Aberdeenshire Council NESBReC Strategy

2020-2023

"We will collate, manage and disseminate biological data for the benefit of all in order to protect, promote and enhance the biodiversity of North East Scotland"

The Strategy is primarily an Aberdeenshire Council working document to help manage and deliver key priorities of NESBReC for the next three years.

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Front Cover: Photo,of a Four-spotted Chaser dragonfly at a garden pond in Methlick, Aberdeenshire

1 Introduction

From mountain to sea, Aberdeenshire boasts a rich and valuable resource in its natural environment. The varied landscape, habitats and native species of North East Scotland are a tremendous resource for both local inhabitants and visitors alike. The area is rich in biodiversity and holds sites of national and international importance.

The North East Scotland Biological Records Centre (NESBReC) has the job of managing biodiversity data and promoting the natural environment within Aberdeenshire and other local authorities. This involves partnership working with a diverse range of bodies including national agencies, community groups and most importantly a significant number of individuals who regularly contribute species records to NESBReC. The core of the team's work is based around the management of a database of biodiversity information and providing such data to decision makers and other data requestors.

1.1 Scope of Strategy

The NESBReC Strategy provides a structured approach to service delivery for the three-year period 2020-23. The Strategy is primarily an Aberdeenshire Council working document to help manage and deliver the key priorities, aims and objectives of NESBReC. The Strategy also provides opportunities to improve efficiency, participation and collaboration with key stakeholders and partners and embed best practice in the delivery of NESBReC's key priorities, aims and objectives.

This Strategy shows where NESBReC delivers or contributes to Scottish Government and Aberdeenshire Council priorities and recognises the financial support of Scottish Natural Heritage (now known as NatureScot), Aberdeen City Council, the Cairngorms National Park Authority and Scottish Forestry.

Through the period of the Strategy there will be a requirement to consider the challenges of our changing environment and the changing needs of our present and potential user groups. These challenges will include not only the effects of climate change, but also the necessary reactions to the arrival of Covid-19. To reflect these changes and challenges, an Annual Action Plan will be prepared for each year of the Strategy period which will provide detailed actions on the delivery of the Strategy and reflect the new priorities both at a Council level and beyond, as stated within the Council Plan approved in October 2020.

1.2 Aberdeenshire Council's Vision for NESBReC

It is Aberdeenshire Council's vision to be the best area and the best Council in Scotland.

It is NESBReC's aim that the benefits gained from Aberdeenshire's unique natural environment should be available to those who live, work and visit Aberdeenshire, and that the value of these resources, and the need to protect and enhance them for future generations through sustainable management, is understood. This vision for NESBReC can be summarised thus:

"We will collate, manage and disseminate biological data for the benefit of all in order to protect, promote and enhance the biodiversity of North East Scotland"

2 Resources

NESBReC is part of Aberdeenshire Council's Specialist Services Team within the Planning & Environment Service, Infrastructure Services. NESBReC comprises 2.6 (full-time equivalent) staff made up of 1.0 NESBReC Co-ordinator, 1.0 GIS Project Officer and 0.6 Data Assistant posts.

The staff are based in Woodhill House and cover not only the entirety of Aberdeenshire but also Aberdeen City, Moray and the Cairngorms National Park.

The financial budget for 2020-21 predicts total income of £83,393. NESBReC receives an annual contribution of £16,000 from Aberdeenshire Council and £7,120 from Aberdeen City Council under a Service Level Agreement. A grant of £40,473 will be received from NatureScot in 2020-21. However, NatureScot funding is now on an annual cycle and long-term funding from this source cannot be predicted with any certainty. The remaining income is generated by small grants from supporting organisations, project work (including work for Aberdeenshire Council) and ongoing consultancy income. The allocated staffing budget for 2020-21 is £93,883 and £25,000 for travel, administration, supplies and services costs. Any annual shortfall in income to meet expenditure for NESBReC, is met by the Planning & Environment Service budget.

Looking ahead, future budgets for NESBReC will need to take into consideration the effects of local authority expenditure in dealing with Covid-19. This Strategy has been produced with this in mind, although it is assumed in terms of the staffing budget for NESBReC there are no significant changes planned.

3 Aberdeenshire Council NESBReC Golden Thread

Scottish Government Purpose	**To focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all, increase wellbeing of people, create sustainable and inclusive growth, reduce inequalities, and give equal importance to economic, environmental, and social progress**			
Scotland Performs **Scottish Government National Outcomes (A1)**	*National Outcome* We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe	*National Outcome* We value, enjoy, protect, and enhance our environment	*National Outcome* We are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely	*National Outcome* We are healthy and active
Scottish Government National Plans, Policies & Strategies (A2-6)	A2) The Environment Strategy for Scotland: Vision and Outcomes (2020)		A3) National Planning Framework 3	A4) National Tourism Development Framework
	A5) Scotland's Biodiversity: It's in Your Hands (2004)	A6) 2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity (2013)	A3a) Scottish Planning Policy	
Aberdeenshire Council Vision	**Serving Aberdeenshire from mountain to sea – the very best of Scotland**			
Aberdeenshire Council & Community Plans & Strategies (B1-7)	B1) Aberdeenshire Council Priorities (2020)			
	B2) Local Outcomes Improvement Plan		B3) Aberdeenshire Council Plan 2020-22	
	B4) Infrastructure Services Delivery Plan		B5) Local Development Plan 2017 / 2021	
	B6) Community Action Plans		B7) Community Place Plans	
NESBReC Vision	**We will collate, manage and disseminate biological data for the benefit of all in order to protect and promote the biodiversity of North East Scotland**			
NESBReC Strategy (C1)	C1) Aberdeenshire Council NESBReC Strategy 2020 - 23			
NESBReC Plans (C1a-b)	C1a) Annual Team Action Plan		C1b) Annual Individual Workplans	

4   NESBReC Strategy Priorities, Aims, and Objectives

The NESBReC Strategy's aims and objectives have been drawn together to reflect the strategies, plans and policies which form the 'golden thread' (see Section 3) between Scottish Government outcomes and delivery on the ground. The Strategy's objectives provide a common framework for a customer and performance focussed service which works in partnership with stakeholders to deliver a high quality, efficient service which provides best value.

As part of this process key priorities have been identified which ensure biological data is collated, managed and disseminated in the most effective way for the area. These key priorities take their lead from the Council's Strategic Priorities which are underpinned by key principles under the three pillars of: Our People, Our Environment and Our Economy within the Aberdeenshire Council Plan 2020-22.

The NESBReC Annual Action Plan provides the detailed actions the Team will take to achieve the Strategy aims for, not just Aberdeenshire, but the whole of the North East of Scotland within NESBReC's remit. Section 5 of this Strategy provides the list of key performance indicators NESBReC will use to measure how the core outcomes of the Strategy have been achieved.

Image 1: A Common Frog found at one of NESBReC's training events. All members of the public can contribute to the database by reporting sightings of this species in their local area. Frogs are limited by the availability of pond habitat for breeding.

4.1 Key Priorities 2020-23

Table 1: Key Strategy Priorities 2020-23

Key Priority	Success Measure	Impact
KP1 Maintain, develop and expand, sustainably, the biological database for the North East of Scotland to ensure biological data is available for the management, promotion, and enhancement of the area's rich natural environment.	Number of new records added to the NESBReC database. Updates of NESBReC's GIS layers to take note of any new or revised data that may be available for sites and habitats.	Increase in data that is available for access by all users. More information available on the natural environment. Better understanding of the importance of the natural environment.
KP2 Support and encourage the recording of designated species, invasive non-native species, pollinator species, under recorded species and priority habitats to support the work of NESBiP and the Biodiversity Duty of those local authorities contributing to NESBReC.	Provide training days that target the identification and recording of these species groups. Participation in North East Scotland's INNS Forum events. Carry out habitat survey work in response to any project work that may be available for local authorities or other organisations. Partnership working with other groups and initiatives.	Better understanding of the importance of the natural environment. More information available on the natural environment. Targeted recording effort. Partnership working with local and national groups to deliver environmental priorities.
KP3 Further promote NESBReC and biological recording throughout the North East of Scotland as a volunteering opportunity, ensuring the mental health and wellbeing benefits of doing so are made clear	Provide an annual programme of free training days. Host an annual Recorders' Forum event that is free to attend. Regular use of social media to reach the wider public.	Better understanding of the importance of the natural environment. Increased public participation and personal development. Increased public wellbeing and connection to the natural environment for

Key Priority	Success Measure	Impact
for all, especially in light of the increased need following the Covid-19 pandemic, so that people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds can contribute to the collective understanding of North East Scotland's biodiversity.	Partnership working with other groups and initiatives. Number of young people engaged with NESBReC	people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. Promotion of the region. More information available on the natural environment.
KP4 Explore further alternative sources of income for NESBReC, including working with other Local Record Centres to ensure the Service continues to operate in an efficient and sustainable manner.	Carry out habitat survey work in response to any project work that may be available for local authorities or other organisations. Participation in the Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum Review. Improved links with other Local Record Centres and national recording schemes. Developing any opportunities for geographical expansion and possible new SLAs.	Sustainable operation of NESBReC. Sharing ideas of best practice and exploring possible new sources of income.

Image 2: Photo of a Cream Spot Ladybird sent in to NESBReC by a member of the public for identification and for addition to the NESBReC database. There are 15 species of ladybird in North East Scotland and this species is not frequently recorded in our area. Public sightings are an important element in understanding the distribution of many species in our local area.

4.2 Aim 1 – Manage Biodiversity Information

To manage a database of biodiversity information on protected sites, habitats and species and act as a hub for biological information exchange pertaining to the biodiversity of North East Scotland.

Table 2: Aim 1 Team Objectives

Team Objective	Golden Thread (see Section 3 and Key Priorities)	Outcome
1 Manage specified datasets on behalf of partners, organisations, groups and individuals.	A1, A2, A5, A6, B1, B5, C1, C1a, C1b, KP1	Greater public access to biodiversity data. Better understanding and management of the local natural environment.
2 Act as a focus for biodiversity records for the North East of Scotland.	A1, A2, A5, A6, B1, C1, C1a, C1b, KP1	Increase in data that is available for access by all users. Increased public participation in reporting local biodiversity.
3 Act as a node within the National Biodiversity Network and share data with national recording schemes.	A1, A2, A5, A6, B1, C1, C1a, C1b, KP1	Promotion of local biodiversity to a wider audience. Greater public access to biodiversity data
4 Provide support and guidance for recorders.	A1, A2, A5, A6, B1, B2, B6, B7, C1, C1a, KP2	Increased public participation in reporting local biodiversity. Increased public wellbeing and connection to the natural environment

4.3 Aim 2 – Protect and Enhance Biodiversity

To provide baseline biodiversity information to enable a range of users to analyse data and monitor any changes, and help decision makers make the best choices for the protection, restoration and enhancement of the biodiversity of North East Scotland.

Table 3: Aim 2 Team Objectives

Team Objective	Golden Thread (see Section 3 and Key Priorities)	Outcome
5 Supply data to decision makers, establishments, private businesses and the public.	A1, A2, A5, A6, B1, B2, B5, B6, B7, C1, C1a, C1b	Better protection of the natural environment. Better understanding and management of the local natural environment. Greater public access to biodiversity data.
6 Provide input into national policy and guidance development.	A1, A2, A5, A6, C1, C1a, C1b	Better protection of the natural environment. Increased sustainable development.
7 Provide input into Local Development Plan process.	A1, A2, A3, A3a, A5, A6, B1, B5, C1, C1a, C1b	Better protection of the natural environment. Increased sustainable development.
8 Work in partnership with relevant individuals, groups and organisations at national, regional and local levels to share knowledge and best practice.	A1, A2, A5, A6, B1, B2, B5, B6, B7, C1, C1a, C1b,	Better protection of the natural environment. Greater public access to biodiversity data.

4.4 Aim 3 – Promotion of the Biodiversity of the Natural Environment

To help promote understanding of the biodiversity of the natural environment to everyone, and to ensure it is at the heart of community wellbeing, emphasising the benefits it provides to people's mental health, economic development and sense of place, especially in light of the increased need following the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 4: Aim 3 Team Objectives

Team Objective	Golden Thread (see Section 3 and Key Priorities)	Outcome
9 Promote, encourage and co-ordinate biological recording among the wider community.	A1, A2, A5, A6, B1, B2, B6, B7, C1, C1a, C1b, KP3	Greater community engagement. Better understanding of the local natural environment. Increased public wellbeing and connection to the natural environment.
10 Provide training days as appropriate.	A1, A2, A5, A6, B1, C1, C1a, C1b, KP3	Increased skills learning. Increased volunteering opportunities. Better understanding of the local natural environment. Increased public wellbeing and connection to the natural environment.
11 Support the work and projects of the North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership (NESBiP).	A1, A2, A5, A6, B1, C1, C1a, C1b, KP2	Better understanding of the local natural environment. Increased public wellbeing and connection to the natural environment.
12 Maintain and update the NESBReC website and social media outlets[1].	A1, A2, A4, A5, A6, B1, C1, C1a, C1b, KP2, KP3	Better understanding of the local natural environment. Increased public wellbeing and connection to the natural environment. Increased skills learning.

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[1] The Facebook account and content is managed and delivered by NESBReC, without any additional support from internal or external sources.

Team Objective	Golden Thread (see Section 3 and Key Priorities)	Outcome
		Increased volunteering Opportunities.
		Greater community engagement.
		Increased public participation in reporting local biodiversity.
		Greater public access to biodiversity data.
13 Participate in relevant promotional events that highlight the biodiversity of North East Scotland.	A1, A2, A5, A6, B1, C1, C1a, C1b, KP3	Better understanding of the local natural environment.
		Increased public wellbeing and connection to the natural environment.
		Increased volunteering opportunities.
		Greater community engagement.
		Increased public participation in reporting local biodiversity.
14 Provide support and guidance for recorders.	A1, A2, A5, A6, B1, B2, B6, B7, C1, C1a, C1b, KP3	Increased skills learning.
		Increased volunteering opportunities.
		Better understanding of the local natural environment.
		Increased public wellbeing and connection to the natural environment.
15 Work in partnership with relevant individuals, groups and organisations in the promotion of North East Scotland's biodiversity.	A1, A2, A4, A5, A6, B1, B2, B6, B7, C1, C1a, C1b, KP2, KP3	Better understanding of the local natural environment.
		Increased public wellbeing and connection to the natural environment.

Team Objective	Golden Thread (see Section 3 and Key Priorities)	Outcome
		Increased volunteering opportunities.
		Greater community engagement.
		Increased public participation in reporting local biodiversity.

4.5 Aim 4 – Continuous Improvement

Ensure that NESBReC's service is high quality, continually improving, efficient, sustainable and responsive to local people's needs.

Table 5: Aim 4 Team Objectives

Team Objective	Golden Thread (see Section 3 and Key Priorities)	Outcome
16 Develop and maintain a team Strategy and Team Annual Action Plan	B1, B4, C1, C1a, C1b	Understanding and communication of Team priorities, aims and objectives. Defining roles within the Team. Better team working and service delivery.
17 Ensure staff CPD requirements are met.	B1, B4, C1, C1a, C1b	Continual improvement. Professional and personal development. Better team working and service delivery.
18 Maintain Key Performance Indicators.	B1, B4, C1, C1a, C1b	Demonstration of service value. Assessment of Team performance and service delivery.

Team Objective	Golden Thread (see Section 3 and Key Priorities)	Outcome
19 Produce performance reports, including an annual report.	B1, B4, C1, C1a, C1b	Assessment of Team performance and service delivery. Demonstration of service value.
20 Maintain continuous service improvement.	B1, B4, C1, C1a, C1b	Better team working and service delivery.
21 Explore alternative sources of income for NESBReC.	B1, B3, B4, KP4	Sustainable operation of NESBReC.
22 Develop and improve links between other Local Record Centres, Local Authorities and national recording schemes.	A1, A2, A5, A6, B1, B3, B4, KP4	Sustainable operation of NESBReC Better sharing and use of information
23 Provide input and support to the Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum (SBIF) Review	A1, A2, A5, A6, B1, B3, B4, KP4	Sustainable operation of NESBReC

Image 3: The first ever record of a Buff Footman moth in Aberdeenshire, seen in Luthermuir in 2020. The photo was sent in to NESBReC for identification and local moth experts were able to confirm the record from this image. NESBReC's links to members of the public across North East Scotland enables such sightings to be entered in the database for future use by a range of users.

5 Annual Performance Indicators

5.1 Aim 1 – Manage Biodiversity Information

I.   Number of new records added to NESBReC database

II.   Outputs delivered according to specific SLAs or grant conditions

III.   Delivery of any habitat survey contract(s)

IV.   Increase in habitat data held on GIS layers

V.   Number of new plant species records collected through habitat survey contract(s)

VI.   Number of Service Level Agreements in Place

VII.   Number of records uploaded to NBN Atlas

5.2 Aim 2 – Protect and Enhance Biodiversity

VIII.   Number of data searches carried out for Aberdeenshire Council

IX.   Number of data searches carried out for Local Development Plan

X.   Number of data searches carried out for environmental consultants

XI.   Number of searches for non-commercial users

XII.   Average time taken for full response to requests

XIII.   Number of SBIF Advisory Group meetings attended

5.3 Aim 3 – Promotion of the Biodiversity of the Natural Environment

XIV.   Annual Recorders Forum held & number of attendees

XV.   Number of training events held

XVI.   Total number of attendees at training events

XVII.   Number of presentations delivered to other groups

XVIII. Attendance at NESBiP Awareness Group meetings

XIX.   Number of Facebook "likes" and "follows"

XX.   Participation in events run by other groups and organisations

XXI.   Number of new recorders submitting records

XXII. Number of young people under the age of 25 engaging with NESBReC

5.4 Aim 4 – Continuous Improvement

XXIII. Up-to-date Strategy in place

XXIV. Up-to-date Action Plan in place

XXV.   NESBReC Advisory Group meetings held

XXVI. Number of training events attended by staff

XXVII. Performance Indicators recorded and presented in Annual Report

XXVIII. Other reports accepted by various organisations

XXIX.   Annual financial budget set and monitored

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