

**Working together
for a safer Scotland**



**SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

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BIODIVERSITY DUTY REPORT 2021-2023

SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Safety. Teamwork. Respect. Innovation.

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1. Introduction

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) are committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of the people of Scotland. The role of SFRS is to prevent and control fires, however the role is much more complex with firefighters responding to many different emergency incidents such as road traffic collisions, flooding, rope and water rescue as well as assisting partner agencies. The Scottish Government provides funding to SFRS which allows the service to deliver the priorities set out in the national Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland.

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service has a large estate with 356 Fire Stations located across Scotland. To ensure SFRS are able to meet the needs of all our communities, front line services are delivered locally from three strategically positioned hubs based in the North, West and East of the country. Fire Stations across Scotland vary in size and response depending on local requirements. There are 74 Wholtime stations which are manned 24/7, with the remaining stations being Retained and Volunteer stations which operate with on-call firefighters.

The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 sets out the duty for all public bodies in Scotland “to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities” to ultimately look after nature on all sites not just protected sites or species. The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 requires every public body in Scotland to produce a report every three years outlining their compliance with their Biodiversity Duty.

The SFRS estate is spread out across Scotland and includes Fire Stations, Corporate Office Buildings, Workshops and Training Centres. The size of each site varies; around half of our Fire Stations consist of a building within a tarmacked yard, whereas others have small grassy areas with trees or in some cases community gardens. The measures in which we can implement to support and improve biodiversity are therefore variable dependent on each site. This report will outline the different projects and workstreams we have been able to undertake over the past three years to support and improve Biodiversity across our estate.

2. Actions to Protect and Enhance Biodiversity

Community Gardens

At Clydesmill Fire Station there is a Community Garden that has continued to expand from its initial development in 2019, Healthy n Happy a community development trust, run weekly volunteer sessions at the garden growing food together and sharing skills. The garden expanded throughout 2021-2023 with more raised beds and a poly tunnel, there were also multiple community events held at the site. The site has seen an increase in biodiversity since the community group started working on the land with more wildflowers and wildlife in the area.



Clydesmill Community



Kilmarnock Community Garden

In 2022 Kilmarnock Fire Station were successful in applying for National Lottery Funding to set up a community garden at Kilmarnock Fire Station. The station transformed an area of hardstanding ground beside the car park into a community garden, planting trees and installing raised beds. The area is used almost daily for community projects with a number of events having been held to raise awareness of biodiversity as well as sharing fire safety information.

Pollinator Highway

In 2021 Motherwell Fire Station created their Wild Garden and Bee Project, a community garden located at the back of Motherwell Fire Station. The garden was developed with the goal of being a teaching space, community garden as well as a Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Area. The area was previously just grassland and has now supported further biodiversity with the planting of 120 trees, wildflowers, creation of a small pond and beehives.



Beehives at Motherwell Fire Station



Community Garden at Motherwell Fire Station

Partnership working between Motherwell Fire Station and The Scottish Beekeepers Society & Lanarkshire Beekeepers Association led to the expansion of the initial garden at Motherwell Fire Station to create a Pollinator Highway across other SFRS sites. Between 2021 and 2023 we have expanded the number of beehives across our estate to 21 sites with plans to expand this network further. The installation of the beehives across our estate has helped to support local ecosystems providing pollinators that help pollinate flowers, fruit and vegetables.

Tree Planting



Tree Planting at Cultybraggan Camp in Comrie



Tree Planting for Queens Jubilee

To mark the Platinum Jubilee in May 2022 SFRS took part in The Queen's Green Canopy celebration. The project was in partnership with Sodexo and Tivoli where Cherry Trees were planted at more than 15 fire stations across Scotland from Drumnadrochit to Dalbeattie, including at Cambuslang National Training Centre.

In 2021 it was highlighted 53 trees in the grounds of Comrie Fire Station required to be felled as they were located too close together and causing damage to local property. SFRS liaised with the Forestry Commission and agreed that we were to replant 3 trees for every 1 felled. Due to the lack of space at Comrie Fire Station to plant this many trees we reached out to local communities. SFRS spoke with Comrie

Development Trust who highlighted some land at Cultybraggan Camp where trees could be planted. 420 Trees were donated from Woodlands Trust which were planted in a double staggered row, the trees included hawthorn, oak, rowan and hazel. The hedge helps to create a wildlife corridor on site, joining up with other hedges, helping to attract and support local wildlife.

Ground Maintenance

In 2022 a new Grounds Maintenance contract was awarded to Tivoli they have helped to look after our sites that require grass cutting, hedge trimming, maintaining planters as well as any other required grounds support. Tivoli assisted with our tree planting event for the Queen's Jubilee, previously mentioned they also help to treat invasive species such as Giant Hogweed at some of our sites to prevent the further spread protecting plant species and support biodiversity. We are initiating conversations with Tivoli to establish what further work through the contract can be done to support Biodiversity across our estate.

Response to Wildfires

SFRS are responding to more and more wildfires across Scotland. Our Prevention and Protection department has throughout this period developed community safety messaging, sharing crucial information on wildfires, the Muirburn Code and deliberate fire setting to help educate and inform the public, so they are aware of how to behave in the countryside when the risk of fire is elevated. Through SFRS community messaging we aim to reduce the number of fires starting, which can lead to a reduction in the number of wildfires and consequently protect local biodiversity.

SFRS are also able to help protect biodiversity through firefighting techniques for example the practice of Muirburn involves starting controlled fire to remove fuel from the area the fire is travelling towards, letting the fire naturally extinguish itself. SFRS has worked with the Scottish Wildlife Forum to promote safe Muirburn practice and fuel management across Scotland.

Pollution Prevention

SFRS have been undertaking a piece of work to reduce the risk and possibility of pollution incidents across our sites, we have previously rolled out chemical cabinets to all Wholtime Stations to store foam and fuel correctly and safely. Throughout 2021-2022 Drainage Surveys were completed for our entire estate, helping to identify sites located closest to vulnerable water courses. This project has also helped to support the recent undertaking of creating pollution incident response plans for all Fire Stations, this project is expected to be completed in 2024.

3. Mainstreaming Biodiversity

SFRS recognises the importance of addressing the dual crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, The Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland 2022 includes climate change as one of our 7 key strategic priorities. Our Strategic Plan 2022-2025 sets our objectives for the next three years, one of our overall outcomes is responding to the impacts of climate change and reducing our carbon emissions.

These objectives are further embedded across SFRS operations through our Climate Change Response Plan, Carbon Management Plan 2020-2025, Environment Policy, and procurement policies. SFRS also has an Environment and Carbon Management board that meets quarterly to support and implement the above policies and strategic objectives which consequently support biodiversity. The pollinator highway project and the development of community gardens across our estate has helped raise awareness, in the importance of nature and biodiversity with local community groups and staff.

4. Nature-based Solutions, Climate Change and Biodiversity

SFRS is currently working in partnership with Built Environment, Smarter Transformation, Scottish Futures Trust, and Hub North Scotland to investigate a rural station investment program to explore the additional benefits of not only providing fit for purpose workplaces but also enable the transition to net zero and environmental sustainability, increasing socio-economic benefits and help to build resilient and sustainable places.

Our Climate Change Response Plan outlines how SFRS will respond to climate change, supporting local communities as well as tackling our own emissions. SFRS have ensured that throughout our procurement procedure we promote the requirement of our suppliers and supply chains to reduce emissions and waste, both in their manufacturing and packaging as well as in their transport, logistics and on-site delivery. SFRS support active travel regularly promoting the cycle to work scheme and in 2023 we carried out a travel survey to establish how staff travel to work and how we could support or promote any sustainable changes.

5. Public Engagement and Workforce Development

Our communication department regularly develops environmental campaigns, throughout 2021-2023 SFRS ran campaigns encouraging staff to make environmental pledges and reduce energy consumption through our conservation station competition. SFRS also supported Climate Week to help raise awareness of the global climate emergency and encourage climate action and supported Sodexo in their campaigns for supporting World Earth Day in 2022 with a litter pick.

In 2023 SFRS developed environmental training modules for our staff including a presentation for new recruits, premise responsible person and retained station staff to help increase awareness of climate change, biodiversity, and the natural environment. Community groups such as schools and charities regularly visit Fire Station's for tours. During these visits firefighters share fire safety messages, however at sites with beehives and community gardens, we have started to incorporate conversations around the importance of biodiversity and the natural environment.

6. Research and Monitoring

Initial Research has been carried out by our Environment and Carbon Team to establish a list of sites with different features such as grass, trees, hedges, and planters to establish how we could support biodiversity across the variety of our sites. The Watch Commander running the Pollinator Highway in partnership with the Beekeepers Association is continually carrying out surveys to assess the viability of expanding our pollinator highway across more stations.

7. Biodiversity Highlights and Challenges

The expansion of Community Gardens across our estate and the Pollinator Highway has been one of our biggest achievements, seeing our estate being used for sharing critical messages on the climate emergency and biodiversity loss alongside fire safety has been beneficial to many of our local communities. The partnership working with community organisations, Beekeepers Association, Woodland's Trust and Comrie Development Trust continue to be some of our best relationships in supporting biodiversity.

Some of the challenges we have faced include access to funding, to developing or initiating projects that would support biodiversity. The size of our estate also has an impact on implementing measures, however the work to determine what is achievable at different sites will hopefully help to implement further projects that can support and enhance biodiversity.