



# Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire Project Summary

## Background

The Southern Uplands Partnership hosts the Dumfries and Galloway Environmental Resources Centre (DGERC). The Centre is a not-for-profit organisation which aims to further the appreciation, understanding and protection of the natural environment by collecting, collating, managing and safeguarding relevant data, by providing a focal point for accessing this information and supporting those involved in wildlife recording activities.

A partnership of organisations (East Ayrshire Council, North Ayrshire Council, South Ayrshire Council, Scottish Natural Heritage) based in Ayrshire approached the Southern Uplands Partnership to explore the opportunities for developing a similar provision across their local authority area that builds on the experience and expertise of DGERC. From those early discussions "Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire" was developed.

Although initially programmed to run as a two year project the partners hope to demonstrate "a need" that will see the project become part of a South West Scotland Environmental Centre encompassing both Ayrshire and Dumfries & Galloway.

## The project

*Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire* is a project designed to engage people throughout the region in wildlife recording. The project will create a focal point for training in identifications skills, collation and safeguarding of volunteer-gathered environmental data and improving sharing of that data to influence better environmental management in the region.

The project will be overseen by a Steering Group including representatives of the host organisation and funders. The group will meet quarterly to guide the project as it develops.

Keys aspects will include:

### Citizen science surveys

Two citizen science projects focusing on identification and submission of records relating to easily recognised species or species groups, designed to appeal to a broad range of people (e.g., schools, families and individuals). This might include postcard and online surveys or co-ordinated surveys of particular sites/species.

### Developing a project website

The project will develop a website to provide information about Ayrshire's wildlife. It will provide a source of information about important local species, provide an online portal for submission of biological records, provide context for sightings by providing maps of other sightings, provide guidance on identification of key local species etc.

### Promoting the project

The project will develop some promotional materials to help raise awareness of project activities –pop-up banners, leaflets, flyers and posters etc. The project will also make use of social media to publicise the project.

The project officer will be available to give talks to local wildlife and community groups. Typically these will happen in the winter period and will be aimed at a wide variety of audiences across Ayrshire who have an interest in their natural heritage, and are intended to raise awareness of local biodiversity, generate new interest in wildlife recording and get more people involved in the project.





## Building a network of local wildlife recorders

A key part of Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire is focusing on training communities and individuals in the skills required to identifying local wildlife in Ayrshire. We plan to offer a programme of training events at different locations in the county (with a series of at least four training courses each year, repeated in each of the three local authority areas) that focus on getting communities and individuals out identifying and recording wildlife in their area. The subjects of the training days is flexible, but could include dragonflies, butterflies, bumblebees, grasshoppers, amphibians etc. depending on the skills of the project officer and availability of local experts. It may be possible to organise or facilitate training days for more experienced recorders by working with national groups or organisations.

Two networking events – one each year – will also be held. These may take the form of informal conferences, aiming to bring together established NGO's, local wildlife groups, community based 'environment groups' and individuals to share experiences and help guide future recording priorities for Ayrshire.

Providing feedback to the project participants (existing and potential) will be important in maintaining engagement with the project. The project will produce newsletters/publications

## Producing a wildlife recording event toolkit

Through providing training and a toolkit we hope to create the foundations for volunteers to get involved in running their events recording wildlife in their locality and sharing that information so that we can develop a detailed picture of the natural heritage of Ayrshire. The toolkit will help guide community groups in how to set up an event to explore their natural heritage, who to go to how to for help and support identify species, how to record finds etc.

## Building a database of information

The project officer will liaise with local and national recording groups to mobilise new and existing information about build a network of form a comprehensive database of biological records that reflect species and habitats across Ayrshire that can be mapped through GIS applications to show region-wide distribution that can used to influence decision making.

## Funding Partners

The project is jointly funded by Ayrshire LEADER, Heritage Lottery Fund, East Ayrshire Council (EAC), South Ayrshire Council (SAC) and North Ayrshire Council (NAC).

## Project evaluation and reporting

The project officer will be responsible for gathering of feedback from attendees at networking events, training courses, talks etc. throughout the event to evaluate

A final project report summarising the achievements of the project, who has been involved, and how WWA can continue to progress in the future will be prepared at the end of the project.

