

Significant funding awarded to Edinburgh biodiversity projects

Almost half a million pounds will be shared among three nature projects in Edinburgh which are trying to create better places for wildlife to thrive.

Edinburgh Shoreline's project will improve breeding areas for puffins by removing invasive non-native species, such as tree mallow, and create eight new coastal wildflower meadows to link up with existing sites and help pollinators to travel around.



Puffins.
©Lorne Gill

Buglife's *Central Scotland B-Lines* will create 100 hectares of wildflower habitat across 50 urban sites, connecting East Dunbartonshire, South Lanarkshire, Falkirk and Edinburgh, helping pollinators to move freely through towns and cities. Local community groups will take on ownership of each site. The project includes training in areas such as managing and monitoring of local sites, and how to increase habitat connectivity across the Central Belt.

Little France Park will be brought to life by the Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust's project. It will transform the site and create a corridor for nature from the centre of Edinburgh to Midlothian. As well as improving the 46 hectare park's existing habitats, such as hedges, scrub and grassland, a network of new habitats will be created, targeted at butterflies, including the northern brown argus, common blue and small copper.



Northern Brown Argus butterfly, (*Aricia artaxerxes*). ©Lorne Gill/SNH

Suzanne Burgess, Buglife's Scotland Manager, said: "We're

delighted that our ground-breaking, landscape-scale project has received this funding from SNH. We're now really looking forward to working with our partners, fantastic volunteers and local communities in Edinburgh and the other project areas to try and halt the decline in Scotland's vital pollinating insects."

These projects are three of 14 successful applicants across Scotland to share the £1.8 million Biodiversity Challenge Fund over a two-year period. The funding will support large-scale projects that aim to deliver rapid change on the ground to help our most at-risk habitats and species, including mammals and birds, connect existing nature reserves and tackle non-native invasive species.

Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment, Mairi Gougeon, announced the awards on a visit to one of the successful projects in Edinburgh earlier this summer. She said: "I am delighted that, through the Biodiversity Challenge Fund, the Scottish Government and SNH can support these fantastic projects across the country to safeguard some of our most vulnerable species and habitats, and protect them from invasive species. Their success will play a crucial role in our efforts to improve nature and help Scotland meet its international biodiversity commitments."

The aim of the Biodiversity Challenge Fund is to enable targeted action for priority habitats and species, accelerating efforts that will help Scotland meet its international biodiversity commitments.

Fulfilling a commitment in the Programme for Government, SNH will administer investments of around £1.8 million over the next 2 years on creating and improving habitats for key species and encouraging increased access to nature.