

Committee(s): Planning and Transportation – For Recommendation Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee – For Decision	Dated: 30/03/2021 27/04/2021
Subject: Biodiversity Action Plan Update	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	2,5,11 & 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	£
What is the source of Funding?	
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	N
Report of: Colin Buttery, Director Open Spaces	
Report author: Jake Tibbetts, City Gardens Manager	

Summary

This report sets out the background and production of the Draft Biodiversity Action Plan (2021-26) (BAP); attached at Appendix 1. The BAP aims to ensure that the City meets its obligations towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity.

A timetable for the production of the BAP was agreed by Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee in December 2020. This draft has been developed as a result of consultation with the Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership Group.

Members are asked to agree to the draft plan being made available for public consultation which will run from the 3rd to the 31st May 2020. Members will be able to comment individually on the BAP during that consultation period. Following consultation, any proposed changes to the draft plan will be brought back to both Planning and Transportation and Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee for approval and for formal adoption as a City-wide Biodiversity Action Plan.

This report is supported by the Planning and Transportation Committee for onward approval to the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee.

Recommendations

- i) Members of the Planning and Transportation committee are asked to:
 - Recommend for onward approval to the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee, the draft Biodiversity Action Plan 2021/2026, subject to the incorporation of any changes proposed by this Committee.
- ii) Members of the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee are asked to:
 - Approve the draft plan being made available for public consultation.

Main Report

Background

1. The City of London produced its first Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) in 2003 which was subsequently updated in 2010, 2012 and 2016. The BAP covers the geographical area of the Square Mile. Sites outside of the City are covered by the local authorities in which they are located.
2. As a public authority in England the City of London Corporation has a duty under the National Environment & Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 'to have regard for conserving biodiversity in all their actions'. In addition, the National Planning Policy Framework states that local planning authorities should set out a strategic approach to their Local Plans by planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks for biodiversity and green infrastructure. The BAP provides a strategic focus on Biodiversity for decision makers.

Current Position

3. Open Spaces committee agreed the following timetable for the development of the BAP in December 2020.

DATES	ACTION/ EVENT
2nd Dec	Present Timetable to Committee
17th Dec	First Draft of Biodiversity Action Plan circulated to Biodiversity Partnership Group
14th Jan	City of London Biodiversity Group - Consultation meeting
15th -30th Jan	Second Draft of Biodiversity Action Plan produced
1st -15th Feb 2021	Second draft circulated to Partnership Group for Further comments
8th Feb	Second draft presented to Open Spaces Committee
16th Feb -15th Mar	Third Draft of Biodiversity Action Plan Produced
30th March	Third Draft of Biodiversity Action Plan presented to Planning & Transportation Committee
27th April	Open Spaces Committee to sign off third draft of Biodiversity Action Plan
3rd May -31st May	Public Consultation
1st June - 5th June	Response to Public Consultation and Final draft Produced
29th June	Final draft of Biodiversity Action Plan presented to Planning & Transportation Committee for Information
13th July	Final draft of Biodiversity Action Plan presented to Open Spaces Committee for sign off
TBC	Launch

4. An ecological consultant was commissioned to interrogate the species data that has been recorded over the last five years to identify key species and recommend objectives for the new Biodiversity Action Plan. These recommendations are being incorporated into the first draft of the new Biodiversity Action Plan.
5. The BAP will be delivered under the four following themes:
 - I. **Open space and habitat management**
Aim: to protect and enhance habitats and species in the City.
 - II. **The built environment**
Aim: to improve green infrastructure in the built environment
 - III. **Education and community engagement**
Aim: to promote a greater understanding of the City's biodiversity
 - IV. **Data collection, surveys and monitoring**
Aim: to improve monitoring and data on biodiversity in the City.
6. Consultation is an essential part of the development of the Biodiversity Action Plan. During the development of the previous BAP a "Biodiversity Partnership Group" was created, which included internal and external stakeholders. New members were added, and the group reconvened in January when feedback on the first draft of the BAP was obtained. A second draft was then produced and presented to Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee in February. Following further internal consultation and with key external partners a third draft has now been produced. This is the draft that is being presented to the Committee.
7. As part of the public consultation a copy of the draft BAP will be available to be downloaded from the City's website. Stakeholders will be sent links to the consultation documents directly. More widely the consultation will be promoted through social media, City Gardens notice boards, housing resident and internal newsletters. The Biodiversity Partnership group will also play a key role in promoting the document beyond stakeholders through their extensive network. Feedback will be collected primarily through an online form.
8. Public consultation will be carried out between the 3rd till the 30th May. Collation and incorporation and feedback of comments will be carried out before reporting back to the Traffic and Transportation and Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee with the final draft in July.
9. Whilst City Gardens oversee and monitor the BAP, actions are to be delivered by City Gardens as well as internal and external partners. All partners who are listed as a lead partner for BAP actions have agreed to the actions as detailed in the current draft. These lead partners include Planning Policy, Development Management, City Surveyors, DBE Environmental Resilience Team, Friends of City Gardens and the Barbican Wildlife Group.

Strategic implications

10. The BAP ensures that a key aim of Corporate Plan; *‘To Shape Outstanding Environments’* is realised as well as the priorities;
 - *We have clear air, land and water and a thriving sustainable natural environment*
 - *Businesses are trusted and socially and environmentally responsible.*
 - Our spaces are secure, resilient and well-maintained
11. Under the Natural Environment & Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 states that “Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity’.
12. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that local planning authorities should set out a strategic approach to their Local Plans by planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks for biodiversity and green infrastructure.
13. The London Environment Strategy 2018 of which conserving and enhancing wildlife and natural habitats is a key element of the strategy, which recognises that important social, health and economic benefits result from greening the city.
14. The London Plan 2021 Policy G6: Biodiversity and access to nature reads:

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) should be protected.

Boroughs, in developing Development Plans, should:

 - 1) use up-to-date information about the natural environment and the relevant procedures to identify SINCs and ecological corridors to identify coherent ecological networks
 - 2) identify areas of deficiency in access to nature (i.e. areas that are more than 1km walking distance from an accessible Metropolitan or Borough SINC) and seek opportunities to address them
 - 3) support the protection and conservation of priority species and habitats that sit outside the SINC network, and promote opportunities for enhancing them using Biodiversity Action Plans
 - 4) seek opportunities to create other habitats, or features such as artificial nest sites, that are of particular relevance and benefit in an urban context
 - 5) ensure designated sites of European or national nature conservation importance are clearly identified and impacts assessed in accordance with legislative requirements.

15. The Draft City Plan 2036 Policy OS3: Biodiversity reads:

Development should aim to secure net gains for biodiversity where possible by incorporating measures to enhance biodiversity, including:

- retention and enhancement of habitats within Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), including the River Thames
- measures recommended in the City of London Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) in relation to particular species or habitats
- green roofs and walls, gardens and terraces, soft landscaping and trees
- green corridors and biodiversity links
- wildlife-friendly features, such as nesting or roosting boxes a planting mix and variation in vegetation types to encourage biodiversity
- planting which will be resilient to a range of climate conditions, with a high proportion of native plants
- a lighting scheme designed to minimise impacts on biodiversity.

16. The BAP is also integral to the Climate Action Strategy includes the following actions:

- *Introduce new land management practices across our open spaces aiming to maximise their ability to remove carbon, and optimise their biodiversity and resilience value*
- *Advocate the importance of green spaces and urban greening as natural carbon sinks, and their contribution to biodiversity and overall wellbeing*
- *Enhance greening and biodiversity across our public realm and open spaces*

Financial implications

17. None

Resource implications

18. The development of the BAP document will be resourced by City Gardens staff, internal partnership members and relevant support services. There will not be the need for additional resources above this.

Legal implications

19. There would be risk of non-compliance of policy should the City not have an up to date BAP in place. Any BAP should meet the policy requirements as set out above.

Risk implications

20. There is a reputational and legal risk of not having a current BAP as the Corporation has obligations towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity.

Equalities implications

21. None

Climate implications

22. It is widely recognised that Biodiversity and Climate change are interconnected. Protecting and restoring ecosystems can help us reduce the extent of climate change and cope with its impact. The BAP will support the delivery of the City's Climate Action Strategy.

Security implications

23. None

Conclusion

24. A new BAP for the City is necessary to ensure that we continue to meet our legal and moral duties, it is also required to ensure that we meet our other strategic commitments. The current draft has been prepared in line with the agreed timetable and it is recommended that the current draft is made subject to public consultation.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Draft City of London Biodiversity Action Plan 2021-2026

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