



SCOTTISH
FUTURES
TRUST

Biodiversity Report 2017-20

1 JANUARY 2020

INTRODUCTION

As a Scottish public body, we, the Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) have a statutory duty to further the conservation of biodiversity:

“It is the duty of every public body and office holder, in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity, so as it is consistent with proper exercise of these functions.” [Nature Conservation \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#)

The biodiversity duty is about connecting people with the environment and managing diversity in the wider environment all around us, not just in protecting sites.

The [Wildlife and Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#) places a duty on us to make a report publicly available every three years on our compliance with biodiversity duty. This publication is our report of our activities for the period 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2020.

SFT produces an annual sustainability report which details SFT’s environmental impact. The link to the 19/20 report can be found here. [SFT’s Sustainability Report](#).

Due to the global pandemic, all our staff have been working from home since 16 March 2020.

OUR ROLE AND PURPOSE

As a centre of infrastructure expertise owned by the Scottish Government, our aim is:

'to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of infrastructure investment and use in Scotland by working collaboratively with public bodies and industry, leading to better value for money and providing the opportunity to maximise the investment in the fabric of Scotland, and hence contribute to the Scottish Government’s long-term ambitions for inclusive economic growth, net zero carbon emissions and building sustainable places.'

Infrastructure connects people both physically and digitally to their communities and to economic opportunities; it deals with the energy, water and waste needs of daily life, and it keeps families and public services safe, warm and dry in homes and public buildings. Increasingly infrastructure is also seen to encompass the natural assets of the green and blue spaces around us which contribute so much to the quality of our lives. High-quality infrastructure is therefore the underpinning element of an inclusive Scotland, with a flourishing economy, vibrant places and a sustainable environment.

This, along with the direct economic benefits from the jobs in asset construction and maintenance, and the investment unlocked through infrastructure financing and delivery, has been the case for more than the decade that the Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) has been

at the forefront of improving public sector infrastructure across Scotland after being established by Scottish Government

Infrastructure is a long game, so the planning and implementation of Scottish Government's response to the climate emergency will be a 25-year mission; accelerating, refreshing and building on work which has already, in some cases, been decades in the making. It will be undertaken in an era of unprecedented digital advancement of all industries, requiring increasing connectivity, and with care to both maximise for Scotland the economic benefits which it presents; and, with all people and places in mind, to create a just transition to a net-zero carbon economy.

We have established close working relationships with our numerous public and private sector partners built up over many years.

OUR APPROACH TO BIODIVERSITY

Our role means that we link to biodiversity in an indirect rather than a direct way. Our role is not directly linked to biodiversity. We do not own land and we have no direct role in the management and use of land or natural resources. We do not have a role in the promotion of sport, recreation, tourism, education and healthcare, social services or any of the other core activities set out in the Scottish Government's guidance on the biodiversity reporting duty but we do recognise that infrastructure investment and management has a significant biodiversity impact.

The biodiversity impact of the programmes we manage are accounted for by the organisations which have budgetary control of the projects within these programmes. We have an influence on these programmes and comment below on actions in our programme activity.

We occupy the second floor of a four-storey building in Thistle St, just off St Andrew's Square in Edinburgh. This is a leased office and our landlord is responsible for maintenance of the building, including arranging the gas heating for the building. However, we are responsible for the electricity in our office. As such, we are best placed to carry out a smaller, proportionate set of activities for biodiversity in our corporate activity.

CORPORATE ACTIONS ON BIODIVERSITY

During the period 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2020, we have taken the following actions on reducing the human impact on biodiversity:

- Introduced food waste collections in the office to ensure as little as possible ends up in landfill
- Reduced the number of bins in the office and increased the amount of recycling receptacles
- Reduced our electricity use per employee by continuing to source all electricity in the period from a supply with formal Renewable Energy Guarantee of Origin (REGO) certification

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- Identified mainland UK flights as a significant, avoidable source of carbon emissions and taken the decision to encourage staff to avoid flying in favour of public transport for this type of journey
 - Agreed to purchase offsets for all carbon emissions arising from essential mainland UK flights
 - Introduced a bike to work scheme to encourage cycling and reduce our carbon footprint
 - Introduced plants into the office to improve the air quality
 - Introduced “walking months” where staff were encouraged to walk rather than drive and encouraged to learn more about nature

PROGRAMME AND PROJECTS ACTION ON BIODIVERSITY

Infrastructure development can have both significant positive and negative biodiversity impact. Positive impact examples from projects where SFT has had a role include:

Scotland’s Schools for the Future Programme

(Local Authority Projects in a programme managed by SFT on behalf of Scottish Government)

- Programme Targets for the environmental standards of new buildings – BREEAM Excellent, EPC B+ (before renewables)
- All projects undertake ecological surveys and some have been halted/delayed because of these
- Outdoor learning and using nature as part of the learning and teaching promoted through new school design
- Additional community outdoor areas have encouraged an increase in outdoor play for the local community, and after school groups in the programme
- By way of example - Carrongrange High School has rooftop gardens, sensory gardens which provide real benefits to the learning and teaching and wellbeing. Pupils feedback captured in [video case study](#)

Infrastructure Commission for Scotland

(Independent Commission with SFT members in secretariat)

- The Commission recommended that “natural capital should be recognised within the definition of infrastructure, covering both “green” and “blue” (aquatic) infrastructure. However, natural capital, as with all assets, should not be looked at separately or in isolation from Scotland’s other infrastructure, assets but as a component part of the whole system. If properly designed and delivered, integrating blue/green infrastructure into wider plans can increase the county’s connectivity with the natural environment and deliver efficiencies in investment

Early Learning & Childcare Programme Infrastructure

(Local authority projects in a programme managed by SFT on behalf of Scottish Government)

- To increase awareness in future generations, outdoor learning is an important part of the Early Years Expansion Programme. Scotland’s Outdoor Play & Learning

Coalition Position Statement which was published by partners supporting the delivery of the programme states that *“It is a powerful tool through which children and young people learn to understand the world around them and their place in it, creating a sense of ownership of all of Scotland’s landscapes. Playing and learning outdoors is essential for our children and young people to understand, value, enjoy and protect our natural world. It connects them to their environment, enhancing their appreciation and understanding of its physical properties and diversity”*

- Data as of September 2020 shows there are 32 outdoor nurseries planned for 613 spaces. This is creating a capacity the equivalent of eight average size new build nurseries. A further 280 projects within the programme are using the indoor/outdoor model of creating 2,400 additional outdoor spaces. This is the equivalent of 29 average size new build nurseries. The 3,000+ spaces have been created without the need for additional built infrastructure (with the exception of an outdoor toilet or sink in some cases), thus reducing embodied and operational carbon.

Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route

(Transport Scotland project in the Non-Profit Distributing programme managed by SFT on behalf of Scottish Government)

- Two special wildlife bridges over the AWPR route have been constructed. The green bridges at Kirkhill near Dyce and Kingcausie in Maryculter are the first of their kind to be built over a major road in Scotland and will provide safe crossing points for wildlife between habitats and colonies
- A rope crossing is being installed near Goval at Dyce for red squirrels. A total of 17 dedicated mammal underpasses have also been installed along the route offering safe access to wildlife
- A total of 80 box culverts for water courses have been below the new road and all have mammal ledges in them for species such as otters, which gives them safe access without being at risk from road users
- A total of 1.5 million trees have been planted to create habitats that benefit both the environment and drivers. In addition, 6.2 million square metres of land across the project site has been sown with grass and wildflower seed mixes
- New habitats have been created including: bat boxes and bat house at Milltimber Junction in an old coach house at the former site of the International School and water vole habitat creation at Fishermyme – creating a network of shallow ponds in a wet land area with riparian woodland

FUTURE PLANS

SFT is committed, in the future, to:

- Mainstream biodiversity measures into our wider policies
- Continue to take steps to mitigate and adapt to climate change
- Educate our workforce about biodiversity
- Engage with communities, young people and the public about biodiversity, where appropriate
- Take actions to increase understanding of nature and biodiversity externally and promote positive impacts on infrastructure projects and programmes in which we are involved, where possible
- Measure the impacts of the actions on biodiversity we have taken

Specific actions we are planning to take in the period 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2023, include:

- Encourage staff to utilise their two days paid volunteering leave a year, on activities related to nature and biodiversity
- Create a biodiversity page on the staff intranet where articles on biodiversity could be highlighted
- Encourage staff, as part of the weekly staff newsletter, to submit photographs of threatened parts of nature such as butterflies, bees and hedgerows
- Review policies, procedures and strategies to ensure biodiversity aspects are embedded across the organisation
- Raise awareness of biodiversity by introducing high level training sessions
- Carry out an annual review of our biodiversity actions and their impacts
- Raise awareness of biodiversity in our external work with the public and private sector across our broad range of infrastructure projects and programmes

Front cover images – Children taking part in outdoor learning at a new nursery and a dedicated wildlife crossing on the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route.