

**Progress against priority workstreams**  
**Mid-year report: 1 April – 30 September 2025**

Ref:	Workstream	Progress to mid-year (1 April – 30 September 2025)
<b>a) Nature conservation and resilience</b>		
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop CSS and Woodland Management Schemes across our sites. <b>Ongoing</b></li> <li>2. Ensure effective engagement with the planning system to influence the protection of our open spaces in the most relevant way. <b>Ongoing</b></li> <li>3. Deliver the Climate Action Strategy's Carbon Removals Project to protect and enhance carbon sequestration level. <b>2027</b></li> </ol>	<p>A wide range of actions have been taken across all natural environment sites to deliver this key workstream, protecting and enhancing the biodiversity and resilience of our green spaces. The work also directly supports the Corporate Plan Outcome: Leading Sustainable Environment. Examples include</p> <p><b>CSS and woodland management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hosting an International Conference on the Biodiversity of Pollarded Trees in collaboration with Ancient Tree Forum and the Arboricultural Association. This was a highly regarded event, attended by delegates from across the world, and further raised the profile of the CoL as experts in this field.</li> <li>• Cutting fire breaks and development of Woodland Management Plans at Epping Forest.</li> <li>• Grassland management and species monitoring across the North London Open Spaces.</li> <li>• Tree works to ensure safety and conservation of vulnerable and ancient trees has continued at all sites. This has also contributed to the mitigation of the associated tree safety risks which are held by several of the charities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Climate Action Strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Climate Action Strategy (CAS) carbon removals project has also continued to progress, including the provision of wildfire management training for staff; ecological monitoring surveys; and the identification of suitable sites for the construction of leaky dams which significantly increase the long-term resilience of green spaces.</li> </ul>

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<b>b) Community engagement</b>		
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Build and sustain meaningful and lasting partnerships with the communities we serve <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop volunteering programmes across our sites. <b>Ongoing</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Continue to develop the quality and range of our communications to ensure they reach, and are understood by, our communities and service users.</li> </ol>	<p>All sites have hosted and supported a range of well attended events to diverse audiences and there has been extensive volunteer involvement with a wide range of activities. The associated interaction with members of the public helps officers to build and develop services that meet the needs of the communities they serve.</p> <p><b>Volunteering partnerships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly valued volunteers continued to support the sites, with hundreds of volunteer hours donated by supporters of the open spaces and heritage assets.</li> <li>• During the period, volunteers were also recognised at CoL volunteer celebration event.</li> <li>• Some examples of the contribution of volunteers to support the CoL and its green spaces, include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Epping Forest volunteers have been trained to carry out fortnightly butterfly and reptile transect surveys. Training has now commenced for grassland condition assessment surveys.</li> <li>○ The Epping Forest Engagement team took the 'Epping Forest Roadshow' to local events over the summer. The team also promoted volunteering opportunities within Epping Forest.</li> <li>○ At West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons, volunteers have supported biodiversity monitoring of reptiles, skylarks and butterflies over the period.</li> <li>○ Heath Hands and Friends of West Ham Park continue their work to support our NLOS sites.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Communications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteering opportunities for all sites continue to be promoted locally and via the CoL website.</li> <li>• The Epping Forest Engagement team promoted volunteering opportunities to those who attended their summer 'Roadshow'.</li> </ul>

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<b>c) Access and recreation</b>		
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Upgrade and install new on-site signage to enhance wayfinding and access to information.</li> <li>2. Provide easily accessible and clear pre-visit information through digital platforms.</li> <li>3. Build understanding and knowledge about the open spaces through engagement and instruction.</li> </ol>	<p>Appropriate messaging is used across the sites to improve accessibility, wayfinding, and to encourage visitors to respect the sites and use them responsibly. Officers continued to identify improvements and additions to this during the period. Some examples are provided below</p> <p><b>Wayfinding</b></p> <p>Five of six new byelaw boards were installed at Ashted Common, this will improve wayfinding and enhances the visitor journey. In addition, most of the design work, preparation and installation of these boards has been undertaken by volunteers.</p> <p><b>Accessibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At Epping Forest, the new Brambly Hedge Trail opened. Each of the wooden characters feature their names in braille and include a tactile panel, adding a variety of ways to experience the Trail.</li> <li>• Installation of the new Gloucester Ride surfaced path at Epping Forest, using sustainable 'no dig' installation techniques, improves access between the visitor centre and Connaught Water.</li> <li>• Sports facilities at Hampstead Heath and West Ham Park remained very popular and saw high levels of use, particularly over the summer season.</li> </ul> <p><b>Building understanding and knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning Team continued to facilitate children and young people to connect with nature through active learning in our green spaces: nature connection in childhood is the foundation for pro-environmental behaviours in adulthood. During the period, thousands of school students participated in outdoor learning programmes, including orienteering, eco-art and habitats.</li> <li>• The London Fire Brigade hosted a media event on Wanstead Flats to promote responsible land management to prevent wildfires.</li> </ul>

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		<p>There has also been a well-received social media campaign to raise awareness and consequences of fly-tipping.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All these actions help to catalyse improved behaviours in our spaces where needed.</li> </ul>
<b>d) Culture, heritage and learning</b>		
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop our communities of interest.</li> <li>4. Provide more opportunities for children to engage in outdoor play.</li> <li>2. Protect and enhance our built heritage, landscape heritage and archaeological assets and promote them as part of our visitor and learning offers.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Communities of interest</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officers have continued to build meaningful engagement with a diverse range of communities of interest, including Ambition Achieve Aspire; the East Africa Collective; City of London Virtual School; Epping Forest Youth Council; SOS-UK (Students Organising for Sustainability); the London Wildlife Trust; and the UK Youth Climate Coalition.</li> </ul> <p><b>Outdoor play</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School, play and youth programmes have continued to thrive. The learning programmes are continuing to engage large numbers of participants from some of London's most economically disadvantaged communities.</li> <li>Evaluation showed an increase in confidence and wellbeing, comparing levels before and after participation in our learning sessions</li> </ul> <p><b>Protect, enhance and promote heritage assets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Heritage Team worked directly to support and deliver activities including:</li> <li>Launch of the Keats House 100 Exhibition.</li> <li>Hampstead Summer Festival, to celebrate the culmination of their 2025 fundraising campaign for Keats Community Library and Hampstead School of Art.</li> <li>Open House and Heritage Open Days to open Keats House for free as part of their pan-London festivals; and</li> </ul>

## Appendix 1

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City Lit, hosting three days of their creative writing workshops inspired by Keats.</li> <li>• The Monument Conservation Management Plan has been finalised.</li> <li>• City Surveyor's and their appointed specialist contractors continued to progress surveys and remedial conservation works for several key heritage assets, including Keats House &amp; Ten Keats Grove; The Grotto, Wanstead Park; and the Hill Garden Pergola, Hampstead, to ensure these heritage assets are preserved for future generations to enjoy and learn from.</li> </ul>
<b>e) Develop a sustainable business model</b>		
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Begin to implement the recommendations of Natural Environment Charity Review. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update Charity Financial models to allow for improved asset management and to improve financial security for the charities. <b>2025-2030</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>2. New agreement and changed ways of working/governance regarding management and condition of assets. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with CSD to ensure improved condition and environmental performance of built assets. <b>Q4 2025/26.</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Seek opportunities to increase income generation. <b>Ongoing</b></li> </ol>	<p><b>Natural Environment Charity Review</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Grant Funding Agreement is in draft and will begin its route through Committees in late 2025/early 2026.</li> </ul> <p><b>Asset management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An agreement has been reached with City Surveyors to focus CWP priorities on key lodges with income generation potential, this work is now planned/underway.</li> <li>• Extension of the Grant Funding Model to Central and Risk and Recharge elements of Charity budgets will take place in next 12-18 months and this will shape future service level agreements regarding maintenance of properties.</li> <li>• A full audit of potential opportunities and constraints regarding Complementary Land is also underway, with consultants appointed to produce a report.</li> </ul> <p><b>Income generation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An independent report on fundraising potential and roadmap have been completed, and recommendations are being drawn up for action, including high priority areas and projects, the skills and</li> </ul>

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		<p>systems required to achieve them, and how corporate identity plans can best benefit these outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A BNG Assessment of CoL Open Spaces was undertaken to identify opportunities to develop habitat banks and sell biodiversity units to support the long-term enhancement, management, maintenance, and monitoring of our open spaces.</li> </ul>
<b>f) City Gardens: Effectively manage the green spaces within the Square Mile</b>		
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide well maintained and accessible spaces. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carry out an audit of green spaces within the Square Mile for accessibility standards to establish a baseline which can be monitored in future years. Q4 2025/26</li> </ul> </li> <li>Progress Biodiversity Action Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to progress Biodiversity Action Plan. Q4 2025/26</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p><b>Well maintained and accessible spaces</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All our City Gardens are well maintained year-round through the hard work and dedication of the 36 gardeners.</li> <li>The recent reopening of Finsbury Circus is a shining example of how the team is contributing towards providing well maintained and accessible spaces. A full accessibility audit will follow.</li> <li>An audit of green spaces across the Square Mile has commenced in consultation with the Access Team within the Planning Division. 64 site visits and assessments will take place over the next quarter, establishing a robust accessibility baseline to be monitored in future years.</li> </ul> <p><b>Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The BAP continues to progress with a key success being the joint hosting of an Urban Pollinators event with Pollinating London Together. The event was held at the Tower of London and attracted around 70 people to listen to experts discuss the importance of pollinators in the urban environment and what we can do to support them.</li> <li>The BAP continues to make good progress, with the latest BAP Partnership Group meeting held in October. Focus will now turn to ensuring that all outstanding actions are completed by the end of 2026, in line with agreed targets.</li> </ul>