# Stirling Council Draft *Alive with Nature* Plan

Response from Riverside Naturally

Riverside Naturally (RN) is an environmental community group - see [www.riversidenaturally.org](http://www.riversidenaturally.org/). RN welcomes the publication of this plan and is pleased to see Stirling Council viewing the natural world as an asset.

RN has several specific points to raise:

* The Steering Group which drafted the plan appears to comprise only large public sector organisations. It is disappointing that no grass-roots or community organisations (such as RN) were involved in the drafting of the plan. The key role of community groups in delivering the plan is recognised and they should therefore have been involved from the outset.
* It is difficult to know what is meant by “Scotland’s Greenest Region”. In any case, we would hope that Stirling Council sees the nature emergency as a shared global issue rather than a competition between local authorities. For example, many solutions lie in landscape scale actions across artificial administrative boundaries.
* Similarly, it is difficult to know what action the slogan ‘Nature at the heart of life – Here and Now’ is designed to promote. Perhaps it would be possible to find a slogan that is a meaningful call to action.
* RN suggests that NHS Forth Valley should be a partner in realising the implementation of this plan. Despite the recognition of the health promoting benefits of access to natural places, there is no mention of joint work with colleagues in, for example, health promotion and this is a gap which should be addressed.
* RN fully supports the creation of a landowner forum and jhopes that one of its priorities will be local food production for local consumption.
* RN believes that Cowane’s Trust should be a partner in realising the implementation of this plan. Land owned by Cowane’s Trust (such as the riverbank) appears subject to different priorities and, for example, maintenance schedules, than land owned by Stirling Council.
* RN welcomes the commitment to controlling INNS and has undertaken work locally to remove Himalayan Balsam. RN knows of other groups working in similar ways. Again, the involvement of community groups at an earlier stage would have harnessed this local knowledge, expertise and willingness.
* There is a lack of compatibility between plans to enhance spaces for biodiversity and the operational work of various Stirling Council services. What plans and targets are there to change attitudes amongst Council officers so that these plans can be realised?
* RN operates in the town centre. There is considerable pressure on green spaces in the centre of Stirling and, for example, trees have been removed to allow CCTV cameras clear vantage points. Green spaces in urban areas should be given some priority to mitigate air pollution and ameliorate extremes of temperature.
* RN urges the Council to stop all use of herbicide sprays other than essential use in tackling toxic invasive species.
* The plan acknowledges that “Delivery of this Plan is dependent on the availability of resources and the establishment of positive partnerships with other organisations and local communities.” It should make it clearer how the Council intends to harness the necessary resources and how it will engage with local organisations and communities. For example, will dedicated staff be available to seek and apply for funding? Will dedicated staff be available to engage with and support community groups?

Riverside Naturally

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