

THE BIODIVERSITY DUTY REPORTING TEMPLATE: LEVEL THREE 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: Workforce development
- Section 6: Research and monitoring
- Section 7: Biodiversity highlights and challenges

The 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 possible 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.

Guidance on completing this section	<p>Summarise your organisation's role and purpose, including a brief outline of governance and management structures.</p> <p>Summarise any relevance and impacts of biodiversity to your organisation. This might include the key environmental impacts from your operations, and any your role you have in sustainable development.</p>
Text Field	<p>The Scottish Funding Council is the Scottish Government's public body responsible for funding colleges and universities in Scotland, supporting teaching and research.</p> <p>The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) is a Non-Departmental Public Body of the Scottish Government and operates at 'arms-length' from the Government. SFC was established by the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005. SFC is governed by a publically-appointed Board, which delegates the management of the organisation to the Chief Executive. SFC has around 100 staff and budget of around £1.9Bn in 2019-20.</p> <p>Our own operations are centred on our office in Haymarket Terrace in Edinburgh. Our role in supporting Scotland's universities and colleges means we fund, influence or otherwise are involved in the activities of 19 universities and 16 colleges or regional college groupings.</p> <p>Our role in sustainable development includes supporting research capacity (to enable project investment by other funders), investing in university and college estate and funding activity intended to facilitate innovation in companies, social enterprises and the public sector. Our Global Challenges Research Fund supports Scottish universities to undertake research supporting the Sustainable Development Goals in developing countries.</p> <p>In all of these activities we are mindful of the duty to pursue Scotland's climate change objectives.</p>



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.

<p>Guidance on completing this section</p>	<p>You may wish to report on activities across the breadth of your organisation, including any actions that you have undertaken on your premises.</p> <p>Please explain how these actions have benefited biodiversity or nature, noting successes and challenges, and any plans for future or follow-up work. These might include:</p> <p>Addressing or raising awareness of some of the key drivers of biodiversity loss, which might include work or projects to tackle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Change. • Land use change. • Pollution. <p>Enhancing biodiversity at your premises through actions in and around offices, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing bird boxes / feeders. • Creating habitat for wildlife, such as wildflower areas. • Installing green roofs. • Organising staff volunteering days. • Sponsoring a species or habitat, or raising funds for a local wildlife trust or charity. • Reducing energy use. • Recycling and re-using as much as you can so that you produce less waste. • Encouraging staff to cycle or walk to work more.
<p>Links to related resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance on the Key pressures on biodiversity. • Guidance on Buildings and biodiversity - how to make space for nature in the built environment.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information on placemaking, open space and green infrastructure.• Examples of smaller actions that can be enacted in the office or staff homes - Biodiversity - what can you do? <p><u>Case studies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scottish Water Volunteering Programme.
Text Field	<p>Before the advent of Coronavirus, SFC had contracted its office space from two floors to one, with a considerable reduction in energy use assisted by a move to more efficient off-site computing resource. We have been working remotely since late March with only essential work in the office in that time. Our use of energy and paper has dropped (data in the process of collation). Our generation of waste has dropped and our work travel has dropped dramatically.</p> <p>It is too early to say when or how a new work pattern will emerge post-pandemic but we intend to lock in some of these environmental gains as much as possible.</p> <p>Importantly we will be using our current Review of Further and Higher Education to ensure the considerable public funding we allocate to universities and colleges assists, and encourages these institutions to themselves contribute to climate goals through increasingly sustainable operations.</p> <p>In recent years, our staff have been encouraged to volunteer in SFC-donated time, many doing so with ecological charities or in organised cleans ups of the Water of Leith, for example. As contributions to climate change objectives, SFC assists its staff to reduce their carbon footprint from travel with opportunities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Season ticket advance cycle loan: This is an advance against salary of up to £400 recovered over a 12 month period.• Cyclescheme – is a tax efficient scheme that allows staff to save on their tax and NI whilst buying a bicycle and bike equipment. It operates by staff selecting the bike/equipment they want, obtaining a voucher from the scheme and paying back the costs over an agreed period



	<p>of time direct from salary. As it is approved by HMRC tax (income and NI) savings benefits help reduce the actual cost of purchasing the bike. At the end of the agreed period a final payment is made to transfer the ownership from the scheme to the employee.</p>
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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.

<p>Guidance on completing this section</p>	<p>Outline any of your own body’s policies, plans and strategies that refer to biodiversity, or that may affect biodiversity positively or negatively, and describe how these are reflected in the structure of your organisation.</p> <p>These may include policies on consideration of biodiversity in estate management, procurement policies and purchasing decisions, and Sustainability and Climate Change commitments.</p> <p>Detail any areas in which your organisation has most successfully implemented mainstreaming of biodiversity, including through working with others, or raising awareness of biodiversity or nature.</p>
<p>Links to related resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Place Standard tool and associated Strategic Plan 2020-2023 provides a simple framework to structure conversations about place. • Case study - Procurement by the Scottish Courts and Tribunal (SCTS) Services. • The Forest Stewardship Council global forest certification system. • Guidance on Scotland's Pollinator Strategy, projects, resources • Case studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local Nature Conservation Sites systems in North Lanarkshire and Aberdeenshire. ○ A Pollinator Action Plan in Aberdeenshire.
<p>Text Field</p>	<p>In our organisation we have created a cross organisation staff group, led by a Director, to co-ordinate our own environmental considerations – reducing impact and increasing staff engagement.</p> <p>We have embedded net-zero thinking in our support for business-university and business-college interaction and prioritised some of our funds for carbon reduction projects. These have included projects on campuses (the University of St Andrews Eden Campus heating project is an example) or off them (support for the retrofitting of carbon reduction technology to urban tenements in Glasgow is another example)</p> <p>We have supported the SFC-funded Innovation Centres to pivot towards net-zero projects and</p>



assistance for Scotland's businesses to adopt net-zero innovation to create new products and services. A highly visible manifestation of this work was the Countdown to COP online [conference](#) held in November 2020 by the Innovation Centres.

Our [Outcome Agreement guidance](#) asks universities and colleges to take urgent action to help reduce climate change, avoid irreversible damage, and support environmental sustainability measures.

Our focus on contributing to Scotland achieving our net-zero target is an important consideration in our [Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability](#) (of Further and Higher Education). In the Review we will take a broad look at the ways we can influence research, teaching and the operations of our universities and colleges to help make the maximum contribution. A recent example of our activity is our contributions to the writing of the Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan 2020-2025 [published in December 2020](#).

In partnership with SDS, SFC has co-produced the Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan (CESAP), which was published on 16 December 2020. It is an important framework through which all relevant public sector agencies, universities and colleges and industry are coordinating and developing their response to the climate crisis building new skills and training programmes that will help create new and green jobs for Scotland's recovery from the pandemic.



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

[Climate change](#) is a direct driver of biodiversity loss. Some species are dying out while others are being displaced due to warmer air temperatures, extreme weather patterns, and higher sea levels. As well as being a direct driver of biodiversity loss, climate change also worsens the other drivers. For example it enables quicker spread of non-native invasive species. Combined action for biodiversity loss and climate change can be achieved through nature-based solutions.

This reporting section provides the opportunity for your organisation to provide details on how you are supporting the positive contribution biodiversity can make to building resilience, and helping nature to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

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

<p>Guidance on completing this section</p>	<p>Nature-based solutions can play a vital role in helping us to protect and enhance biodiversity, achieve net zero targets, and improve quality of life.</p> <p>If relevant, you may wish to report on any processes or activities that your organisation has undertaken, including within your buildings and workforce, and projects that you have delivered.</p> <p>Integration might include incorporating biodiversity into nature-based solutions to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The climate emergency, for example by developing climate change strategies that include nature, investing in green infrastructure, and taking action for pollinators. • Inclusive economic growth, for example by supporting nature based industries, or key natural visitor attractions. • Health and wellbeing, for example by improving access to nature for all.
<p>Links to related resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on how urban nature-based solutions can help Scotland's towns and cities mitigate and adapt to climate change providing guidance and examples. • The Helping nature to adapt webpage contains useful information on making use of nature's capacity to adapt to change as one of our best tools for managing climate change impacts, including through managing native woodlands and restoring peatlands. • The publication People, Place and the Climate Emergency includes examples and information on local nature-based solutions to deliver a range of socio-economic outcomes.



Text Field	<p>Our contributions to realising nature-based economic or social value are almost exclusively through the universities and colleges we work with.</p> <p>We are aware of the value of Scotland’s natural capital and our land-based institutions are particularly focussed on that asset. I would highlight, as just two examples of our engagement in our natural capital, the work we have done to support the establishment of South of Scotland Enterprise and to support the centrality of the colleges in the South as well as the universities with presence in the South, to engage with the strongly rural economic opportunities. SRUC is very heavily involved in dairy farming in the South, and is very much in the lead in thinking about natural capital and nature-based opportunity for growth. A second example is the extensive work that UHI is doing in the Blue Economy – looking to develop the economy of the coast and simultaneously address questions of energy, sustainable food supply and so on.</p>
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SECTION 5: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Workforce skills and training

Guidance on completing this section	<p>Detail activities that have been undertaken to support the development of your workforce, particularly in relation to skills relevant to biodiversity, nature, or outdoor learning and community engagement in the natural environment. Identify any opportunities that are available to your staff to take part in practical action.</p> <p>Activities might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supporting volunteering days, for example with environmental Non-Governmental Organisations.• Staff training, education and capacity building.• Staff networks that aim to deliver on or promote objectives related to biodiversity or nature.• Hosting conferences, exhibitions and events.• Collaborative working with other organisations and sharing best practice.• Information about nature hosted on your webpage or blog posts.• Ideas on volunteering outdoors.
Text Field	<p>I have referred to volunteering and internal staff awareness raising above. We have been fortunate to have engagement directly from experts in the field of climate change and sustainability speak to staff.</p>



SECTION 6: RESEARCH AND MONITORING

Describe any research activities that your organisation has undertaken that may be relevant to biodiversity or nature.

Guidance on completing this section	Detail any relevant research activities undertaken, if any. This might include research papers, surveys or reports undertaken by your organisation.
Text Field	The majority of such research is done in universities and in Scottish Government supported research institutes.

What follow-up actions or monitoring have you undertaken to assess the impacts of the actions you have taken? How have you measured this?

<p>Guidance on completing this section</p>	<p>If relevant, you may wish to report on monitoring of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities relating to biodiversity, climate change or nature more generally. • Any contribution to meeting national and international biodiversity targets. • Implementation of relevant strategies or policies. • Organisational capability or development in relation to biodiversity or the natural world.
<p>Links to related resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on biodiversity data, including obtaining and sharing data from Local Records Centres Biodiversity - where to find data. • The State of Scotland's Nature report provides a useful overview. • The National Biodiversity Network provides a single hub for biodiversity data management in the UK. • Biological Recording in Scotland is a useful source of information on surveys and biodiversity data management in Scotland.
<p>Text Field</p>	<p>Our current Review (referred to above) will strengthen the centrality of (particularly) the contribution universities and colleges should make to helping Scotland achieve its net-zero goals. We will include contributing to those goals in the accountability framework we are developing, also as part of the Review. We will, therefore, be able to report on progress against agreed contributions on national, regional and institutional scales.</p>



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).

Guidance on completing this section	Examples of key achievements might include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Actions taken to improve biodiversity through processes followed by your organisation.• Actions taken to improve biodiversity on your premises.• Meeting any strategic aims in relation to biodiversity or nature.• Completion of any projects with relevance to biodiversity or nature.• Volunteering days or time invested.
Text Field	<p>We are most proud that our own staff recognise the importance of our work in helping universities and colleges own contributions to these agendas.</p> <p>We are also pleased that our having moved to a smaller office, and now to our homes, has reduced waste and energy use.</p>



Looking ahead, what do you think will be the main challenges over the next three years?

Guidance on completing this section	Challenges might include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Economic and resource pressures.• Delivery of cross-cutting actions.• Preventing further loss of habitats and species.• Effective management of invasive non-native species.• Pressures for space.• Need to meet targets.• Encouraging enhanced partnership working.
Text Field	Considering our remit of further and higher education, the challenges will include those educational intuitions: Dramatically reducing carbon emissions from university and college activities and using that to enhance our global reputation for teaching and research which respects the biosphere and its finite resources. Using cutting edge research in geography, economics etc to properly value our land and sea as a resource for carbon management, flood management and biodiversity. Joining the research and advanced practice of universities and colleges to public policy to create virtuous cycles of encouragement and achievement in sustainability.