Biodiversity Motion

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Council notes:

1. Biodiversity is critically important to the maintenance of Earth's "life support systems" (Ecosystem services) and the continued functioning of our ecosystems (Duffy, 2009).
2. The UK is one of the most biodiversity depleted nations on the planet due to constant urbanisation and agriculture.
3. One of the biggest threats to biodiversity globally is the growing urbanisation trend (Aronson et al., 2017), however, it also offers important opportunities for biodiversity conservation of native species in urbanised spaces through appropriate management of Urban Green Spaces (UGS) (Aronson et al., 2017).
4. Environment and biodiversity constitute one of the main five interdisciplinary challenges that the University of Aberdeen has committed itself on with their 2040 strategy, however, there is currently no policy that addresses the promotion of biodiversity on campus (University of Aberdeen, 2020).
5. The University's Old Aberdeen campus is surrounded by UGS (Aberdeen City Council, 2022) and is itself a good space to foster biodiversity due to the green spaces in and around it and the expertise that is housed inside which can produce reliable biodiversity surveys (Güler, 2019).

Council believes:

1. The University of Aberdeen campus owns spaces that should be committed to environment and biodiversity as per the university's 2040 strategy.
2. Action on promoting Biodiversity by the University of Aberdeen is critical to meet Sustainability targets in the 2040 Strategy and to help meet climate targets.
3. Measures to increase levels of biodiversity requires work from university staff and students alike to lobby such change.
4. Actions taken in the University of Aberdeen are crucial due to the added symbolic value of the city it resides in, the so-called "Oil Capital of Europe". Any actions that are taken by the University of Aberdeen in the pursuit of fighting biodiversity loss and climate change would echo with other universities and spur them into taking similar action in their own campuses.
5. The Student Union and the University as a whole must show leadership in working for the sustainable future of our planet, setting an example to our sector and to society.

Council resolves:

- That a series of actions be taken to promote biodiversity on campus. These are the recommended actions that the Students Union should take:
    1. To promote biodiversity on campus by taking a series of actions in order to tackle biodiversity loss caused by urbanisation, pollution and climate change. These actions include the build up of bird feeders on trees on campus, and the thereafter monitoring of these to ensure a constant food supply for these animals, setting up nest boxes for birds/bats and the regular maintenance of said boxes, the cessation or reduction of mowing of lawns where appropriate and the planting of mixed native hedgerows, wildflowers and native plants to encourage biodiversity of native insect and other animals species, the establishment of roof gardens on university buildings where possible, the use of principles of Biodiversity Net Gain to be used in all building designs on campus and the ensuring of a litter-free campus for the improvement of habitat suitability for biodiversity.
    2. Biodiversity Surveys of the university campuses should be established and run with the frequency of at least once per academic year. Set up of these surveys could be done in collaboration with relevant schools such as the School of Biological Sciences in order to understand the state of biodiversity that the university campus has. The objective is to gain a clearer picture of where future actions must take place to improve biodiversity on campus. Records should be put to the local biological records centre (e.g. NESBReC) to help build a picture of local biodiversity changes.
    3. A green map of the university campus to be established or made accessible which clearly indicates green spaces and their level of management around campus. Set up of this map could be done in collaboration with The School of Geosciences utilising existing human capital on Geographic Information Systems.
    4. That the Student's Union should lobby the University at all levels to promote policy that is beneficial to fostering biodiversity on campus. This includes lobbying the university to amend their management of their green spaces to increase biodiversity and connectivity among the surrounding green spaces around Old Aberdeen Campus. This can be done through the set up of a biodiversity working group which has union/student involvement alongside staff from grounds.
    5. That the Student's Union, as an organisation that is influential in local and national politics, should collaborate with other relevant national bodies such as NUS in order to lobby the Scottish Government to implement relevant policy that advocates for the promotion of biodiversity on campuses and other public spaces.
    6. To support the Hedgehog Friendly Campus project: this initiative is a collaboration with the British Hedgehog Preservation Society and The Secret Garden Society and aims to take a series of actions to address hedgehog population decline as best as the capacity of the Student Union allows. These actions include raising awareness of the concerning situation of hedgehogs and

the ecological impact that their loss would have on the biodiversity of plants and insects, building of shelters for hedgehogs, surveying of hedgerows and hedgehogs, assessment of hazards for hedgehogs in the area, making campus litter free, promotion of insect and plant biodiversity beneficial for hedgehogs, outreach to schools, retention of tree cuttings as log piles on campus sites, set up of pathways connecting different green spaces, implementation of signage where hedgehog crossing occurs.

References:

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