The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Scottish Parliament Biodiversity Statement

2018–2021

Introduction

The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 places a statutory duty on all public sector bodies in Scotland to further the conservation of biodiversity. The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 also introduced a requirement for all public bodies to make a report publicly available on their compliance with biodiversity duty. Biodiversity duty reports are required every three years. This document forms the Scottish Parliament's report on biodiversity from 2018-2021.

Review of Biodiversity Management at the Scottish Parliament

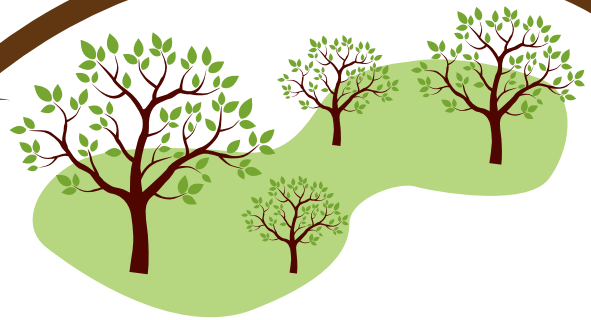
At the Scottish Parliament we are very conscious of our place in the landscape and are keen to ensure that we can contribute to thriving ecology across Scotland. We maintain the grounds with the aim of supporting the biodiversity of the area.

Wildflower planting

A large area of the grounds has been planted with indigenous Scottish wildflowers, shrubs, wild grasses and trees. The wildflower meadows have been designed to contrast with the cut turf lawns and feature plants such as sticky catchfly, dropwort and meadow cranesbill.

Working with the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh our employees have planted foxglove, red and white campion, viper's bugloss and cowslip. We plant yellow rattle seeds to help control the grass and give other wild plants the opportunity to flourish.

The number of wild plant and flower species has been greatly increased in recent years by staff volunteers working with the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE). Plants now include foxglove, red and white campion and viper's bugloss. Yellow rattle seeds were planted by the team to help control the grass and give other wild plants the opportunity to flourish.



Rowan trees

The Isle of Arran is home to three tree species found nowhere else, Arran whitebeam, Arran service-tree and Catacol whitebeam. These new species arose through natural hybridization between rowan (Sorbus aucuparia) and rock whitebeam (Sorbus rupicola) and have evolved on the island since the last glaciation, about 10,000 years ago.

The total population size on Arran is fewer than 900 trees, all confined to remote and treacherous crags difficult to access. In conjunction with the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh, the Scottish Parliament has planted some of the Arran Rowan Trees on our estate, to help protect and save the species.

Butterfly Project

In 2017/18 we planted some more common rock rose, as part of the ‘Square Metre for Butterflies’ project.

A ‘Square Metre for Butterflies’ is a partnership between the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) and Butterfly Conservation Scotland. The aim of the joint project is to plant patches of common rock rose – the favourite food plant of the butterfly caterpillars – on green roofs surrounding Arthur’s Seat and further afield to encourage the existing population in the Royal Park to expand and colonise in the newly created habitats.

In 2005, the Northern Brown Argus species was rediscovered at Holyrood and the population has continued to increase year on year. By creating a network of green roofs across Edinburgh, the project hopes to encourage the population of Northern Brown Argus to expand into new areas. Green roofs are perfect because the butterfly is usually found living at height and these roofs will provide warmth, food and shelter in the city. Our common rock rose is planted on one of our green roofs and we hope is helping to increase the number of Northern Brown Argus caterpillars.

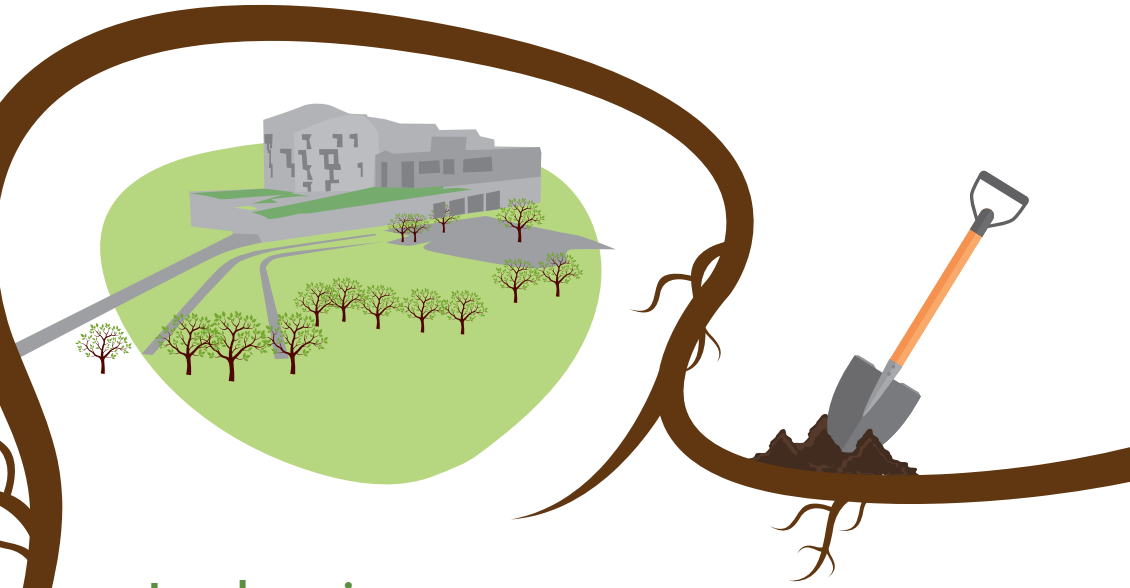
The Northern Brown Argus is Edinburgh’s butterfly. For years it existed on Arthur’s Seat with Scottish butterfly watchers in the 1700’s assuming it was just a slightly different version of the Brown Argus which it closely resembles. But in 1793, closer inspection revealed that it was a completely new species. After its discovery, the Northern Brown Argus became a highly prized addition for collectors. It disappeared by 1869 due to over-zealous collecting and land use changes at Holyrood, including the building of a road through the last remaining population strongholds of the species.

Beehives

We are very aware of the importance of bees as the world's most important pollinator of food crops. It is estimated that one third of the food that we consume each day relies on pollination mainly by bees, but also by other insects, birds and bats.

We have 12 beehives onsite. The bees have good access to all the foliage across Holyrood Park and Arthur's Seat, as well as the plants and flowers within the Parliament's Gardens and wild flower meadows. The bees and beehives are managed on our behalf by a family run, local business. The Smith hive, a hive suitable for Scottish weather conditions is used at the Scottish Parliament.

The beehives produce between 80lbs to 120lbs of honey each autumn which is bottled and sold in the Scottish Parliament gift shop. The beeswax (which is a bi-product of beekeeping has been used to fill the Great Seal of Scotland and seal every act of the Scottish Parliament since its inception – over 200 in number.



Landscaping

To realise the conceptual idea of the Parliament building sitting in the landscape, many of the structures have been turfed and "concrete branches" covered in grass. As well as the areas of public landscaping native meadow grasses, similar to those found in Holyrood Park, also partly cover the Parliament's underground car park and basement structures. The landscape is largely grass with granite seats built into the contours and extensive areas of paving.

Landscaping services at the Parliament are delivered through one of our two large maintenance contracts. The current landscape supplier provides a weekly service in summer, reducing to a fortnightly service in winter when they also deliver pathway salting and snow clearing duties. A notable recent project involved the planting of fifteen new trees around the Parliament perimeter.

No pesticides, fertilisers or peat are used onsite by our contractors.

Key Actions and Deliverables for 2018-2021

Wildflower Planting

Carry out some more planting of wildflowers in conjunction with Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh (RBGE). At least one during the three year period.

LC20428 - 03/19