



Subject:	Biodiversity programme of work update
Date:	14 th April 2026
Reporting Officer:	Stephen Leonard, Operational Director City & Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Eiméar McCullough, Lead Officer, Open Space & Streetscene Edel Gowdy, Lead Officer Open Space & Streetscene

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To update Members on Council's delivery of a £1.5M+ biodiversity programme of work being progressed both with support of funding agreed by Members and awarded by external funders in 25/26 financial year.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to note the content of this report and the accompanying work programme table (Appendix 1).
3.0	Main report

3.1	<p>Background and Context</p>
3.2	<p>Members will recall that in response to Member request for an update be provided regarding a Notice of Motion entitled, “Biodiversity in the Council Parks and Open Spaces” a report was brought to Committee in January 2025 updating on ongoing work and resourcing issues associated with Council’s delivery of a Local Biodiversity Action Plan and other Council biodiversity priorities, and the steps which might be taken in address. (see Appendix 2 – ‘Update on Local Biodiversity Action Plan Development’ – People and Communities report 14th January 2025))</p>
3.3	<p>Since that time Open Spaces and StreetScene (OSS) has benefited from an injection of funding resources to support delivery on our biodiversity commitments across the city. Directly in response to the report, as part of the District Rate setting process for 2025/26 Members agreed a package of resourcing to progress a number of identified project priorities including:</p>
3.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £35,000 (one off) to scope and develop a LBAP for Belfast • £50,000 (annual budget) to support baseline ecological studies, habitat surveys, and site management plan development, including delivery of site-specific biodiversity actions • £50,000 (one off) to support delivery of the Urban Meadows project citywide • £100,000 (one off) for wider biodiversity measures
3.5	<p>Further to this, Members will also be aware that Council officers successfully secured external funding for a further two large-scale projects including:</p>
3.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £850,514 National Lottery Heritage Funding towards a Nature Town Cities initiative revenue project ‘Breaking Through Barriers to Connect People and Nature’ to support nature recovery. This was 92% of the total approved Project cost of £924,418, with in kind contributions from the Council and delivery partner Ulster Wildlife (see Appendix 3 – ‘Heritage Lottery Nature Towns and Cities Funding Award’– People and Communities report 5th Aug 2025))
3.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £472,000 Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DEARA) Challenge Funding towards the ‘Belfast is Making Space for Nature’ capital project to enhance nature and climate recovery and to connect people with the environment by developing Conservation Management Plans and a Nature Recovery Network across Belfast. This is 90% of the total approved Project cost of £ £522,500 with Council contribution of works to value of £50,500. (see Appendix 4 – ‘DAERA Funding Award and Update on the NoM on Urban Meadows’– People and Communities report 7th Oct 2025))
3.9	<p>The table set out in Appendix 1 is to be considered by way of update on the delivery of £1.5M+ biodiversity programme of work. This programme detailed is in addition to ongoing work strands delivered across OSS aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity across our estate including control of invasives (NIEA requirement); Monitoring biodiversity outcomes delivered via partnership arrangements with Strategic Partnerships Lagan Valley</p>

<p>3.10</p> <p>3.11</p> <p>3.12</p> <p>3.13</p>	<p>Regional Trust (for Lagan Valley Regional Park) and Belfast Hills Partnership (for Belfast Hills); and ongoing provision of design advisory function for Council capital projects. Members should note that a further £100,000 agreed for further Biodiversity Measures project is currently also being scoped by officers and a future report will detail how this money will be spent.</p> <p>In addition to the overall programme, the recent award of \$1 million (approximately £750,000) through the Bloomberg Philanthropies 2025–2026 Mayors Challenge to implement an Alleyways Transformation Project strengthening our existing commitment and plans to enhance alleyways. This project will also deliver positive outcomes in relation to biodiversity and climate resilience for the city.</p> <p>Members should note that further update report on the programme of work will be brought to Committee in due course.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> N/A</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments</u> There are no Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments associated with this paper.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1- Biodiversity Programme of Work</p> <p>Appendix 2 – ‘Update on Local Biodiversity Action Plan Development’ – P&C report 14th Jan 2025</p> <p>Appendix 3 – ‘Heritage Lottery Nature Towns and Cities Funding Award’– P&C report 5th Aug 2025</p> <p>Appendix 4 – ‘DAERA Funding Award and Update on the NoM on Urban Meadows’– P&C report 7th Oct 2025</p>