

## **THE BIODIVERSITY DUTY REPORTING TEMPLATE: LEVEL ONE ORGANISATIONS**

### **Report Outline**

Bodies are encouraged to use the following structure for their report. This is set out in the template below, which you can either type directly into, or copy into a separate document.

- Section 1: Introductory information about your public body
- Section 2: Actions to protect biodiversity and connect people with nature
- Section 3: Mainstreaming biodiversity
- Section 4: Nature-based solutions, climate change and biodiversity
- Section 5: Public engagement and workforce development
- Section 6: Research and monitoring
- Section 7: Biodiversity highlights and challenges

### **Completion Notes**

These completion notes offer guidance to support your public body to complete your Biodiversity Duty Report. Taken together with the associated hyperlinks, they provide suggestions on the breadth of actions that could be included in your report. They may also assist with forward planning on how biodiversity can be taken into account in future.

While they incorporate the key elements on which you may wish to report, they are not an exhaustive list and it is likely that there will be a range of additional work that your organisation carried out in support of biodiversity on which you may also wish to report. To find out more on the Biodiversity Duty see the [NatureScot website](#).



## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR PUBLIC BODY

Please describe your organisation’s role and purpose, including any particular environmental responsibilities

	<p><u>Governance and management structures</u></p> <p>Scottish Borders Council comprises 34 elected Councillors representing 11 wards. The Administration since May 2017 has been a coalition of the Conservative Group and Aligned Independents Group.</p> <p>The Administration’s vision for delivering better communities is set out in “Connected Borders 2017 - 2022”, with their commitments based on 4 key principles: consensus, equality, innovation and community. Over the lifetime of the vision, the aim is to build communities that are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Connected – improved physical and digital connectivity;</li> <li>2. Enterprising – maximised investment; new and supported businesses;</li> <li>3. Beautiful – high quality development; high quality environment;</li> <li>4. Well – education for everyone; focus on mental &amp; physical health;</li> <li>5. Caring – patient pathways; support for families and carers; and</li> <li>6. Empowered – strong community partnerships taking decisions at local level.</li> </ol> <p>Within “<i>Communities of Beauty</i>” there is a commitment by the Administration:  <i>“We will, building on SBC’s localities work, pilot a biodiversity project to manage communal land, opening it up for more innovative approaches to enhancing our communities.”</i></p> <p>The Single Outcome Agreement has now been replaced by the Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership’s Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (The Scottish Borders Community Plan). The vision of the Partners is “working together with our communities and through targeted partnership action, the quality of life will improve for all who live, work or study in the Scottish Borders.”</p> <p>All committee reports include a section on sustainability to ensure that new policies and actions are assessed against environmental impacts.</p> <p>In 2019 a new Sustainable Development Committee has been established supported by an officer Sustainable Development Group to embed sustainable development within the Council’s strategies, policies and service delivery. A key focus of the Committee will be to develop and implement a Climate Change Action Plan and</p>
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<p>prioritise actions to further the conservation of biodiversity. Following consideration of report to entitled 'Embedding Sustainable Development' Report on 29th August 2019 <a href="https://scottishborders.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=132&amp;MId=4753&amp;Ver=4">https://scottishborders.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=132&amp;MId=4753&amp;Ver=4</a> Council agreed formally to commit to implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals as they related to local government; and to establish a new Sustainable Development Committee, supported by an officer Sustainable Development Group, to embed sustainable development within the Council's strategies, polices and service delivery. A key focus of the Committee will be to develop and implement a Climate Change Action Plan and prioritise actions to further the conservation of biodiversity.</p> <p>The Council declared a Climate Emergency on 25 September and is to set a target for reduction in carbon emissions consistent with Scottish Government's target of net zero by 2045. The Council will work with Community Planning partners and other stakeholders to develop the Scottish Borders response to the Climate Emergency and loss of biodiversity based on an ecosystems approach.</p>
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## SECTION 2: ACTIONS TO PROTECT BIODIVERSITY AND CONNECT PEOPLE WITH NATURE

Please describe and explain any actions that your organisation has undertaken alone or as part of a partnership to benefit biodiversity directly, to tackle the main drivers of biodiversity loss, or to achieve wider outcomes for nature and people

### Heritage & Design

The biodiversity function is included within the Heritage & Design section, which leads the co-ordination of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership. Advice is provided to inform the statutory planning process including development of the Local Plan policies and the production of the Supplementary Guidance for biodiversity and a Local Biodiversity Sites programme. Recommendations to protect biodiversity interest have been provided for over 789 development management consultations in the period 2018-20 to date.

The Council has been liaising with partners in Edinburgh and Lothian Councils (Edinburgh, Lothian & Borders Natural Heritage Planning group) to share good practice in biodiversity and planning and develop consistent approaches in south east Scotland.

The Council's Landscape Architects are working with the Council's Flood Protection Scheme to inform the design and strong mitigation measures have been incorporated into the project to protect riparian habitats and recreate habitats affected by the scheme. Potential biodiversity losses will be compensated for by re-establishing vegetation and trees, with a ratio of 2: 1 for replacement tree planting. Where the urban nature of the scheme precludes two trees being planted for every one removed, there are proposals to plant the excess trees higher up the river catchment to provide Natural Flood Management benefits. The protection of riparian habitats and the recreation of habitats affected by the scheme is a core principle of the scheme mitigation measures.

Coldstream Cemetery is being developed by the Council. The design objective is to create a cemetery on the edge of the town that will be attractive, provide an appropriate setting for burials and is largely planted with native species. The site is being enclosed by a native hedge and there will be grass maintenance regime that favours meadow grassland species, as well as a simple SUDs scheme planted with native species. It is hoped that the design and the location will together result in an attractive spot for contemplation and memorials. The Landscape Architects have been consulted on 640 planning applications in the period 2018-20 to date.



#### Local Record Centre

The Council continues to have a Service Level Agreement with The Wildlife Information Centre <http://www.wildlifeinformation.co.uk/> to maintain a biological records database for the region, provide information to support Planning and site and operational management, support for the LBAP, holding educational events and supporting biological recording in the region.

#### Invasive non-native species

The Council has a Service Level Agreement with Tweed Forum to support their control of Invasive non-native species within the region and on the Council's estate.

#### Greenspace management

Scottish Borders Council have ceased the provision of annual bedding across the region as part of the Neighbourhoods Review. Alternative planting proposals have been developed with our communities, involving more sustainable and pollinator-friendly planting, and removing the Council's use of peat-based compost in the process. The reduced requirement for transportation of bedding plants by the producer and SBC staff's planting and ongoing maintenance activities reduces the level of harmful carbon emissions produced by the vehicles involved.

The department now has an electric vehicle within the fleet, in use as part of the management at Wilton Lodge Park, also contributing the reduction in carbon emissions.

Also included in the Neighbourhoods Review, the Council have reduced amenity grass cutting frequency by 50%, thus reducing use of machinery and vehicles and the resultant carbon emissions, and allowing a longer sward between cuts. Many grass areas have been identified where either no, or a single, cut is carried out resulting in hugely beneficial habitat opportunities for a wider variety of biodiversity to exist.

Tree risk management is ongoing with tree surveys and remedial works contracted out to 3<sup>rd</sup> parties. The procurement of this work includes requirements for biodiversity-supporting measures such as retention of tree



stumps as habitat creation. The identification of both protected and sensitive wildlife habitats, such as bat roosts and badger setts, is part of the survey activity.

Play facilities – Scottish Borders Council are rationalising play provision, with significant investment in key Play Parks and the decommissioning of 56 smaller play facilities. This creates opportunities for alternative uses such as community planting, food growing, etc. Additionally, it reduces the amount of vehicle use to undertake the inspection regimes which contributes to the lowering of carbon emissions.

#### Biodiversity awards

As part of the Council's annual Floral Gateway Competition, the Border Biodiversity Award recognises community projects or initiatives that increase the biodiversity of the Scottish Borders through areas such as, e.g. local food production, recycling, or changes to environmental management or maintenance.

#### Wildflower area development

Parks & Environment are piloting further wildflower cultivation within amenity grass areas, with 2 nominated sites across each locality within the region.

#### Food Growing Strategy

Under the Community Empowerment Scotland Act (2015), the Council has developed its first ever Food Growing Strategy which is out for consultation until December 2020. This promotes and supports community growing of all types from orchards to allotments, with advice and guidance on good practice. The Volunteer Co-ordinator post is being brought back in-house to enhance the development of support for community growing projects. Integral to this is the continued development of the Community Growing project at Wilton Lodge Park Walled Garden, which includes cultivation of local food and pollinator friendly planting. Development of this includes investment in a new replacement glasshouse, which will sustain the project and increase the scope for volunteers to get involved in local growing.



#### Roadside verges

Rural roadside grass cutting – our operations are undertaken only once throughout the season, they are timed to commence in June and given the size and scale of the network means that some verges may not be maintained until late July. The specification is to cut the grass 1m into the verge. We extend this at critical junctions and to maintain vision splays at sections of roads which are higher traffic/higher speed. Some unclassified roads verges are not always cut and are left untouched all summer where safety is maintained. We also modify our approach to maintenance at areas where we understand naturalised plants are in bloom e.g.at Yetholm.

#### Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes

As part of the design process for new housing development consideration is given to the creation of SUDS basins. These contribute to the slowing the flow of water to burns and rivers. Also as part of General Roads Maintenance, where there are specific issues with localised road drainage flooding and if it is deemed efficient to do so, we consider the installation of attenuation to accommodate the excess surface water during period of intense rainfall. This in turn reduces the impact on the existing surface water piped systems and also any discharges to water courses. To facilitate our waste management of road gully arisings, we use settlement lagoons at our material recycling centre at Langlee to deal with the treatment of the waste water from this process.

Working in and around water courses/rivers – The Council always engages with third parties including SEPA when it is required to work in and around bodies of water and rivers etc. Most recently at Dawston bridge a fish pass was included in the rebuilding of the bridge located on the B6357 towards Newcastleton. The fish pass maintains safe passage for aquatic life and demonstrated how we consider and design into our maintenance programmes biodiversity matters.

SBc Contracts is recognised for its efforts in environmental maintenance and is accredited under the ISO 45001 for environmental management. This recognises the approach taken to ensuring management systems comply and support minimising the impacts on the environment the activities undertaken by SBc Contracts.



### Community Planning

A Community Plan is in place to meet the requirements of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, with an emphasis on improving outcomes and reducing inequalities for the Scottish Borders including a focus on sustainability and climate change. The Council established 5 Area Partnerships to help deliver this with a focus on community empowerment and locality planning with an aim to form a community engagement platform to develop priorities and outcomes for the area. As part of the Community Fund application process, there are criteria based on biodiversity plans within the community if appropriate (greenspace, parks & flower areas, community gardens etc.). The revised Local Biodiversity Action Plan was consulted on at the 5 Area Partnerships across the Borders.

### Legal Services

Legal services provide advice with regard to wildlife legislation including Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 and The Conservation Regulations (1994). Legal advice has been a vital component in the development of the mechanism for biodiversity offsets and the service plays a key role in delivery of these projects. Legal Service help produce Service Level Agreements with key partner organisations including The Wildlife Information Centre.

### Partnerships

The Council co-ordinates the Community Plan partnership and the Local Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership. The Council is a long-standing and original member of the Tweed Forum which has a catchment management planning focus, and works closely with the Southern Upland Partnership, a south-Scotland NGO with a focus on rural communities and renewables, and with Borders Forest Trust.

The Council is a responsible authority on the Solway-Tweed River Basin Management plan (Tweed Area Advisory group, North Solway AAG) and Scotland River Basin Management Plan (Forth AAG)

The Council continues to support marine initiatives as a responsible authority under the cross-Border Berwickshire and Northumberland Marine Nature Partnership <http://www.xbordercurrents.co.uk/new-partnership/> and the Berwickshire Marine Reserve





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## **SECTION 3: MAINSTREAMING BIODIVERSITY**

**Please outline any steps your organisation has taken to incorporate biodiversity measures into its wider policies, plans or strategies. This should include decision-making structures and staff and organisational roles and responsibilities.**



The conservation of biodiversity is embedded within the Council's Regulatory Services, particularly Planning and Building Standards and Major Projects.

The Local Development Plan provides a robust policy framework to ensure that biodiversity is protected and enhanced through developments. This is supported by Supplementary Guidance notably the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, Biodiversity, Scottish Borders Woodland Strategy, Trees and Development, Renewable energy and design guidance.

The conservation of biodiversity is embedded in the functions of the Planning and Implementation section including within Ecology, Access, Landscape Architects and Paths to Health. Examples of mainstream activities from the reporting period are set out below:

#### Land Use and Forestry

The Council has explored opportunities to build upon the Land Use Strategy pilot (2013-15). As part of the Council's Woodland Strategy, the Council has been working with Scottish Forestry since 2018 on a Regional Strategic Woodland Creation pilot project <https://forestry.gov.scot/support-regulations/woodland-creation/regional-strategic-woodland-creation-project>. The pilot project seeks to explore opportunities for new woodland in the region and develop a more integrated approach to land use. Scottish Government has set ambitious targets for woodland creation as part of the Climate Change Plan and Scottish Borders and the south of Scotland are key areas where there is pressure to create new woodland. There has been an extensive phase of local stakeholder engagement working with partners at The Southern Uplands Partnership and Borders Forest Trust, to identify the main issues associated with large, scale woodland creation and potential solutions. The next phase of the project will develop this into a Woodland Creation Framework and Supplementary Planning Guidance to provide locational guidance and promote integrated land use and activities that maximise the benefits. This work may inform national guidance to local authorities developing woodland strategies.

In response to Scottish Forestry's new Woodland creation application process, the Council produced an advisory note to sign-post woodland scheme applicants to relevant sources of information and key criteria that should be considered in drawing up a scheme:

[https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/directory\\_record/54705/woodland\\_creation\\_advice\\_note/category/28/approved\\_planning\\_guidance](https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/directory_record/54705/woodland_creation_advice_note/category/28/approved_planning_guidance)



#### Local Development Plan

The adopted Local Development Plan 2016 (LDP), includes a number of policies relating to the natural environment, which help direct potentially adverse development away from locations whose intrinsic value might be affected, but also acts as a signpost to direct resources towards the improved management of these areas. There are also a number of policies, which assist in helping people connect with nature.

Policy PMD1: Sustainability, contained within the adopted LDP underpins all the policies contained within the Plan, outlining a number of sustainability principles, including the natural environment. Policy PMD2: Quality Standards, includes standards for green space, open space and biodiversity, which all proposals should take into consideration. A number of other policies within the LDP make reference to the natural environment within criteria for the assessment process.

Chapter 'Environmental Promotion and Protection' (EP) sets out a series of policies specifically covering the natural environment, these include; biodiversity, landscape designations, protected greenspaces and green networks. There are a number of specific policies within the 'Infrastructure and Standards' (IS) chapter which are relevant too, covering flooding and SUDS.

The main policy changes within the last 3 years, have been in the production of the Proposed Local Development Plan (LDP2), which will be subject to a period of representation from 2 November 2020 until 25 January 2021. The aims of the Proposed LDP2 include;

- *Protect and enhance the built and natural environment*
- *Make provision for waste management*
- *Promote climate change adaptation*
- *Protect key greenspaces within built up areas*
- *Encourage better connectivity*
- *Extend and improve green network opportunities and links.*

The chapter 'Environmental Promotion and Protection' (EP), states that the Scottish Borders is an attractive place to live and work and this puts a clear responsibility on the Council to maintain the intrinsic qualities of the area whilst seeking the balance of promoting the economic stability and growth essential to the future viability of the area. The policies within this chapter place an emphasis on placemaking and design in relation to new



development. It confirms the various landscapes, natural environment and nature conservation designations within the Scottish Borders and lays down a range of criteria tests to be applied to ensure their protection and/or any potential appropriate mitigation measures.

The main policy changes, in respect of the natural environment, since the adopted LDP are the inclusion of Local Biodiversity Sites (LBS) and Local Geodiversity Sites (LGS), which have been identified within the LDP2 as non-statutory designations (Local Nature Conservation Sites). Technical Notes covering both these designations accompany the Proposed LDP2 consultation.

The main policies contained within the Proposed LDP2 which are relevant are;

- Policy PMD1: Sustainability
- Policy PMD2: Quality Standards
- Policy EP1: International Nature Conservation Sites and Protected Species
- Policy EP2: National Nature Conservation and Protected Species
- Policy EP3: Local Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- Policy EP4: National Scenic Areas
- Policy EP5: Special Landscape Areas
- Policy EP11: Protection of Greenspace
- Policy EP12: Green Networks
- Policy EP13: Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows
- Policy IS8: Flooding
- Policy IS9: Waste Water Treatment Standards and Sustainable Urban Drainage

#### Local Biodiversity Sites

The Council working with The Wildlife Information Centre and a Steering Group of partner organisations and biological recorders has been reviewing and assessing sites that within the region that are candidate Local Biodiversity Sites (local nature conservation sites, of regional importance). A total of 188 sites have been assessed as meeting the criteria and are now subject to consultation as part of the new Local Development Plan.



Placemaking

It should be noted that placemaking principles underpin the policies contained within the Proposed LDP2. Delivering sustainable development and ensuring high quality design from all development via good placemaking principles are key requirements which the LDP supports. The Council places a very strong emphasis on placemaking and design principle when assessing new development proposals, including respecting the character, appearance and amenity of the built and natural heritage of the area.

Tweedbank Expansion Area

The site is allocated for mixed use development within the Scottish Borders Local Development Plan 2016 (MTWEE002). Supplementary Planning Guidance is being produced which sets out to guide and inform the future expansion of Tweedbank within the site of the former Lowood Estate. As part of this process an Ecological Appraisal has been undertaken to inform the developable areas of the site and to inform the need for further assessments.

Engineering and Infrastructure

In engineering infrastructure projects the Council undertakes ecological surveys as appropriate and then implements measures to protect wildlife. For example during refurbishment works on Boghall Bridge an active dippers' nest was discovered so works were delayed until the young had fledged, monitored by ecological contractors and the Council's ecologist. Works were successfully undertaken and a nesting box provided the Dipper in future years. The Council also undertook major road improvement works on the A72 at Dirtpot Corner and these too incorporated many measures to protect wildlife and the River Tweed system. Ecology survey were undertaken and an Environmental Clerk of Works was employed to monitor the successful implementation of the works. Upon completion of the civils work a suitable complementary riparian planting scheme was undertaken.

Protection of bat roosts, birds' nests and otters during bridge works whilst also complying with environmental standards and restrictions. In the reporting period 2018-20 a total of 16 Environmental Surveys have been undertaken prior to certain bridge works commencing and, works were carried out under 5 CAR Licences obtained to allow bridge works to proceed in accordance with SEPA accepted Method Statements. A further 17 bridge projects where in stream working is required will be completed under SEPA General Binding Rules. For other asset maintenance 1 Environmental survey was carried out, works were carried out under 17 CAR licences



including emergency works in relation to flood damage, 17 schemes were also carried out under General Binding Rules and fish rescue operations were carried out at 3 locations.

#### Major Projects

##### Hawick Flood Protection Scheme

Construction works are planned and implemented with safeguarding and enhancement of local ecosystems made a priority. These include; extensive ecological surveys undertaken as part of the planning and consenting process prior to construction works as well as regular monitoring and evaluation follow up during construction; extensive planting of trees and landscaping of new habitats across the project footprint; the introduction of a new Biodiversity Park at Weensland; and the deployment of a number of specialist 'in river' working techniques such as silt mitigation and fish protection, all done in close partnership with SEPA, River Tweed Commission and local ecology groups. A key feature of the project is the introduction of a new Active Travel Network throughout the town of Hawick which will see a significant increase in active travel by foot/cycle within the community and the corresponding reduction in carbon emissions from previously chosen modes of motorised transport. The project also aims to operate throughout its 3.5 year programme in as sustainable a manner as possible by operating a stringent recycling policy across its delivery contracts, use of electric vehicles across the construction site, as well as use of 'paperless' contract management systems.

##### Jedburgh Campus

The development of a new intergenerational campus at Jedburgh was subject to a detailed ecological impact assessment and a range of other environmental surveys. Key ecological sensitivities included badgers and potential bat roosts in trees and existing buildings. An Ecological Clerk of works was appointed to oversee mitigation under licence. Post construction monitoring with camera traps has shown continued use of the area by badgers. A number of trees were required to be felled and they were subject to detailed surveys for bats, red squirrel and breeding birds prior to felling. The demolition of the existing primary school was carried out after detailed bat and bird surveys had been completed.

There was potential connectivity with the Jed water (part of River Tweed SAC) surface water mitigation was a priority. A surface water mitigation plan was implemented in agreement with SEPA, regularly updated as the works progressed. The main measures that were put in place were cut off trenches leading to settlement ponds



and silt barriers were also erected throughout the course of the works. A water quality specialist visited the site regularly and recorded the pH levels at the outlets and also upstream from the site.

#### Economic Development

The Borderlands Growth Deal has committed to the production of an Energy master plan for the Local Authorities involved including Scottish Borders Council, the first stage is the development of an energy baseline, a strategic action plan and stakeholder engagement strategy.

The Council acts as lead partner in the Scottish Borders LEADER Local Action Group (LAG), and LAG staff work within the Economic Development section of the Council. LEADER is European funding for local development, and is allocated by the Local Action Groups as a part of Scotland's Rural Development Programme.

The 2014-2020 Scottish Borders LEADER programme was allocated approximately £3M to support community, business and diversification projects with 5% of the budget to be spent on co-operation projects with other LAG areas in Scotland, UK or Europe. The overarching aim of the Scottish Borders Local Development Strategy in this LEADER programme is 'Enterprising Communities'. Its strategic aims are: Growing our economy, reducing inequalities and maximising the impact from the low carbon agenda. Its development themes are a focus on enterprise, innovation, revenue generation and sustainability, support for small and micro rural businesses and social enterprises, including key Borders sectors of tourism, food & drink, renewables and creative industries. There is also a focus on supporting projects that create employment, developing community capacity and leadership and supporting skills and training development.

Five projects have been supported by LEADER in the 2014-2020 programme which specifically supports biodiversity and enhancements to the environment. The projects have total values of £1,272,560 and attracted grant support of £839,355. These LEADER project decisions include:

- South of Scotland Golden Eagles project – co-operation project between Scottish Borders and Dumfries & Galloway LEADER.
- Change of land use for sustainability Tweed Valley Mountain Biking Development





- Bird Garden Scotland – creation of coffee shop/educational facility/play area to support development of bird sanctuary at Oxton.
- Change of land use from hay meadow to create memorial wooded area for walking and ash burial at Neidpath, Peebles
- Marine Seabed Interpretation Project – Provision of detailed mapping of the St. Abbs and Eyemouth Voluntary Marine Reserve for development of virtual visitor centre.



## SECTION 4: NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS, CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY

How has your organisation integrated biodiversity into nature based solutions to the climate emergency and other socio-economic outcomes?

	<p><u>Nature-based solutions</u></p> <p><u>Biodiversity Offsetting</u></p> <p>A further series of implementation projects have been developed by the Council to deliver biodiversity offsets arising from major wind farms. A key focus of these implementation projects has been a multiple benefit approach providing examples of nature-based solutions. This approach features in the 2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity. This includes the Penmanshiel Compensatory Replanting Scheme to deliver 110ha of new woodland through a bespoke grant scheme launched in 2016 working with SAC (<a href="https://www.sruc.ac.uk/info/120104/forestry_and_estate_management/1704/penmanshiel_compensatory_replanting_grant_scheme_pcrqs">https://www.sruc.ac.uk/info/120104/forestry_and_estate_management/1704/penmanshiel_compensatory_replanting_grant_scheme_pcrqs</a>) to compensate for loss of woodland in accordance with Scottish Governments Control of Woodland Removal policy. This is being achieved by creating new native woodland, amenity woodland and productive woodland (broadleaf and conifer) that deliver multiple benefits including biodiversity, landscape, water quality improvements, natural flood management and recreation benefits, targeted using the Land Use Strategy pilot decision support tool. 25 woodland schemes totalling 110ha have been approved to date with two more proposals in the pipeline, to exceed the planting target. Four of the sites are on the Council's estate including at Eyemouth, Galashiels and Lauder.</p> <p>A Langhope Rig biodiversity offset project was launched in 2016 in partnership with Tweed Forum, SEPA, NatureScot and Scottish Forestry, to create new wetland areas in the Ale water catchment, a nationally important area for basin mire habitat and to create riparian woodland in the catchments of the upper Teviot to provide natural flood management benefits, which links this to the Council's Flood Protection Scheme at Hawick. Adopting a blended funding approach, 77ha of new native and riparian woodland has been planted in 7 schemes and the locations have included a set of additional natural flood management measures including attenuation ponds and leaky barriers. A further set of woodland creation schemes will be drawn up in 2020/21 to complete the project. Multiple benefits have been delivered for biodiversity, natural flood management, water quality improvements, habitat connectivity and landscape enhancement.</p>
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In the Ale water project, 9 ponds have been created within the Ale water target area, a further large pond was drawn up under the Ale water scheme but created under a SRDP grant. The ponds provide benefits for biodiversity, water flow management, water quality enhancements, carbon sequestration and will help maintain the range of successional states from open water through to wet woodland in an area of national importance for mire habitats.

Two further offset projects are about to be launched associated with Quixwood windfarm, the Borders Wader Initiative to create wader habitat in core areas within the region, the Council working in partnership with Tweed Forum and RSPB Scotland. The Council also continues to further support the Borders Tree Planting Grant scheme in partnership with Tweed Forum, Borders Forest Trust, Scottish Forestry and NatureScot.

#### Flood Risk Management

Consideration of opportunities for sustainable flood management including natural flood management, delivering multiple benefits, is included in the Council's Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMP) (Tweed Flood Risk Management Plan where the Council is lead authority in 2016, the Forth Estuary Local Flood Risk Management Plan (lead: City of Edinburgh Council) and Solway Local Flood Risk Management Plan (Lead: Dumfries and Galloway Council) to align with its relevant land use strategies.

The Hawick Flood Protection Scheme is under construction with completion due by 2023. The scheme was subject EIA and a HRA, with works being carried out in a highly sensitive watercourse (River Teviot, part of the River Tweed SAC/SSSI). A number of working groups are overseeing construction of the development including a water course impacts group and environmental consents working group.

#### Borderlands Growth Deal Initiative

The Council is working with Tweed Forum who are leading development of a Destination Tweed HLF proposal under a HLF development grant. The proposal includes projects for the native and riparian woodland in the Upper Tweed, a pollinator project, enhancement of designed landscapes, control of invasive non-natives and environmental education.

The Council is working with partners in Dumfries & Galloway Council to develop a Borderlands Natural Capital proposition as part of the Borderland Growth deal to trial natural capital pilot projects.

Supplementary Guidance: Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes



	<p>In August 2020 the Council approved Supplementary planning Guidance (SPG) on Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) which sets out good practice procedures for the design of SUDS. The SPG is intended to highlight that the disposal of surface water requires early consideration in the development process and provide guidance on the measures and opportunities available to developers to integrate sustainable surface water management into their developments.</p>
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**What steps has your organisation taken to incorporate biodiversity outcomes into partnership initiatives, wider strategies or initiatives of relevance to climate change?**

	<p><u>Local Biodiversity Action Plan</u></p> <p>The Council updated and reviewed the Local Biodiversity Action which was approved as Supplementary Guidance in 2018. The updated plan was subject to extensive consultation with LBAP partners and a full public consultation including with the five Area Partnerships of the Community Plan. The LBAP is based on ecosystem approach incorporating the key themes of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and builds on the Council's Land Use Strategy pilot work focussing on key drivers in response to climate change. It sets out a programme of action for LBAP partners until 2028 with key themes of ecosystem restoration, investment in Natural Capital, quality greenspace, conserving wildlife &amp; habitat, land and freshwater management and marine and coastal ecosystems.</p>
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**Looking ahead, what do you think will be the main climate change related challenges for biodiversity over the next three years?**

	<p>In relation to the Council's functions, key challenges related to Climate Change over the next three years will be related to flood protection and maintenance of infrastructure and the road network, management of Greenspace and wider countryside issues such as woodland creation. The Council will complete the construction of the Hawick Flood Protection Scheme during this period and will be investigating the development of Flood Protection Schemes and surface water management plans in other settlements. The Council will continue its review of Greenspace management considering opportunities to reduce inputs and build resilience in the environment in and around towns. The Council will continue to work with Scottish Forestry and stakeholders in the region to develop an integrated approach to land use and forestry to safeguard the natural environment and maximise the benefits to businesses, communities and land managers in the region.</p>
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## SECTION 5: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### Public Engagement

	<p><u>Education</u>          Programmes of environmental education have continued within schools, with 10 schools awarded Eco Schools Green flag during 2018-20. Thirteen schools have been involved in the John Muir Award programme with 696 pupils signed up to the scheme in total (2017/18 and 2018/19) and 663 Awards gained in this period.</p> <p><u>Customer Advice &amp; Support Service</u>          Part of the work carried out by the Customer Advice and Support Service is to develop internal and external customer digital technology. The Digital Customer Access project has introduced digital ways to access our services and will continue to expand those options.</p> <p>Digital information distribution and collection using means such as social media, the Council website, online accounts and email will reduce significantly the need for paper distribution of information to our customers.</p> <p>The ability of customers to access Council services via self-service portals and our telephony service allows customers to do so utilising digital technology thereby reducing the need for travel to our Contact Centres, site visits by staff, the use of paper, postage and other resource consumption and disposal. Customers are sign-posted to relevant sources of environmental information including biodiversity resources.</p> <p><u>Good practice</u>          The Council will continue to promote good practice and has given presentations on its work at national events including the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy stakeholder event in 2018, CIEEM conference in 2019, CIEEM Scottish conference in 2020 and input into guidance for indicative Regional Spatial Strategies in 2020.</p> <p><u>Access and Transport Team</u>          The Access and Transport Team continue to maintain an extensive network of paths throughout the Scottish Borders and promote and encourage use for walking, cycling and horse riding, through the provision of dedicated websites: <a href="http://www.walkscottishborders.com">www.walkscottishborders.com</a> <a href="http://www.cyclescottishborders.com">www.cyclescottishborders.com</a> and supporting Southern Uplands Partnership project <a href="http://www.ridescottishborders.com">www.ridescottishborders.com</a> These websites and related publications promote and interpret the nature and landscape of the Scottish Borders.</p>
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	<p>The Access Team ensure that the annual Scottish Borders Walking Festival is hosted by a Border town each year. In 2018 Hawick were the hosts and in 2019 it was held in Selkirk. The Access Rangers and volunteers lead a week-long series of walks many with the aim of interpreting the areas natural and cultural history.</p> <p>The Team manage Lindean Loch Site of Special Scientific Interest near Selkirk, in a manner which enhances the biodiversity and public enjoyment of this site. A breeding bird survey is undertaken each year.</p> <p>Coldingham Bay is a very popular Council owned beach and we work in partnership with the Berwickshire Marine Reserve, Sea the Change and Butterfly Conservation Scotland to ensure that the biodiversity interest of the site is managed and maintained and that environmental activities are organised for the public.</p> <p>The Walk It project is supported by NHS Borders and Paths for All and continues to be very successful at encouraging many people to take exercise and to enjoy the outdoors. Across the Scottish Borders there are currently 30 Walk It groups meeting weekly. In 2019 the project delivered 850 walks attended by over 11300 participants and has been successful in training many new walk leaders, which encourages people to be more aware of their environment.</p>
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### Workforce skills and training

	<p><u>Training</u> Training events have been held for Council officers and partner organisations including training on Invasive Non-Native Species held during INNS week in 2019 with presentations by SEPA and Tweed Forum, training on Wildlife Crime provided by SASA for Council officers and Police Scotland and training for the Council's Planning Officers on bats and planning.</p>
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**Identify any opportunities that are available to your staff to take part in practical actions**

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## SECTION 6: RESEARCH AND MONITORING

Describe any research activities that your organisation has undertaken to help develop understanding and awareness of biodiversity

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What follow-up actions or monitoring have you undertaken to assess the impacts of the actions you have taken? How have you measured this? If you do not carry out any monitoring activities, please explain why.

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**Does your monitoring show any significant trends or highlight any areas of concern?**

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**Have you added any data collected to the National Biodiversity Network or your Local Records Centre?**

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## SECTION 7: BIODIVERSITY HIGHLIGHTS AND CHALLENGES

Describe your organisation's main achievements for biodiversity over the reporting period and what you are most proud of (this can include processes, plans, projects, partnerships, events and actions).

	<p>Key highlights during this period include the successful delivery of the Penmanshiel Compensatory Replanting Scheme which has successfully delivered 110ha of new woodland, providing a range of woodland types including productive conifer and broadleaved, amenity and native woodland enhancing local areas, and providing improvements to manage water flow and water quality.</p> <p>The Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2018-20 was adopted as Supplementary Guidance during this period and provides an exemplar of an LBAP based on an ecosystem approach which links the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to the Land Use Strategy.</p> <p>The declaration by the Council of a Climate Emergency and the establishment of a new Sustainable Development Group and development of a Climate Change Action Plan will focus actions to address the impacts of climate change and seek to reverse the loss of biodiversity.</p>
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**Looking ahead, what do you think will be the main challenges over the next three years?**

	<p>Resources are likely to be increasingly scarce and opportunities will be sought to draw in further resources including further investment in Natural Capital.</p> <p>Developing integrated approaches to delivery for biodiversity as part of the Green Recovery will be both a challenge and a great opportunity. Approaches should seek to help develop the economy, which also enhances the natural environment and improves the health and well-being of local communities.</p>
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