**Item 1**

**8th November 2022**

**Glasgow City Council**

**Net Zero and Climate Progress Monitoring City Policy Committee**

**Report by Executive Director of Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability**

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# Seven Lochs Wetland Park Update

## Purpose of Report:

To report progress on the Seven Lochs Project, and plans for future sustainability of the Seven Lochs Partnership from June 2023.

## Recommendations:

It is recommended that Committee:

- Notes progress against the principal aims of the Seven Lochs Project.
- Notes the proposed approach to the future sustainability of the Seven Lochs Partnership and instructs officers to work with the project partners to progress the associated Funding Strategy.
- Notes future project priorities and considers further areas for review.
- Instructs officers to develop a new Seven Lochs Collaboration Agreement to be approved by the City Administration Committee before June 2023.

Ward No(s): 18 and 21 Citywide:

Local member(s) advised: Yes X No ☐ consulted: Yes ☐ No X

## 1. Background

1.1 The Seven Lochs Project was established in 2014 to support the ongoing regeneration of approx. 16 sq. km of land straddling the Glasgow City and North Lanarkshire boundary between Easterhouse, Coatbridge and Stepps. The Project has 3 principal aims:

1.1.1 Develop the Seven Lochs Wetland Park as a new heritage and nature visitor attraction of national significance;

1.1.2 Deliver the Seven Lochs Heritage Project, a £6.8 million partnership project supported by a £4.5 million award from the Heritage Lottery Fund; and

1.1.3 Drive forward the creation of the Seven Lochs Green Network, a high quality, multi-functional network of open spaces and green corridors.

1.2 The Seven Lochs Partnership was formed in April 2014 to lead development and delivery of the Seven Lochs Project. Partnership members were Glasgow City Council (GCC), North Lanarkshire Council, Forestry and Land Scotland, The Conservation Volunteers Scotland and NatureScot. In Dec 2017 these organisations made a commitment to work together to deliver the Seven Lochs project by signing a Seven Lochs Collaboration Agreement. Since then three new partners have joined the partnership - Glenboig Development Trust, Provan Hall Community Management Trust, and The Royal and Ancient. GCC chairs the partnership and is the lead partner in the delivery of the project. The Partnership Board meets quarterly to review progress and set future priorities.

1.3 Implementation of the project is supported by a small staff team. The team comprises four staff, a Project Coordinator and Development Officer employed by GCC, and two Senior Project officers employed by The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) Scotland.

1.4 The Seven Lochs Project Annual Report 2021/22 is attached at Appendix 1.

## 2. The Seven Lochs Wetland Park – a new heritage and nature park

2.1 At over 16 sq km the Seven Lochs Wetland Park (www.sevenlochs.org) is Scotland's largest urban nature park. The park vision is "*a new wetland park of national significance that will:*

- *protect and enhance nature and heritage in the area as a national resource;*
- *promote the health and wellbeing of resident and visitors; and*
- *have a major impact on the environmental, social and economic regeneration of the area.*"

2.2 A key element of the park strategy is to establish 4 visitor gateways, 2 in Glasgow and 2 in North Lanarkshire, as the main points for visitor welcome and orientation. These will be at:

- Lethamhill Golf Course / Hogganfield Park
- Provan Hall, Auchinlea Park
- Glenboig Life Centre
- Drumpellier Country Park

2.3 At Lethamhill Golf Course / Hogganfield Park GCC is working in partnership with The Royal and Ancient (R&A) as part of their Golf It development (www.golf-it.com) on the edge of Hogganfield Loch. Linked to GCC and NLHF capital funding of £768k for the development GCC has agreed a 20-year lease with The R&A for rent free occupation of a Seven Lochs visitor centre, staff team base, and training room in the new facility. Construction is underway, and the new facility is expected to open to the public in June 2023.

2.4 At Provan Hall the council is developing a 10-year lease with the Provan Hall Community Management Trust who will operate the restored buildings as a Seven Lochs visitor centre and a new hub for heritage learning and engagement. The Trust has recently appointed a staff team of three officers to lead their operation at Provan Hall. It is expected that the lease will be finalised in late 2022, with the Trust re-opening Provan Hall to visitors in early 2023.

2.5 Following community asset transfer of a former community centre from North Lanarkshire Council (NLC) the Glenboig Development Trust GDT) opened Glenboig Life Centre in 2020 as a new community hub. The Seven Lochs Partnership is working with GDT to develop new heritage interpretation and support a range of heritage learning and engagement activities.

2.6 At Drumpellier Country Park the Seven Lochs Partnership worked with NLC to invest £950k in new visitor facilities. This included a large heritage / nature themed adventure play park, and extending / upgrading the visitor centre to create a new interpretation area with information about the park's history and wildlife. The new play area, which opened in 2018, led to an increase in footfall. The visitor centre extension was completed in October 2022.

2.7 These visitor centres are linked by a network of walking and cycling routes. The Seven Lochs Trail, launched in 2018, is a 10km route linking Hogganfield Park with Drumpellier Country Park. Signposted walking and cycling links have been developed from five stations around the park to the nearest visitor centre. Two themed heritage / nature trails have been completed, and further themed trails are in development.

2.8 Seven Lochs Wetland Park branding and associated communication products have been developed to support promotion of the park as a place to visit and explore. The Partnership has established a Communication Advisory Group bringing together communication and marketing officers from project partners to ensure coordinated communication and promotion of the Seven Lochs.

## 3. Seven Lochs Heritage Project

3.1 In July 2016 National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) announced an award of £4.5M for the £6.8M Seven Lochs Heritage Project. Formal 'Permission to Start' was received from HLF on 6th October 2016. The Seven Lochs Heritage Project is integral to the development of the Seven Lochs Wetland Park, and is made up of 14 individual projects which aim to protect and enhance key heritage assets across the park area, and enable more people to visit, learn about and celebrate heritage on their doorstep.

3.2 The Grade 1 listed buildings at Provan Hall are the most significant heritage assets in the Seven Lochs Project area. GCC has a 25-year lease for Provan Hall from the National Trust for Scotland (NTS). In 2017 GCC began a full heritage restoration of Provan Hall. Alongside the restoration project GCC worked with the Friends of Provan Hall, other local organisations, and NTS to set up Provan Hall Community Management Trust (PHCMT), which was formally established as a charity in January 2018. As noted at paragraph 2.4 PHCMT will lead the future operation of Provan Hall.

3.3 The Seven Lochs Heritage project has also included activities to restore and enhance biodiversity. This has included:

- creation of 360m$^2$ of floating islands to create wetland habitat and improve water quality at Hogganfield, Lochend and Garnqueen Lochs.
- restoration of 19ha of peatland habitat, with further habitat restoration planned in 2022/23.
- creation and enhancement of 9.6ha of species-rich grassland to support pollinator species.
- Over 3500 trees planted and management and enhancement of 25ha of native woodland in partnership with Forestry and Land Scotland.

3.4 One of the key species for the Seven Lochs Heritage Project is the population of grassland water voles found in parks and open spaces in N.E. Glasgow. The population is unique in the UK because high density populations are found in unmanaged grassland up to 1km away from the nearest surface water, and Nature Scot have designated the grassland population in N.E. Glasgow as nationally significant. In 2021-22 GCC worked with NatureScot and others to develop a Seven Lochs and N.E. Glasgow Water Vole Conservation Action Plan. The plan aims to balance the need for ongoing regeneration and development with the need for good conservation management of this UK protected species. The 5-year Action Plan was completed in April 2022 and signed off by the Seven Lochs Partnership in June. A sub-group of the Partnership has been established to oversee implementation of the plan.

3.5 The project has also delivered a programme of heritage engagement activity led by TCV Scotland. The programme aims to raise awareness of the important heritage and nature of the Seven Lochs, and involve people in activities to celebrate, protect and enhance the heritage on their doorstep. To date this has included:

- 36 job-seekers gaining accredited training through an ‘Employability in the Outdoors’ programme.
- 300 volunteer activities, delivering over 1000 volunteer days valued at £74,250 (based on Glasgow Living Wage).
- 8 outdoor health and wellbeing programmes in partnership with GGC Health Board.
- Almost 500 outdoor learning sessions for nurseries, schools and colleges.
- Over 75 heritage / nature themed events and activities, attracting over 5000 visits to the Seven Lochs Wetland Park.

## 4. Seven Lochs Green Network

4.1 The Seven Lochs vision includes creation of a wider Green Network that extends from the park edge into surrounding communities. These green links will connect local communities to the park and support environmental enhancement and regeneration of vacant and derelict land.

4.2 The £4.5million Greater Easterhouse Green Infrastructure Project delivered two new green corridors linked to the wetland park. The project was completed in 2020 and included access improvements, habitat creation and surface water management to enable development on adjacent V+DL at Cranhill, Croftcroighn and Blairtummock parks.

4.3 Regeneration of V+DL includes;

- a £600k transformation of V+DL at Avenue End Rd in partnership with Green Action Trust, supported by the V+DL Investment Programme and Nature Restoration Fund.
- creation of a new 5ha community greenspace in partnership with Growing 21, a recently established community trust. Also supported by the V+DL Investment Programme and Nature Restoration Fund.
- Removal of redundant roads and habitat creation and enhancement for grassland water voles at 2 former housing sites adjacent to Bishop Loch local nature reserve.

4.4 The Seven Lochs Project area is an area of planned community growth. Housing sites for up to 2500 new homes have been identified on brownfield sites in Greater Easterhouse and areas of greenbelt release within the wetland park boundary. It is critical that the design of this new development connects to the Seven Lochs Wetland Park and green network through the creation of new green infrastructure. To support this the Partnership finalised a Seven Lochs Design Guide in October. This aims to encourage high quality design of open space in new developments and will inform the Greater Easterhouse Strategic Development Framework to be produced by GCC next year. Discussion is underway with Planning Services in GCC and NLC on how this is taken forward in 2022/23.

## 5. Project Sustainability

5.1 At present the Seven Lochs staff employed by GCC are funded by the NLHF grant for the Seven Lochs Heritage Project. TCV Scotland staff are funded by the NLHF grant and funding from the Glasgow Communities Fund (GCF). The GCF funding ends in March 2023, and the NLHF grant in June 2023. The current Seven Lochs Collaboration Agreement ends on the same date as the NLHF funding.

5.2 A Partnership Review has taken place over the last 12 months. This has looked at delivery to date, future priorities, and options for the future management of the Seven Lochs Wetland Park and delivery of further Seven Lochs Project activity. The review recommended that:

- all current partners continue to work together through the Seven Lochs Partnership, with a new Seven Lochs Collaboration Agreement setting out the aims of the partnership, the roles of partners, and governance arrangements;
- GCC continues to act as lead partner, including chairing the Seven Lochs Partnership; and
- a small staff team is in place to coordinate and support project delivery.

5.3 The review proposed the following aims for the new Collaboration Agreement;

- Coordinate and manage volunteering, training and community engagement programmes at the Seven Lochs Wetland Park.
- Address the climate and ecological emergencies through habitat restoration and enhancement, greening of V+DL, and improved active travel networks.
- Continue to drive forward the creation of the Seven Lochs Green Network, a high quality, multi-functional network of open spaces and green corridors linked to the Seven Lochs Wetland Park.

These are in discussion with the Seven Lochs Partnership Board.

5.4 A Funding Strategy will be developed over the next quarter, with the aim of securing the funding needed to deliver Seven Lochs Project aims and support the staff team for a minimum of 3 years from April 2023. The new Seven Lochs Collaboration Agreement will also be developed over the next quarter, with the aim of taking the Collaboration Agreement and associated Funding Strategy through the Climate and Sustainability Programme Management Office and Board to ensure alignment with the Glasgow Climate and Adaptation Plans, before going to the City Administration Committee for approval prior to June 2023.

## 6. Policy and Resource Implications

**Resource Implications:**

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| *Financial:* | Budgets for delivery of the Seven Lochs Heritage Project to June 2023 are agreed and in place.<br><br>A Funding Strategy to secure external match funding to support the Seven Lochs Project beyond June 2023 is in development. A key role of the Seven Lochs staff team is to secure further funding to support the ongoing management and development of the Seven Lochs Project. |
| *Legal:* | An Implementation and Collaboration Agreement (to June 2023) is in place between the project partners.<br><br>It is proposed that partners work together to develop a new Collaboration Agreement setting out arrangements for the future |

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| | management of the Seven Lochs project from June 2023 onwards. |
| *Personnel:* | The Seven Lochs Project is currently supported by two GCC officers. Contracts for these posts currently run to June 2023. It is proposed that contracts are extended subject to external match funding being secured. |
| *Procurement:* | Procurement will generally be through existing frameworks, subject to approval by NLHF and other funders |

**Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:**

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| *Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.* | The project supports the following Equality Outcomes:<br>• An increased proportion of women, black and minority ethnic people, younger people, disabled people and LGBTI+ are supported to enter employment or training.<br>• The importance of tackling social isolation and loneliness is recognised and prioritised through our work with partners. |
| *What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?* | Positive impact through training and employability programmes that target people with protected characteristics. The Seven Lochs community engagement programme included volunteering and wellbeing activities that help address isolation and loneliness. |
| *Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.* | The project addresses socio-economic disadvantage through education, training and employability programmes and regeneration activities that target people and communities in more deprived neighbourhoods. |

**Climate Impacts:**

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| *Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:* | The project supports the follow Climate Plan actions:<br>• Accelerate Implementation of the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Blueprint for a Green Network to create green & biodiversity corridors in the city by improving open space provision and increasing tree cover, while also providing opportunities for active travel corridors. |

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| | • Identify and utilise Vacant and Derelict Land for greening and rewilding in combination with renewable energy generation measures and reducing flood risk.<br>• Support new and further extensions to Local Nature Reserves in the city, protecting and enhancing biodiversity and habitat connectivity<br>• Increase investment in peatland restoration in the city region to enhance biodiversity and increase capacity for carbon sequestration. |
| *What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?* | Increased carbon sequestration through habitat restoration and land remediation. Reduced carbon emissions through the creation of new active travel routes. Increased public awareness of, and engagement with, climate action. |
| *Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?* | The proposed IRNS funded project will directly link nature-based solutions and land restoration at Seven Lochs, and elsewhere in the city, with the Glasgow Sustainability Network and the net zero by 2040 target. |
| **Privacy and Data Protection Impacts:** | No data protection impacts identified. |

## 7. Recommendations

7.1 It is recommended that Committee:

- Notes progress against the principal aims of the Seven Lochs Project.
- Notes the proposed approach to the future sustainability of the Seven Lochs Partnership and instructs officers to work with the project partners to progress the associated Funding Strategy.
- Notes future project priorities and considers further areas for review.
- Instructs officers to develop a new Seven Lochs Collaboration Agreement to be approved by the City Administration Committee before June 2023.