

PLANNING ADVICE: NUMBER 5/2015

opportunities for biodiversity enhancement in new development

Aberdeenshire
COUNCIL



This guidance details actions that could be taken to enhance biodiversity as part of development. It is designed to give a range of suggestions from small scale to those suitable for major applications.

Paragraph 194 of Scottish Planning Policy advises that 'planning authorities should seek benefits for biodiversity from new development'. This aspiration is incorporated into supplementary guidance in the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan stating that the 'protection and enhancement of biodiversity should be considered for all types of development, from a housing scheme to altering or extending an existing building'. In all applications biodiversity enhancement opportunities should be considered and included as part of the plan.

All development is likely to have some impact on wild plants and animals with even house extensions resulting in loss of garden ground, which may support insects and birds. The primary aim should be to protect any wildlife habitats or features that are present on the site. There is also an opportunity for all development proposals to provide some enhancement to biodiversity to compensate for

losses and to lead to an overall improvement in our built environment. Using new planting to create linkages between existing areas of habitat is particularly important in a larger development.

Different scales and types of development will provide different opportunities for biodiversity enhancement. Some of the suggested options will require more management to maintain their value. **Long term management and maintenance of any option must be considered and secured prior to taking on any project.** Land set aside for biodiversity enhancement will usually be counted as part of the "open space" element of any proposal.

Where possible, larger scale developments should seek to undertake projects which assist with the implementation of local biodiversity action plans for priority species and habitats. Details of these action plans can be found on the North East Scotland Biodiversity Action Plan website at:

www.nesbiodiversity.org.uk





Option	Benefits	Links to advice/guidance	Notes
Householder and up to 3 houses			
Native species hedgerow planting	Provide shelter and screening for development. Nesting sites, food and shelter for birds, insects and small mammals. Provide corridors for wildlife linking areas of habitat.	RSPB advice on planting garden hedges	Hedges can be predominantly hawthorn, with a mixture of blackthorn, hazel, dogrose, holly, willow and elder included.
Insect boxes/Bee hotel	Shelter and nesting sites for invertebrates including bees.	www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk	
Bird boxes	Encourages and supports nesting birds, can be incorporated into roof space.	www.rspb.org.uk	Aim to install minimum 2 artificial nest sites per new unit where suitable north facing sites are available.



<p>Tree planting</p>	<p>Improves setting of development, provides shelter. Attracts birds, mammals and insects providing food, shelter and nesting sites.</p>	<p>www.woodlandtrust.org.uk Native Tree and Shrub Species Suitable for Aberdeenshire (pdf 83kb)</p>	<p>Choose species appropriate for site, locally native preferred. Small berry-bearing native trees are suitable for small gardens and landscaped areas. Plant during winter months when trees are dormant.</p>
<p>Woodpiles / log shelter</p>	<p>Good for a wide range of invertebrates. Good use of fallen/cut timber.</p>	<p>www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk</p>	<p>Frogs, toads, hedgehogs, beetles and other insects shelter underneath or among the gaps of rotting logs. Create a log pile by loosely arranging together old branches or pieces of log, leave bark on and use a variety of species if possible. Place the pile higgledy piggledy in a shady place, such as under a tree, at the foot of a hedge, at the back of the border or behind the shed.</p>
<p>Drystone wall</p>	<p>Significant landscape features in Aberdeenshire. Dry stone walls provide cover for wildlife to move around from place to place, nooks and crannies for birds, insects, amphibians, reptiles and small mammals to nest, overwinter, and shelter. Habitat for mosses and lichens.</p>	<p>Dry Stone Walls for Wildlife (pdf 1017kb)</p>	



<p>Ponds and soakaways</p>	<p>Improve setting of development. Habitat for amphibians, birds and wetland plants.</p>	<p>www.freshwaterhabitats.org.uk</p> <p>Ponds, Pools and Lochans (SEPA Habitat Enhancement Initiative) (pdf 295kb)</p>	
<p>Living Roofs</p>	<p>Provide habitat for insects and birds. Reduce water runoff and increase insulation.</p>	<p>www.livingroofs.org.uk</p>	



Option	Benefits	Links to advice/guidance	Notes
Conversion of traditional and/or old buildings			
As above plus Swallow nest boxes	Encourages and supports swallows.	www.rspb.org.uk	Create spaces for nests adjacent to masonry or wooden beams in outbuildings or use ready made nests. Nests should be located inside an outbuilding with constant access for birds to the outside. Artificial nest made from terracotta are available from the RSPB website.
Barn owl nest box (where surrounding habitat suitable)	Encourages and supports breeding, use of nest boxes enables barn owls to move to new sites with suitable habitat.	www.barnowltrust.org.uk	Nest in roof spaces of barns or outbuildings. Barn owls need tussocky grassland close to a nest site.
Bat boxes	Artificial roosts sites to encourage bats particularly into areas with suitable habitat but few/no roosts.	www.bats.org.uk www.habibat.co.uk	Can be placed on trees or outside of buildings, sites close to woodland/open water needed to provide foraging habitat and cover.
House martin boxes	Provides suitable nest sites, lack of suitable sites is thought to limit numbers in some areas.	www.rspb.org.uk/advice/helpingbirds/nestboxes/attracthousemartins/makeanest.aspx	



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Small scale commercial and industrial buildings e.g. retail, factories, offices and warehouses (less than 100m²)			
As above plus Swift bricks/internal nest boxes	Provide access to nesting sites for swifts and other birds which use buildings.	www.concernforswifts.com	Incorporate swift nest bricks around the top of commercial buildings, they do not have to be on a visible façade.
SuDS	Habitat for wetland plants and invertebrates. Valuable for amphibians especially where standing water provided. Add to the setting of a development as part of the open space requirement.	Good Practice for Design and Maintenance of Soft SuDS (pdf 105kb) Maximising the Ecological Benefits of Sustainable Drainage Systems (pdf 1354kb)	Developers should be careful to check with bodies adopting/maintaining any new SuDS scheme for any restrictions in relation to planting and maintenance.



<p>Use of native tree and shrub species in landscaping.</p>	<p>Provide shelter and screening. Provide nesting sites and food for birds and insects.</p>	<p>Scottish Native Seed Sources (Forestry Commission Scotland Guidance) (pdf 996kb)</p> <p>Scotland's Native Trees and Shrubs - A Designer's Guide to their Selection, Procurement and Use in Road Landscaping</p> <p>Native Tree and Shrub Species Suitable for Aberdeenshire (pdf 83kb)</p>	<p>Species to consider depend on site conditions and location and include oak (pedunculate and sessile), rowan, willow sp, wych elm, ash, birch (downy and silver), gean, bird cherry, hazel, elder, scots pine, alder, aspen, guelder rose, crab apple, hawthorn, blackthorn, broom, gorse, dog rose, juniper, holly.</p>
<p>Green walls/habitat walls, Willow fedge (fence/hedge).</p>	<p>Can provide excellent visual features. Shelter, food and nesting sites for birds and insects. Willow in particular is inexpensive and easy to establish from cuttings.</p>	<p>www.livingroofs.org</p> <p>www.grassroofcompany.co.uk</p>	<p>Fedges require annual maintenance.</p>
<p>Introduce wildflowers into verges.</p>	<p>Food plants for butterflies and other insects.</p>	<p>RHS advice on creating a wildflower meadow</p> <p>Source of native seeds</p>	<p>Many grasses are tolerant of fairly high levels of salt but the following are particularly salt tolerant and may be suitable for roadside verges; red fescue, creeping bent, Yorkshire fog, creeping soft grass.</p>



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Larger scale development including residential and commercial			
As above plus SuDS	Creation of ponds or wetland habitats will support a variety of wetland plants and attract birds and insects. Even small areas of permanent water or wetland vegetation in detention basins can be beneficial.	See links for SuDS and Ponds and Soakaways above.	Consider reedbeds or willow filtration systems as alternatives for water treatment. Living roofs may be most appropriate to deal with surface water where space is limited.
Incorporate habitats/features within open space to create green corridors.	Retain existing wildlife habitat within the development. Links with other natural areas and the surrounding countryside are important to allow movement of wildlife along corridors. This contributes to a developments open space requirements.	www.woodlandtrust.org.uk	Link existing wildlife habitat and/or newly created green spaces with strategically placed trees, shrubs, hedges, dry stone wall or grass verge.
Habitat creation and restoration of existing habitats.	Contribute to meeting Local Biodiversity Action Plan targets for priority habitats. Creating/restoring high quality open space to enhance development. Consider wildflower grassland, native species woodland and wetland habitats. This contributes to a developments open space requirements.	www.nesbiodiversity.org.uk	Consider opportunities to re-meander canalised burns, carryout thinning of trees along watercourses, restore wetland habitat.

<p>Use of nectar rich species and food plants for caterpillars in landscaping.</p>	<p>Benefits for butterflies, moths and other insects.</p>	<p>www.butterfly-conservation.org</p> <p>Plants for Butterflies (pdf 2.58MB)</p> <p>Food Plants for Caterpillars (pdf 1.35MB)</p> <p>Habitat Management for Butterflies</p>	
<p>Buffer strips along watercourses and ditches.</p>	<p>Improvements to quality of water, habitat for wildlife, linear habitat and corridor for the movement of wildlife. This contributes to a developments open space requirements.</p>	<p>Buffers Strips Adjacent to Water Courses and Water Bodies (Aberdeenshire Council Guidance for Developers) (pdf 228kb)</p>	
<p>Use show home garden or demonstration area on industrial site to demonstrate wildlife gardening.</p>	<p>Food and shelter for birds, insects and amphibians.</p>	<p>www.gardenforlife.org.uk</p>	<p>Include use of bat boxes/bird boxes/bee hotels, log piles, planting to encourage butterflies, bumble bees and birds. Wet areas/pond for common frog, newts and damselflies. See links above.</p>