

1. Our Green Belt is zoned for good reason in the Local Plan (2015) and it is also protected in Clyde Plan that relates to green places forming a network in West Central Scotland. It is essential that these priorities are observed and protected.

2. Green Belt has long been recognised for its separation of built up areas thereby preventing urban sprawl. Such open countryside with its character and distinctive views should not be allowed to disappear - here it opens out in clear weather across the Clyde Valley to the mountains of Arran.

3. Increasingly Green Belt is providing a refreshing 'lung' for people and nature. Here serious damage has been done to our 'green belt' land by the construction of the M8 extension - a halt has to be called to such destruction.

4. The Green Belt gives invaluable space for recreation on its paths for walking, jogging and cycling - close to people's homes. Local doctors here are prescribing the 'outdoor activity pill' to encourage healthfulness and wellbeing - but there have to be meaningful and beneficial places to refer patients and to organise walks for them.

5. The Green Belt is the habitat for many species - animals, birds, insects and amphibians, some of which are protected. The variety of habitat and its biodiversity rewards nature watching - but this would disappear with the loss of the Green Belt.

6. Continuing this theme, we have seen a decline in biodiversity here mainly because nature needs space to succeed - narrow 'corridors' and back gardens are an inadequate substitute for large green 'wedges' such as Green Belts can offer. (Mitigation measures are only gestures and local extinctions result).

7. Green Belt is the place where farming takes place close to settlements. Agriculture, with its crop rotations and grazing by livestock, can enrich the environment. If built over, such richness in soils is lost for ever. Maintained hedgerows and shelter belts in the Green Belt are sanctuaries for birds and small mammals some of which (hedgehogs) are becoming increasingly rare.

8. The contribution of Green Belt land to the moderation of climate change and its consequences should not be underestimated. This relates to flooding where Green Belt can act as a 'sponge', but also to pollution from transport and other sources.

Please note that the Green Belt here is perceived and used as a local Country Park. It also has heritage resonances as both the Monkland Canal (James Watt designed) and the North Calder Water, a tributary of the Clyde, flow through it.

For these many reasons, there is need to strengthen policies outlined in paras 49-53 of the present SPP NPF4 that will further protect Green Belts. It has been suggested that Community Councils, too often seen as having only a 'paper pushing function', might be given an enhanced role in the context of protecting their Green Belts in which they have such a strong interest.