

<b>Committee(s):</b> Natural Environment Board – For Information	<b>Dated:</b> 17 October 2024
<b>Subject:</b> Biodiversity Action Plan – Progress Report	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	2,5,11 & 12
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Katie Stewart, Executive Director of Environment	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Joanna Leyden, Waste Strategy and Biodiversity Group Manager	

### Summary

The current version of the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) was launched in 2021 and outlines a 5 year plan to make improvements to the Biodiversity of the Square Mile. At the half way point, this paper provides an update on the progress of the BAP. The BAP is made up of 4 action plans covering the following topics:

- Open Spaces and Habitat Management
- The Built Environment
- Education and Community Engagement
- Data collection, surveys and monitoring

At the time of writing this report, the BAP sits at an average completion rate of 47% across the 21 actions which puts it on track for the 2026 planned completion date.

Some key highlights from the BAP include the completion of the SINC (site of importance for nature conservation) management plan for our Noble Street SINC, the completion of underground mapping and the engagement of the BAP Partnership group who are supporting in the completion of a number of BAP actions.

Work will continue to complete the remaining actions of the BAP and prepare for the incoming Local Nature Recovery Strategy from the GLA which we will look to reflect in the next iteration of our biodiversity planning.

### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. The Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) was launched in 2021 with the purpose of providing a strategic focus to ensure species and habitats are understood and considered throughout the decision-making processes in the Square Mile. The BAP provides a framework to ensure all legislative requirements, regional and national targets for protecting, conserving and enhancing biodiversity are met at a local level.

### **Current Position**

2. Good progress has been made across the various actions, with the overall completion level of the action plan sitting at an average of 47% across the 21 actions. There are 2 items which have been successfully completed out of the 21 key actions and progress has been made on all actions bar one. There are a number of challenges that are ongoing which are causing delays for some of the actions. This includes elements which are outside the control of the BAP action owners such as policy documents being adopted, and London wide legislation being created. BAP owners include City Gardens, Planning and Planning Policy teams along with a number of other officers across the organisation.
3. A key success of the BAP so far is the relaunch of the BAP partnership group. This group brings together a range of stakeholders including biodiversity experts, relevant city officers, other landowners in the city, resident groups and city businesses, who collaborate on and progress BAP actions. Currently a guidance document is being put together to support landowners in the city to comply with our Biodiversity Action Plan and this work is being led by Pollinating London Together (PLT) through the partnership group.
4. Another key success is the completion of the Noble Street SINC management plan. This has been a collaborative piece of work between Friends of City Gardens, the City Gardens team, the Environmental Resilience team and the Heritage team and has produced a document we can use as a template for all other SINC management plans.
5. Next steps for the BAP are:
  - Feeding into the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) consultation from the GLA to ensure that our target species are featured, and work with them to have aligned species action plans.
  - Work to align the BAP more closely with the GLA's LNRS so that in 2026 the City Corporation will transition to creating a Local Nature Recovery Plan for the City.

- Continue to progress and develop Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) management plans for all the City's SINC and review options to carry out a full SINC review to assess current SINC and potential to propose additional sites.
- Support the implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) through the planning process by providing evidence to inform biodiversity gain plans and other opportunities for net gain and nature recovery.
- Continue to drive engagement, awareness and education of the BAP and biodiversity in general both within the City Corporation and with the wider stakeholders of the square mile.

## **Key Data**

6. The BAP currently stands at a 47% completion rate and is on track.

## **Strategic implications**

7. The Biodiversity Action Plan continues to support the Corporate Plan 24-29 in particular in Leading Sustainable Environments.
8. 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".
9. 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.
10. The London Environment Strategy 2017 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.
11. The Intended Draft London Plan Policy G6: Biodiversity and access to nature reads:

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) 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 SINC 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.

#### Financial implications

12. None

#### Resource implications

13. The development of the BAP actions will continue to be resourced by City Gardens staff, internal partnership members and relevant support services. There will not be the need for additional resources in addition to this.

#### Legal implications

14. There would be risk of non-compliance of policy should the City not have an up to date BAP in place.

#### Risk implications

15. 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

16. None

#### Climate implications

17. 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 continues to support the delivery of the City's Climate Action Strategy.

#### Security implications

18. None

#### **Conclusion**

19. The BAP is on track to complete in 2026 and the Corporation team will continue to work with the external partners to ensure completion of actions

to a good standard. The next iteration of the BAP will align closely to the LNRS from the GLA and will likely be a Local Nature Recovery Plan.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – BAP Progress Report
- Appendix 2 – City of London Biodiversity Action Plan 2021-26

## **Background Papers**

City of London Biodiversity Action Plan

### **Joanna Leyden**

Waste Strategy and Biodiversity Group Manager

T: 07803814855

E: [joanna.leyden@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:joanna.leyden@cityoflondon.gov.uk)