



**Glasgow City Council**

**Neighbourhoods, Housing and Public Realm City  
Policy Committee**

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

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**Item 4**

**1<sup>st</sup> June 2021**

## **H2020 CONNECTING NATURE**

### **Purpose of Report:**

To provide the Committee with an update on the Council's role as front runner city in the EU Horizon 2020 Connecting Nature project.

### **Recommendations:**

That the Committee considers:

- (1) Work ongoing on the development of an Impact assessment planning tool (I-APT).
- (2) Discussions are now ongoing to further develop the Glasgow hub to support the Urban By Nature programme with ICLEI.
- (3) Note the ongoing work to embed a place based approach with a nature based focus in all policies.
- (4) That Glasgow successfully hosted the first Connecting Nature innovation Summit virtually in March 2021.
- (5) That further updates will be brought to future Committee meetings.

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

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

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Committee will recall, in the report presented on [26 November 2019](#) about the Glasgow's Open Space Strategy (OSS) that the EU Horizon 2020 Connection Nature Project was referred to as a key delivery partner for the OSS. The report described, briefly, the parallel work that was on going to provide funding and expertise to aid the Council in exploring how to design and deliver on the outcomes of the OSS, resulting in the production of an "OSS Delivery Plan". A further report was presented to Environment, Sustainability and Carbon Reduction City Policy Committee on [4 February 2020](#) to provide the Committee with background to the Connecting Nature Project and the key deliverables that will bring positive benefits to the City.

## 2. Progress made to date

- 2.1 Designing and implementing nature based solutions on a scale that delivers economic, environmental and social co-benefits, while also building resilience and benefiting biodiversity, is complex, with many different issues to consider. The Connecting Nature project aims to develop a series of tools that helps cities deliver a place based approach to nature based solutions. The approach has been to work with three front runner cities, one of which is Glasgow, and eight fast follower cities to identify the key tools they need to support delivery.
- 2.2 Over the last three years of the project, Glasgow has used the Open Space Strategy as our exemplar. We have delivered the following:
- **Adopted Open Space Strategy** – The development of the strategy has been supported including work on evidence to evaluate quality of open spaces; how to ensure sustainable resilient projects and review of previous actions, for example the recent review of the Stalled Spaces programme using the Connecting nature framework.
  - **Place based approach / Nature based solutions** - underpinned by the [Open Space Strategy](#) and based on a wealth of data and spatial analysis, the strategy sets out an approach to coordinate the various open space responsibilities to ensure well-managed, well-located and well-connected open spaces that operate as part of a wider green network. This has now been embedded within the indicative regional spatial strategy (iRSS) and is also feeding into National Planning Framework 4.
  - **Data driven decision making** – In order to visualize the data that has been gathered to date on Social Cohesion; Health & Wellbeing; Economic and Environment an interactive [dashboard](#) has been created. The Development Plan Group are working collaboratively with our corporate GIS team and key stakeholders such as the Scottish Government; Key Agencies; Public Health Scotland and the Glasgow City Region based Universities to continuously source geographical data that can help us to provide evidence to identify actions and expected outcomes for our communities.

- **Connecting Nature framework** - a holistic approach to creating nature-based solutions that is characterised by three concepts:
  - The process is iterative
  - Co-production is best
  - The ongoing monitoring of goals and impacts is critical
- **Connecting Nature Impact Assessment Planning Tool (I-APT)** - process aimed at supporting cities in developing and successfully implementing robust monitoring and evaluation plans. This links into the work that has been developed by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and Scottish Government on [measuring what matters](#).
- **Connecting Nature Innovation Summit** - As part of the dissemination process within Connecting Nature each of the front runner cities are hosting a Connecting Nature Summit. The Leader of the Council launched the series on 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021 with the Connecting Nature Innovation Summit in Glasgow. The virtual event attracted over 1200 registrations from 70+ countries. Over 850 people actively participated in at least one of the webinars and innovation café sessions. The sessions can be viewed [here](#) and included the launch of the Nature Based Solutions [Impact Assessment Guidebook](#) which Glasgow co-authored.

### 3. The Year Ahead

3.1 As we enter the final year of the Connecting Nature project, the following work areas will continue to be developed and delivered:

- Open Space Strategy Delivery Plan – evidence based decision making tool that will identify key actions for the Council and our partners. Evolving into a key asset management tool supported by data.
- Development of Glasgow as an Urban by Nature hub as part of our membership of ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability) Cities with Nature network.
- Final development work on the Impact Assessment Planning tool.
- Nature based Enterprise incubator pilot.
- Embedding a place based approach with nature based solutions into policy and strategies developed by the Council and partners.
- Natural capital accounting / Nature based enterprise.

### 4. Synergies with Corporate priorities and partnership working

4.1 Committee should note that the work described above aligns with the following corporate and partner outcomes:

- Edinburgh Biodiversity Declaration.
- Impact assessment Planning – RTPI Measuring what matters.
- COP26.
- Urban by Nature / Cities with Nature (ICLEI networks).
- Embedding a place based approach/Nature based solutions collaborative work

- with COSLA; Scottish Government and key agencies.
- Sustainable Glasgow / Green deal / Green economy.

## 5. Deliverables at completion

5.1 The key deliverables at completion of our role in Connecting Nature in May 2022 will include:

- Maintained and sustainable evidence base for City Development Plan 2 and Open Space Strategy.
- Supporting delivery of Climate and Ecological Emergency Plan.
- Evidence based decision making in line with the Scottish Government Digital Planning objectives.
- Supporting delivery of Sustainable Glasgow/Climate Ready Clyde.
- Supporting the Strategic and Corporate plan objectives in particular a healthier city; a sustainable and low carbon city and resilient and empowered neighbourhoods.

## 6. Policy and Resource Implications

### Resource Implications:

#### *Financial:*

The Connecting Nature Project is fully funded until May 2022. There will be financial implications if we don't deliver on the project commitments.

There will be financial implications involved in delivering the OSS but there are potentially greater financial implications in not doing so.

#### *Legal:*

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 requires planning authorities to produce an open space strategy but it is not yet clear whether this iteration of the OSS will have to be refined once Scottish Government guidance is issued. This will require to be kept under review.

#### *Personnel:*

The project funds three Officers. They work closely with the wider Development Plan Group in which they are embedded to ensure that Nature Based Solutions are mainstreamed within our work.

There is close collaboration with other teams within the Planning Service, other

Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability teams and Glasgow Life. The project lead is the Spatial Planning Manager – Research & Development.

This work relates closely to a number of actions within the Climate emergency declaration.

There will be personnel implications post May 2022 in supporting the mainstreaming of Nature Based Solutions. There will be implications for the delivery of OSS including monitoring delivery and in keeping associated resources, such as the Open Space Map, up-to-date.

*Procurement:* None

**Council Strategic Plan:** Supports Priorities:15, 21, 38, 44, 63, 67, 69, 71, 72, 75, 76, 83, 87, 88,

**Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:**

*Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2017-21*

Yes - the Connecting Nature Project supports the delivery of the OSS which will play a role in enhancing access to and quality of Open Space in the city which will have a direct impact upon improving health and tackling health inequality. It also establishes a structure through which communities will be able to have greater influence over how their open spaces operate and are used.

The project aims to ensure that there is an equity of benefit across environment, economy, Social and Health & Wellbeing.

*What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?*

The place based approach to nature based solutions aims to ensure that the impact of any action has a positive benefit for social cohesion; health & wellbeing; economy; environment and biodiversity.

*Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio economic disadvantage.*

The Connecting Nature Project has a key aim to embed a place based approach to Nature based solutions within mainstream policy and proposals. This means that any action should aim to do no negative harm to social cohesion;

health & wellbeing; economic; environment and biodiversity.

**Sustainability Impacts:**

*Environmental:*

Connecting Nature is supporting work on the OSS which is embedded in protecting and enhancing environmental performance of the city and has been updated to reflect the Council's declaration of a climate emergency.

Connecting Nature is supporting the embedding of Nature Based Solutions within our Development Plan and wider Corporate Plans. Nature Based Solutions will help us to address the Climate Emergency in a positive way.

*Social, including opportunities under Article 20 of the European Public Procurement Directive*

Connecting Nature aims to ensure that a holistic approach is taken to delivery of policy and projects. Solutions that take a Nature Based approach that is inspired and supported by nature, which are cost-effective, simultaneously provide environmental, social and economic benefits and help build resilience.

The project uses the OSS as its exemplar. The OSS is intrinsically linked to the Placemaking approach set out in the CDP which seeks to promote greater social cohesion and strengthen local communities as well as tackle health inequalities.

*Economic:*

A key deliverable of the Connecting Nature Project is exploring how to grow finance for nature based solutions; ensure the projects that are developed become self-sustaining and can lead to entrepreneurial opportunities for small medium enterprises (SME) or the third sector.

The OSS sets out a strategic context for directing investment in open spaces and the green network to yield longer term financial and societal benefits.

**Privacy and Data Protection impacts:**

None.

**7. Recommendations**

That the Committee considers:

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