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**To: Joint Committee**

**On: 19 June 2020**

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**Report by: Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park, Park Coordinator**

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**Heading: CMRP – Lockdown Activity**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 This report seeks to provide the Joint Committee with an update on activity during the current lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
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## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Joint Committee notes this report.
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## **3. Background**

- 3.1 The Covid-19 pandemic has delivered unusual environmental benefits: cleaner air, lower carbon emissions and a respite for wildlife. This report highlights the effects of lockdown on the Park community and the natural environment.
- 3.2 Park staff have adapted to working from home or working remotely and continue to operate within current Government guidance on social distancing and good hygiene.
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## **4. Activity during lockdown**

- 4.1 All Regional Park facilities were closed to the public on 23 March 2020 and all education and leisure activity suspended. However, the open

spaces of the Regional Park remained a valuable outdoor resource for all those able to access these spaces on foot or by bike during lockdown

- 4.2 There are many stories of how people have had time to reflect and appreciate the benefits of accessing green spaces and engaging with wildlife through online platforms. Many people are taking a new interest in walking and cycling and appreciating the outdoors.
- 4.3 Wildlife is flourishing with highlights including ospreys fishing in the lochs, sightings of brown hares and otters, starlings nesting in the swift boxes and many bird species more clearly seen and heard. Roe deer are being seen more often in Parkhill Wood and at Muirshiel as there is less wildlife disturbance. There have also been new sites identified for butterflies including reported sightings of rare species which have not been officially sighted for 15 years.
- 4.4 Plant life is also flourishing and a change in management from strimming to scything will continue to benefit species diversity. More relaxed grass cutting regimes in parks and green spaces have resulted in impressive displays of wildflowers which are an important aspect of our biodiversity.
- 4.5 4000 native trees species are now planted at Muirshiel to replace the sitka spruce. This includes Scots pine, silver birch, downy birch, common alder, hazel, rowan and oak. The aspen, planted two years ago, are growing well. Close to Muirshiel, maintenance of the 850 planted juniper, aspen and eared willow has been completed. All these trees, along with blueberry and heather – create a ‘local’ wild upland. The work at Muirshiel is part of a 25 year woodland management plan.
- 4.6 Muirshiel Country Park is officially 50 years old this month, the oldest Country Park in Scotland. During lockdown Ranger staff are developing an online display of historical images and memories of the Park to celebrate 50 years of people working in and visiting Muirshiel.

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## **5. Conclusion**

- 5.1 During the lockdown the number of people and vehicles in the park have reduced considerably, resulting in nature thriving. With the closure of the visitor centre and suspension of all activity, there has been no income during this period. As we move into a phased road to recovery process the importance of our green spaces for our physical and mental wellbeing, outdoor learning and leisure activities are more

important than ever. In line with Government guidance, when appropriate, the services provided in the Park, including education and leisure activities will be delivered to meet the demand for outdoor activity.

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**Author:** Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park, Park Coordinator

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