

Aberdeenshire Council

Integrated Impact Assessment

Budget reduction for Landscape Services on Routine and Non-Routine Maintenance

Assessment ID	IIA-003455
Lead Author	Ewan Wallace
Additional Authors	Jennifer Reith, Ann Overton, Tim Stephen
Service Reviewers	Alexander Scott
Subject Matter Experts	Suzanne Rhind, Claudia Cowie, Yvonne D'Ambruso, Kakuen Mo, Jane Wilkinson, Jade Fitzpatrick, Ricki Lyon, Annette Johnston
Approved By	Alan Wood
Approved On	Wednesday February 11, 2026
Publication Date	Wednesday February 11, 2026

1. Overview

This document has been generated from information entered into the Integrated Impact Assessment system.

Reduction of £500k in the allocated budget for the maintenance of the parks and open spaces that Landscape Services are responsible for. The Service previously reduced costs (required due to last year's reduction of budget) by removing 25+ seasonal posts. The cumulative impact, of this proposed reduction plus the proposal that would also see £300k less work for ECS could equate to a c11% reduction and that equals a loss of circa 22 people/posts within the operational teams. This means a significant decrease to service delivery and area work programmes. Part of the mitigation suggested would see activity undertaken by community groups on a voluntary basis. Community capacity development to enable groups to undertake such activity would need to be supported via the Area Teams. Mitigation opportunity will be variable across places and the six areas and immediate mitigation to the impact on service delivery should be considered as minimal in the short to medium term.

During screening 5 of 12 questions indicated that detailed assessments were required, the screening questions and their answers are listed in the next section. This led to 3 out of 5 detailed impact assessments being completed. The assessments required are:

- Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty
- Sustainability and Climate Change
- Town Centres First

In total there are 2 positive impacts as part of this activity. There are 8 negative impacts, of these negative impacts, 9 have been mitigated and 1 cannot be mitigated satisfactorily.

A detailed action plan with 5 points has been provided.

This assessment has been approved by alan.wood@aberdeenshire.gov.uk.

The remainder of this document sets out the details of all completed impact assessments.

2. Screening

Could your activity / proposal / policy cause an impact in one (or more) of the identified town centres?	Yes
Would this activity / proposal / policy have consequences for the health and wellbeing of the population in the affected communities?	No
Does the activity / proposal / policy have the potential to affect greenhouse gas emissions (CO2e) in the Council or community and / or the procurement, use or disposal of physical resources?	Yes
Does the activity / proposal / policy have the potential to affect the resilience to extreme weather events and / or a changing climate of Aberdeenshire Council or community?	No
Does the activity / proposal / policy have the potential to affect the environment, wildlife or biodiversity?	Yes
Does the activity / proposal / policy have an impact on people and / or groups with protected characteristics?	No
Is this activity / proposal / policy of strategic importance for the council?	No
Does this activity / proposal / policy impact on inequality of outcome?	No
Does this activity / proposal / policy have an impact on children / young people's rights?	No
Does this activity / proposal / policy have an impact on children / young people's wellbeing?	No
Does the activity / proposal / policy relate to budget proposals?	Yes
Does this activity / proposal / policy impact on consumers of Council services?	Yes

3. Impact Assessments

Children's Rights and Wellbeing	Not Required
Climate Change and Sustainability	Only Some Negative Impacts Can Be Mitigated
Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty	Only Some Negative Impacts Can Be Mitigated
Health Inequalities	Not Required
Town Centre's First	Only Some Negative Impacts Can Be Mitigated

4. Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty Impact Assessment

4.1. Protected Groups

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Age (Younger)		Yes		
Age (Older)		Yes		
Disability		Yes		
Race		Yes		
Religion or Belief		Yes		
Sex		Yes		
Pregnancy and Maternity		Yes		
Sexual Orientation		Yes		
Gender Reassignment		Yes		
Marriage or Civil Partnership		Yes		

4.2. Socio-economic Groups

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Low income		Yes		
Low wealth		Yes		
Material deprivation		Yes		
Area deprivation			Yes	
Socioeconomic background		Yes		

4.3. Negative Impacts and Mitigations

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
Area deprivation	<p>Aberdeenshire has areas of deprivation and in these areas community capacity may not match other areas creating inequality around ability to mitigate impact of reduction of routine and non-routine works and work programmes.</p> <p>No mitigation has been entered for this impact.</p>

4.4. Evidence

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
External Consultation	Meetings with Community Groups and use of Engage Platform	Groups value their open spaces and them being well maintained but also that some places see a role for them. Also a strong view on need to tackle the nature emergency in many response	We have a decent network of contacts for potential assistance

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
External Data	SIMD statistics	Sets out Aberdeenshire's areas of deprivation	supports prioritisation of focus for area teams.

4.5. Information Gaps

We do not have data on the numbers and demographics of those people using all of the green assets we look after

4.6. Measures to fill Information Gaps

Measure	Timescale
Consider public engagement options	12-24 months

4.7. Engagement with affected groups

None

4.8. Ensuring engagement with protected groups

We have not done this directly as Landscape Services

4.9. Evidence of engagement

NA

4.10. Overall Outcome

Only Some Negative Impacts Can Be Mitigated.

partial mitigation if communities have the capacity to take on activities.

A justification for continuing despite unmitigated negative impacts has not been entered.

4.11. Improving Relations

Regular attendance at Community Councils. Strong use of Communications portals

4.12. Opportunities of Equality

Reducing our level of maintenance of open spaces will generate equal opportunity for comment and to step forward to assist

5. Sustainability and Climate Change Impact Assessment

5.1. Emissions and Resources

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Consumption of energy	Yes			
Energy efficiency		Yes		
Energy source		Yes		
Low carbon transition		Yes		
Consumption of physical resources	Yes			
Waste and circularity		Yes		
Circular economy transition		Yes		
Economic and social transition		Yes		

5.2. Biodiversity and Resilience

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Quality of environment			Yes	
Quantity of environment		Yes		
Wildlife and biodiversity			Yes	
Infrastructure resilience		Yes		
Council resilience			Yes	
Community resilience		Yes		
Adaptation			Yes	

5.3. Positive Impacts

Impact Area	Impact
Consumption of energy	Less frequent levels of maintenance will reduce travel to sites and use of equipment. Equipment may have to be used longer and work harder when being used.
Consumption of physical resources	A reduced frequency of maintenance has the potential to reduce the amount of fuel and products being used

5.4. Negative Impacts and Mitigations

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
-------------	------------------------

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
Adaptation	<p>Less frequent levels of Maintenance of our parks and open spaces will reduce the opportunity to adapt those locations to address the impacts of climate change</p> <p>Can be mitigated Yes</p> <p>Mitigation Through development of the RM2030 seek external funding support that allows greater adaptation of the parks and open spaces under our control.</p> <p>Timescale 12-24 months</p>
Adaptation	<p>Less frequent levels of Maintenance of our parks and open spaces will reduce the opportunity to adapt those locations to address the impacts of climate change</p> <p>Can be mitigated Yes</p> <p>Mitigation The time periods for work will have to be extended if no external funding can be levered in for nature restoration</p> <p>Timescale 12 - 18 months</p>
Adaptation	<p>Adaptation and mitigation projects and activity tend to require specialist design, delivery and maintenance that may not be straightforward for voluntary groups. Fewer LS staff will be available to do such works with the reduced funding.</p> <p>Can be mitigated Yes</p> <p>Mitigation Revised maintenance approaches by the teams will require to be developed and the option of increased community based activity can also be further developed.</p> <p>Timescale 12-18 months</p>
Council resilience	<p>The Landscape operational teams play a key role as part of the Councils emergency responses eg during adverse weather and flooding so a reduction of 21% in core staff will reduce our resilience.</p> <p>Can be mitigated Yes</p> <p>Mitigation Risk and resilience team to consider a greater cohort of Council employees outwith the operational teams and a an enhanced number of local groups. This would come at a cost in terms of additional payments plus equipment alongside training</p> <p>Timescale 18-24 months</p>

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
Quality of environment	<p>Less frequent levels of maintenance will reduce the opportunity to actively improve the quality of the environment that is our parks and open spaces</p> <p>Can be mitigated Yes</p> <p>Mitigation Need to try and lever in more external funding or accept longer periods for delivery</p> <p>Timescale 12-18 months</p>
Quality of environment	<p>Less frequent levels of maintenance will reduce the opportunity to actively improve the quality of the environment that is our parks and open spaces</p> <p>Can be mitigated Yes</p> <p>Mitigation Seek to increase voluntary activity where possible. This does require staff support</p> <p>Timescale 12-24 months</p>
Wildlife and biodiversity	<p>Less frequent levels of maintenance reduces the opportunity to manage the parks and open spaces to support our wildlife and biodiversity</p> <p>Can be mitigated Yes</p> <p>Mitigation Seek support through climate related budgets at a national level to put in place maintenance techniques and provision of future greenspaces that support wildlife and biodiversity</p> <p>Timescale 12-24 months</p>
Wildlife and biodiversity	<p>Less frequent levels of maintenance reduces the opportunity to manage the parks and open spaces to support our wildlife and biodiversity</p> <p>Can be mitigated Yes</p> <p>Mitigation The work is specialist and requires funding and expertise if we are to meet our agreed objectives and targets that link to the national nature restoration requirements. The mitigation may come through on going Scottish Government direct funding of nature restoration and potentially private sector offset works and funding</p> <p>Timescale 18-24 months</p>

5.5. Evidence

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
------	--------	----------	-----------

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
Internal Data	Cross Service work by E&S teams	Work of the Landscape, Environment and Climate Change Teams shares professional knowledge and information on the links between their areas of work.	Their knowledge and advice, supported by sector specific research, is that well maintained habitats aid work on climate change and sustainability through enhanced biodiversity
Internal Data	Landscape Services Improvement Plan 2025	Identifies team activity and levels of service and sets out the changes being taken forward by the teams.	Opportunity to align team make up to the reduced budget and priority tasks
External Data	LDP Outdoor Access Audit	Sets out the scale of the current asset base and the access to it by the population across Areas.	Allows a data led approach in the future .
Other Evidence	Feedback Team	Level of compliment and complaint by the public relating to Landscape activity.	The team has access to information on level of service

5.6. Information Gaps

The links between how we maintain our public open spaces and our approach to climate change and sustainability do require to be strengthened through a revised strategic approach and enhanced engagement with key stakeholders

Numbers and capability/willingness of potential local groups to pick up tasks

5.7. Measures to fill Information Gaps

Measure	Timescale
This will be a core part of the revised strategic approach by the Council and is part of the delivery of RM2030	12-36 months

5.8. Overall Outcome

Only Some Negative Impacts Can Be Mitigated.

Some of work that would be reduced and the links to the impacts identified can be addressed by future actions and commitments through RM2030 and associated policy work. But where reduced core routine works cannot be taken forward there will require to be asks to community groups that may not be in a position to do those works. In addition the impact on resilience during emergency situations cannot be addressed by the Service and would require other staff in the Council to be deployed if response levels to be maintained.

A justification for continuing despite unmitigated negative impacts has not been entered.

6. Town Centre's First Impact Assessment

6.1. Local Factors

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Town centre assets			Yes	
Footfall		Yes		
Changes to road layouts		Yes		
Parking		Yes		
Infrastructure changes		Yes		
Aesthetics of the town centre			Yes	
Tourism		Yes		
Public safety		Yes		
Town centre business		Yes		
Cultural heritage and identity		Yes		
Social and cultural aspects		Yes		

6.2. Negative Impacts and Mitigations

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
Aesthetics of the town centre	<p>Reduced activity to maintain parks and open spaces will negatively impact on the aesthetics of town centres. Mitigation is voluntary groups being persuaded and then supported to take on appropriate work. reduced activity equates to a reduction in visual aesthetics and this is likely to have a negative impact on local business, tourism, and local residents.</p> <p>No mitigation has been entered for this impact.</p>

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
Town centre assets	<p>A reduced level of budget to maintain our parks and open spaces will impact on our town centres as there will be a required reduction in maintenance and a lower level of staffing to deliver the reduced programme. Less frequent maintenance of parks and open spaces will impact on the general appeal of the town centres as Places. There will be a negative impact on reputation of the Council and on the reputation of the town centre which could translate to impact on local business, tourism and residents.</p> <p>Can be mitigated Yes</p> <p>Mitigation Encourage local businesses and community groups to collaborate and provide assistance if they feel the service level is too low. This mitigation is not immediate and would be minimal in terms of the scale of the budget reduction. It takes time and capacity within the Area Teams and the Landscape Services team to work with the community to create capacity, develop the skill set and ensure all necessary assessments and requirements are in place.</p> <p>Timescale 12-24 months</p>

6.3. Evidence

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
External Consultation	Post COVID Community Impact Assessments	These pieces of work identified the views of local people with regard to the maintenance of parks and Open Spaces. They were of the view that it aided the perception of their communities if a good standard of public open space maintenance was provided	The residents within communities are likely to see this reduction as a negative
Internal Data	Feedback system	The number of complaints coming through the feedback team regarding the maintenance of public open spaces is in the order of 350-400 per year across Aberdeenshire. It shows dissatisfaction with the level, type and location of maintenance (often unfounded)	A reduced level of maintenance is likely to increase the level of dissatisfaction

6.4. Information Gaps

Further up to date Community Impact Assessments should include consideration of the role that public open space maintenance in how our places/town centres function.

6.5. Measures to fill Information Gaps

Measure	Timescale
Include in future Community Impact Assessments	12-18 months

6.6. Overall Outcome

Only Some Negative Impacts Can Be Mitigated.

The impact of the reduction of budget can only be partially mitigated and in the short term that mitigation is minimal. To support a mitigation via community groups requires capacity and resource from Landscape Services and Area Teams and will have to be a longer term focus.

A justification for continuing despite unmitigated negative impacts has not been entered.

7. Action Plan

Planned Action	Details
<p>Develop and write the area committee reports that set out the impacts in the six areas as a consequence of the reduced budgets and the reduction of routine and non-routine works. Area Committees can then consider and determine the priorities for the service via the work programmes and the reports will also have clarity on the impact in the areas across the service delivery.</p>	<p>Lead Officer Alexander Scott</p> <p>Repeating Activity No</p> <p>Planned Start Friday March 10, 2023</p> <p>Planned Finish Friday May 29, 2026</p> <p>Expected Outcome An agreed prioritised work programme for 26/27 for LS work and clarity on levels of service delivery in each Area.</p> <p>Resource Implications Manager and PO attendance at Committee and engagement with members and community groups</p>
<p>Work with Area teams on linking to the potential community groups who could carry out voluntary work, supporting capacity development and to provide them with guidance/procedures on the reality, risks, and liabilities on taking on that work.</p>	<p>Lead Officer Alexander Scott</p> <p>Repeating Activity No</p> <p>Planned Start Wednesday April 01, 2026</p> <p>Planned Finish Friday April 30, 2027</p> <p>Expected Outcome Potential increased numbers of active community groups undertaking routine landscape works that were previously done by in house staff.</p> <p>Resource Implications Area Teams will need to find capacity to provide this support. Additional time for PLSO and LSO in linking to the groups and to provide guidance</p>

Planned Action	Details	
<p>Whilst the initial estimate of the reduced work for the teams is that posts/people in the Service will be impacted the precise numbers and the profile of those impacted is not clear at this point. Therefore once that information has been worked up it may be that a further IIA will need to be developed to identify the impact of the loss of posts within the service and whether there are socio economic and protected characteristic impacts. There would also require to be HR processes for the removal of posts and or the redundancy of current staff members that would need to be taken forward which could impact the saving being made in 2026/27.</p>	<p>Lead Officer Repeating Activity Planned Start Planned Finish Expected Outcome Resource Implications</p>	<p>Alexander Scott No Monday March 09, 2026 Monday May 04, 2026 On basis of the current workforce profile limited impacts on those with protected characteristics but many of the members of this workforce are at the lower end of the pay scales. Significant for Line Managers and HR support</p>
<p>1) Keep the impacts of this reduction under review within the Town Centre Health Checks 2) Work with colleague services to engage with businesses within our towns and villages to explore what support they could give to local groups in filling the gap in core service provision 3) Keep the capacity of local groups under review as this shift is a major one.</p>	<p>Lead Officer Repeating Activity Planned Start Planned Finish Expected Outcome Resource Implications</p>	<p>Alexander Scott No Monday April 06, 2026 Monday July 13, 2026 Increased engagement with local businesses and support to local community groups to undertake routine maintenance Will require multiple service leads to work on a plan with input from Area teams. It is unclear if they will have capacity</p>
<p>Creation of a support package for community groups who are able to take on activities in their places. Includes guidance, links to training opportunity, governance, checklists, and clarity on who does what and to what extent.</p>	<p>Lead Officer Repeating Activity Planned Start Planned Finish Expected Outcome Resource Implications</p>	<p>Ann Overton No Friday March 27, 2026 Saturday October 31, 2026 Smoother path to taking on activities in places Area Teams and Landscape Services will have to find capacity to deliver.</p>