

The purpose of an Integrated Impact Assessment is to evidence that Aberdeen City Council is meeting its legislative duties by assessing the potential impacts of its policies and decisions on different groups of people and the environment. The legislation considered within this assessment is:

- Section 2 [Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics](#)
- Section 3 [Socio-Economic](#)
- Section 4 [Consumer Duty](#)
- Section 5 [Human Rights](#)
- Section 6 [Children and Young People’s Rights](#)
- Section 7 [Environmental impacts](#)

The term ‘policy’ is used throughout this document and applies to policies, proposals, strategies, provision, criteria, functions, practice, budget savings and activities that includes delivery of our services.

1. About the Policy

1.1 Title
Removal of funding to support community led environmental projects
1.2 What does this policy seek to achieve?
Due to rising demand and costs, the Council is seeking to address a funding shortfall of £34 million in 2025/26 and £54m over the next three years.
Aberdeen City Council's Climate and Environment Policy Service have a £44,000 annual budget for supporting community environmental improvements which this proposal would remove. Historically this fund has been directed to communities through a partnership with the now defunct Aberdeen Greenspace Trust. To maximise the benefits of this funding in empowering communities to act on the city’s climate and nature commitments, different funding models have been explored by the Service.
The current delivery model for this fund is through the Local Environmental Action Fund (LEAF) but the underlying budget and therefore the LEAF Fund faces potential cuts which could stop these initiatives.
1.3 Is this a strategic programme/proposal/decision?
Yes
1.4 Is this a new or existing policy?
The budget is an existing budget with associated approved funding model but the proposal to remove it is new.
1.5 Is this report going to a committee?
Yes
1.6 Committee name and date:
Full Council – March 2025
1.7 Report no and / or Budget proposal number and / or Business Case reference number:
New-102
1.8 Function and Cluster:
City Regeneration & Environment - Strategic Place Planning

Impacts

Aberdeen City Council has a legal requirement as a public sector organisation to assess the impact of its work on equality groups and assess against human rights, children’s rights and our socio-economic duty. This is our Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The PSED has three key parts:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation or any other prohibited conduct.
- Advance equality of opportunity.
- Foster good relations by tackling prejudice, promoting understanding.

This following five sections in the Integrated Impact Assessment demonstrate that these considerations that have been made in the policy, that the impact of proposals made is understood and accepted, and what mitigating steps can be taken to reduce any negative impact of the policy.

2: Equality Act 2010 - Protected Characteristics

Aberdeen City Council wants to ensure everyone is treated fairly. This section identifies what impact the policy may have on people with [protected characteristics](#).

2.1 What impact could this policy have on any of the below groups?

Protected Characteristic	Negative			Neutral	Positive
	High	Medium	Low		
Age		✓			
Disability		✓			
Gender Reassignment				✓	
Marriage and Civil Partnership				✓	
Pregnancy and Maternity				✓	
Race				✓	
Religion or Belief				✓	
Sex				✓	
Sexual Orientation				✓	

2.2 In what way will the policy impact people with these protected characteristics?

Nature is a key asset underpinning the economy, quality of life, and the health and wellbeing of all citizens. The fund gives opportunities for communities to directly address some of the priorities and aims identified by residents in the draft [Aberdeen Open Space Audit: 2024 Public Survey](#). Residents highlighting they wanted to see better accessibility and that being in nature was one of the primary reasons why people accessed greenspaces.

Respondents were also asked about any needs around open spaces in relation to disability, medical condition or age. Some respondents expressed need for better lighting, security and toilet facilities in greenspaces, particularly at night.

The issue of accessibility for people with disabilities or mobility problems was expressed, with the need for more hard surfaced paths and better maintained surfaces, suitable for wheelchair users, to improve accessibility highlighted. A need for more seating for rest including wheelchair accessible benches and handrails was also expressed.

The desire for access to exercise equipment and outdoor adult gym equipment and a variety of exercise equipment was also expressed.

Not empowering communities to address some of these priorities through improving the accessibility and quality of greenspaces through an environmental improvement fund could therefore have a

negative impact on some groups with protected characteristics. A full summary of the Fund and its aims and priorities can be found on the Fund's website: <https://www.nescan.org/leaf-funding-1>

Examples of projects that would not be delivered if the budget was removed could include the elements below which are examples given of projects that would be supported by the fund:

- Creating more inclusive and accessible spaces e.g. providing inclusive furniture such as wheelchair-accessible picnic benches and seating or similar accessibility improvements.

The removal of the budget could prevent achieving the following positive impacts: positive impacts on protected characteristics such as age and disability by creating resting places and improving access, allowing more people to use and enjoy the outdoor and greenspaces.

- Street or green space furniture such as benches, picnic benches, outdoor classrooms, wildlife observatories, and promoting active travel, outdoor learning, and natural play.

The removal of the budget could prevent achieving of the following positive impacts: street furniture and places to meet are important as resting places and can also provide opportunities for social interaction and opportunities for people to be in nature, which can improve health and wellbeing for people of all ages. Opportunities for outdoor learning and natural play are also important for young people and can improve their understanding and enjoyment of the natural environment.

- Physical environment improvements such as signage, information panels, interpretation, and way markers; to promote, educate, and increase enjoyment of greenspaces and biodiversity e.g. by helping to identify local animal, insect, bird, and plant species or to inform about the histories and stories of people and place.

The removal of the budget could prevent achieving of the following positive impacts: improved signage, information and way markers which make it easier for people to navigate and move around outdoor spaces.

Information on other characteristics is not available / disclosed at the time of collection and has been marked as neutral. While there is no robust data relating to the characteristics, we do acknowledge that there may be other barriers that these groups might face when accessing services.

2.3 What considerations have been made in reaching the above assessment?

What internal or external data has been considered? What does this data tell us?

Improving and having access to natural, green and open spaces provides multiple health and well-being, economic, and environmental protection benefits. They improve health and wellbeing while also giving us opportunities to connect with nature and people, tackle the global climate-nature crisis, promote nature recovery, and make positive environmental changes.

The draft [Aberdeen Open Space Audit: 2024 Public Survey](#) highlighted that 82.4% of residents wanted to see more green spaces managed in a more natural way for the benefit of wildlife and nature which the budget directly supports. Respondents also highlighted the critical role that greenspaces play in promoting overall health and well-being, with physical exercise or health reasons, to be in nature or to socialise given as the top three reasons why people use and visit these spaces. The results also indicate that the awareness of the many benefits of greenspaces and access to nature is high. There is a wealth of data detailing the importance of nature and the benefits nature provides for our communities, neighbourhoods and our individual wellbeing.

Key sources of data include:

- [People, Place and the Climate Emergency: The contribution of Nature to Community Planning Partnership Priorities | NatureScot](#)
- [Nature: How connecting with nature benefits our mental health - Scotland | Mental Health Foundation](#)
- [The State of Nature Scotland Report 2023](#)
- [A nature positive Scotland - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)
- [Tackling the Nature Emergency - Scottish biodiversity strategy to 2045 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

[The State of Nature Scotland Report 2023](#) shows that since systematic monitoring of 407 Scottish species began in 1994, the numbers of those species have declined on average by 15%. While some of these species have seen increases, in the last decade 43% have declined.

- Environmental projects help communities address or respond to climate change, including nature-based solutions.
- Providing health, environmental and economic benefits. Blue and green infrastructure delivers multiple functions including climate mitigation, nature restoration, biodiversity enhancement, flood prevention, and water management
- Green networks and corridors linking spaces promotes biodiversity and enables movement of wildlife
- Reduce CO² emissions by providing non-vehicular travel routes encouraging walking and cycling
- Provide carbon storage and sequestration in vegetation
- Managing flood risk: living roofs, large trees and soft landscape areas absorb heavy rainfall
- Provide for storage of surface water in times of peak flow in SUDS and other water features
- Clean and cool the air, water and soil, countering the 'heat island' effect of urban areas

What consultation and engagement has been undertaken with officers and partner organisations?

Engagement with the [North East Scotland Climate Action Network \(NESCOAN HUB\)](#) a regional network of people and community-led organisations that are or want to act to reduce and adapt to climate change in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire helped to identify the need for a fund and shape its priorities. Engagement with other teams and colleagues further helped to develop the Fund.

NESCOAN Hub who are delivering the fund are the North-East of Scotland's primary resource on climate action. This provides a wide-ranging knowledge base on these issues as well as a joined-up approach to action on climate and nature with NESCOAN Hub representing more than 300 member organisations from the north of east of Scotland.

What consultation and engagement has been undertaken with people who may be impacted by this policy?

Aberdeen City Council undertook a two-part public consultation around the 2025/26 Budget and future spending plans from August 2024 to November 2024.

In Part 1, conducted throughout August 2024, participants were asked to provide feedback on four key areas: Budget Options, Council Tax, Service Area Prioritisation, and Capital Programme Expenditure. Under Budget Options, respondents were queried about the potential impacts of proposed options, including both reduction strategies and income-boosting charges. Regarding Council Tax, input was sought on acceptable levels of increase and their potential impacts. Citizens were also invited to express their views on which service areas should be prioritised for spending and to offer their opinions on capital programme expenditure.

In part 2, which took place throughout November 2024, the Council consulted on additional budget options, again focusing on the impact if implemented. The phase 2 consultation included budget options relating to the Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership.

There were 4278 responses across the four areas consulted on during part 1 of the online consultation and 1535 responses to part 2. Respondents had the option to indicate which protected characteristics would be affected.

Various approaches were offered to support participation. Throughout both phases, opportunities were offered for the public to attend face to face and digital sessions to discuss the proposals in more detail. There were 2 face to face sessions, including British Sign Language options and 4 digital sessions, with a total of 24 attendees.

Budget Consultation Results

The Budget Consultation 2025-26 launched on Monday 19 August 2024 with the aim to understand how potential savings options might affect residents.

454 residents highlighted that the removal of environmental improvement project funding would have a high or medium impact on them. A summary of the 216 comments on personal impact is outlined below:

Impact on Climate and Biodiversity: Many comments stress that removing funding for environmental projects will exacerbate climate and biodiversity crises, impacting both global and local scales and negatively affecting communities that benefit from these initiatives.

Environmental Education and Well-being: Respondents argue that environmental projects contribute significantly to community resilience, health, and well-being, and their removal would have widespread negative effects.

Long-term Consequences: There is a strong sentiment that removing funding for both environmental projects and the FAF would be shortsighted, leading to greater costs and challenges in the long term.

Summary

Residents highlighted that the removal of environmental improvement project funding would have a significant impact on them. Comments emphasized the negative effects on climate, biodiversity, community resilience, health, and well-being. Many believe that cutting this funding would be shortsighted and lead to greater long-term costs and challenges.

2.4 What mitigations can be put in place?

What can be done to remove or reduce any negative impacts of this policy (if applicable)?		
Potential mitigations to reduce any negative impacts of removing this budget that that could be explored include:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding alternative sources of funding to support community environmental improvements. This could include potentially finding a sponsor or private sector funder to fill this funding gap. Supporting communities through partners such as NESCAN HUB or through Aberdeen City Councils External Funding Team to find or signpost to other sources of funding. Exploring options to provide alternative support focused on nonfinancial outcomes could also be considered. 		
With mitigations in place, what is the new overall rating of the negative impact(s)?	High	
	Medium	✓
	Low	
	Negative Impact Removed	

3: Socio-Economic Impacts

Aberdeen City Council has a duty to reduce the inequalities of outcome that can arise from socio-economic disadvantage. This section is used to consider what impact the policy may have on people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage – and how any inequalities of outcome arising from the policy can be reduced.

Use this guide to understand more on socio-economic inequalities: [The Fairer Scotland Duty: Guidance for Public Bodies \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

3.1 What impact could this policy have on people who experience the following aspects of socio-economic disadvantage?

	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Low income – those who have insufficient earnings to meet basic needs, such as food, clothing, housing, or utilities.	✓		
Low/ no wealth – those who have no savings for unexpected spend or provision for the future.	✓		
Material deprivation – those who cannot afford or access goods or services that are considered essential or desirable for a decent quality of life, such as food, clothing, heating, transport, internet, cultural, recreational and social activities.	✓		
Area deprivation – those who live in an area with poor living conditions, such as higher levels of crime, pollution, noise, congestion, or lack of infrastructure, amenities, or green spaces.	✓		
Socio-economic background – social class, parents' education, employment, income.		✓	

3.2 In what way will the policy impact people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage?

Blue and green infrastructure has multiple health, wellbeing, economic, and environmental protection benefits. They improve health and wellbeing while also giving us opportunities to connect with nature and people, tackle the global climate-nature crisis, promote nature recovery, and make positive environmental changes. Green infrastructure and open space areas can include parks, gardens, playing fields, woodlands, river corridors, play areas, allotments, and civic spaces.

Social

Improving opportunities for food growing can improve access to affordable, nutritious food for communities and individuals, particularly those on low incomes. Well-managed and maintained spaces can create opportunities for all sections of the community. They can promote a sense of place and be a source of community pride and offer opportunities for people to play an active part in caring for the local environment. Open space provides opportunities for sport and recreation, helping to promote active and healthy lifestyles, and can open opportunities for environmental education for local groups, schools and individuals.

Economic

Well-designed and managed spaces can raise the quality of business, retail and leisure developments, making them more attractive to potential investors, users and customers. Areas of open space can also provide economic benefits in their own right; for example, produce from allotments, timber, and other wood crops. The quality of civic spaces undoubtedly helps define the identity of towns and cities, which can enhance their attraction for living, working, investment, and tourism.

Environmental

Green networks and corridors linking spaces also promote biodiversity and enable movement of wildlife. Trees and planting provide shade for both wildlife and people. Trees also play a role in the control of air and water pollution, noise reduction and contribute to energy reduction by providing shelter for buildings. They can also help to soften the impact of development and make green and civic spaces more appealing.

- Blue and green infrastructure delivers multiple functions including climate mitigation, nature restoration, biodiversity enhancement, flood prevention, and water management.
- Green networks and corridors linking spaces promotes biodiversity and enables movement of wildlife.
- Communities benefit from accessible, high-quality blue, green and civic spaces.

3.3 What considerations have been made in reaching the above assessment?

What internal or external data has been considered? What does this data tell us?

There is a wealth of data detailing the importance of nature and the benefits nature provides for our communities, neighbourhoods and our individual wellbeing. It is not possible to list all data sources here.

The draft [Aberdeen Open Space Audit: 2024 Public Survey](#) highlighted the critical role that greenspaces play in promoting overall health and well-being, with physical exercise or health reasons, to be in nature or to socialise given as the top three reasons why people use and visit these spaces. The results also indicate that the awareness of the many benefits of greenspaces and access to nature is high.

A report by the [Mental Health Foundation Scotland](#)¹ evidences how nature is an important need for many and vital in keeping us emotionally, psychologically and physically healthy. These benefits are so well recognised that the first Green Health Prescription pathways were successfully launched in April

¹ [How connecting with nature benefits our mental health - https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/scotland/node/4266](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/scotland/node/4266)

2019 in Scotland. Green social prescribing involves using parks, greenspaces, and the outdoors to improve health and wellbeing and allows NHS Healthcare professionals to link patients with free outdoor interventions.

NHS Grampian is also adopting a similar approach, though it's in the early stages. A Community Planning Aberdeen Local Outcome Improvement Project is being delivered to boost awareness and the use of green prescribing in the area.

Surveys and research from the [Environment and Spaces for Public Health Partnership Group](#)², hosted by [Public Health Scotland](#), also showed that greenspace usage rose during the COVID-19 pandemic, but that socio-economic inequality in greenspace use also widened. Importantly almost nine out of ten of the people who participated in the research said that being in green and open spaces benefitted their mental health.

The [Aberdeen City Population Needs Assessment \(PNA\)](#)³ further identifies how people and communities in Aberdeen can benefit from better, healthier places as well as providing an evidence base to further ensure priorities for improvement are focused on what communities need.

Further Key sources of data include:

- [People, Place and the Climate Emergency: The contribution of Nature to Community Planning Partnership Priorities | NatureScot](#)
- [Nature: How connecting with nature benefits our mental health - Scotland | Mental Health Foundation](#)
- [The State of Nature Scotland Report 2023](#)
- [A nature positive Scotland - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)
- [Tackling the Nature Emergency - Scottish biodiversity strategy to 2045 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)
- [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation](#)

What consultation and engagement has been undertaken with officers and partner organisations?

Engagement with the [North East Scotland Climate Action Network \(NESCAN HUB\)](#) a regional network of people and community-led organisations that are or want to act to reduce and adapt to climate change in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire helped to identify the need for a fund and shape its priorities. Engagement with other teams and colleagues further helped to develop the Fund.

NESCAN Hub who are delivering the fund are the North-East of Scotland's primary resource on climate action. This provides a wide-ranging knowledge base on these issues as well as a joined-up approach to action on climate and nature with NESCAN Hub representing more than 60 member organisations from the north of east of Scotland.

What consultation and engagement has been undertaken with people who may be impacted by this policy?

Budget Consultation Results

The Budget Consultation 2025-26 launched on Monday 19 August 2024 with the aim to understand how potential savings options might affect residents. 454 residents highlighted that the removal of

² [COVID-19 and greenspace use survey findings -https://www.publichealthscotland.scot/publications/covid-19-and-greenspace-use-survey-findings/covid-19-and-greenspace-use-survey-findings-summary/](https://www.publichealthscotland.scot/publications/covid-19-and-greenspace-use-survey-findings/covid-19-and-greenspace-use-survey-findings-summary/)

³ [Aberdeen City Population Needs Assessment \(PNA\) - https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/resources/population-needs-assessment/](https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/resources/population-needs-assessment/)

environmental improvement project funding would have a high or medium impact on them. A summary of the 216 comments on personal impact is outlined below:

Impact on Climate and Biodiversity: Many comments stress that removing funding for environmental projects will exacerbate climate and biodiversity crises, impacting both global and local scales and negatively affecting communities that benefit from these initiatives.

Environmental Education and Well-being: Respondents argue that environmental projects contribute significantly to community resilience, health, and well-being, and their removal would have widespread negative effects.

Long-term Consequences: There is a strong sentiment that removing funding for both environmental projects and the FAF would be shortsighted, leading to greater costs and challenges in the long term.

Summary

Residents highlighted that the removal of environmental improvement project funding would have a significant impact on them. Comments emphasized the negative effects on climate, biodiversity, community resilience, health, and well-being. Many believe that cutting this funding would be shortsighted and lead to greater long-term costs and challenges.

3.4 What mitigations can be put in place?

What can be done to remove or reduce any negative impacts of this policy (if applicable)?		
Potential mitigations to reduce any negative impacts of removing this budget that that could be explored include:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding alternative sources of funding to support community environmental improvements. This could include potentially finding a sponsor or private sector funder to fill this funding gap. Supporting communities through partners such as NESCAN or through Aberdeen City Councils External Funding Team to source or signpost to other sources of funding. This could however add greater demand on staff in the External Funding Team. Exploring options to provide alternative support focused on nonfinancial outcomes could also be considered. 		
If mitigations are in place, does this remove or reduce the negative impact?	No – negative impact remains	
	Yes – negative impact reduced	✓
	Yes - negative impact removed	

4: Consumer Impacts

The Consumer Scotland Act 2020 places a Consumer Duty on the public sector to put consumer interests at the heart of strategic decision-making, emphasising the need for accessible and affordable public services, especially during times of financial pressure. This person-centred approach is intended to result in better quality services and outcomes for the public as consumers of public services across Scotland.

This section of the IIA is used to consider the impact of the policy on consumers of any services that the policy is intended to change.

Use this guide to understand more on the consumer duty: [How to meet the consumer duty: guidance for public authorities](#)

4.1 What impact could this policy have on any of the below consumer groups?

	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Individuals		✓	
Small businesses		✓	

4.2 In what way will the policy impact people in these consumer groups?

There are no negative impacts identified. The impact will be neutral.

4.3 What mitigations can be put in place?

What can be done to remove or reduce any negative impacts of this policy (if applicable)?

N/A

If mitigations are in place, does this remove or reduce the negative impact?

No – negative impact remains

Yes – negative impact reduced

Yes - negative impact removed

5: Human Rights Impacts

The Human Rights Act 1998 sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone in the UK is entitled to. It incorporates the rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into domestic British law. The Human Rights Act came into force in the UK in October 2000

The Act sets out our human rights in a series of 'Articles'. Each Article deals with a different right.

Use this guide to understand more about [Human Rights](#).

5.1 What impact could this policy have on Human Rights?

Human Rights Article	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Article 2: Right to life		✓	
Article 4: Prohibition of slavery and forced labour		✓	
Article 5: Right to liberty and security		✓	
Article 6: Right to a fair trial		✓	
Article 7: No punishment without law		✓	
Article 8: Right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence		✓	
Article 9: Freedom of thought, belief and religion		✓	
Article 10: Freedom of expression		✓	
Article 11: Freedom of assembly and association		✓	
Article 12: Right to marry and start a family		✓	
Article 14: Protection from discrimination in respect of these rights and freedoms		✓	
Article 1 of Protocol 1: Right to peaceful enjoyment of your property		✓	
Article 2 of Protocol 1: Right to education		✓	
Article 3 of Protocol 1: Right to participate in free elections		✓	

5.2 In what way will the policy impact Human Rights?

There are no negative impacts identified. The impact will be neutral.

5.3 What mitigations can be put in place?

What can be done to remove or reduce any negative impacts of this policy (if applicable)?

N/A

If mitigations are in place, does this remove or reduce the negative impact?

No – negative impact remains

Yes – negative impact reduced

Yes - negative impact removed

6: Children and Young People’s Rights Impacts

The United Nations Convention has 54 articles that cover all aspects of a child’s life and set out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all children everywhere are entitled to. It also explains how adults and governments must work together to make sure all children can enjoy all their rights.

Children’s rights apply to every child/young person under the age of 18 and to adults still eligible to receive a “children’s service” e.g. care leavers aged 18-26 years old.

You can [read the full UN Convention \(pdf\)](#), or [just a summary \(pdf\)](#), to find out more about the rights that are included.

6.1 What impact could this policy have on the rights of Children and Young People?

	Negative	Neutral	Positive
PROVISION			
Article 2: non-discrimination		✓	
Article 3: best interests of the child provision and protection		✓	
Article 5: parental guidance and a child's evolving capacities		✓	
Article 16: right to privacy		✓	
Article 17: access to information from the media		✓	
Article 18: parental responsibilities and state assistance		✓	
Article 22: refugee children		✓	
Article 23: children with a disability		✓	
Article 24: health and health services		✓	
Article 26: social security		✓	
Article 27: adequate standard of living		✓	
Article 28: right to education		✓	
Article 29: goals of education		✓	
Article 30: children from minority or indigenous groups		✓	
Article 31: leisure, play and culture	✓		
Article 39: recovery from trauma and reintegration		✓	
Article 40: juvenile justice		✓	
PROTECTION			
Article 6: life, survival and development		✓	

Article 7: birth registration, name, nationality, care		✓	
Article 8: protection and preservation of identity		✓	
Article 9: Separation from parents		✓	
Article 10: family reunification protection		✓	
Article 11: abduction and non-return of children		✓	
Article 15: freedom of association		✓	
Article 19: protection from violence, abuse and neglect		✓	
Article 20: children unable to live with their family		✓	
Article 21: adoption		✓	
Article 25: review of treatment in care		✓	
Article 33: drug abuse		✓	
Article 34: sexual exploitation		✓	
Article 35: abduction, sale and trafficking		✓	
Article 36: other forms of exploitation		✓	
Article 37: inhumane treatment and detention		✓	
Article 38: war and armed conflicts		✓	
Article 32: child labour		✓	
PARTICIPATION			
Article 12: respect for the views of the child		✓	
Article 13: freedom of expression		✓	
Article 14: freedom of thought, belief and religion		✓	
Article 42: knowledge of rights		✓	

6.2 In what way will the policy impact the rights of Children and Young People?

The removal of the Fund would mean opportunities to improve greenspace and play areas and improving opportunities for formal and informal play for children and young people to directly support Article 31: (leisure, play and culture) would not be achieved - every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities. LEAF Projects should aim to achieve at least one of the following outcomes:

- Protect, enhance, and increase biodiversity, nature, and high-quality greenspaces.
- Improve existing or develop new spaces that benefit communities including parks, public gardens, playing fields, woodlands, natural "rewilded" areas, play areas, rivers, ponds, coastal habitats, allotments, community gardens and public spaces.
- Help communities mitigate, adapt to and build resilience to climate change, including the use of nature-based solutions.
- Raising awareness of and prompting action on nature, biodiversity, climate, and the environment.

6.3 What mitigations can be put in place?

What can be done to remove or reduce any negative impacts of this policy (if applicable)?		
Potential mitigations to reduce any negative impacts of removing this budget that that could be explored include:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding alternative sources of funding to support community environmental improvements. This could include potentially finding a sponsor or private sector funder to fill this funding gap. Supporting communities through partners such as NESCAN or through Aberdeen City Councils External Funding Team to find or signpost to other sources of funding. Exploring options to provide alternative support focused on nonfinancial outcomes could also be considered. 		
If mitigations are in place, does this remove or reduce the negative impact?	No – negative impact remains	
	Yes – negative impact reduced	✓
	Yes - negative impact removed	

7: Environmental Impacts

Aberdeen City Council has a duty to meet its legal environmental responsibilities by working towards Net Zero emissions, adapting to climate change, and acting in a way it considers most sustainable. We must also fulfil the [biodiversity duty](#) and [sustainable procurement duty](#).

This section in the Integrated Impact Assessment demonstrates that these considerations that have been made in the policy, that the impact of proposals made is understood and accepted, and what mitigating steps can be taken to reduce any negative impact of the policy.

Use this guide to understand more on the legal climate change duty: [Climate change - gov.scot](#) ([www.gov.scot](#)) and find out more about how Aberdeen is adapting to Climate Change: [Aberdeen Adapts | Aberdeen City Council](#)

7.1 What is the impact of this policy on any of the below climate, environmental and waste considerations?

	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Council or City-wide carbon emissions	✓		
Active and sustainable travel	✓		
Facilities for local living	✓		
Resilience and adaptability to flooding and weather events	✓		
Biodiversity improvement and wildlife/habitat connectivity	✓		
Water consumption and drainage	✓		
Pollution (air, water, noise, light and land contamination)	✓		
Impact on resource use and waste	✓		
Sustainable procurement of goods and services		✓	

7.2 In what way will the policy impact the environment?

A primary driver for Aberdeen City Council's Climate and Environment Policy Service environmental improvement budget is to deliver environmental improvements by funding environmental projects or providing match funding for the benefit of the wider community.

Removal of the budget would prevent the delivery of environmental improvements, exacerbate climate and biodiversity crises, and negatively affect communities.

The current delivery model to maximise the benefits that the budget can deliver is through the [Local Environmental Action Fund](#) (LEAF - 'the Fund'), delivered through an external partnership with the [North East Scotland Climate Action Network](#) (NESCAN HUB.)

Local Environmental Action Fund's Importance: The LEAF fund supports various community environmental projects, including improving urban spaces and wildlife monitoring and is in high demand, with applications exceeding available funding.

Impact of Budget Removal: Eliminating the budget would prevent the delivery of environmental improvements, exacerbate climate and biodiversity crises, and negatively affect communities.

Community Empowerment: Empowering communities to take climate action is crucial for achieving goals set in the Aberdeen Adapts framework and other local strategies.

Statutory Duties: Removing the budget could hinder the Council's ability to meet statutory biodiversity and climate duties under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 and the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

LOIP Stretch Outcomes: Budget removal would impact the ability to meet LOIP stretch outcomes related to carbon emission reduction, sustainable travel, and the protection of nature.

Types of Projects Funded: The fund supports projects that provide social and environmental benefits, such as enhancing biodiversity, improving community spaces, and addressing climate change through nature-based solutions.

Business Need

The removal of this budget puts the delivery of several key areas of business need at risk as well as Climate Change and biodiversity duties. Aberdeen City Council is committed to responding to the global climate-nature crisis. In March 2023 the Council added its voice to the growing number of local authorities around the world by declaring a climate and nature emergency. The Council is also signatory to the Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration, and the United Nations [Race To Zero Campaign](#).

The [Aberdeen Climate and Nature Pledge](#) is a further commitment by the organisations and people of the City of Aberdeen to act within their own organisations and lives to contribute towards the [Net Zero Aberdeen Route map](#) and [Aberdeen Adapts](#) climate adaptation framework. The [Council Climate Change Plan 2021 - 2025](#) also sets out the Council's ambitions and projects for net zero and interim targets for reduced carbon emissions.

There is a need to empower communities to take action on climate change and nature recovery and make positive environmental changes in Aberdeen to directly support the delivery of Aberdeen Adapts, the [Net Zero Aberdeen Routemap](#), underlying [Net Zero Aberdeen Empowerment Strategy](#) and [Natural Environment Strategy](#) as well as help to deliver place based outcomes in the [Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026](#).

The Net Zero Aberdeen Empowerment Strategy recognises that empowerment is crucial to achieving Routemap goals through the engagement, participation and capacity building of organisations and citizens on climate change to achieve a just transition and net zero future.

These plans and outcomes can't be delivered without significant action from communities, organisations and individuals and the removal of an Aberdeen Environmental Improvement fund does not support or empower communities or promote public action on climate change, nature recovery and making positive environmental changes in Aberdeen.

The removal of this budget and fund would also mean non delivery of the administration's agreement '[Working in Partnership for Aberdeen](#) to build a Greener and more Sustainable City and work with communities to review the management of council-managed open spaces to create more sustainable and safer green areas and open spaces and develop a Community Environmental Improvement Fund, for communities to access, to implement their own small-scale local environmental improvements.

Our ability to meet our statutory biodiversity and climate duties under the [Nature Conservation \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#)⁴, could be impacted with all public bodies in Scotland having a duty to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities.

Removal of the budget could also impact or ability to fulfil our [Biodiversity Duty](#)⁵ to address wider outcomes such as helping Scotland halt biodiversity loss, address the climate emergency, and contributing to a green recovery and a net zero future.

The [Climate Change \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#)⁶ ("the 2009 Act") places specific climate change duties on public bodies. This includes reducing green house gas emissions, putting in place measures to adapt to a changing climate and to work in a sustainable way. A public body must, in exercising its functions, act in the way best calculated to contribute to the delivery of the targets set in or under Part 1 of the 2009 Act, act in the way best calculated to help deliver any programme laid before the Scottish Parliament under section 53 of the 2009 Act and in a way that it considers is most sustainable.

The removal of the budget will also directly impact the ability of communities to act in their local areas through the [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#)⁷

The Fund also directly supports the Prosperous Place stretch outcomes of the [Local Outcome Improvement Plan \(LOIP\) 2016-26](#) with outcomes having consultation undertaken with the public and a broad range of community groups and stakeholders via [Community Planning Aberdeen](#).

The ability to deliver the following stretch outcomes would be impacted by the removal of the budget:

13. Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate.
14. Increase sustainable travel: 38% of people walking and 5% of people cycling and wheeling as main mode of travel and a 5% reduction in car miles by 2026.
15. 26% of Aberdeen's area will be protected and/or managed for nature and 60% of people report they feel that spaces and buildings are well cared for by 2026.

Removal of the budget would also impact negatively on the ability of partners such as NESCAN and communities to achieve the LOIP Improvement project stretch aim 15.5 - to Increase by 50% the number of community groups delivering local environmental improvements in their neighbourhoods by 2026, an improvement project which this fund directly supports.

Removal of the budget would impact the delivery of [Aberdeen Adapts](#), the [Net Zero Aberdeen Routemap](#), underlying [Aberdeen Empowerment Strategy](#) and [Natural Environment Strategy](#), as well as the [Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026](#).

⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2004/6/contents>

⁵ <https://www.nature.scot/scotlands-biodiversity/scottish-biodiversity-strategy-and-cop15/biodiversity-duty>

⁶ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2009/12/contents>

⁷ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2015/6/contents>

7.3 What considerations have been made in reaching the above assessment?

What internal or external data has been considered? What does this data tell us?

Budget Consultation Results

The Budget Consultation 2025-26 launched on Monday 19 August 2024 with the aim to understand how potential savings options might affect residents.

454 residents highlighted that the removal of environmental improvement project funding would have a high or medium impact on them. A summary of the 216 comments on personal impact is outlined below:

Impact on Climate and Biodiversity: Many comments stress that removing funding for environmental projects will exacerbate climate and biodiversity crises, impacting both global and local scales and negatively affecting communities that benefit from these initiatives.

Environmental Education and Well-being: Respondents argue that environmental projects contribute significantly to community resilience, health, and well-being, and their removal would have widespread negative effects.

Long-term Consequences: There is a strong sentiment that removing funding for both environmental projects and the FAF would be shortsighted, leading to greater costs and challenges in the long term.

Summary

Residents highlighted that the removal of environmental improvement project funding would have a significant impact on them. Comments emphasized the negative effects on climate, biodiversity, community resilience, health, and well-being. Many believe that cutting this funding would be shortsighted and lead to greater long-term costs and challenges.

Aberdeen Open Space Audit: 2024

The draft Aberdeen Open Space Audit: 2024 highlights several areas for improvement in relation to the quality, accessibility and quantity of open space in Aberdeen highlighting the need for a budget and environmental improvement fund to address some of these areas for improvement.

The audit was published in June 2024 with the final Audit Main Report and Public Survey Report, including publicly accessible audit mapping to be published early in 2025. The draft Audit Main Report can be [viewed here](#) along with the Public [Survey Report](#).

Community empowerment and supporting others to improve these spaces is crucial and the LEAF fund delivered through this budget directly supports projects that address areas highlighted for improvement in the audit and public survey.

Aberdeen's open spaces, including parks, gardens, and natural areas, are important assets for both people and nature, providing various health, wellbeing, economic, and environmental benefits.

Public parks and gardens, amenity greenspace and sports areas are typically the most accessible public spaces used in daily life. Not all residents have good access to these spaces.

Audit Key Findings

- **Quality:** Quality scores varied across different wards and types of spaces with some communities lacking in accessible high-quality greenspace.

- **Access to Open Space:** Only 45% of residents are within 400m of a natural greenspace over 2 hectares, indicating a need for improved access in certain areas.
- **Quality Indicators:** Open space quality indicators showed that health and biodiversity scored the lowest, while accessibility and place quality scored the highest, reflecting areas for potential improvement.
- **Satisfaction and Use:** Most people reported using these spaces for physical exercise, enjoying nature, and socializing highlighting the importance of access to good quality greenspaces.
- The Audit Public Survey highlighted that some open space types such as amenity spaces had low overall satisfaction rates.
- **Managing Spaces for Nature:** 82% of respondents said they would like to see more greenspaces managed in a more natural way for the benefit of wildlife and nature.
- **Improvement Suggestions:** Respondents suggested that better facilities, spaces being better managed for wildlife, and more paths would encourage more frequent use of open spaces.
- **Food Growing:** 54% of respondents supported having more food-growing opportunities in open spaces, satisfaction with allotments was low, this could be attributed to long waiting lists and high demand.

Respondents highlighted the critical role that green spaces play in promoting overall health and well-being, with physical exercise or health reasons, to be in nature or to socialise given as the top three reasons why people use open spaces.

The results indicate that the awareness of the many benefits of green spaces and access to nature is high, along with better understanding that the responsibility for the effective management of these spaces is a collective effort.

The removal of the environmental improvement budget and associated LEAF Fund would limit opportunities for communities to address the areas for improvement identified by the audit and residents though the public survey.

What consultation and engagement has been undertaken with local groups, partner organisations, experts etc? Where required, identify any other environmental assessments that have been completed.

Budget Consultation Results

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Long-term Consequences: There is a strong sentiment that removing funding for both environmental projects and the FAF would be shortsighted, leading to greater costs and challenges in the long term.

Summary

Residents highlighted that the removal of environmental improvement project funding would have a significant impact on them. Comments emphasized the negative effects on climate, biodiversity, community resilience, health, and well-being. Many believe that cutting this funding would be shortsighted and lead to greater long-term costs and challenges.

7.4 What mitigations can be put in place?

What can be done to remove or reduce any negative impacts of this policy (if applicable)?

Potential mitigations to reduce any negative impacts of removing this budget that that could be explored include:

- Finding alternative sources of funding to support community environmental improvements. This could include potentially finding a sponsor or private sector funder to fill this funding gap.
- Supporting communities through partners such as NESCAN or through Aberdeen City Councils External Funding Team to find or signpost to other sources of funding.
- Exploring options to provide alternative support focused on nonfinancial outcomes could also be considered.

If mitigations are in place, does this remove or reduce the negative impact?

No – negative impact remains

Yes – negative impact reduced

Yes - negative impact removed



8: Sign Off

Any further positive or negative impacts on individuals or groups that have been considered?

Engagement with the NESCAN Hub helped to identify the need for this fund and shape its priorities. The removal of the budget could lead to there being a funding gap for the provision of this type and scale of locally accessible environmental funding in the city.

Does the policy relate to the Council’s [Equality Outcomes](#)? If yes, how.

Applications for the LEAF Fund which are funded through the budget should show how the project will support one or more **social outcomes** below, some of which relate directly to the Equality Outcomes:

1. Mental, physical, or emotional health and wellbeing.
2. Community priorities and needs.
3. Equity, inclusion, and diversity.
4. Marginalised, minority or disadvantaged communities.
5. Building skills and capacity.
6. Collaborative working.
7. The long-term viability of your organisation and initiative.
8. Community engagement and decision-making in relation to place.

The removal of the budget would mean these social outcomes that contribute to the Councils Equality Outcomes would not be delivered through the Fund.

Overall summary of changes made to the policy as a result of impact assessment.

N/A

Outline how the impact of policy will be monitored.

The [Local Environmental Action Fund \(LEAF\)](#) which relies on this £44,000 budget directly supports the Community Planning Aberdeen Improvement Project “Empowering Community-led Environmental Action” which seeks to increase by 50% the number of community groups delivering local environmental improvements in their neighbourhoods by 2026.

If the £44,000 annual budget for supporting community environmental improvements is removed, this could impact the success of the Community Planning Aberdeen Improvement Project.

Progress against the LOIP Improvement Project charter aim will be measured as part of the model for improvement Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle which includes measures/metrics on the number of groups and projects which are being supported which could highlight any impacts from removal of the budget and therefore removal of the LEAF Fund.

Officers are also to include updates on the Fund and impacts within the Council’s existing Annual Climate and Nature Reports, presented to the Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee.

If there are any remaining negative impacts after mitigation, what is the justification for why this policy should proceed.

N/A

Assessment Author	Guy Bergman – Environmental Planner
Date	20/12/2024
Chief Officer	David Dunne
Date	20/02/2025