

EX24. Biodiversity and Sustainable Grass Management Pilot

The Executive considered a report by the Acting Director of Development Services which sought approval for a pilot project to trial new ways of managing grassland areas at 35 sites covering a small percentage of the total area of Council managed grassland. It was also proposed that a consultation exercise be undertaken to assess the impact of the pilot sites and determine arrangements for wider roll-out of the approach.

The Council managed a range of grassed areas including parks and public open spaces, grass areas around residential and commercial properties, road verges and path edges.

Changes to how grassland areas were managed could help deliver healthier places, help address the climate emergency and reduce biodiversity loss in a cost effective way. Some site-specific work had already been done to convert areas of amenity grass to longer grass and wildflower meadows. Surveys indicated a significant increase in biodiversity at these sites.

It was recommended that a pilot exercise to implement the proposed changes to grass management took place at 35 sites during 2021, with ongoing monitoring to take place to assess the impact of the measures. Details of the proposed pilot sites were included in an appendix to the report. It was also proposed that consultation on the broader approach to grass maintenance took place over the course of the year, with a report back on the proposed policy, the impact of the pilot stages and implications for wider rollout across the remaining grassed areas managed by the Council.

Councillor Garner, seconded by Councillor Hughes, moved that the Executive:-

- (1) notes the Biodiversity and Grass Management Review 2020;
- (2) agrees that the recommended pilot programme of changes to biodiversity and grassland management proceeds from March 2021;
- (3) requests that officers monitor the outcomes of the pilot programme, and
- (4) requests that officers report the results of the pilot back to the Executive at the end of spring 2022, with recommendations for next steps.

Councillor Bissett, seconded by Councillor Nimmo, moved as an amendment, in substitution for the motion, that the Executive:-

- (1) notes the Biodiversity and Grass Management Review 2020;
- (2) agrees to carry out three pilot projects, one in each of the localities;
- (3) agrees to carry out full public consultation, and

- (4) requests a report back to the Executive on the outcome of the consultation, with full information on the financial implications of proceeding further with the approach set out in the review.

The Executive adjourned at 11.20am and reconvened at 11.35am with all members present as per the sederunt.

Councillor Bissett, with the consent of the Convener and Councillor Nimmo as his seconder, amended the terms of clause (2) of the amendment to read:-

- (2) agrees to proceed with the phase one sites as set out in the report;

Following discussion the Acting Director of Development Services gave the Executive the following two undertakings:-

- (1) that there would be briefing and communication with Community Councils and other community groups by the end of March on the proposals, and
- (2) that there would be ongoing concurrent consultation as sites came onstream.

The Executive adjourned at 11.50am and reconvened at 11.55am with all members present as per the sederunt.

Councillor Bissett, as the mover of the amendment, stated his agreement that, along with the undertakings made by the Acting Director of Development Services, all sites proceed as set out in the motion.

There was then general agreement on the terms of the motion and the amendment fell.

Decision

The Executive:-

- (1) noted the Biodiversity and Grass Management Review 2020;**
- (2) agreed that the recommended pilot programme of changes to biodiversity and grassland management proceed from March 2021;**
- (3) requested that officers monitor the outcomes of the pilot programme, and**
- (4) requested that officers report the results of the pilot back to the Executive at the end of spring 2022, with recommendations for next steps.**