

# Natural Environment Division and City Gardens

## The Environment Department shapes future environments and protects current ones.

It is the largest department in the organisation and provides a diverse range of services to London and the South East.

Within the 'square mile' we deliver many local authority and regulatory functions including planning and development; building control; engineering; highways and transportation; cleansing and waste; environmental health, licensing and trading standards. The SME Delivery Team provides advice and guidance for start-ups and small businesses which are located in, or visit, the City.

Further afield, we manage over 11,000 acres of stunning open spaces worth billions of pounds which capture thousands of tonnes of carbon a year and attract an estimated 25 million visitors.

We run the City of London Cemetery and Crematorium; operate the Heathrow Animal Reception Centre; provide animal health services London-wide; and, as the London Port Health Authority, undertake controls on imported food and feed through London's ports.

**Due to the complexity and scope of the department, three separate high-level Business Plans have been produced to reflect our three key Committee 'clusters'.  
This plan covers the Natural Environment Division and City Gardens.**

### What's changed since last year... (to Oct 2023)

- Front line services continued to respond effectively to support the City's post-pandemic recovery.
- The Natural Environment's new organisational structure was implemented.
- A new Culture and Projects Section was established to deliver a joined-up approach to delivering projects, and our learning and heritage offers across the Natural Environment Division.

### Major achievements 2023/24 (to Oct 2023):

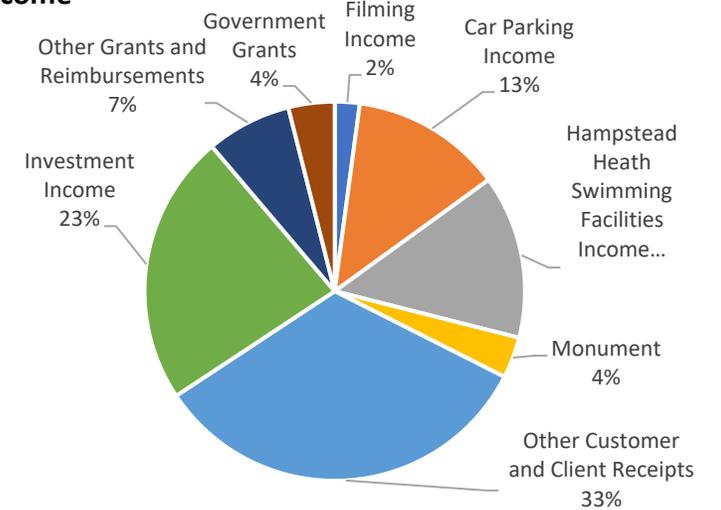
- City Gardens: Bunhill Fields Burial Ground, a Grade I listed landscape on the National Register of Parks, won a Green Flag Award. The prestigious scheme is an international benchmark, recognising some of the very best managed parks and green spaces in the world.
- All Natural Environment sites maintained their Green Heritage Accreditation and Green Flag awards and several won London In Bloom Awards.
- Epping Forest introduced pioneering invisible fencing technology to graze cows and received positive media coverage.
- The Commons' vehicle fleet was upgraded to be ULEZ compliant.
- The Learning Team provided case study for a Climate Action Pathways (CAPE) report, sharing the work of the team with educators and researchers across the UK.
- Keats House received funding from the Education Strategy Unit (ESU) to deliver the 'Culturally Speaking', 'Poetry Vs Colonialism' and 'Young Poet in the City' programmes in conjunction with other venues and partner organisations.

## Where our money comes from and what we spend it on

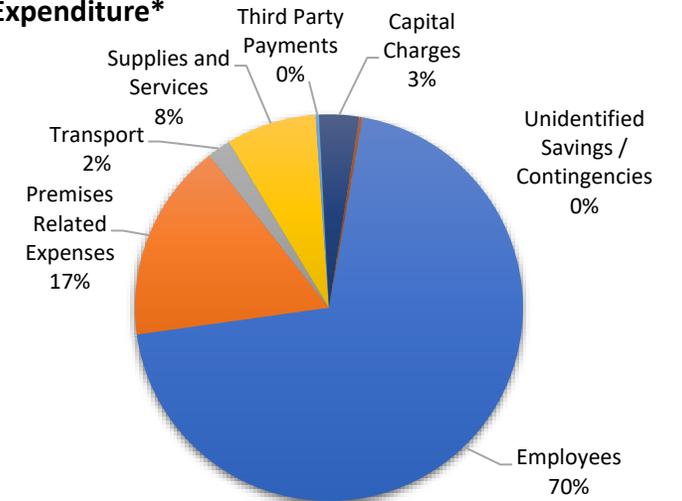
Total 2024-25 net expenditure is: £18.569m

Total FTE within scope of this Business Plan: 242 (28.09.2023)

### Income\*



### Expenditure\*



\*N.B: The charts are based upon 2023/24 approved budgets as of Sept 2023.

# Our 2024/25 timeline planner: priority workstreams and key milestones

Environment Department Business Plan 2024/25

Beyond 2024/25

Q1 2024/25

Q2 2024/25

Q3 2024/25

Q4 2024/25

Apr  
May  
Jun

Jul  
Aug  
Sep

Oct  
Nov  
Dec

Jan  
Feb  
Mar

2025/26

2026/27



**City Gardens**

Maintain City-owned green spaces in the Square Mile.

Complete Finsbury Circus re-landscaping (December 2024).

**Nature conservation and resilience\***

Protect and enhance biodiversity of the open spaces

Increase the resilience of our open spaces

Establish a natural capital-based management process.

Climate Action Strategy – Carbon Removals Project

**Community engagement\***

Create meaningful and lasting partnerships.

Cultivate a sense of deep pride in, and attachment to, our spaces.

Ensure continuous transfer of information between the Corporation and its customers.

**Access and recreation\***

Enable the best possible visitor journey.

Provide welcoming places that visitors from all backgrounds and abilities are comfortable to explore.

Build understanding and knowledge about our open spaces.

**Culture, Heritage and Learning\***

Develop communities of interest that participate in, advocate for, and support our Natural Environment and Heritage charities.

Develop a learning offer that builds nature connection and wellbeing.

Protect, enhance and promote our built heritage, landscape heritage and archaeological assets.

**Income generation**

Develop and start to implement an income generation plan for the Natural Environment Division.

Complete the Operational Property Review.

Conserve and improve built assets across the Natural Environment Division and City Gardens.

\* N.B. The Natural Environment Division’s workstreams reflect the developing suite of core Natural Environment Strategies (referred to later in this Plan). When the strategies are finalised, more detailed objectives and performance measures will be developed and incorporated in the local management plan of each charity.

## Our major workstreams 2024/25

Workstream Name	Funding allocation % (of 2023/24 revenue budget)	People resource % (of FTE)	Prioritisation category	Dependencies	Outcomes/ Impacts	KPI	Update Schedule	24/25 Target	22/23 Baseline
<b>City Gardens</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain City-owned green spaces in the Square Mile.</li> <li>Complete Finsbury Circus re-landscaping (Nov 2023-Dec 2024).</li> <li>Effectively manage our spaces to ensure they are safe and pleasant and fit to provide the essential long-term benefits of green areas, including increasing biodiversity and adapting to become more climate resilient.</li> </ul>	11%	14%	2. Duty and Discretionary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shared synergies and standards with similar Natural Environment spaces such as Hampstead Heath.</li> <li>Core strategies which can affect service requirements and delivery, including Destination City.</li> <li>Services are delivered out of operational facilities which are owned and maintained by City Surveyors.</li> </ul>	The Service will adapt to changing demands arising from expected increases in footfall resulting from implementation of the Destination City Strategy, climate change impact, and requirements of the Climate Action Strategy.	Achieve Green Flag Awards for Bunhill Fields and Finsbury Circus.	Annually	2	1 (Bunhill Fields)
						Meet Biodiversity Action Plan commitments by 2026.	Annually	14 actions by 2026	New KPI 2024/25
<b>Nature conservation and resilience</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect and enhance the biodiversity of our open spaces.</li> <li>Increase the resilience of our open spaces within a wider, interconnected natural landscape.</li> <li>Establish a natural capital-based management process across our open spaces.</li> </ul>	29%	41%	7. Climate action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Availability of specialist staff and financial resources.</li> <li>Access to planning system expertise for monitoring and responding to planning issues.</li> <li>Legal and financial support to facilitate land acquisition or partnership working agreements with neighbours.</li> </ul>	Protected habitats and species conserved in line with the UK Government's 25-year Environment Plan and legal obligations. Threats from damaging invasive species reduced or contained. Enhanced resilience to climate and other threats, ensuring continued delivery of natural capital benefits. Delivery of the Climate Action Strategy will ensure the Corporation meets its target of being Carbon neutral by 2027.	Biological survey records uploaded onto national recording databases within 12 months of collection.	Annually	100%	New KPI 2024/25
						Percentage of Local Authority plan consultations responded to.	Annually	100%	New KPI 2024/25
						Achieve annual carbon removal target.	Annually	-16.23 ktCO <sub>2</sub> e	-16.23 ktCO <sub>2</sub> e
<b>Community engagement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnership: create meaningful and lasting partnerships.</li> <li>Ownership: cultivate a sense of deep pride in, and attachment to, our spaces amongst users.</li> <li>Knowledge exchange: ensure continuous transfer of information between the Corporation and its customers.</li> </ul>	20%	19%	13. Other - supports delivery of charity objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Availability of staff and financial resources to deliver the Community Engagement Strategy's Action Plan.</li> <li>Engagement of customers, service users and partner organisations.</li> </ul>	Inclusive, accessible spaces which are physically and psychologically welcoming. Increased advocacy and volunteering to support the CoL and its green spaces. Greater customer participation and engagement will enable us to deliver services that better reflect the needs of the diverse communities we serve.	Number of partnership organisations that are delivering activities in our open spaces.	Annually	tbc	New KPI 2024/25
						Number of volunteer work hours.	Every six months	tbc based on 2023/24	Comparable data not available
						Visitors to Natural Environment Division web pages.	Every six months	1 million	921,079

Continued...

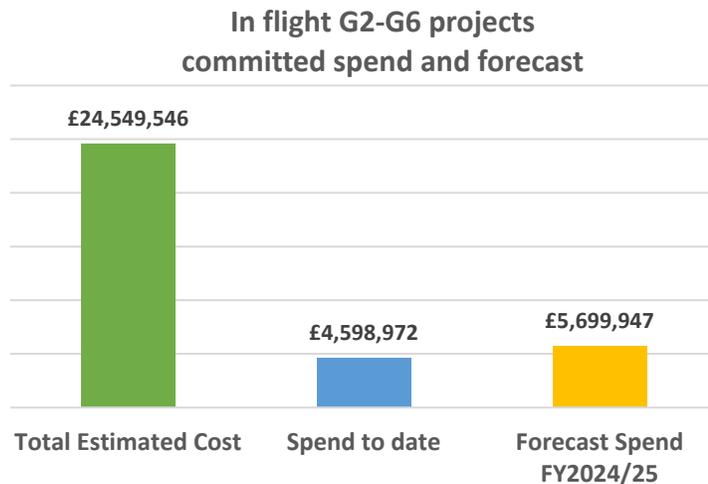
Workstream Name	Funding allocation % (of 2023/24 revenue budget)	People resource % (of FTE)	Prioritisation category	Dependencies	Outcomes/ Impacts	KPI	Update Schedule	24/25 Target	22/23 Baseline
<b>Access and recreation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellence: Enable the best possible visitor journey, creating the right information from pre-visit to on-site experience in exemplar sites.</li> <li>• Equal access: Provide welcoming places that visitors from all backgrounds and abilities are comfortable to explore</li> <li>• Inform: Build understanding and knowledge about our open spaces. Visitors will respect one another and will care for and advocate for the sites.</li> </ul>	20%	17%	13. Other - supports delivery of charity objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of staff and financial resources.</li> <li>• Income from SAMMS realised to pursue capital works.</li> <li>• Successful Countryside Stewardship Scheme bids.</li> </ul>	Open spaces are preserved for recreational benefit whilst maintaining the highest level of environmental protection. We provide the best possible visitor journey. All visitors are equally welcomed. Our spaces are welcoming places that visitors from all backgrounds and abilities are comfortable to explore.	100% of Waymarked trails are audited annually to maintain standards.	Annually	100%	New KPI 2024/25
						Provide accessibility information for every public facility on website by 2025.	Annually	100%	New KPI 2024/25
						Seasonal engagement sessions provided on site (minimum one per season per site).	Annually	Four per site	New KPI 2024/25
<b>Culture, Heritage and Learning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop communities of interest that participate in, advocate for, and support our Natural Environment and Heritage charities.</li> <li>• Develop a learning offer that builds nature connection and wellbeing.</li> <li>• Protect and enhance our built heritage, landscape heritage and archaeological assets and promote them as part of our visitor and learning offers.</li> </ul>	7%	8%	13. Other - supports delivery of charity objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grant funding, recruitment and external partnerships.</li> <li>• Governance processes, operational property review, City Surveyor's expertise, funding to undertake repairs, maintenance and measures to protect built heritage assets.</li> <li>• Permissions from relevant local authorities and Historic England for assessment/works.</li> </ul>	Increased nature connection, pro-environmental behaviour and wellbeing of participants. More participants are from high pupil premium schools, are looked after children, young carers, young refugees and 13–25-year-olds who are struggling with education, employment or mental health. Built heritage, landscape heritage and archaeological assets are protected, meet statutory obligations, and are enhanced to support improved visitor and learning offer.	Number of participants per annum in our: School Learning programme: Play programme:	Annually	18,500 20,500	17,868 19,868
						Number of heritage assets on the 'Heritage at Risk' register.	Every six months	Three	Four
						Number of visitors per annum to our managed heritage attractions: Keats House: Monument:	Every six months	11,500 150,000	5,149 92,899
<b>Income generation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and start to implement an income generation plan for the Natural Environment Division.</li> <li>• Complete the Operational Property Review.</li> <li>• Conserve and improve built assets across the Natural Environment Division and City Gardens, tackling the 'bow wave' of maintenance backlog works.</li> </ul>	6%	2%	9. Income generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operational Property Review and NE Charities Review (including the need for charities to restrict funds and carry funds forward).</li> <li>• Production of a comprehensive asset register.</li> <li>• The support of City Surveyor's Department with funding and delivery of the cyclical works programme.</li> <li>• Provision of adequate guidance, support and tools for staff to enable them to raise income.</li> <li>• Internal governance processes.</li> </ul>	Greater income will enable the charities to deliver more work to help achieve the vision and key priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan and the Natural Environment vision and strategies. It will also reduce dependence on City's cash and help us tackle some of the 'red' risks on the risk register, such as the maintenance backlog.	5% increase in income generation (on previous year).	Annually	tbc (awaiting 2023/24 figures)	(£,000's)
						Epping Forest & Buffer Lands:			2,835
						North London Open Spaces:			3,533
						The Commons:			1,416

## Medium Term Plans under consideration (2025/26 and 2026/27)

Priority list (e.g. new legislation, services, projects, automation)	2025/2026	2026/2027	Funded or Unfunded
Build profile of completed Finsbury Circus	x		Funded
Secure Planning consent for redevelopment of West Ham Park nursery site	x	x	Part funded
Secure removal of Wanstead Grotto from Heritage At Risk Register	x		Part Funded
Establish a new landscape scale nature recovery working partnership.		x	Unfunded

## In-flight Capital Projects (Gateway 2-6)

Total no. of projects: 15



## Operational Property requirements

The Environment Department's staff are based across 25 sites throughout London and the south-east. We hold approximately 340 physical assets, almost 270 of which are at our Natural Environment sites.

As part of the Corporation's Operational Property Review Programme, the Environment Department is undertaking a critical review of all its physical assets, including operational property. A Departmental 'Task and Finish' group has been established and meetings are taking place to progress this project. The initial stage of the project will be to identify the resources required to undertake a full analysis and in-depth review of all physical assets held by the department, including baselining operational requirements, financial position and state of repair.

Following this, we will work with the City Surveyor's Department to establish a detailed project plan and realistic timeline. An update on the status of the assets relevant to this Committee will be reported, including any that are identified as surplus to requirements.

## Operational Property Utilisation Assessment

Asset name	Assessment Complete?
Guildhall complex	Initial Workplace Survey completed June 2023. Detailed utilisation assessment to be considered as part of the OPR Programme.
Additional operational properties	No, utilisation assessments of these properties to be considered as part of the overall OPR Programme.

## Key Risks

*Details are accurate at January 2024 but are subject to continual review and change.*

Our business risks are managed in accordance with the Corporate Risk Management Framework and, where applicable, the Charities Act 2011. Risks are regularly reviewed and updated by management teams in consultation with risk owners. Committees receive regular updates on the risks held by the charities/ services within their remit to provide them with necessary assurance that risks are being managed and mitigated effectively, and to enable Members to fulfil their oversight and scrutiny role.

Each of the Natural Environment charities holds its own risk register. The Natural Environment Cross-Divisional Risk Register includes risks which are managed by the Natural Environment Director at a higher, strategic, level. City Gardens is part of the City Operations Division, and its risks are held in a separate, non-charity, risk register.

Our highest risks fall within the subject areas listed below. The matrix shows the overall business risk profile for the Natural Environment Division and City Gardens Service.

## Top risk subject areas

Decline in condition of assets (physical and natural)	Budget pressures
Lack of an asset register (Natural Environment)	Extreme weather and climate change
Wildlife management	Pests and diseases
Recruitment of suitable staff	Tree failure
Public behaviour	Impacts of visitor pressure

## Risk profile

		Impact			
		Minor	Serious	Major	Extreme
Likelihood	Likely		18	22	3
	Possible		10	20	2
	Unlikely		4	11	
	Rare				

## Our Strategy and cross-cutting strategic commitments

### Corporate Plan

We are working to align to the developing Corporate Plan, through continued engagement and participation in the Strategy Forum, Strategic Planning Group and so on. We will shape our strategies and services appropriately to ensure they support achievement of the City Corporation's outcomes.

Our future Business Plans will be fully informed by the mission, aims and outcomes in the 2024-29 Corporate Plan.

### Natural Environment Division Strategies

The Natural Environment Division's overarching vision and mission statement is being refreshed and a suite of core strategies is being developed.

Subject to Committee approval, these strategies will support the aims and objectives of the new Corporate Plan 2024-2029, other Corporate strategies and policies, as well as the Charity Objects and the Environment Department's vision and aims.

The Natural Environment Division's major workstreams for 2024/25 (set out earlier in this document) are to implement and begin to deliver these strategies. When the strategies are finalised, more detailed objectives and performance measures will be developed and incorporated in the local management plan of each charity.

#### Overarching Natural Environment Vision and Mission

Conservation and Nature Resilience Strategy  
 Community Engagement Strategy  
 Access and Recreation Strategy  
 Culture, Heritage and Learning Strategy

#### Underpinning strategies and plans

Income Generation Strategy  
 Natural Environment Business Plans  
 Natural Environment Masterplans  
 Natural Environment Charity Review  
 Operational Property Review

### The key Corporate strategies we support are...

#### Climate Action Strategy

- Enhance carbon removal in our open spaces.
- Advocate the importance of green spaces and urban greening as natural carbon sinks, and their contribution to biodiversity and overall wellbeing.
- Deliver further climate resilient planting schemes in City Gardens.

#### Cultural Strategy

- Develop, enhance and animate open and green spaces.
- Support initiatives that encourage London schools, especially in disadvantaged areas, to engage with the cultural life of the City.
- Support outdoor programmes to grow, and actively encourage sponsorship and participation from neighbouring commercial partners.

#### Destination City

- Improve the quality of green spaces in the City to create a more attractive and welcoming public realm.

#### Education Strategy

- Contribute to delivering the strategy actions, particularly under the aim to: *Ensure that the Square Mile's outstanding cultural, historical and open spaces resources enrich the creative experience of London's learners.*

#### Sport & Physical Activity Strategy

- Contribute to deliver the strategy actions, particularly under the outcome: *People enjoy good health and wellbeing and health inequalities are reduced.*

We will review any new corporate strategies and policies as they are approved and consider how our services can and will support their delivery during 2024/25 and in future years. This will include the new **Corporate Plan 2024-2029** and the **People Strategy**.

## Our stakeholders and engagement

We have a wide range of stakeholders and delivery partners (including, but not limited to those shown here).



## Our Impacts



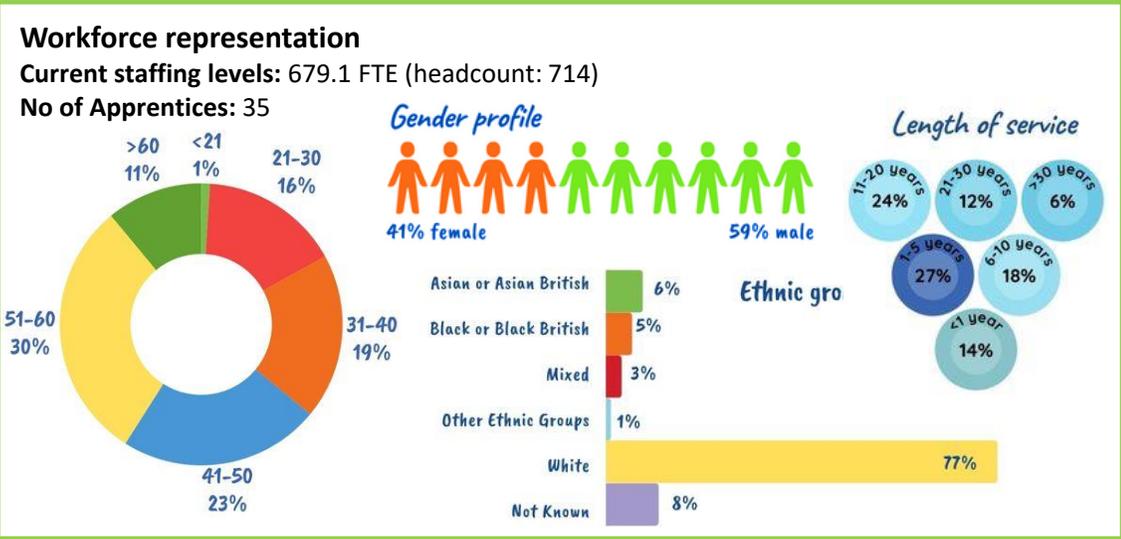
### Stakeholder engagement

We continue to communicate with our stakeholders appropriately. For example:

- **Learning Programme** - The Natural Environment Learning Team worked with academic partners at Derby University to create a bespoke evaluation toolkit to measure participants' wellbeing, nature connection, confidence, understanding and involvement. The young participants rate themselves before and after a learning session, using a scale of smiley / sad faces to respond to a set of key questions.
- **Heritage** – Keats House Charity partnered with Cardiff University to deliver the 'Young Romantics in the City' programme for 2023/24.
- **City Gardens** - We regularly consult on proposed changes to the City Gardens, such as the Brewers' Hall Gardens and Finsbury Circus.
- **North London Open Spaces** – Consultations were undertaken on the proposed Woodland Walk at Queen's Park, the potential improvement projects at Parliament Hill, and other projects.
- **Epping Forest** - A project board including Friends of Wanstead Park and the Heritage of London Trust was established to oversee the restoration and maintenance of Wanstead Park Grotto.

The data and information on this page relates to the whole of the Environment Department, not just to the services covered by this business plan. All data correct at 28/09/2023.

Environment Department Business Plan 2024/25



### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- The Environment Department is committed to driving forward the City of London Corporation’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) agenda. The department’s Senior Leadership Team, with the help of their Equalities Champions, seek to identify equality and inclusion priorities, develop appropriate actions to address inequalities and foster good relations between diverse groups.
- The Department’s EDI Working Group consists of representatives (Champions) from across the department and is responsible for developing and ensuring compliance with the Departmental EDI Action Plan, and that actions support the CoL’s overall Equality duties.
- The Group is currently developing a Departmental EDI Plan which will align with the Corporate EDI Plan.

**The first three priorities of our Departmental EDI Action Plan for 2024/25 are to ensure that:**

- Our staff have a clear understanding of the Equality Act 2010, particularly the PSED, and how it applies to them both in terms of service provision and working with colleagues. We will achieve this by ensuring staff undertake mandatory equality training and other relevant training, such as EQIAs and management skills.
- Our Equality Champions actively support and advise managers and colleagues on EDI matters.
- EQIAs are undertaken, recorded, and the results taken into consideration when making decisions on service delivery.

### Our work locations

Total Environment Department people resource: 679.1 FTE  
*(N.B. data is accurate at 28/09/2023 but is subject to continual change.)*

Guildhall complex	268.2 FTE
Walbrook Wharf	13 FTE
London Gateway Port	55 FTE
River Division Office (Denton)	6 FTE
Heathrow Animal Reception Centre	47 FTE
CoL Cemetery & Crematorium	53.9 FTE
Old Bailey (Coroner’s service)	2 FTE
Epping Forest	52.8 FTE
Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, Queen’s Park (Several different buildings across these sites.)	105.8 FTE
West Ham Park	12.5 FTE
Keats House	2.9 FTE
Ashtead Common	6 FTE
Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common	14.2 FTE
West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons	11.8 FTE
City Gardens, Depot	28 FTE

### Developing our people

**The first three priorities of our Departmental Workforce Plan for 2024/25 are:**

- Improve staff communication and engagement.
- Increase people management skills and team building.
- Undertake a skills mapping audit.

**We are increasing staff engagement through:**

- Collaboration with corporate working groups and staff networks.
- Hosting staff network visits to our sites.
- Publishing a monthly departmental newsletter.
- Maintaining and promoting our departmental SharePoint site
- Our Departmental Working Groups which comprise representatives from all divisions (Communications; EDI; Health & Safety; Workplace; IT).
- Celebrating success, e.g. many nominees for the Celebrating our People Awards 2023.

**We are developing capability and managing our talent through offering:**

- Departmental induction sessions for new joiners.
- ILM Talent Management Programme.
- Supervisory training for managers.
- Specific training, e.g. ‘Investigation’ training for managers and ‘Finance for non-financial managers’ courses, which support corporate financial and HR objectives.
- Mentoring of apprentices and ILM candidates (and training for mentors).

### Health and Safety

**The first three priorities of our Departmental Health and Safety Action Plan for 2024/25 are:**

- Mental Health – Stress Risk Assessments: Assess stress factors for all teams across the department, to determine the most effective actions to promote staff wellbeing.
- Departmental Audit process: Implement a cross divisional Health and Safety compliance audit to share best practise and develop a departmental H&S culture.
- Front line staff, including lone workers: Audit local processes, to ensure adequate controls are in place for vulnerable staff including lone workers.

(This table is merged into the 'Our work locations' table above for better readability.)

# The Environment Department

## Shaping sustainable future environments

The Environment Department is the largest in the organisation and provides a diverse range of services to London and the South East.

Within the ‘square mile’ we deliver many local authority and regulatory functions including planning and development; building control; highways and transportation; cleansing and waste; environmental health, licensing and trading standards.

Further afield, we manage over 4,500 hectares of green spaces; run the City of London Cemetery and Crematorium; operate the Heathrow Animal Reception Centre; provide animal health services London-wide; and, as the London Port Health Authority, undertake controls on imported food and feed through London’s ports. The Department’s aims, activities and vision are presented in the diagram below.

