stages of the fund as well as progress of projects.