

# ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

## BULLETIN ITEM

**Subject:** Nature Restoration Fund - Progress Report

**Date:** 2 December 2021

**ECO:** Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 Nature Restoration Fund - Progress Report

### 2. Background

2.1 The Nature Restoration Fund (NRF) is a capital fund designed to support new projects, or to enhance existing approaches, to restore biodiversity.

The newly established Scottish Government fund with a total allocation of £10m, is additional support to help fund projects that will deliver nature restoration, safeguard wildlife, and tackle the causes of biodiversity loss due to climate change.

£5m of the Nature Restoration Fund has been allocated to include a competitive small project fund of £1m to be distributed by Nature Scot, with the remaining £4m going directly to establish nature restoration projects across Scotland. The remaining £5m has been allocated to Local Authorities.

The Highland Council secured an allocation of £258K. The allocation is based on the following formula:-

- 80% of the annual funding is distributed based on 50% total population and 50% on the number of towns/cities.
- 20% of the annual funding is distributed on a deprivation SIMD factor, with deprivation to be measured by the number of data zones in the top 20 per cent most deprived data zones in the SIMD.

**Appendix 1** summarises all LA allocations.

### 2.2 Purpose of Fund

The purpose of the NRF is to support actions that help nature recover across Scotland. To deliver this the NRF will run across two themes:-

- 1) Making Space For Nature (urban focused nature-based solutions for biodiversity and climate change); and
- 2) Helping Nature Recover (rural focused biodiversity enhancement, climate resilience and reinstatement).

Examples of the types of projects that could be supported include:-

- Wee Forests (purchase and planting of trees);
- Rain gardens (construction and materials plus planting);
- Improving Greenspace for Outdoor Learning (purchase and planting, equipment for outdoor learning, small access improvements);
- Action for pollinators (equipment for maintaining wildflower areas/verges plus planting);
- Improving condition and use of LNRs (purchase and planting, equipment for outdoor learning, small access improvements);
- Greening Active travel routes (purchase and planting) ;
- Urban woodlands - Climate forests (purchase and planting) ;
- Planting of wildlife corridors, removal of barriers to movement, pollinator planting;
- Natural flood management actions such as connecting rivers with flood plains, pond creation, de-culverting, in-stream works for habitat and flow variability;
- Removal of INNS;
- Habitat and species enhancement works using native stock, enhancing natural coastal defences through marram, addressing coastal squeeze; and
- Supporting building the evidence base to better inform restoration, recovery and wider enhancement efforts.

### 2.3 Use of Fund

The timetable for delivery of this fund is very tight and as such the following approach was agreed by WSM on 28 September 2021:-

1. Prepare a comprehensive Council land ownership record to inform biodiversity /carbon sequestration opportunities; to include opportunities for food growing, tree planting, biodiversity enhancement and or carbon offsetting. This action accords with the Councils Climate Change Programme Alignment Report and supports the work currently underway in respect of the Amenities Review and the Council's Food Growing Strategy.

Development of this map-based record will enable staff to make an evidence-based assessment of best opportunities for a wider range of ecological/low carbon interventions for both the Council and its communities. The output will be a suite of sites/spaces that may be suitable for food growing and/or set aside areas for biodiversity benefits.

2. Capital Grant scheme for Biodiversity: open scheme for Highland communities/public sector/third sector to support the management and / or enhancement of biodiversity. This approach will ensure that the Council delivers against the majority of items listed above. Grant scheme will be in the order of £200K supported by 1 FTE resource to manage and administer the scheme. The scheme will need to be opened and closed before the end of the financial year to meet requirements of the capital allocation.

### **3 Progress to date**

- 3.2 The Council launched its new Nature Restoration capital grants scheme on 9 November 2021. Grants of between £2,500 and £20,000 are available to a wide cross section of community groups and organisations.

A two-stage process has been put in place: 1) an expression of interest to be submitted no later than 12pm Friday 26 November 2021 and 2) followed by a full application – if projects are technically eligible. This stage will be open from Friday 10 December 2021 and final applications including supporting documentation must be submitted no later than 12pm Friday 14 January 2022. You must pass the EOI stage to submit a full application. We anticipate making approvals around the 31 January 2022.

As stated above, timescales are tighter than would normally be expected to ensure we meet the requirements of the SG capital allocation (i.e., funds must be spent in this financial year).

Full details of the scheme can be found at:-  
[www.highland.gov.uk/naturerestorationfund](http://www.highland.gov.uk/naturerestorationfund)

### **4. Governance**

- 4.1 Timescales will make approval of grants difficult to report to Committee, and as such, delegated authority was secured to establish the following process. Applications for project funding under the grant scheme will be made to the LEADER Team in partnership with the Environment team, who will assess and score proposals against the Scottish Government funding criteria. A funding recommendation paper will then be drafted and presented to the ECO – Infrastructure, Environment and Economy and Chair of Economy & Infrastructure Committee to discuss and approve.

A final report on funding allocations under the grant scheme will be brought to the first meeting of the Economy & Infrastructure Committee following the end of the current financial year.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Date: 11 November 2021

Author: Nicole Wallace, Acting Head of Environment

Background Papers: Appendix 1 - SG Nature Restoration allocations

## Appendix 1

<b>Region</b>	<b>Population – 40%</b>	<b>Town – 40%</b>	<b>SIMD – 20%</b>	<b>Rounded Allocation</b>
Aberdeen City	229,060	6	29	<b>0.128</b>
Aberdeenshire	260,780	42	9	<b>0.268</b>
Angus	115,820	11	12	<b>0.095</b>
Argyll & Bute	85,430	17	13	<b>0.108</b>
Edinburgh, City of	527,620	5	71	<b>0.264</b>
Clackmannanshire	51,290	9	18	<b>0.067</b>
Dumfries & Galloway	148,290	17	19	<b>0.135</b>
Dundee City	148,820	1	70	<b>0.109</b>
East Ayrshire	121,600	23	51	<b>0.172</b>
East Dunbartonshire	108,750	9	5	<b>0.079</b>
East Lothian	107,900	16	8	<b>0.109</b>
East Renfrewshire	96,060	11	7	<b>0.084</b>
Falkirk	160,560	25	35	<b>0.183</b>
Fife	374,130	53	97	<b>0.416</b>
Glasgow City	635,640	3	339	<b>0.487</b>
Highland	235,430	38	30	<b>0.258</b>
Inverclyde	77,060	6	51	<b>0.088</b>
Midlothian	93,150	10	10	<b>0.081</b>
Moray	95,710	16	4	<b>0.101</b>
Eilean Siar	26,500	2	0	<b>0.018</b>
North Ayrshire	134,250	16	74	<b>0.166</b>
North Lanarkshire	341,140	34	153	<b>0.369</b>
Orkney Islands	22,400	2	0	<b>0.016</b>
Perth & Kinross	151,910	26	11	<b>0.166</b>
Renfrewshire	179,390	13	56	<b>0.157</b>
Scottish Borders	115,240	18	9	<b>0.120</b>
Shetland Islands	22,870	2	0	<b>0.016</b>
South Ayrshire	112,140	11	28	<b>0.105</b>
South Lanarkshire	320,820	21	88	<b>0.264</b>
Stirling	94,080	13	15	<b>0.097</b>
West Dunbartonshire	88,340	9	48	<b>0.102</b>
West Lothian	183,820	20	35	<b>0.172</b>
	<b>5,466,000</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>1,395</b>	<b>5.000</b>