

I want support with biodiversity and green spaces

Introduction

1 in 6 species in Scotland is at risk of national extinction. Despite efforts, Scotland's nature has continued to decline over the decades (Scotland's Nature Agency). We're a country which prides itself on our nature and wild places, but we need to do more to protect the species that share our land, water and skies.



The decline in biodiversity is due to multiple issues: land use changes leading to a loss in habitat, overfishing, climate change, intensified agriculture, fragmentation of habitats making migration and mating difficult, invasive non-native species out competing native species, and pollution within the air, water and land.

Healthy ecosystems give us clean air, fresh water, and healthy soils. They're home to insects (bumble bees, wasps and flies) that pollinate the crops that feed us. Without a thriving biodiversity, our clean air, food and water are at risk. There's huge potential for greenspace work within West Dunbartonshire; over 40% of the land is classified as open countryside, which provides significant opportunities.



Greenspaces are great for our health and wellbeing: they're the places we can go to move our bodies, connect with nature and socialise. Your local greenspace might be your local park, a nature reserve, a sports field or play area, your own garden or even a local cemetery.

These areas are important to tackle climate change by:

Removing CO₂ from the atmosphere and storing it. Places with peat are especially important for this, as they can store it in much larger quantities and much longer timeframes. In fact, peatland restoration is a core part of the UK and Scotland's plan for achieving net zero by 2045.

Trees in urban places also help keep us cool during the summer – all the more important as summer temperatures are set to rise. They do this by providing shade, and cooling the air as water evaporates from their leaves. Certain trees and shrubs can also filter harmful air pollution out of the air through their leaves.

A healthy ecosystem also helps reduce flooding by slowing the flow of water by intercepting the rain with their leaves and slowing ground water movement with their roots – this allows the water more time to soak into the ground instead of creating a

flood. This is especially important as we know we'll get much wetter winters as the impacts of climate change continue to worsen.

Ideas for individuals



- Mow less frequently (e.g. no-mow May challenge) – allowing grass and wildflowers to grow creates vital food sources and shelter for pollinators like bees and butterflies, supporting local insect populations,
- Log pile – a pile of logs provides essential shelter and a food source for a wide range of wildlife, including beetles, frogs, fungi, and small mammals,
- Pond - even a small tub, offers a valuable water source and habitat for frogs, newts, insects, and birds, boosting garden biodiversity. Just make sure there is a way for insects/small mammals to exit the water safely.
- Less chemicals at home and in the garden – reducing pesticides and herbicides protects beneficial insects, pollinators, and soil life, and prevents harmful pollutants from entering the wider ecosystem,
- Peat-free compost - peat-free compost protects peatland habitats, which are rich in biodiversity and vital for carbon storage and climate regulation,
- Use native plants – native plants support local ecosystems by providing the right food and shelter for native insects, birds, and other wildlife,
- Bird, bat or bee boxes – bird, bat and bee boxes offer safe nesting and sheltering spaces, helping to support declining populations from habitat loss.

Ideas for community groups:



Before you start:

- ★ Ensure that you have landowner permission for any work and activities you're planning.
- ★ Ensure you have insurance for the activities, especially if it will involve the public or use of tools. [Keegan and Pennykid](https://www.keeganandpennykid.co.uk) (0131 225 6005) specialise in third sector insurance.
- ★ If you're planning on planting – make sure you know what you're planting on top of, to prevent issues with water/power/gas lines, and in case you're on a contaminated site (even if it looks beautiful!).
- ★ Whilst not always necessary, consider letting the council greenspace team know what your plans are – they may be able to support with tools, seeds/bulbs and permissions. Their contact details are wdc.greenspace@west-dunbarton.gov.uk / 01389 772 059.

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- Set up a ‘friends of park’ group, for fundraising, practical park improvement projects and running events in your local park,
- Create a community wildflower meadow with native flowers,
- Create a community orchard or woodland,
- Set up seed libraries of native plants for local people to use and share,
- Organise nature walks or BioBlitzes – encourage citizen science and engagement in natural spaces,
- Run eco-friendly workshops – e.g. teaching how to build wildlife boxes, chemical free weed and pest control, composting,
- Create a no-mow zone or wildlife corridor,
- Use art and creative signage to engage people – explain what’s growing and its role in the ecosystem.

Further resources:



Greenspace Scotland – advice on setting up a ‘friends of park’ group, and local growing group: <https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/>

TCV – volunteering opportunities, and can support your community group with knowledge and skills: <https://www.tcv.org.uk/scotland/>

Keep Scotland Beautiful – networking, funding, training - <http://keepsotlandbeautiful.org/>

Need Help Getting Started?

We can help you:

- Develop your idea
- Link with funding opportunities
- Connect with like-minded and experienced groups
- Connect with organisations who can provide technical support and expertise

