

Natural Environment Division Strategy

Strategy Name: Access and Recreation	Date: 20/11/2023
Lead author: Jacqueline Eggleston	Final version
<p>Introduction and context</p> <p>The Corporation of London manages over 11,000 acres of stunning open spaces including 58,000 ancient trees, six Sites of Special Scientific Interest and three National Nature Reserves. These open spaces deliver a wide range of ‘ecosystem services’ such as timber, food, biodiversity, carbon capture and storage, flood mitigation, air purification, and health and wellbeing benefits. The total economic value of these benefits is estimated to be £30-£40 million per year. The sites capture thousands of tonnes of carbon and attract an estimated 25 million visitors annually.</p> <p>The Natural Environment Division forms part of the City of London Corporation’s Environment Department. We manage nine Charities, through which our open spaces are governed and whose objects reflect our vision. Our management of open spaces and assets supports the role of London as a world-class city. We work with local authorities, statutory and Government agencies, special interest groups, schools, businesses, community groups, residents and people who are not typically represented. By reaching out to these wider communities, we seek to ensure our long-term relevance.</p> <p>The Natural Environment Strategies set out the City of London Corporation’s strategic approach to our managed open spaces, assets and activities. They build upon over 150 years of stewardship of open spaces across London and the South-East. They explain the importance of the natural environment to the achievement of economic, societal and environmental outcomes described in our Corporate Plan 2024-29. They describe why we all need to act now and our proposed approach during the next five years. The Strategies describe our objectives for the natural environment and the measures by which we will assess our performance against those objectives. The Strategies will inform our business plans and management plans and set out how our activities will align with corporate and regional priorities and policies.</p> <p>Purpose</p> <p>Our iconic and exemplary open spaces and heritage assets have provided enjoyment, recreation and well-being to millions of visitors for nearly 150 years. As visitor numbers continue to grow, preserving the fundamental benefits these spaces provide to our communities, alongside protecting and enhancing their environment and biodiversity, is increasingly a challenging balance. This strategy provides key objectives to direct how we can both welcome visitors and continue to protect our special, historic. and biodiverse sites and assets for the future.</p> <p>Key Themes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Balance the needs of visitors with the requirements of protecting the natural and heritage assets of the open spaces2. Enable the best possible visitor journey, creating the right information from pre -visit to a stress-free and enjoyable on-site experience3. Provide welcoming places that visitors from all backgrounds and abilities are comfortable to explore	

4. Build understanding and knowledge about the open spaces. Visitors will respect one another and will care for and advocate for the sites.

Links to Corporate Plan

Outcome 2: The City of London is a **vibrant destination** that attracts international and domestic visitors. Our world leading culture offer means people want to spend time here.

Outcome 3: People are proud of their city and feel like they belong. **Our communities are involved** in co-creating fair and innovative outcomes and we show our appreciation for their contributions.

Outcome 4: People receive good services, live in good quality housing, **can live independent and healthy lives**, and can access life-long learning and jobs.

Outcome 5: The City of London Corporation is a leader in driving the success of London as a whole, through our stewardship of public goods, through our major capital investment into the capital's civic fabric, **and through our protection and enhancement of 11,000 acres of amazing open spaces and our unique and iconic assets.**

Outcome 6: People and businesses understand and follow our example as **leaders in striving for equity**, focusing on economic, social, and **environmental issues in our operations, and protecting our environment for future generations.**

Key themes	Measures
<p>Theme 1: Balance Balance the needs of visitors with the requirements of protecting the natural and heritage assets of the open spaces</p> <p>Theme 1, Objective 1 <i>Manage visitors to protect vulnerable areas</i></p> <p>Theme 1, Objective 2 <i>Plan for increased visitor numbers and improve durability of honeypot locations</i></p>	<p>Measure 1: Spatial masterplans created by 2025 to map wayfinding and visitor facilities to encourage use of most sustainable areas and away from ecologically sensitive locations.</p> <p>Measure 2: Site management plans developed by 2026,</p>

<p>Theme 1, Objective 3 <i>Reduced visitor impact on priority habitats and other important sites through sustainable visitor and mitigation strategies being in place and implemented.</i></p>	<p>and a site-wide approach to physically managing the wear and tear on tracks and paths is articulated in annual site management plans.</p> <p>Measure 3: Annual visitor footfall survey conducted to monitor increase in numbers.</p> <p>Measure 4: Ecological monitoring of visitor impact (various measures)</p>
<p>Theme 2: Excellence Enable the best possible visitor journey, creating the right information from pre-visit to on-site experience in exemplar sites</p> <p>Theme 2, Objective 1 <i>Provide clearly branded and accessible on- site wayfinding, interpretation and information</i></p> <p>Theme 2, Objective 2 <i>Provide easily accessible, clear and exemplary pre visit information through digital platforms</i></p> <p>Theme 2, Objective 3 <i>Provide on site infrastructure and welcome facilities to create exempt class sites that are renowned for the highest quality visitor experience</i></p> <p>Theme 2, Objective 4 <i>Make improvements to both informal and formal recreational facilities</i></p>	<p>Measure 1: On site signage audited annually</p> <p>Measure 2: Standalone website created for each site by 2025</p> <p>Measure 3 Quality Accreditation is achieved</p> <p>Measure 4: 100% of Waymarked trails are audited annually to maintain standards</p>

<p>Theme 3: Equal access Provide welcoming places that visitors from all backgrounds and abilities are comfortable to explore</p> <p>Theme 3, Objective 1 <i>Understand gaps in visitor profile</i></p> <p>Theme 3, Objective 2 <i>Work with partners to develop outreach to ensure wider audiences or are aware of and able to access sites</i></p> <p>Theme 3, Objective 3 <i>Ensure that sites have least restrictive access</i></p> <p>Theme 3, Objective 4 <i>Work towards excellence for physical access</i></p>	<p>Measure 1: Visitor profile survey undertaken by 2026</p> <p>Measure 2: Minimum of six outreach activities provided through partnership annually</p> <p>Measure 3: Least restrictive access achieved across whole landholding by 2026</p> <p>Measure 4: Accessibility information provided for every public facility on website by 2025</p>
<p>Theme 4: Inform Build understanding and knowledge about the open spaces. Visitors will respect one another and will care for and advocate for the sites.</p> <p>Theme 4, Objective 1 <i>Information and education about the open spaces' culture, heritage and ecology will be provided through on site interpretation at visitor centres and through all marketing channels to increase understanding</i></p> <p>Theme 4, Objective 2 <i>Respectful use of facilities and sites will be encouraged through engagement and instruction</i></p> <p>Theme 4, Objective 3: <i>Key messages are delivered through layered and targeted campaigns</i></p>	<p>Measure 1: New interpretation panels created each year and websites updated monthly. Newsletters issued monthly.</p> <p>Measure 2: Codes of conduct are promoted on every site</p> <p>Measure 3: Seasonal engagement sessions provided on site (minimum one per season per site)</p>

How will the strategy be implemented?

This strategy will be implemented via Divisional business plans and through other relevant Corporation strategies and plans such as the Sports Strategy. New income generation opportunities will be developed, and external grants will be sought to contribute to the resourcing of activity.

Cross-cutting themes

Income generation and financial sustainability, encouraging visitors to give back through well planned campaigns and fit for purpose mechanisms. Working towards cost neutral recreational provision. Creating new areas of income generation and maximising current income streams. Working in partnership, community engagement and volunteering.