



Glasgow City Region Cabinet

Report by Gerry Cornes, Chief Executive, East Dunbartonshire Council

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LAUNCH OF THE 'CLYDE PEATLAND' IN THE GLASGOW CITY REGION

Purpose of Report:

To update the Cabinet on the 'Clyde Peatlands' project, developed for Glasgow City Region by the GCV Green Network and supported by NatureScot's Peatland Action Fund.

Recommendations

The Cabinet is invited to:

- a) welcome the development of the Clyde Peatlands project; and
- b) agree to proceed with a formal launch of the project.

Purpose of the Report

1. To update the Cabinet on the 'Clyde Peatlands' project, developed for Glasgow City Region by the GCV Green Network and supported by NatureScot's Peatland Action Fund.

Background

2. The GCV Green Network (GCVGN) was formed in 2006 with the aim to make Glasgow City Region one of Europe's most attractive places to live, work, play and visit through the creation of a high quality and multifunctional Green Network. The Green Network partners include the region's eight local authorities as well as Scottish Forestry, NatureScot, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Public Health Scotland, the Glasgow Centre for Population Health and Clydeplan.
3. In the spring of 2019 the GCVGN launched its 'Blueprint for the Green Network' across Glasgow City Region, with the endorsement of the Cabinet. Around the same time Scottish Government and many local authorities declared a Climate Emergency, highlighting the key role that nature restoration has to play in both mitigating against climate change and adapting to it.
4. Since the publication of the Blueprint the GCVGN has been working with all the GCR local authorities and other partners to develop initiatives that bring new resources and the necessary skills to the region for at-scale, on the ground delivery of the ambitions embedded in the Blueprint.
5. The first of these initiatives was Clyde Climate Forest which was launched in May 2021 after receiving endorsement from the Cabinet in February 2021. Recent work has focused on the development of Clyde Peatlands which, with the support of NatureScot's Peatland Action Fund, is about to advertise for two new officers to drive forward peatland restoration across the region, with the multiple climate and ecological benefits that brings
6. Preparations are underway for the launch of Clyde Peatlands to coincide with the appointment of the new officers and to raise awareness with key audiences and stakeholders.

Clyde Peatlands

7. Around 20% of Scotland is covered in peatland, with Glasgow City Region having around 50,000 hectares. That's an area the size of North Lanarkshire. Healthy peatlands capture and store vast amounts of carbon and should play a critical part of the drive for Net Zero. However, degraded or dried out peat emits carbon rather than storing it and currently around 80% of Scotland's peatlands are degraded through drainage, extraction and urban expansion.
8. This means that Scotland's peatlands emit roughly the same amount of carbon each year as all of Scotland's homes. Addressing this degradation has a major role to play not only in the drive for Net Zero, but in restoring a unique habitat that is home to an array of plants and animals.
9. In healthy condition, peatlands provide a range of nature-based solutions to the twin and linked challenges of a changing climate and ecological collapse:

- As highlighted above, reversing carbon emissions from dried out peat to the capture and locking in of large amounts of carbon for very long timescales will help the region meet its Net Zero ambitions
 - Peatlands absorb water from the heavy rainfall events we increasingly experience and slowly release it back into rivers networks, helping to address downstream flooding
 - Peatlands are a UK and Scottish priority habitat and restoration will help address the ecological collapse of the species that depend on it
10. NatureScot's Peatland Action Fund has £250 million up to 2030 to support peatland restoration and is 100% funding the creation of two new officer posts in Glasgow City Region. The fund will also provide up to 100% funding for projects brought forward by the officers. This is a major opportunity to bring new resources to the region.
 11. The officers will proactively engage with public and private sector landowners to identify opportunities, support them through feasibility work and funding applications and project manage on the ground works. Additionally, one of the officers will have a community engagement role to raise awareness of the value of peatlands, and to provide volunteering opportunities. The posts will be hosted on behalf of City Region partners by South Lanarkshire Council, initially for a period of two years.
 12. The new Peatland Officers will be jointly managed by South Lanarkshire Council and the Green Network, with support from NatureScot. The Green Network team is proactively engaging with partners in advance of the officers being in post to identify a first suite of projects. This will ensure best use is made of the officers' time in project development through to delivery. The Green Network would welcome discussions on potential peatland restoration projects with local authority partners.
 13. The aim of the Clyde Peatlands is to deliver a step change in the amount and rate of peatland restoration across Glasgow City Region as a response to the Climate Emergency and Ecological Crisis.

Recommendations

The Cabinet is invited to:

- a) welcome the development of the Clyde Peatlands project; and
- b) agree to proceed with a formal launch of the project.