NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

5 December 2023

Cabinet

Title:	**Consultation response on Scotland's Strategic Framework for Biodiversity**

Purpose:	To seek approval of the proposed consultation response to Scotland's Strategic Framework for Biodiversity.

Recommendation:	That the draft consultation response at Appendix 1 is approved and submitted to the Scottish Government.

1.   Executive Summary

1.1   It is widely recognised that the world is facing a climate and nature crisis. The Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and has committed to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

1.2   The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045: Tackling the Nature Emergency has been published by the Scottish Government for consultation and sets out compelling evidence of long-standing global and Scottish biodiversity loss. The Strategy framework sets a goal to halt biodiversity loss and be 'Nature Positive' by 2030 and to have restored and regenerated biodiversity across the country by 2045.

1.3   The consultation exercise is seeking views on the strategy, delivery plan and Natural Environment Bill. Cabinet approval is sought for submission of the draft response to the consultation at Appendix 1 to the Scottish Government.

2.   Background

2.1   Climate change is a direct driver of nature loss. In September 2023, the Scottish Government recognised that the country is now faced with a 'Nature Emergency' and has set out an ambitious new Biodiversity Framework to halt biodiversity loss by 2030 and reverse it with large-scale restoration by 2045.

2.2   In December 2022, the Scottish Government published its draft Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. It set out a vision, outcomes and 33 actions designed to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. There are five key overarching actions in the strategy, which are to:
- Accelerate restoration and regeneration
- Protect nature on land and at sea, across and beyond protected areas
- Embed nature positive farming, fishing and forestry
- Protect and support the recovery of vulnerable and important species and habitats
- Invest in Nature; and
- Take action on the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss

2.3 The strategy will be supported by a series of five-year delivery plans. There are a range of actions proposed within the initial delivery plan, which are grouped as follows:

Woodlands	Coastal	Freshwater
Urban	Uplands and Peatlands	Soils
Agriculture	Marine	Overarching

2.4 The Biodiversity Strategy is also supported by a Natural Environment Bill which will set out the framework for statutory targets for nature restoration. These targets will demonstrate whether delivery actions have been effective. There is also a commitment to protect at least 30% of our land and sea for nature by 2030 (the '30x30' framework) and to use Nature Networks to deliver the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. A Nature Network connects nature-rich sites, restoration areas, and other environmental projects through a series of areas of suitable habitat, habitat corridors and stepping-stones.

2.5 A consultation has been launched seeking views on the strategy, delivery plan and Natural Environment Bill. A cross-service response has been prepared and is provided at Appendix 1. The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy aligns with the themes of the North Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan, which aims to protect and restore biodiversity, connect people with the natural world, and maximise the benefits of a diverse natural environment.

2.6 However, there a number of implications for local authorities from the proposed new framework. It is likely that the Council's Local Biodiversity Action Plan will require to be significantly updated to support new national targets and milestones. We are also seeking clarity on the new biodiversity targets, how they will be measured and monitored, what compliance would look like, and what enforcement action would be taken where targets are not met.

2.7 There are further potential implications arising from the new framework, including:

- Delivering on the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and statutory targets will require a move away from the current management practices for public green space and woodland. Further articulation and guidance on these proposals is sought within the response
- The Council will be required to identify opportunities as part of the Nature Network that can help target finance from developments to important areas for biodiversity connectivity under Policy 3 of NPF4
- The Nature Network will be the focus of efforts in mainstreaming the climate and nature crisis. Meeting this challenge will involve a redesign and realignment of our climate change and environmental education delivery

2.8 Whilst the ambition and drive to halt biodiversity loss at a national level is welcomed, a recurring consideration in the proposed consultation responses is the resources required to deliver on these aspirations. The new actions will not be deliverable within

current local authority funding envelopes, or from the number of staff available with the skills and expertise to undertake biodiversity related work. Officers are currently utilising national Nature Restoration funding to undertake a biodiversity audit to establish a biodiversity baseline in North Ayrshire and deliver on the Nature Network agenda (and link this to our next Local Development Plan), however it is noted within the responses that further resource will be required to achieve the wide-reaching aims of the strategy and delivery plans.

2.9 The Council's response to the consultation further supports the Council's Biodiversity Duty. Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, all public bodies in Scotland have a duty to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities. A Biodiversity Duty Report has been prepared for submission to Scottish Government in January, detailing our actions to protect biodiversity, connect people with nature and mainstreaming biodiversity. By engaging in the Scottish Government's consultation, the Council acknowledges the nature crisis and supports the proposals to halt biodiversity loss by 2030.

3.   Proposals

3.1 It is proposed that Cabinet approves the consultation response at Appendix 1 for submission to the Scottish Government.

4.   Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

4.1 The financial implications of the proposals being consulted on could be significant for local authorities, and this has been raised repeatedly in the proposed response. The nature and extent of the resource implications is not yet clear.

Human Resources

4.2 If implemented, the proposals being consulted on would require additional resources for delivery. The nature and extent of human resources implications are not yet clear.

Legal

4.3 Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, all public bodies in Scotland have a duty to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities.

Equality/Socio-economic

4.4 The ambition to halt biodiversity loss by 2030 contributes to our socio-economic duty by protection our local environment for the benefit of communities.

Climate Change and Carbon

4.5   The consultation responses support the Council's climate change aspirations by proposing to halt biodiversity loss by 2030 and reverse decline by 2045, recognising the interdependency between the climate change and nature emergencies.

Key Priorities

4.6   The consultation responses are in keeping with the aim 'To achieve net-zero by 2030' within the Council Plan 2023-28.

Community Wealth Building

4.7   There are no community wealth building implications arising from the report.

5.   Consultation

5.1   The consultation documents have reviewed by various Council services including Planning, Growth and Investment, Information and Culture, Legal, Property Management and Investment, Regeneration, Roads, Streetscene, and Waste Resources to provide a cross-service response.

RUSSELL McCUTCHEON
Executive Director (Place)

For further information please contact **David W. Hammond, Head of Sustainability, Corporate Property & Transport,** on (01294) 324514.

Background Papers
0

Respondent Information Form

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Tackling the Nature Emergency - Consultation on Scotland's Strategic Framework for Biodiversity

Please Note this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy:
https://www.gov.scot/privacy/

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

☐   Individual

X   Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

North Ayrshire Council

Phone number

N/A

Address

Cunninghame House, Irvine

Postcode

KA12 8EE

Email Address

dhammond@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

☐   Publish response with name

X   Publish response only (without name)

☐   Do not publish response

Information for organisations:

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

X Yes

☐ No

Tackling the Nature Emergency: Consultation on Scotland's Strategic Framework for Biodiversity

Questions

We are inviting responses to this consultation by **14 December 2023**.

You are not required to answer every question in the consultation. The consultation is set out in sections to help you identify matters in which you may have a particular interest.

Please note that Section 1 of the consultation document does not contain any questions, so question numbering starts from Section 2.

Section 2 – Scottish Biodiversity Delivery Plan

Question 2a: Have we captured the key actions needed to deliver the objective: accelerate restoration and regeneration?

- Yes
- No X
- Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response:
The key actions captured in the document broadly capture those needed to deliver the objective. A further useful key action would be to provide greater focus and support towards community mainstreaming and community partnership building. These partnerships will be key for local delivery. Therefore, introducing 'supporting local partnership building' as a key action would contribute towards the delivery of the existing actions.

The key actions should also focus on engagement. The action to safeguard space for coastal habitat change could conflict with the private interests of landowners and business operators, for example. In North Ayrshire, areas of space suitable for coastal habitat change are also key areas for economic development and regeneration. It will be important to undertake engagement to tease out competing interests to find areas of consensus to deliver the actions.

Question 2b: Are the key actions, to support the objective: accelerate restoration and regeneration, sufficient to put Scotland on track to ending the loss of biodiversity by 2030?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure X

North Ayrshire Council welcomes the strategy's ambition and recognises the potential the key actions have for accelerating restoration and regeneration. However, given the scale of the task and the short time scale involved, it will take a significant increase in the capacity to deliver the proposed level of restoration and regeneration. Without a significant increase in funding and resource, it is unlikely that local authorities will be able to deliver the actions in the strategy in a way that will halt biodiversity loss by 2030 and contribute to the national commitment.

Question 2c: Which actions do you think will have most impact?

We believe the following actions will have the most impact in North Ayrshire:
- *Introduce statutory nature restoration targets* - The scope and extent of the Statutory Nature Restoration Targets will be key to delivering on the other actions.
- *Implement a programme of ecosystem restoration* - The action to expand and enhance Nature Networks and ecological connectivity would help to emphasise the value of regularly used spaces within existing neighbourhoods.
- *Enhance water and air quality and undertake water management measures to enhance biodiversity and reduce negative impact*s - There are already challenges with delivering Natural Flood Management actions in small catchments so the above actions would need considerable support for implementation. This may require legislative changes to support.
- *Identify and facilitate partnership projects for six large scale landscape restoration areas with significant woodland components by 2025 and establish management structures with restoration work progressing by 2030.*
- *Implementation of a Scottish Plan for INNS Surveillance, Prevention and Control* - It is important that this is accompanied with wider support measures (including funding) to enable long-term effective INNS removal at scale. INNS management and damage costs increase rapidly over time as new species arrive and established ones continue to spread due to many factors, including climate change. Investing in prevention provides economic returns up to fifty times higher than trying to manage an INNS after it is established.

Question 2d: Have we captured the key actions needed to deliver the objective: protect nature on land and at sea across and beyond protected areas?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure X

Please explain the reasons for your response:
It is clear from the evidence available that we are in a nature emergency. North Ayrshire Council recognises this position and the need to protect nature on land and sea across and beyond protected areas. The Council agrees that strategy has captured key actions, but it is currently unclear if these will be enough to deliver the objective.

Question 2e: Are the key actions, to support the objective: protect nature on land and at sea across and beyond protected areas, sufficient to put Scotland on track to ending the loss of biodiversity by 2030?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure X

The Council welcomes the scale of the strategy's ambition and recognises the potential of key actions to protect nature on land and sea across and beyond protected areas in North Ayrshire. However, given the scale of the task and the short time scale involved, it will take a significant increase in local authorities' capacity to deliver the objective. It will be challenging for local authorities to deliver a truly integrated and functional Nature Network. Creating a functioning landscape of key local nature sites, NNRs, protected areas and public and private land within the time scale, without significant investment and increased partnership working, will not be possible. As with all actions in the strategy, it will be important for local authorities to be able maintain the delivered actions for the duration of the strategy time frame. This will not be possible without the allocation of appropriate long-term funding and investment in personnel with the required skills.

Question 2f: Which actions do you think will have most impact?

- *Identify and realise opportunities for expansion of existing NNRs or the designation of new ones – identifying a range of sites by 2026 and designating those considered suitable by 2028:* The process of expanding or designating new NNRs will have an impact at a local level. This impact will not just be through the provision of more sites managed for nature but also provide an important conduit for engaging with local communities. This engagement will then create further opportunities for the delivery of the wider Nature Network.
- *Ensure nature networks are implemented in every Local Authority area to provide connectivity between important places for biodiversity, deliver local priorities and contribute to strategic priorities at regional and national scales by 2030:* The Council welcomes this approach. The overall targets of the strategy will be more readily achieved if each local authority works together towards an integrated Scotland wide Nature Network. The concern that this approach raises is the lack of a unified approach between local authorities at present. Each local authority is delivering the network in a different way. This could make regional and nation cooperation more challenging.
- *Undertake mapping of opportunities for creating local-authority-wide Nature Networks by 2030:* The undertaking of mapping will not only benefit delivery of the Nature Network but also help create a better baseline for the creation of the Local Development Plan.

- *Develop a consistent approach to assessing existing and potential biodiversity value of green and blue spaces and measuring, monitoring, and demonstrating long-term positive effects for biodiversity and agreed approach to standardised monitoring has been provided to Local Authorities by 2030:* The adoption of a standard monitoring approach would enable the Council to undertake more fact-based management actions and help with a universal approach across Scotland.
- *Prepare and implement nature-positive amenity grassland management strategies for the public estate in town and cities by 2030, incorporating improved technical guidance for practitioners and access to suitable machinery for local authorities. A strategic approach is essential for the success of this key action, supported by sufficient funding, training, education and communications:* The preparation and implementation of a nature positive amenity grassland strategy will be an important part of the Council's delivery on biodiversity. The strategy will allow the Council to deliver cohesive grassland management strategies across all communities. However, we requite to see detail of the proposals for further assessment, and it will be essential for implementation of the plan to ensure that engagement with communities is undertaken in relation to any management regime changes, alongside grounds maintenance staff including planning in relation to training and funding for machinery that will be required.

Question 2g: Have we captured the key actions needed to deliver the objective: embed nature positive farming, fishing and forestry?

- Yes X
- No
- Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response:

We welcome the fact that large-scale action in forestry is required and the need to improve the biodiversity benefits from all woodlands, as well as encouraging an expansion of natural regeneration.

The key actions for forestry and woodlands ensure that they deliver increased biodiversity and habitat connectivity alongside timber and carbon outcomes.

Sustainable forest management has been highlighted as a key action and is important for decision makers to increase biodiversity through this action to diversify age and species mixes and to facilitate natural regeneration as a method of increasing woodland cover.

Question 2h: Are the key actions, to support the objective: embed nature positive farming, fishing and forestry, sufficient to put Scotland on track to ending the loss of biodiversity by 2030?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response:
N/A.

Question 2i: Which actions do you think will have most impact?

Please state the actions and explain the reasons for your response:
The updating of woodland management guidance and plans (between 2023 and 2030) to reflect greater emphasis on actions that will improve biodiversity.

Question 2j: Have we captured the key actions needed to deliver the objective: protect and support the recovery of vulnerable and important species and habitats?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure X

Please explain the reasons for your response:
The Council welcomes the scale of the strategy's ambition. It will need sufficient resources, including additional and appropriate funding, training, education and communication, to meet the ambition of supporting the recovery of vulnerable and importance species and habitats in the delivery timeframes.

Question 2k: Are the key actions, to support the objective: protect and support the recovery of vulnerable and important species and habitats, sufficient to put Scotland on track to ending the loss of biodiversity by 2030?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure X

Please explain the reasons for your response:
The Council believes that more guidance is required on how decision makers can create green corridors to embed into open space strategies and planning developments and how improvements will be funded.

Question 2l: Which actions do you think will have most impact?

Please state the actions and explain the reasons for your response:

N/A.

Question 2m: Have we captured the key actions needed to deliver the objective: invest in nature?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure X

Please explain the reasons for your response:
The key actions of the strategy recognise some of the key aspects relating to investing in nature. The Council welcomes the proposed creation of a biodiversity investment plan. We also recognise the need to bring in private investment in natural capital. The provision of **"**direction on, and investment in, green skills and local economic opportunities supporting nature-based education, nature restoration skills and volunteering" is also welcomed. However, the focus of this investment is through information for land managers and the new agricultural payment system. As the strategy acknowledges that many local authorities have a resource gap when it comes to delivering on biodiversity, we would like to see specific actions that would help local authorities bridge identified knowledge and skills gaps.

It is important that Scotland works more strategically and at scale.

The Council would welcome the development of a Biodiversity Investment Fund. There is a need for this alongside signposting to funding streams. Funding is required to support projects and fund machinery. There is also a need for appropriate training, education and communication campaigns.

The Council also supports the development of the Woodland Carbon Code for improved biodiversity benefits.

Question 2n: Are the key actions, to support the objective: invest in nature, sufficient to put Scotland on track to ending the loss of biodiversity by 2030?

- Yes
- No X
- Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response:

The Council welcomes the scale of the strategy's ambition and recognises the potential the key actions have for investing in nature in North Ayrshire. However, generating investment, building the green economy, and developing skills will be challenging particularly in the short term.

For example, we note that there is no clear way to fund or deliver the recommendations of completed natural flood management (NFM) studies. A funding and delivery

mechanism for implementation and maintenance of NFM would be helpful, especially as these schemes would deliver multiple benefits in terms of flood risk management, biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

Question 2o: Which actions do you think will have most impact?
Please state the actions and explain the reasons for your response:

As a local authority, the two main barriers to progressing biodiversity initiatives are funding and capacity. The increase in the capacity to deliver can currently only come from existing, limited funding streams. The establishment of a clear pathway for harnessing biodiversity investments would go some way to elevating the funding and capacity bottleneck.

Question 2p: Have we captured the key actions needed to deliver the objective: take action on the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure X

Please explain the reasons for your response:
The key actions captured in the document broadly capture those needed to deliver the objective. The Council recognises the need to improve the engagement and connection between people, communities, and nature. It will require long term financial investment to build the required capacity. This lack of capacity to support communities will be an issue when it comes to supporting community ownership of local and national nature reserves.

Question 2q: Are the key actions, to support the objective: take action on the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss, sufficient to put Scotland on track to ending the loss of biodiversity by 2030?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure X

Please explain the reasons for your response:

On a local level, the Council would welcome further support in identifying the direct, and indirect, local drivers of biodiversity loss in our own areas. Many of the drivers are systemic, created by the interaction of complex local factors. A weakness of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan system has been presenting biodiversity loss as something that is addressed through individual projects. Although some projects have been individually successful, they have not arrested the overall decline in biodiversity. While funding and effort has been placed into these individual projects the more systemic drivers of biodiversity loss (lack of resources, skills etc.) remain unaddressed.

Question 2r: Which actions do you think will have most impact?

Please state the actions and explain the reasons for your response:
There is a need to ensure that the range of actions to tackle biodiversity loss and deliver a circular economy (through the Circular Economy Bill and Circular Economy & Waste Route Map) are complementary and co-ordinated. The Council recognises that lack of co-ordination between different policy areas is a barrier to halting biodiversity loss. Action would be welcomed to create pathways that would be able to facilitate collaboration between different policy areas and strategies. It should be recognised that the knowledge and skills gap within organisations plays a significant role in the current level of joined up working in policy delivery. A failure to tackle the skills gap would undermine any efforts to enhance complementary and co-ordinated working.

Delivery of action strengthening the connection between people and nature is imperative. The impact of having successful public awareness and education campaigns is important. It would increase the knowledge and understanding of people on the subject. This connection would empower people to carry out the actions required to protect and restore nature.

Section Three – Nature Networks Policy Framework

Question 3a: Do you have any comments on the Nature Networks Framework?

Please provide any comments:

'Governance and decision-making
- *Governance of Nature Networks will be transparent, democratic, and accountable and with inclusive and diverse representation. There will be a focus on empowering and equipping delivery partners from across sectors.'*

We welcome the drive to fully involve our communities in the Nature Network. Given the scope and scale of the Nature Network process it will be difficult to have uniform engagement levels across all North Ayrshire's communities. Building capacity in communities will be a long-term undertaking and challenging. Communities will require ongoing support to facilitate long-term engagement. It is currently unclear where the funding and capacity required to deliver this support will come from.

'Participation, engagement, and communication
- *Engagement with partnerships and communities will be inclusive, empowering and facilitate bottom-up activity.'*

The Nature Networks process has a potential conflict between being data driven, top down and community led, bottom up. It will be challenging to marry up community aspirations and the data driven process.
We welcome a policy framework for Scotland's Nature Networks and the development of a Nature Networks toolbox. We agree that action should make ecosystems

adaptable, robust, and fully connected. This will not only support nature restoration but also provide multiple benefits for people in their local communities.

- *'Simple and unifying messaging on Nature Networks across partners with a focus on building people's connection with nature and fostering stewardship.'*

We agree that it is important to send out a unifying message on Nature Networks.

- *'Scotland's public bodies will be exemplars, supporting the delivery of Nature Networks on their land.'*

We agree that it is important for local authorities to lead by example on the Climate and Nature Emergency, but we require the funding and skills investment in order to do so.

'Knowledge and Skills
- *Nature Networks will be developed using and sharing local knowledge, experience, and best-practice, and will support the growth of green skills and jobs.'*

We agree that development of the Nature Network will be best served by using and sharing local knowledge, experience and best practice. The challenge will be bringing together all of this in an efficient way that ensures all voices are heard.

It should be noted that a defined pathway between the creation of the Nature Network and the growth of green skills and jobs is unclear and requires further articulation and guidance.

'Data, mapping and monitoring
- *We will be adaptive in our approach to delivering Nature Networks and use the opportunity to improve our understanding of developing effective ecological connectivity.'*

Adaptivity will be key to meeting the differing needs of local authority areas. This flexibility may lead to challenges when it comes to sharing best practice between authorities. No two Nature Networks will be the same.

'Monitoring approaches for Nature Networks will be developed with, and for, stakeholders to inform management and action that maximises effectiveness of the network.
- *We will employ innovation and best practice in data collection, management, and use.*
- *Mapping and use of data will be collaborative and holistic in approach.'*

After the initial set up of the network, it is unclear how monitoring approaches will be continued by local authorities utilising existing budgets. There is currently no capacity to carry out the data collection and information management required to monitor a Nature Network. It is imperative that the monitoring approaches for Nature Networks are developed in partnership with local authorities and are fully funded. Appropriate training and data collection methodologies also need implementation. Any actions need to be sustainable in the long term.

'Finance and Resourcing
- *Public and private funding and finance will be delivered through properly resourced, clearly directed, long-term, simple, and accessible means.*
- *Funding and finance will be based on the principles of fairness, trust, and transparency through collaborative working.*
- *Funding and finance mechanisms will be coherent and will continue to be maintained.'*

The mechanism in which public and private funding and finance will be brought together is unclear. The managing and allocating of these funds will require additional resources.

'Policy and Mainstreaming
- *Policy and planning levers will be used to safeguard Nature Networks and provide long term assurance.*
- *Coherence across the policy landscape will be maintained.*
- *Mainstreaming Nature Networks, and wider biodiversity targets, at all levels of government and across the whole of society to encourage shared responsibility, efficient use of resources, and delivery of multiple benefits (additionality).'*

We agree with the need to mainstream the Nature Networks and wider biodiversity targets at all levels. At an organisational level this will require additional funding and access to appropriate courses for officer training. It is not apparent where this additional funding will come from.

Section Four – 30 by 30 Policy Framework

Question 4a: Do you have any comments on the 30 by 30 Framework?

Please provide any comments:
The Council welcomes the development of the 30 by 30 policy framework and is in agreement with the outline vision and guiding principles.

As calculated by NatureScot, currently in Scotland, 23% of land is designated as protected areas. This consists of areas such as: National Parks, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), and Special Protected Areas (SPA).

NatureScot reports that only 78% are currently in a favourable condition. We believe that there should be a further work on the effective management of these existing areas. These areas should then be used as examples of best practice.

The delivery of the 30 by 30 framework faces the same barriers to delivery as of the other elements in the strategy- funding and capacity. The Council welcomes the scale of the 30 by 30 ambition. However, without an increase in funding and capacity, it is unlikely that local authorities will be able to fully deliver the framework.

Section Five – Impact Assessments – Part A

Question 5a: What are your views on the accuracy and scope of the environmental baseline set out in the environmental report?

N/A.

Question 5b: What are your views on the predicted environmental effects as set out in the environmental report?

N/A.

Question 5c: What are your views on the reasonable alternatives as set out in the environmental report?

N/A.

Question 5d: What are your views on the proposals for mitigation and monitoring of the environmental effects set out in the environmental report?

N/A.

Question 5e: Do you think that any of the provisions in the SBS or Delivery Plan will have any adverse effects on business?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If yes, please provide any comments: N/A.

Question 5f: Are there any additional actions or changes to existing actions which can be taken through the Delivery Plan to benefit business?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If yes, please provide any comments:
N/A.

Question 5g: Do you think that any of the provisions in the SBS or Delivery Plan will have any adverse effects on socio-economic equality?

- Yes

13

- No
- Unsure

If yes, please provide any comments: N/A.

Question 5h: Are there any additional actions or changes to existing actions which can be taken through the Delivery Plan to benefit socio-economic equality?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If yes, please provide any comments: N/A.

Question 5i: Do you think that any of the provisions in the SBS or Delivery Plan, will have any adverse impacts on people with protected characteristics?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If yes, please provide any comments: N/A.

Question 5j: Are there any additional actions or changes to existing actions which can be taken through the Delivery Plan to benefit people with protected characteristics?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If yes, please provide any comments: N/A.

Question 5k: Do you think that any of the provisions in the SBS or Delivery Plan, will have any adverse impacts on island communities?

- Yes
- No X
- Unsure

If yes, please provide any comments:

North Ayrshire includes the Isle of Arran and the islands of Cumbrae. The Council has developed a local island plan for these locations. The plans are based around the key themes of community, economy, and environment. It has been concluded, from the information available, that there are elements of the proposals that could help facilitate the delivery of the island plans core themes.

Question 5l: Are there any additional actions, or changes to existing actions, which can be taken through the Delivery Plan to ensure that there are no adverse effects for Island communities?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If yes, please provide any comments: N/A.

Question 5m: Do you think that any of the provisions in the SBS or Delivery Plan, will have any adverse impacts on child rights and wellbeing?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If yes, please provide any comments: N/A.

Question 5n: Are there any additional actions or changes to existing actions which can be taken through the Delivery Plan to benefit child rights and wellbeing?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If yes, please provide any comments: N/A.

Section Six – Statutory Targets for Nature Restoration

Question 6a: Do you agree with this approach to placing targets on a statutory footing?

- Yes X
- No
- Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response:

In principle, we welcome the approach of placing targets on a statutory footing. However, there is a need to clarify exactly what targets will be made statutory, what level targets will be set at, what compliance will look like, and what enforcement will be undertaken.
Mandatory targets will elevate the importance of biodiversity at a strategic and decision-making level. Mandatory targets can then be incorporated into statutory work programmes, strategies, and policies. The provision of appropriate levels of funding to support the delivery of statutory targets will be essential. Without funding, the targets are unlikely to be deliverable. The existence of mandatory targets will also help in

decision making at a strategic level through implementing biodiversity positive changes to maintenance and management approaches of our green infrastructure and open spaces. It is also important to recognise that any statutory target timeframes take note of existing timeframes in existing policies.

It is also unclear how the local authorities will monitor its delivery of statutory targets given the limited capacity to carry out the data collection and information management that would be required.

Question 6b: Do you agree with the criteria set out for the selection of targets?

- Yes X
- No
- Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response:

The Council agrees that the target selection criteria are a logical basis for selecting targets.

Question 6c: Do you agree statutory targets should include a combination of outcome targets and output targets?

- Yes X
- No
- Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response: It is understood that a range of both quantitative and qualitative targets would help provide a more meaningful framework. However, the level of target, the funding to reach them, and how compliance would be monitored and measured needs further articulation and consultation with stakeholders.

Question 6d: Is the list of potential target topics sufficiently comprehensive in terms of the focus of proposed target areas and overall scope?

- Yes X
- No
- Unsure

Question 6e: Do you have any other comments on the list of potential target topics?

No.

Question 6f: Do you agree with the proposal to have the smallest feasible number of targets which reflects the complexity of nature restoration?

- Yes X
- No
- Unsure

Question 6g: Do you agree statutory targets should align with the 2030 and 2045 timescales set out in the Strategy?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure X

Please explain the reasons for your response: The Council recognises the significance of the of the 2030 and 2045 timescales in relation to the realities of the climate and nature emergency. The timescale matches the urgency in which action is required to be taken. It is important, however, to make a distinction between the question of the timescale being an appropriate response to the emergency and the question of the timescale being appropriate in terms of the ability to meet the targets. The proposed Natural Environment Bill with statutory targets for nature restoration only gives limited time to act to be nature positive by halting biodiversity loss, for nature to adapt, and to monitor and publish results by 2030. Considering that the Bill is not due to be ratified until 2026, it will therefore be difficult to meet the 2030/2045 deadline within the present funding and resource landscape.

Question 6h: Do you agree the Bill should allow for the review of statutory targets?

- Yes X
- No
- Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response:

The Council agrees that the Bill should allow for the review of statutory targets. It is important for the targets to be flexible and represent the reality of the climate and nature emergency. The targets need to also be flexible to match the success/lack of success of the response.

Question 6i: Do you agree that reporting on targets should align with existing Biodiversity reporting requirements?

- Yes
- No

- Unsure X

Please explain the reasons for your response:

The targets will be reviewed on a five-year rolling basis. The Council agrees that a five-year time scale is appropriate time to affect change on the ground while still being able to adjust the targets within the tight, 2030–2045, time scale. Due to capacity issues, we believe that the reporting process should be as streamlined as possible. It would make sense to facilitate this by aligning with existing biodiversity reporting requirements. There is a question around the practicalities of this process. The Council will need to align its own LBAP process to the time scale of the targets. Targets would be reviewed every five years with the LBAP being refreshed in the sixth year to deliver the targets at a local level. If the reporting on targets aligns with the present three yearly Biodiversity Duty reporting cycle. There are questions over the practicalities of how will this work in practice that need to be addressed through further guidance.

Question 6j: Do you agree that an Independent Review Body is needed to report on Government's progress in meeting the statutory targets?

- Yes X
- No
- Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response:

Similarly to climate change, where the Climate Change Committee plays a role in monitoring and accountability, the Council agrees with the need for an Independent Review Body to report on the Government's progress in meeting statutory targets. Such a body would also require a process to be able to directly feed into the target review process.

Section Seven – National Parks

Question 7a: Do you agree that the purpose of National Park authorities should be amended in order to emphasise the important leadership role that National Park authorities need to play in restoring nature and in mitigating and adapting to climate change?

- Agree
- Partially agree
- Partially disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know

Please explain the reasons for your response: N/A.

Question 7b: Do you agree with these suggested changes to the first National Park aim?

- Agree
- Partially agree
- Partially disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know

Please explain the reasons for your response: N/A.

Question 7c: do you agree with the suggested change to the second National Park aim?

- Agree
- Partially agree
- Partially disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know

Please explain the reasons for your response: N/A.

Question 7d: Do you agree with the suggested change to the third National Park aim?

- Agree
- Partially agree
- Partially disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know

Please explain the reasons for your response: N/A.

Question 7e: Do you agree with the suggested change to the fourth National Park aim?

- Agree
- Partially agree
- Partially disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know

Please explain the reasons for your response: N/A.

Question 7f: Do you agree that the National Park 'principle' set out in section 9(6) of the 2000 Act should be retained? This would mean that, if there is a conflict between the National Park aims, greater weight should be given to the first aim which would seek to protect, restore and enhance the natural assets, biodiversity and ecosystems within the National Park.

- Agree
- Partially agree
- Partially disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know

Please explain the reasons for your response: N/A.

Question 7g: Do you agree that public bodies operating within the National Park should have regard to the proposed National Park aims?

- Agree
- Partially agree
- Partially disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know

Please explain the reasons for your response: N/A.

Question 7h: Do you agree that public bodies operating within the National Park should have regard to the National Park principle?

- Agree
- Partially agree
- Partially disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know

Please explain the reasons for your response: N/A.

Question 7i: Do you agree that the duty on public bodies operating within National Parks should be strengthened so they have an obligation to support and contribute to the implementation of National Park Plans rather than having regard to these plans?

- Agree
- Partially agree
- Partially disagree
- Disagree

- Don't know

Please explain the reasons for your response: N/A.

Question 7j: Do you agree with the proposal that National Park Authorities should be able to enforce byelaw breaches within National Parks by issuing fixed penalty notices rather than referring them to local Procurators Fiscal?

- Agree
- Partially agree
- Partially disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know

Please explain the reasons for your response: N/A.

Question 7k: Do you think that any other changes should be made to the general powers of National Park authorities?

- Agree
- Partially agree
- Partially disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know

Please explain the reasons for your response: N/A.

Question 7l: Do you agree with the proposed changes to the governance of National Parks?

- Agree
- Partially agree
- Partially disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know

Please explain the reasons for your response: N/A.

Question 7m: Do you have any other comments that you would like to make about the aims, powers and governance of National Parks?
N/A.

Section Eight – Impact Assessments – Part B

Question 8a: Do you think that any of the proposals in Part B, will have any adverse impacts on human rights?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If yes, please provide any comments: N/A.

Question 8b: Are there any additional actions, or changes to existing actions, which can be taken through the proposals in Part B to ensure that there are no adverse effects for people's human rights?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If yes, please provide any comments: N/A.

Question 8c: Do you think that any of the proposals in Part B, will have any adverse impacts on people with protected characteristics?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If yes, please provide any comments: N/A.

Question 8d: Are there any additional actions or changes to existing actions which can be taken through the proposals in Part B to benefit people with protected characteristics?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If yes, please provide any comments: N/A.

Question 8e: Do you think that any of the proposals in Part B will have any adverse effects on socio-economic equality?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If yes, please provide any comments: N/A.

Question 8f: Are there any additional actions or changes to existing actions which can be taken through the proposals in Part B to benefit socio-economic equality?

- Yes

- No
- Unsure

If yes, please provide any comments: N/A.

Question 8g: Do you think that any of the proposals in Part B, will have any adverse impacts on island communities?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If yes, please provide any comments:

North Ayrshire includes the Isle of Arran and the islands of Cumbrae. The Council has developed a local island plan for these locations. The plans are based around the key themes of community, economy, and environment. It has been concluded, from the information available, that there are elements of the proposals that could help facilitate the delivery of the island plans core themes.

Question 8h: Are there any additional actions, or changes to existing actions, which can be taken through the proposals in Part B to ensure that there are no adverse effects for Island communities?

- Yes X
- No
- Unsure

If yes, please provide any comments:

The Council believes that delivering actions in a way that embraces the uniqueness of each island will be key to ensuring adverse effects are minimised.

Question 8i: Do you think that any of the proposals in Part B, will have any adverse impacts on child rights and wellbeing?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If yes, please provide any comments: N/A.

Question 8j: Are there any additional actions or changes to existing actions which can be taken through the proposals in Part B to benefit child rights and wellbeing?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If yes, please provide any comments: N/A.

Question 8k: Do you think that any of the proposals in Part B will have any adverse effects on business?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If yes, please provide any comments: N/A.

Question 8l: Are there any additional actions or changes to existing actions which can be taken through the proposals in Part B to benefit business?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If yes, please provide any comments: N/A.

Question 8m: What are your views on the accuracy and scope of the environmental baseline set out in the environmental report?
N/A.

Question 8n: What are your views on the predicted environmental effects as set out in the environmental report?
N/A.

Question 8o: What are your views on the reasonable alternatives as set out in the environmental report?
N/A.

Question 8p: What are your views on the proposals for mitigation and monitoring of the environmental effects set out in the environmental report?
N/A.