



**Scottish Housing**  
Regulator

**Biodiversity report**

**December 2017**

## About us

We are the independent regulator of social landlords in Scotland.

### We regulate:



nearly  
**200**  
social landlords



around  
**160** Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)



**32** Local Authorities (LAs)

Our one **objective is to safeguard and promote the interests of:**



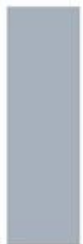
nearly  
**610,000**  
**tenants**

who live in homes provided by  
social landlords



around  
**118,000**  
**owners**

who receive services of social  
landlords



around  
**40,000**  
**people and  
their families**

who may be homeless and seek  
help from local authorities



over  
**2,000**  
**Gypsy/Travellers**

who can use official sites  
provided by social landlords

Our **role** is to **monitor**, **assess** and **report on** social landlords' performance of housing activities and RSLs' financial well-being and standards of governance. We intervene, where we need to, to protect the interests of tenants and service users.

Our **Regulatory Framework** explains how we regulate social landlords. It is available on our website [www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk](http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk)



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

# Introduction

As a Scottish public body we have a statutory duty to further the conservation of biodiversity:

*“It is the duty of every public body and office holder, in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions” [Nature Conservation \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#)*

The biodiversity duty is about connecting people with the environment and managing biodiversity in the wider environment all around us, not just in protected sites.

The [Wildlife and Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#) places a duty on us to make a report publicly available every three years on our compliance with the biodiversity duty. This publication is our report of our activities to December 2017.

## Our role

We operate under the [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#). This legislation sets our functions. We monitor, assess and report on local authorities’ and registered social landlords’ (RSLs) performance in delivering services and RSLs’ financial well-being and standards of governance. We have powers to intervene where necessary.

We are a risk-based regulator, and we target our resources at addressing the issues that present the greatest risk to tenants’ and service users’ interests.

## Biodiversity: our approach

### Our context

Our role means that we link to biodiversity in an indirect rather than a direct way. Our statutory role is not linked to biodiversity. We do not own land and we have no direct role in the management and use of land or natural resources. We do not have a role in the promotion of sport, recreation, tourism, education, healthcare, social services or any of the other core activities set in out in the Scottish Government’s guidance on the biodiversity reporting duty.

As such, we are best placed to carry out a smaller, proportionate set of activities for biodiversity. So this is where we have focused our efforts.

### Our contribution

During the period of this plan we have focused on two types of biodiversity activities: **awareness-raising** and practical **staff volunteering**.

We have raised our staff’s awareness of the importance of biodiversity by using *the Residence*, our staff intranet, to:

- highlight the importance of biodiversity;
- signpost staff to schemes promoting:
  - quick wins
  - home composting

- share practical examples showing the benefits of growing vegetables at home and encouraging staff to consider this.

We set up a biodiversity working group to develop ideas to help us learn more about biodiversity and conservation, and to consider how we could make a practical difference.

This group organised one significant biodiversity activity in 2017. Ten of our staff spent a day volunteering to increase biodiversity in Mugdock Country Park. The group dug out new ponds, and cut and moved rhododendron trees in the park.

This was an extremely successful initiative. We took the opportunity to promote our volunteering because we wanted to maximise its impact and help spread the message about the importance of biodiversity. We tweeted to our 1000+ followers:



Our news release showcased the importance of biodiversity, explained how we are able to contribute and also gave a platform to a Mugdock countryside ranger, who described the impact of the work. It featured in Scottish social housing news e-zines and social media. You can read it at appendix 1.

We will continue to seek opportunities to promote biodiversity in ways that are relevant, meaningful and proportionate to our core statutory role.

## **Appendix 1: Volunteering day at Mugdock Country Park News Release**

### **Housing Regulator Digs Deep for Biodiversity 12 October 2017**

A group of staff from the Scottish Housing Regulator spent a day this week helping to increase biodiversity in Mugdock Country Park. The group of ten dug out new ponds, and cut and moved rhododendron trees in the park.

Ross Williamson, Regulation Manager, organised the volunteering day. He said "It was really rewarding and we've helped in a small way to increase biodiversity at Mugdock. We all learned a bit more too about the habitat all around us and how we can make a small difference. And we'll be able to come back next year to see wildlife in the ponds we dug.

"As a public body we have a duty to further the conservation of biodiversity. Our day job doesn't have an obvious biodiversity link, so this was a great way to get involved. I'd encourage everyone to think about carrying out a local volunteering initiative and raise awareness".

Maggie Ferguson, countryside ranger at Mugdock Country Park, added: "Digging ponds is good fun and great exercise, many thanks to Ross and the group for enthusiastically adding to the network of clean water ponds in Mugdock Country Park. Excavating new ponds and helping to reverse a century of pond loss is important for biodiversity as, when at their best, ponds can be the most species rich habitats in the UK. These new ponds will ensure there are homes and breeding sites for dragonflies, damselflies, water beetles, frogs, toads, newts, water snails, pond skaters and beautiful pond plants, as well as providing a drinking place for birds and mammals."