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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Environment and Regeneration Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>30 October 2014</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Corporate Director, Environment, Regeneration and Resources</b>	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>E&amp;R/14/10/03 SJ/RG</b>
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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Inverclyde Council's Biodiversity Duty Report 2014</b>		

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## **1.0 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To seek the endorsement of the Committee to publish Inverclyde Council's first Biodiversity Duty Report 2014 as required under the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011.

## **2.0 SUMMARY**

- 2.1 Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, all public bodies in Scotland are required to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities. The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 further requires public bodies to provide a publicly available report, every three years, on the actions which they have taken to meet this biodiversity duty. This report requires to be available by the end of 2014.
- 2.2 In furthering the conservation of biodiversity, the legislation stresses that biodiversity is as much of a concern in urban areas as in more wild areas, which may be routinely thought of as being of higher value. The proposed report, which will follow a template suggested by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), will identify a whole range of activities, delivered across a number of Council services that benefit or otherwise affect biodiversity.
- 2.3 Joint partnership working with Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park (CMRP) and the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) Steering Group will be explained in the report, as well as specific actions taken to improve biodiversity. This will include those demonstrating direct action on the ground (eg Plan Bee and various other local projects), those promoting an awareness of biodiversity conservation (eg Heritage Inverclyde Coastal Trail) as well as those showing action to protect the assets currently in place. Finally the report will identify where biodiversity actions have been mainstreamed within Council business and highlight the contribution of Inverclyde's schools to raising awareness with young people.

## **3.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 That Committee:
- a) notes the content of this report and in particular the proposals outlined in Section 5.0, and on that basis,
  - b) delegates authority to the Head of Regeneration and Planning to prepare and publish Inverclyde Council's first Biodiversity Duty Report 2014, no later than 19 December 2014, as required under the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011.

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## 4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Biodiversity, short for biological diversity, is the term used to describe the variety of life found on earth and all of the natural processes. It includes all living things and the habitats in which they live. The importance of biodiversity was acknowledged internationally at the Earth Summit 1992, and when the UK Government became a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity, a UK Biodiversity Action Plan was produced. The production of Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) was subsequently recommended in order to promote improvements in the environment on a local scale.
- 4.2 Launched on 1 April 2004, the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) for Inverclyde, Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire is a partnership initiative between the local authorities and a range of conservation organisations. The LBAP, which includes a range of actions for identified habitats and species to increase local biodiversity, was augmented with new action plans in 2008/09. The LBAP is also used to raise awareness of biodiversity in the area and to involve everyone including local communities, landowners, scientists, industries and business in the process.
- 4.3 Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, all public bodies in Scotland are required to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities. The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 further requires public bodies in Scotland to provide a publicly available report, every three years, on the actions which they have taken to meet this biodiversity duty.

## 5.0 PROPOSALS

- 5.1 The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 identifies the effects on biodiversity that a range of activities can have, and stresses that biodiversity is as much of a concern in urban areas as in more wild areas, which may be routinely thought of as being of higher value. This identification of biodiversity as a feature that pervades a whole range of land types and uses brings with it, by necessity, a realisation that a wide range of activities undertaken by local authorities can impact on biodiversity.
- 5.2 Inverclyde's largely elongated settlement pattern creates a long urban/countryside interface. Coupled with the high quality environment of the Clyde estuary, this means that the environment is an integral part of people's lives. To recognise this inherent sense of environmental belonging, the proposed report will identify a whole range of activities, delivered across a number of Council services that benefit or otherwise affect biodiversity.
- 5.3 Scottish Natural Heritage is the main Scottish Government body dealing with biodiversity at a national scale. To help achieve a comparable standard of biodiversity reporting, they have published a suggested template that the report should follow. It is proposed that Inverclyde Council's Biodiversity Report follows this template.
- 5.4 The suggested sections of the standard reporting template are outlined below.

### **a) Introductory information about your organisation and biodiversity**

- 5.5 Examples here will include joint partnerships such as Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park (CMRP) and the Local Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group, both being joint partnerships with neighbouring councils. Additionally, the current preparation of a Green Network indicator in partnership with the Glasgow and Clyde Valley (GCV) Green Network Partnership for the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA7) will be referenced.

### **b) Action taken to improve biodiversity conservation on the ground**

- 5.6 A number of actions will be referenced in this report, including those demonstrating direct action on the ground, those promoting an awareness of biodiversity conservation as well as

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those showing action to protect the assets currently in place.

- 5.7 Plan Bee is an activity currently underway at St. Stephen's High School. Comprising a series of educational talks and installation of a bee hive on the roof garden, it serves to highlight the current decline of honey bee numbers worldwide. This is an excellent example of local action being taken to offset a global issue.
- 5.8 The promotion of biodiversity conservation, amongst other things, is one element in the Heritage Inverclyde Coastal Trail currently being implemented, and details will be included in the biodiversity report. The community volunteering project run by CMRP in partnership with the Forestry Commission, Branching Out, is another good example that will be detailed in the report.
- 5.9 This section of the report will also contain a number of local community projects, such as Woodhall Community Park in Port Glasgow, the Green Gym project at Daff Glen in Inverkip and the restoration project at Auchmountain Glen in Greenock, some projects of which the Council plays an advisory role.
- 5.10 Discussions are ongoing with SNH in regard to the protection of some of Inverclyde's most important environmental designations, both national and international, which may be at risk in the future from human activity. The legislative role that the Council plays in regard to these designations is coupled with its responsibilities as a landowner.

#### **c) Mainstreaming**

- 5.11 The protection and enhancement of biodiversity is a principle embedded within the Council's Development Plan: the Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan and Inverclyde's Local Development Plan. Developments which create and support sensitive habitats are encouraged, while those which adversely impact upon biodiversity will only be permitted if justified in respect of the protected species legislation.
- 5.12 The Council officer currently tasked with biodiversity duties is also routinely consulted on applications that may have a detrimental effect on the environment. This allows the statutory planning process in Inverclyde to play a part in protecting and enhancing biodiversity. Furthermore the day to day management of many parks and open spaces in Inverclyde will benefit biodiversity by, for example, the control of invasive alien plant species, leaving some verges uncut for the benefit of insects and the management of trees in open spaces.

#### **d) Monitoring**

- 5.13 This will be Inverclyde Council's first Biodiversity Report, and hence will itself provide a suitable baseline against which to monitor progress.

#### **e) Partnership working and biodiversity communications**

- 5.14 The impressive range of activities undertaken by Inverclyde schools will be highlighted in the Report. As future custodians of the environment, it is essential to generate an empathy for biodiversity in our young people, and Inverclyde schools deliver this outcome admirably. Additionally, the several recent campaigns which recycled food waste in Inverclyde into garden compost, freely available to local people, are other impressive projects. The creation of Belville Community Garden by River Clyde Homes also benefitted from Inverclyde Council support, particularly in respect of the Grow Wild programme run by Kew Gardens.
- 5.15 This is just a brief sample of the numerous activities that will be highlighted within the Report. Discussion with Environmental and Commercial Services and the Education Service will be undertaken in the preparation of this report.

## 6.0 IMPLICATIONS

### Finance

6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

#### Financial implications

##### One off costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Year	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

##### Annually Recurring Costs/Savings

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From	Other Comments
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

### Legal

6.2 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

### Human Resources

6.3 There are no direct human resource implications arising from this report.

### Equalities and diversity

6.4 There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report.

### Repopulation

6.5 There are no direct repopulation implications arising from this report.

## 7.0 CONSULTATIONS

7.1 **Chief Financial Officer:** no requirement to comment.

7.2 **Head of Legal and Property Services:** no requirement to comment.

7.3 **Head of Organisational Development, HR and Communications:** no requirement to comment.

## 8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 None.