

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All		
REPORT TITLE Update on the Biodiversity Strategy			
REPORT OF Director of Recreation			
FOR SUBMISSION TO Culture & Environment Scrutiny Committee	DATE 9th December 2024		
<p>SUMMARY OF REPORT</p> <p>An update on the Council's Biodiversity Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan</p> <p>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</p> <p>No documents that require listing were used in the preparation of this report</p> <p>Contact Officer:</p> <table> <tr> <td>Katy Knight Head of Leisure London Borough of Camden 5 Pancras Square London N1C 4AG katy.knight@camden.gov.uk</td> <td>Greg Hitchcock Nature Conservation Officer London Borough of Camden 5 Pancras Square London N1C 4AG greg.hitchcock@camden.gov.uk</td> </tr> </table>		Katy Knight Head of Leisure London Borough of Camden 5 Pancras Square London N1C 4AG katy.knight@camden.gov.uk	Greg Hitchcock Nature Conservation Officer London Borough of Camden 5 Pancras Square London N1C 4AG greg.hitchcock@camden.gov.uk
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<p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p>That the Committee note and comment on the contents of this report.</p>			

Signed:



Oliver Jones

Date:

27th November 2024

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the main elements of the borough's biodiversity strategy 'Creating space for nature in Camden' (the Strategy).

2. Background

- 2.1 On the 7th October 2019 the Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency. As part of that declaration, we committed "...to produce a new ecological plan for Camden to sustain and improve biodiversity in Camden" and to encourage "...all citizens, businesses, and organisations or groups in the borough of Camden to join with the Council to...protect and improve biodiversity, in order to avert impending catastrophe."

- 2.2 Following discussion on a draft at this committee in July 2021, the Council formally adopted the 'Creating space for nature in Camden' via a single member decision in January 2022. This overarching document sets out: a vision; objectives against which progress can be measured; principles; and the other elements that will form the Council's approach. The other elements introduced in the strategy document are:

- A **Biodiversity Action Plan** of work being carried out across the borough to benefit biodiversity and access to nature. This is a live document hosted on the Council's website.
- A **Nature Recovery Network** to provide a spatial framework and priorities for improving connectivity.
- The **Camden Nature Partnership**; a partnership of organisations involved in improving biodiversity and people's access to nature.

The Strategy and Action Plan are hosted on the Council's website at www.camden.gov.uk/wildlife-areas

3. Legislative and Policy Context

During and since the development of the Strategy there have been a number of changes to national Biodiversity policy and legislation.

General Biodiversity Duty

- 3.1 The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, as amended by the Environment Act 2021, requires the Council to consider what action it can take to conserve and enhance biodiversity. The adoption of the Biodiversity Strategy met the requirement for the 'first consideration', and the 5-yearly timetable for review is also consistent with this legislation. This is, however, an ongoing process, and the Nature Conversation Officer is continuing to work with other departments to see where decision-making processes can take into account the potential for positive and negative impacts on biodiversity.

- 3.2 The Environment Act also introduced a requirement for Local Authorities to report on how they have complied with their Biodiversity Duty. The first reporting period ends a year previous to the Biodiversity Strategy period. As the report is to summarise action taken and future plans and there is no requirement for quantitative data, it is currently anticipated that the Biodiversity Duty reporting will be incorporated into the early-stages of the Biodiversity Strategy review in 2026.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

- 3.3 The Greater London Authority (GLA) is developing a London-wide Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), another requirement of the Environment Act. The Council is a Supporting Authority for this, and the Nature Conservation Officer has been attending workshops and feeding in elements of the Council's Biodiversity Strategy and Camden Nature Recovery Network, which is being developed in parallel. The GLA ran a public consultation on the LNRS in September. The LNRS is likely to be published prior to the review of the Biodiversity Strategy, and as such will have to be taken into account as part of that review.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

- 3.4 The Environment Act amended the Town & Country Planning Act such that certain planning applications have to achieve a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity. The application of the legislation is complex, and the Nature Conservation Officer has been working with the Development Management team to navigate it. Only a small proportion of Camden planning applications fall within the legislation as the majority of development sites fall below the habitat area threshold, or are exempted for other reasons, such as householder applications. These BNG applications are taking much more time to scrutinise on average, partially due to the newness of the legislation but the application of the rules and metric are complex. Unfortunately, the outcome with regard to biodiversity in Camden is not yet fully known, and not necessarily positive, as BNG is not well suited for urban areas due to a relatively low base used for calculations, and the legislation may override local policy.

Planning and Infrastructure Bill

- 3.5 The King's Speech announced a Planning and Infrastructure Bill that will use development to "*...fund nature recovery where currently both are stalled, unlocking a win-win outcome for the economy and for nature.*" It is too early to understand if there will be any implications from this for Camden, but the development of the Bill will be followed so we can best respond.

The Camden Local Plan review

- 3.6 The Nature Conservation Officer has worked with the Planning Policy Officer with a view to strengthening the biodiversity policy for the review of the Local Plan. Examples include seeking to ensure indirect impacts on biodiversity from development are taken into account, and any enhancements support local habitat and species priorities. The Local Plan review timetable is currently being finalised.

4. Biodiversity Strategy Update

Biodiversity Action Plan

- 4.1 The Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) webpage has been updated, including the most recent review and resulting current iteration of the BAP. The review provides a report on progress on the individual actions, and adds actions identified since the previous update. www.camden.gov.uk/wildlife-areas#lgn!
- 4.2 The actions fall within 8 themes. Below are highlights from activity and progress against the ambitious actions in these themes.

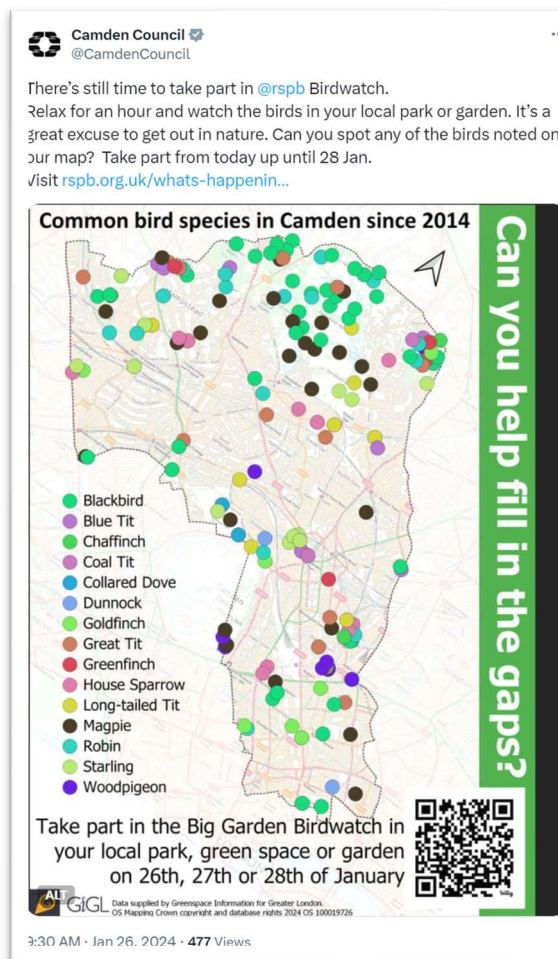
Strategy

- 4.3 Work is progressing and being phased to align with the updated work across London, in late summer we supported work to engage our community where there are opportunities for improving nature in the borough.



- 4.4 A yearly communication calendar is in place focussing on key activities and dates across the year to celebrate and increase engagement with nature in

Camden, below sets out some of the communications associated with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Birdwatch in January.



Designated sites

- 4.5 A review of the Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation has been completed and will form key evidence to inform the Local Plan review.
- 4.6 The Council purchased Mortimer Terrace Nature Reserve for the local community in 2022. Cabinet agreed in March 2024 for officers to work with the associated Trust to become freehold owners, agree a management place and work towards formal designation as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR).

Species

- 4.7 We have developed a procedure/policy to facilitate installation of bird and bat boxes on council-managed trees.
- 4.8 The Nature Conservation Officer (NCO) has worked with Property Management to install swift nest boxes during building repair works. We are using this as a case study to produce guidance and enable further collaboration.

Habitats

- 4.9 The Council, working with residents and 'Friends of' groups, continues to identify and deliver areas for relaxed mowing and native hedgerows across the borough, working with Camden Green Gym in many cases to implement and manage these.
- 4.10 The Council has also made proposals to Canals and Rivers Trust for areas of new reedbeds in the Regent's Canal.

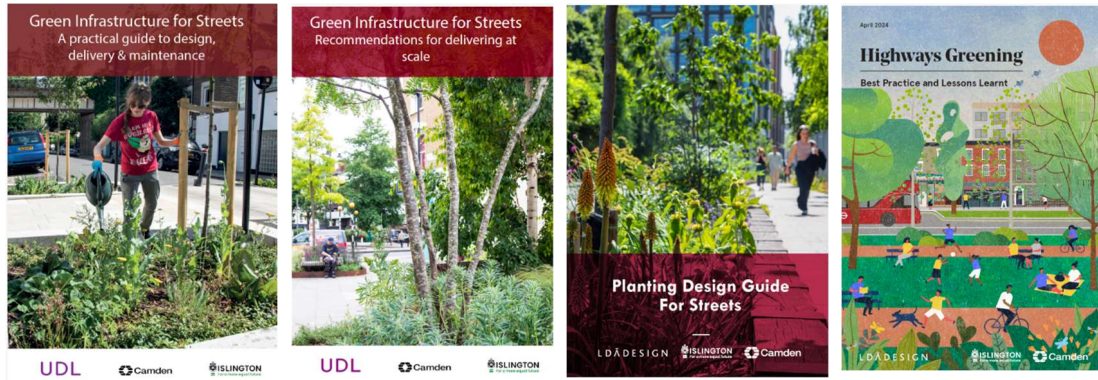


Trees

- 4.11 The latest inventory of tree species sets out improving tree diversity in the borough as a result of the Tree Planting Strategy.
- 4.12 A survey to update to the iTree information has recently been completed and this will provide an updated canopy cover for the borough.

Greening the Grey

- 4.13 The joint project with LB Islington, Highway Greening Accelerator, was completed in the summer culminating in cross-service working improvements, training for officers and a series of documents to help share our learning to other boroughs – this included planting guides for urban greening. These are published in the Urban Design London website at:
www.urbandesiglearning.com/resources-green-infrastructure-for-streets



Parks and Green Spaces

- 4.14 The service lead a conservation maintenance approach, seeking to replace low value planting with sustainable and diverse planting that is capable to supporting biodiversity and our changing climate.


Access to Nature

- 4.15 Worked with Greenspace Information for Greater London to produce 'Nearby Nature' information posters for libraries, informing library users what wildlife has been seen in the vicinity and where the nearest nature site is.
- 4.16 We have partnered with Butterfly Conservation for their 'Big City Butterflies' project, running public butterfly and moth events. The project also provided us with equipment which is being used to run regular surveys and occasional events on our nature reserves.

Camden Council @CamdenCouncil

Join Camden's Nature Conservation Officer for our Moth Morning. See what moths were caught overnight in the reserve before they are released. And if you have time, take part in the [#CityNatureChallengeLondon](#)

[ahm.ac.uk/take-part/moni...](#)
27 Apr, 10-11am
Adelaide Local Nature Reserve



12:00 PM · Apr 24, 2024 · 412 Views

4.17 New signage has been installed at the nature reserves that bring a welcoming style and alignment to the learning from the Parks for Health project.

Jenny Wood Nature Reserve

Open Saturday and Sunday 8am-4pm



Available to schools, nurseries and community groups for nature education and outdoor learning. www.camden.gov.uk/wildlife-areas

dog-free space for nature and education

CREATING SPACE FOR NATURE IN CAMDEN

camden.gov.uk/parks
020 7974 4444
parks@camden.gov.uk

PARKS FOR HEALTH

Camden

Camden Nature Recovery Network

- 4.18 The background evidence for the Camden Nature Recovery Network (CNRN) has been drawn together, and main opportunities for influence and delivery identified. The London-wide 'Local Nature Recovery Strategy', being developed by the Greater London Authority, has recently had a first round of public consultation. Consultation on the CNRN will be postponed, proceeding after the first draft of the London-wide strategy has been shared, to ensure as much synergy as possible. . Opportunities identified within the CNRN include strategic development sites (to ensure they contribute positively to the network); Council strategies and policies such as the Bloomsbury and Holborn Visions; smaller and larger scale opportunities identified through Neighbourhood Plans and by local community organisations; and specific habitat interventions identified by the NCO and others (E.G. floating reedbed ecosystems on the Regent's Canal).

Camden Nature Partnership

- 4.19 In the Strategy, the Council committed to continue to work with those partners who had contributed to the development of that strategy, and new ones, in improving biodiversity in the borough in a 'Camden Nature Partnership'. The BAP went further and included an action to establish a Memorandum of Understanding, through discussion with these partners a Council facilitated partnership working with and between community groups and other organisations was preferred. The NCO has continued to share information with and between these groups, and a number of their own projects and proposals have been supported by objectives within the Strategy and input from the NCO. For example, a co-operative of organisations in the north of the Borough have proposed a 'Camden Nature Corridor' from Hampstead Heath to Talacre Gardens. We are actively seeking further resources, much of which will be aimed at supporting partnership and community work that contributes to the objectives in the Strategy.
- 4.20 We have secured S106 funding for biodiversity, which is being combined with existing HS2 Biodiversity Assurance funding to create a new fixed-term (three years), full time 'nature engagement' role. The new officer will take the lead on achieving the Access to Nature objective of the Biodiversity Strategy and delivering the associated actions from the Action Plan, including partnership working and supporting partners and communities to deliver our shared aspirations for nature. The new post is expected to be in place early in the next financial year.



Climate Change

- 4.21 The Strategy recognised that climate change is one of the greatest threats to biodiversity, but also that nature has great potential for mitigating the impact on people from a changing climate. The NCO has supported the Climate Action Plan review and Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan (and its review), and projects as appropriate and resources allow.

5. Communications

- 5.1 The NCO maintains internal communications, mainly through a 'Camden Wildlife Sightings' group and an occasional blog. These internal communications have had significant traction from colleagues, some sharing how experiencing nature improves their health and wellbeing and helps raise awareness within the Council of Biodiversity, Camden's ecology and networking opportunities.
- 5.3 A new 'green' section of the Council website is in development. This will provide website users and residents ready access to environmental issues, including promoting what people can do for nature and climate. This was a recommendation in Cllr de Ayala Parkers Cabinet Adviser report on Promoting green space and biodiversity. A beta version of the site is expected at the end of the calendar year.

6. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

6.1 This report provides an update on the Biodiversity Strategy. There are no significant financial implications resulting from this report.

7. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

7.1 Legal Services have been consulted and have no additional comments.

8. Environmental Implications

8.1 The essence of the Biodiversity Strategy is to improve the environment, including actions that will ameliorate the effect of climate change, and the overall effect on the environment, and for the citizens of Camden will be positive.

REPORT ENDS