

Architecture &
Design Scotland
Ailtearachd is Dealbhadh na h-Alba

2023 Biodiversity Duty Report



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Section 1: Introductory information about your public body

Our organisation’s role and purpose, including any particular environmental responsibilities.

We are Scotland’s design champion, and promote the design of places, spaces and buildings that meet the needs of everyone in Scotland. Our role is defined in *Creating Places: A Policy Statement on Architecture and Place for Scotland*.

aim and the scope of work we will do to achieve these. Our annual Business Plan sets out a detailed programme of work. We monitor and evaluate our work to understand both performance and achievement of outcomes.

To fulfil this role, we will

- champion good design and collaboration, nationally and internationally
- be a leading organisation, enabling the transformation of Scotland’s places through the way they are planned, designed, delivered and sustained
- support and enable the effective participation of people in decision-making
- work in a range of places to make a difference on the ground
- work in partnership to promote a whole-place collaborative approach
- help shape and promote Scottish Ministers’ policies for the built and natural environment
- share learning from the different places we work in

By doing this, we play a key part in informing and implementing policies around climate change, housing, infrastructure, community empowerment, transport, culture, international relations, landscape, environment, planning, health, learning and regeneration.

The Chief Executive and Leadership Team support a team of 24 employees based in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and report to the Board which is made up of a Chair, Deputy Chair and ordinary Board Members.

In 2021, we published a 10-year strategy. The 2021-31 Corporate Strategy sets out our vision and aim, and how we believe we will make change happen. We also published a Corporate Plan for 2021-24, with eight outcomes that will contribute to our strategic

Section 2: Actions to protect and enhance biodiversity

Describe and explain any actions that our organisation has undertaken alone or as part of a partnership to benefit biodiversity directly, to tackle the main drivers of biodiversity loss, or to achieve wider outcomes for nature and people.

All our work is taken forward in partnership and influence the context in which biodiversity loss and nature restoration can be tackled. Architecture and Design Scotland promotes and supports place-based collaboration. Our design expertise concerns the physical environment, both built and natural. We convene, connect and amplify voices, ensuring a range of perspectives are represented. This allows positive contribution to multiple outcomes from aligning planning or investment.

Taking a place-based approach means that green and blue infrastructure, landscape, outdoor spaces, and people's interaction with these are central to our work. We are able to influence this on a range of scales, from strategic planning to investment in school grounds. The following are examples of projects we have supported during 2021-23:

Climate Action Towns

We are working with local communities to support place-based climate action in a network of small Scottish towns to:

- bring small towns into the climate adaptation conversation: this is especially important when half of Scotland's population lives in towns
- challenge and explore what types of place-based action communities can take in small towns: this action is guided by the eight principles of a carbon conscious place
- explore opportunities to support communities to deliver real change on the ground: these communities are in areas with historically limited action on climate change
- use this work to outline learning for inclusive climate action at a town scale: this learning can be applied in places across Scotland and beyond

We are currently working with nine towns: Annan, Alness, Benarty communities (Ballingry, Crosshill, Lochore and Glenraig), Blackburn, Campbeltown,

Drongan, Rankinston and Stair (DRS), Holytown, Invergordon and Stevenston. [Climate Action Towns | A&DS \(ads.org.uk\)](#)

Support to Learning Estate

We are currently supporting the Scottish Government and collaborating with Scottish Futures Trust to help anyone involved in design proposals for learning estates across Scotland by sharing our learning, co-ordinating advice and supporting local authorities. Beyond the examples given below, further information is available at: [Connecting people, places & learning | A&DS \(ads.org.uk\)](#)

Queen Margaret University Outdoor learning hub

We are working collaboratively with Queen Margaret University on a project to develop an Outdoor Learning Hub on campus that will create access to different environments for learning activity, community engagement, and professional development. This has developed beyond our initial expectations, with interest from many organisations and valuable contributions from NatureScot in the form of the Wee Forest. [Making places for outdoor learning | A&DS \(ads.org.uk\)](#)

Tests of Change outdoor learning

Tests of change is a process that trials out new ways of working for creating learning spaces. It's a process that requires us to engage with learners and teachers to highlight issues and opportunities that arise within a learning environment. During this process we aim to: Develop a culture of testing to inform investment and approaches to designing spaces; Enhance teaching and learning environments. In the reporting period we have provided support outdoor learning environments at Ferryhill, Monquitter, Mearns, and Skene primary schools.

A Development Framework for the Hagshaw Energy Cluster

The Hagshaw Energy cluster development framework is the first one of its kind in the UK. Development frameworks are common in other parts of the planning system, but they've never been used before in the energy sector. [A Development Framework for the Hagshaw Energy Cluster](#)

Skye & Raasay Future (SARF)

A shared statement of the values, ambition, and priorities for partners to work together to improve outcomes for everyone in the area. [Preserving our heritage | Investing with our community | Skye and Raasay Future | The Highland Council](#)

Key Agencies Green Recovery Sub-group

In June 2020, [KAG published its offer to support a green recovery through a strategic joined-up approach](#). Architecture and Design Scotland has worked with the KAG Placemaking Sub-Group on projects across Scotland, from Kirkwall to Leven. Examples below:

Leven Programme in Fife

We contributed support, with SEPA as lead partner, to multi-organisational approach including other agencies, public, private and community interests. The Leven Programme is an ambitious 10-year regeneration initiative, undertaking collaborative place-based work along the River Leven and communities in its surrounding catchment in the Mid Fife area. The catchment of the River Leven is some 422km², which serves the wider Mid Fife area with a resident population of some 50,000 people.

Kilmarnock in East Ayrshire

Working with East Ayrshire Council, we brought together experts in the built environment to discuss and propose solutions to flood mitigation in the area. The threat of flooding in Kilmarnock is already a major concern for residents and for the economy of Ayrshire and Scotland. While the current scale can essentially sever the town north-to-south in more extreme periods, this is expected to eventually become 'the new normal' for the area. [Learning points: a blue-green strategy for Kilmarnock | A&DS \(ads.org.uk\)](#)

Stewarton in East Ayrshire

Stewarton, in East Ayrshire, is considered an early

adopter of using a place-based approach to create a Development Framework. Working with the KAG, we are supporting the planning department to take a collaborative approach to their plan for Stewarton. By helping them to also put people at the heart of the decision-making process we helped them foster a series of recommendations to be considered in their plan preparation.

Recommendations include testing the 20-minute neighbourhood approach when housing is developed. This has been progressed in partnership with the Scottish Government Planning Digital Strategy Team to use Stewarton as a live site to test the principles using various mapping techniques and data analysis.

Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF)

We have supported several rounds of RTIF, increasing the emphasis on a design and place-led approach. Scoring criteria include:

- to what extent the activity proposed enhances the visitor experience, improves the natural and built environment through the use of design and materials and support a wide range of access needs, and
- how well the project encourages and supports responsible tourism development and the development of a low carbon economy

In the period of this report, we have gradually returned to use of our office premises in Edinburgh and Glasgow. The Edinburgh office has a small garden at the back and some bushes and greenery to the front that provide habitat for local wildlife and plants. We know that this makes a difference as we regularly observe birds using both area.

Section 3: Mainstreaming biodiversity

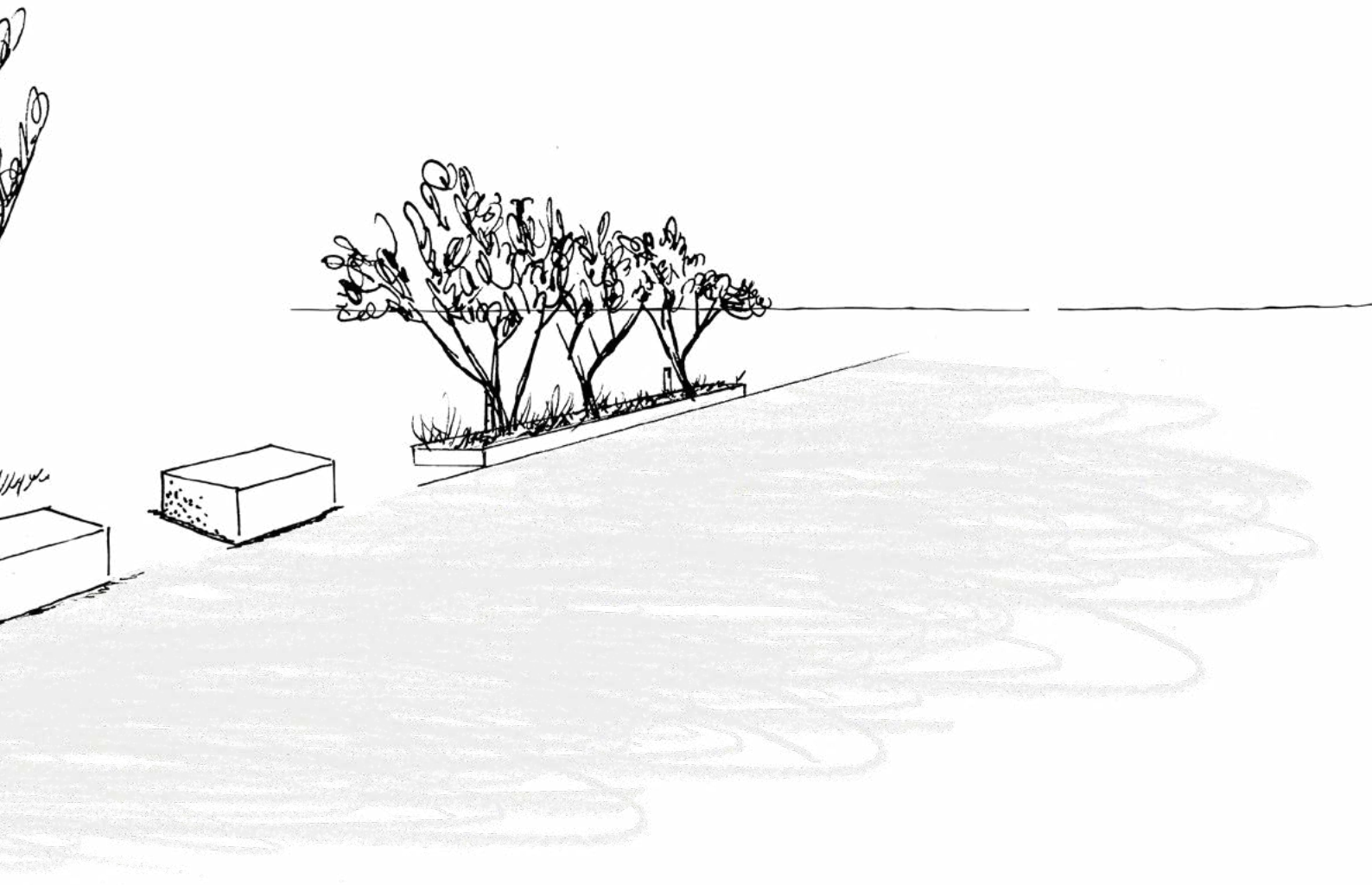
Outline any steps our organisation has taken to incorporate biodiversity measures into its wider policies, plans or strategies. This should include decision-making structures and staff and organisational roles and responsibilities.

Addressing climate change sits at the heart of our 10-year strategy. Early in the work on our corporate plan for 2024-27, we identified the need to highlight more clearly how our work has a positive impact on both the climate emergency and the nature crisis. We are embedding this in our outcomes and will articulate the links within our work plan to 2027. Our new corporate plan will be published in April 2024.

Section 4: Nature-based solutions, climate change and biodiversity

How has your organisation integrated biodiversity into nature-based solutions to the climate emergency and other socio-economic outcomes?

We advocate the use of nature-based solutions within our design advice work and promote taking opportunities to contribute to a range of outcomes at any intervention in the built environment. We will consider further opportunities to monitor this in our work going forward.



Section 5: Public engagement and workforce development

Describe and explain any actions that our organisation has undertaken alone or as part of a partnership to benefit biodiversity directly, to tackle the main drivers of biodiversity loss, or to achieve wider outcomes for nature and people.

Public engagement

Contribution to outdoor learning short course at Queen Margaret University:

As part of the collaboration on the Outdoor Learning Hub, Architecture and Design Scotland staff guest lectured at this short course.

Participation in development and advocating use of the Place Standard, Original version, Climate Lens version, and Children & Young People version:

We have been partners in the Place Standard since inception and continue to inform its implementation. The Place Standard encourages people to understand their place, including the provision of green spaces. [Place Standard | A&DS \(ads.org.uk\)](https://ads.org.uk/place-standard/)

Collaboration with Learning through Landscapes: Climate Ready School Grounds:

We have worked with Learning through Landscapes to facilitate workshops with three schools to better understand the areas that we need to focus on in order to adapt our school grounds for a changing climate. The results are gathered in an online resource, available on our website. [Climate Ready School Grounds | A&DS \(ads.org.uk\)](https://ads.org.uk/climate-ready-school-grounds/)

We host a range of relevant material on our website:

- [Reflections on the sustainable estate | A&DS \(ads.org.uk\)](https://ads.org.uk/reflections-on-the-sustainable-estate/)
- [resource-leip-outdoor-learning-2023-ArcDesSco.pdf \(ads.org.uk\)](https://ads.org.uk/resource-leip-outdoor-learning-2023-ArcDesSco.pdf)
- [Creating greenspace and biodiversity | A&DS \(ads.org.uk\)](https://ads.org.uk/creating-greenspace-and-biodiversity/)
- [Learning Places Scotland conference | A&DS \(ads.org.uk\)](https://ads.org.uk/learning-places-scotland-conference/)
- [Taking action on climate change | Architecture & Design Scotland \(ads.org.uk\)](https://ads.org.uk/taking-action-on-climate-change/)

- [The Gathering: bringing together the Climate Action Towns \(ads.org.uk\)](https://ads.org.uk/the-gathering-bringing-together-the-climate-action-towns/)
- [A place-based collaborative approach to Fife's Local Development Plan | A&DS \(ads.org.uk\)](https://ads.org.uk/a-place-based-collaborative-approach-to-fife-s-local-development-plan/)
- [Learning points: a blue-green strategy for Kilmarnock | A&DS \(ads.org.uk\)](https://ads.org.uk/learning-points-a-blue-green-strategy-for-kilmarnock/)
- [Climate week 2022 - update on our work | A&DS \(ads.org.uk\)](https://ads.org.uk/climate-week-2022-update-on-our-work/)
- [Conversations in Stevenston about Climate Risk Adaptation | A&DS \(ads.org.uk\)](https://ads.org.uk/conversations-in-stevenston-about-climate-risk-adaptation/)
- [Place skills for plan-making | Architecture & Design Scotland \(ads.org.uk\)](https://ads.org.uk/place-skills-for-plan-making/)
- [Place Forum 3: Thinking big, thinking beyond | Architecture & Design Scotland \(ads.org.uk\)](https://ads.org.uk/place-forum-3-thinking-big-thinking-beyond/)
- [What is a 20-minute neighbourhood? | A&DS \(ads.org.uk\)](https://ads.org.uk/what-is-a-20-minute-neighbourhood/)

Workforce development

Initiatives to raise ambitions for how we contribute to nature restoration has been driven by Architecture and Design Scotland's workforce, and very much welcomed by our senior management.

Carbon literacy training delivered by Keep Scotland Beautiful, outlining impacts of climate change on biodiversity in broad terms.

Section 6: Research and monitoring

Describe any research activities that our organisation has undertaken to help develop understanding and awareness of biodiversity or nature.

Not applicable.

What follow-up actions or monitoring have we undertaken to assess the impacts of the actions we have taken? How have we measured this? If we do not carry out any monitoring activities, please explain why.

The importance of biodiversity loss and the nature crisis has emerged as a more important part of our work in the last three years, but we are still in the early stages of our journey to embedding actions in a systematic way.

Section 7: Biodiversity highlights and challenges

Describe our organisation's main achievements for biodiversity over the reporting period and what you are most proud of (this can include processes, plans, projects, partnerships, events and actions).

Outdoor learning – connecting people with nature

In the last 3 years, we have supported the development of outdoor learning capacity in Scotland in a variety of ways. We are most proud of this because it influences the relationship that future generations have with their outdoor environment and because it impacts on a relatively untapped potential for nature restoration within our towns and cities. Biodiversity and nature can be just outside the classroom, provide mental and physical benefits, and help adaptation to climate change.

Looking ahead, what do you think will be the main challenges over the next three years?

Maintaining awareness of opportunities to make an impact on biodiversity of places throughout our work.

Increasing our knowledge and skills in how to address the nature crisis.

As Scotland's design champion, we aim to ensure all Scottish Government priorities inform the future of places we support. Most often that is not by providing all the expertise ourselves, but rather

getting those with specific expertise in the same room to collaborate.

However, key to this is maintaining a general awareness of the causes and effects of biodiversity loss, and where planning, design and construction of buildings and places can contribute positively to restoring nature.

The main challenge will be to keep this live, alongside a wide variety of other priorities and pressures. This is why we are taking care to build in an assessment of opportunities to impact on nature restoration in how we choose where to provide support over the next 3 years.

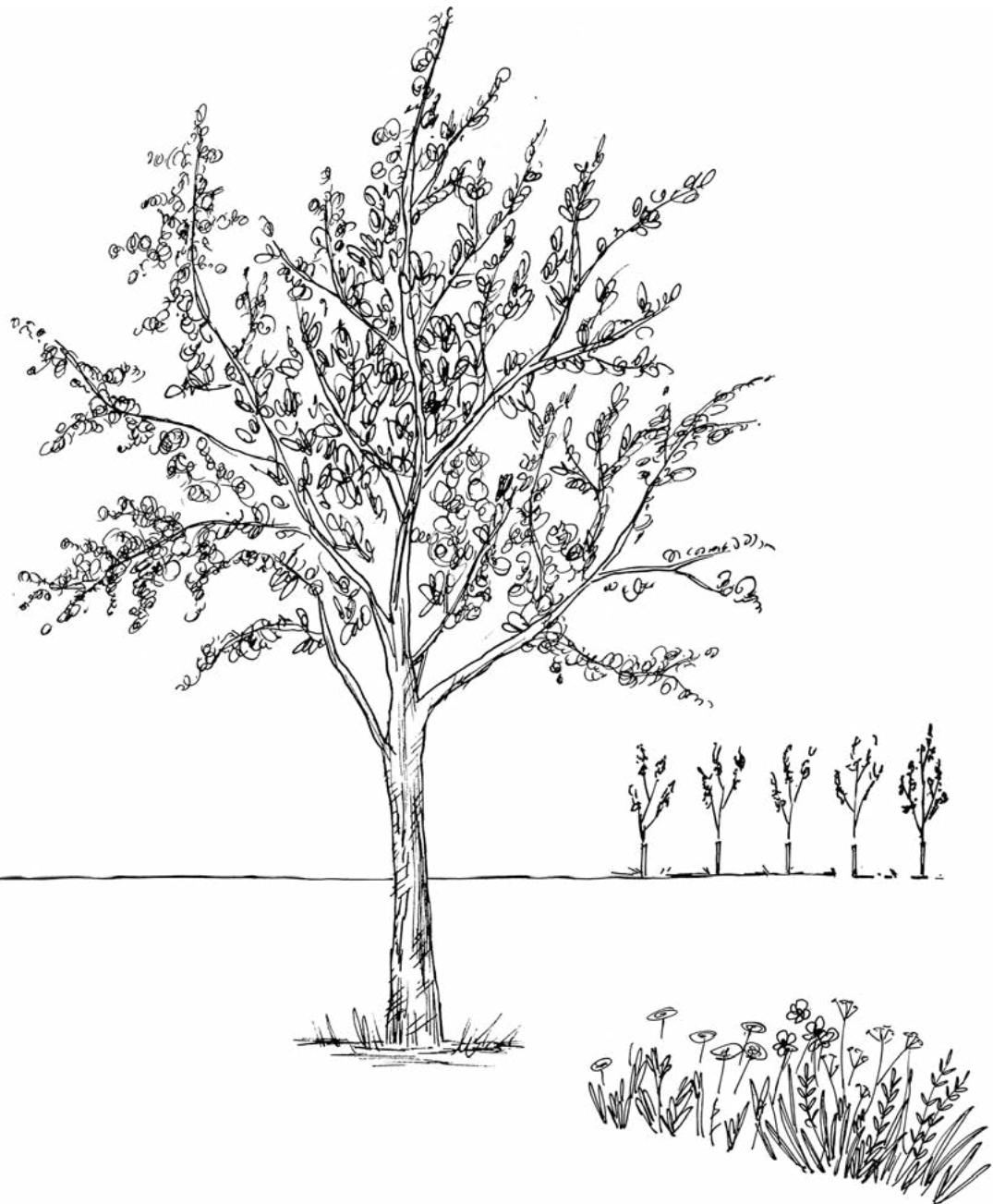
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