



## NATURE FOR NEW HOMES

### Linlithgow Civic Trust Policy Statement

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1. In Linlithgow – A Plan for the Future 2015-2030, the Linlithgow Planning Forum analyses the town's current predicament and comes forward with holistic remedies, many based on initial proposals by Linlithgow Civic Trust. The whole fabric of the town is suffering through 'ad hoc' developments. Linlithgow deserves better; it needs to agree how it sees its future over the next 15 to 30 years. Its fabric is not just its built and urban environment; it is the wellbeing of all its inhabitants, young and old, business and social, education and leisure. A Plan for the Future puts forward a range of proposals, including on housing and sustainability, on how to tackle the many issues facing the town.

2. This Policy Statement builds on the proposals in the Plan for the Future in relation to how new housing developments should incorporate provision for nature in their developments, reflecting best practice and the growing interest we have seen during the Covid19 pandemic of people's love for nature and wanting to do more to assist nature to recover from decades of decline in biodiversity and wildlife numbers.

3. We would like to see a town richer in nature, where birds and other wildlife have made a comeback and where nature continues to be restored, enriching and sustaining the lives of people.

4. *In short, our vision for Linlithgow is for a town where people live well in harmony with abundant nature.*

## **Benefits**

5. There is a wealth of evidence that well-designed greenspaces and enhanced nature provision in housing developments produce multiple benefits. For example:

### *For Wildlife*

- much more space for wildlife;
- improved connectivity of wildlife habitats – both within developments and linking to the wider area;
- buildings that are more wildlife-friendly for hedgehogs.

### *For Residents*

- daily enjoyment of nature - people can experience and benefit from the joy of wildlife and wild places in their daily lives, because there is wildlife around them near to home;
- improved health - accessible natural green spaces for fresh air, exercise and quiet contemplation improve health and wellbeing, for example by helping to lower levels of heart disease, obesity, stress and depression.

### *For Developers*

- satisfied customers – houses and developments set in natural green space are more desirable to buyers;
- enhanced brand value - developers that take a lead on nature build their brand, and change the attitudes of the sector as a whole; and
- improved environmental performance - higher ranking in sustainability and natural capital indices will build long-term value.

### **How nature can be encouraged in housing developments**

*6. The overall aim should be to replace what natural environment is lost with at least comparable or enhanced provision within the new development. New housing developments and houses themselves should be designed to integrate space for both wildlife and people, as well as to reduce carbon emissions and minimise water usage.*

7. The list below is a menu of best practice ways of providing for nature:

- provide a “green or wildlife corridor” through the development that enables wildlife to traverse the site;
- use hedges (preferably of native species) and railings rather than close-boarded wooden fences or walls for boundaries where privacy allows;
- where close-boarded fences are used, if possible, provide a "highway" between housing plots for animals eg hedgehogs to use;
- retain or reuse/replace all trees on the site;

- a tree, preferably native, should be planted on every housing plot;
- instead of having only amenity grass areas throughout the site, consider planting a native woodland or orchards;
- ensure that all SUDS are water features planted with biodiversity in mind;
- use swift nesting bricks in a minimum of 25% of houses;
- erect bird and bat nesting boxes/roosts and bug hotels throughout the common areas and gardens on the site;
- use local, traditional building techniques and materials to encourage wildlife to colonise new buildings;
- use lighting designed to avoid disturbing wildlife eg use hoods to direct the light downwards to reduce light pollution of the night sky, reduce light pollution from inappropriately positioned security lighting etc;
- where possible, create wildlife meadows with communal maintenance, governed by a small residents' committee, put in place to maintain it;
- provide each home with a water butt and compost bin;
- not use plastic-based artificial grass;
- provide allotment space (as already suggested as a requirement in the Plan for the Future for all the housing development proposed for the south-east of Linlithgow); and

- provide a free annual life membership to a wildlife organisation of the householder's choice.

## **The Future**

8. We would hope such provisions would be implemented now by enlightened landowners and developers, pending future enforcement through inclusion in the statutory Development Plan (currently the West Lothian Local Development Plan). In future, for a town like Linlithgow, this will be by means of Local Place Plans which will be community led. Our existing Plan for the Future is an example of such a Local Place Plan. Some of the more detailed wildlife requirements above could also be included in site development briefs

## **Where to get help**

9. Further information and help on providing help for nature for new homes can be found on the following websites:

- Linlithgow Burgh Trust (<https://lbt.scot>)
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds ([www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk))
- Scottish Wildlife Trust ([www.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk))

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Burgh Beautiful Linlithgow and Linlithgow Civic Trust are both part of Linlithgow Burgh Trust

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