



Agenda Item 6

Edinburgh Declaration on Biodiversity

Falkirk Council

Title: Edinburgh Declaration on Biodiversity
Meeting: Executive
Date: 13 April 2021
Author: Acting Director of Development Services

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The Edinburgh Declaration on Biodiversity calls on national governments to adopt an ambitious agreement at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 15) to halt global biodiversity loss. It also calls on the adoption of the agreement by subnational governments, cities, and local authorities to demonstrate greater recognition, inclusion, and support for biodiversity action.
- 1.2 Local authorities are invited to sign the Edinburgh Declaration prior to its presentation to the UN COP 15 in May 2021. Recognising the value of commitment to the agreement in pursuing the Council's environmental objectives, the Executive is asked to approve signing of the Edinburgh Declaration by Falkirk Council.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Executive:

- (1) approves signing of the Edinburgh Declaration by Falkirk Council; and**
- (2) instructs the Chief Executive to sign the Edinburgh Declaration on behalf of Falkirk Council**

3. Background

- 3.1 It is recognised that the world faces a combined crisis of climate change and biodiversity loss. The recent Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Global Assessment of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services concluded that nature and its vital contribution to people, which combines both biodiversity and ecosystem services, is deteriorating worldwide at an increasing rate.
- 3.2 There is a strong inter-relationship between climate change, biodiversity loss and human wellbeing.
- 3.3 The Convention on Biological Diversity is a multilateral treaty signed at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit to conserve biological diversity and ensure its sustainable use. COP 15 is due to take place in May 2021. This meeting will negotiate a post-2020 Framework for Action towards a 2050 global vision of "living in harmony with nature", with associated targets for 2030 and 2050.

3.4 In 2020 the Scottish Government hosted a consultation of local and subnational governments on the post-2020 Framework for Action. These international partners highlighted the critical role that regional and local governments play in biodiversity conservation. They called for this role to be recognised at COP 15 and supported by:

- inclusion of subnational and local governments in the 2030 and 2050 goals and targets
- resource mobilisation for increased investment
- mainstreaming
- capacity-building
- communication, education, and public awareness initiatives
- monitoring, evaluation, and feedback; and
- support for networks.

3.5 A further key output of the consultation was the Edinburgh Declaration.

4. The Edinburgh Declaration

4.1 The Edinburgh Declaration is a high-level commitment on the role of subnational and local governments. The declaration is a call on national governments to adopt an ambitious agreement at COP15 to halt biodiversity loss, with greater inclusion of subnational governments, cities, and local authorities.

4.2 The Declaration calls for greater prominence and recognition to be given to action at the local level; acknowledging and supporting the role of regional and local government in working effectively with wider society to combat biodiversity loss. In order to achieve truly transformational change for nature, all levels of government and society must work more effectively together over the next decade.

4.3 Subnational governments, cities, and local authorities from across the globe are encouraged to sign the Edinburgh Declaration. The Declaration is open for signatories until May 2021 (when COP 15 is scheduled to commence).

4.4 Current signatories include the governments/assemblies of Scotland, Wales and Quebec, regional and local governments from 11 different countries as far afield as Japan, Mexico, Sweden and Uganda, and from Scotland: Aberdeenshire Council, South Ayrshire Council, Stirling Council, Glasgow Council, Cairngorms National Park and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. In addition, a range of environmental and land-use non-government organisations (NGOs) have signed or endorsed the Declaration.

4.5 It is understood that several other Scottish Local Authorities are working towards signing the declaration. COSLA have indicated that they plan to contact all Local Authorities to encourage them to sign the declaration and to seek approval for COSLA itself to become a signatory.

5. Why sign the Edinburgh Declaration?

5.1 Signing the Edinburgh Declaration will:

- signal Falkirk Council's support for ambitious global targets for biodiversity conservation at COP15, and for greater recognition and support for the role of local authorities in developing and delivering those targets. A significant number of signatories from local and regional government will strengthen the case for this, when the declaration is presented at COP 15 in May this year.
- recognise the crucial role regional governments and local authorities, like Falkirk Council, have played and continue to play in biodiversity conservation. It will help to send a strong message that national governments must engage with and support regional and local activity.
- provide an opportunity to highlight and promote Falkirk Council's commitment to climate change and biodiversity conservation, and the wide range of actions the Council is already taking. It will help to recognise that the actions we take locally are a vital part of a global picture. Signing the declaration would offer a great opportunity to generate positive publicity about Falkirk Council's action on biodiversity and climate change.

6. Policy Context

- 6.1 The Council's commitment to Biodiversity Conservation is demonstrated by its Biodiversity Action Plan (approved 2018) and other policies relating to climate change and conservation. Signing the Edinburgh Declaration is consistent and complementary to these policies and is underpinned by the actions now underway across the Council area to promote biodiversity.
- 6.2 The recommendation that Falkirk Council signs the Edinburgh Declaration was endorsed by the Council's cross-party Climate Change Action Group, at its meeting of 8th March 2021.

7. Implications

Financial

- 7.1 There are no financial implications for Falkirk Council associated with signing the Edinburgh Declaration.

Resources

- 7.2 None

Legal

- 7.3 Signing the declaration is purely voluntary and infers no statutory obligations for delivery, monitoring or reporting. This assessment has been confirmed by COSLA.

Risk

7.4 None

Equalities

7.5 None

Sustainability/Environmental

7.6 The Edinburgh Declaration calls upon COP15 to set ambitious targets to combat global biodiversity loss. Signing the document adds weight to this call to action and will have a positive environmental impact.

7.7 The declaration calls for national governments to engage with and support local authorities to help deliver action for biodiversity. This will have a positive environmental impact as well as complementing the Council's commitment to address the Climate Emergency that was declared in 2019.

8. Conclusions

8.1 It is proposed that Falkirk Council should sign the Edinburgh Declaration on Biodiversity as this will:

- signal its support for the ambitious targets to address the global biodiversity crisis
- send a strong message that national governments must engage with and support regional and local activity to conserve biodiversity; and
- reinforce and highlight Falkirk Council's continued action on biodiversity and climate change.

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List of Background Papers:

[The Edinburgh Declaration](#)