

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Planning and Transportation Committee Natural Environment Board	Dated: 22/06/2026 09/07/2026
Subject: Nature Recovery Strategy Development Proposal	Public report: For Decision
This proposal: • delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes • provides statutory duties • provides business enabling functions	Corporate Plan outcomes: • Leading sustainable environment • Flourishing public spaces • Vibrant and thriving destination Statutory duties: • Biodiversity Duty • Biodiversity Net Gain
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of:	Executive Director of Environment, Katie Stewart
Report author:	Ben Bishop, Nature Recovery Programme Manager

Summary

The City of London Corporation's Climate Action Strategy 2020 - 2040 continues its ambitions to drive climate action, build resilience and champion sustainable growth; and in its second phase (2027 – 2033), will include a more holistic, cross-Corporation approach to nature recovery.

This report sets out the proposed approach for developing the first corporate Nature Recovery Strategy, setting the long-term direction for biodiversity and nature across the City Corporation's functions, services and assets.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Approve the approach to developing the Nature Recovery Strategy.
- Note the targeted consultation approach of the strategy.

Main Report

Background

1. In February 2026, Policy and Resources Committee approved the second phase of the Climate Action Strategy (CAS) 2027 – 2033, with a broader scope including ‘Enabling Nature Recovery’.
2. Nature underpins human health, economic prosperity, and climate stability, yet it is in unprecedented global decline. Wildlife populations have fallen by around 73% since 1970, undermining the natural systems that over half of global GDP depends on.
3. The UK is recognised as one of the most nature depleted countries. Since the 1970s, 41% of UK species have declined and around 16% are threatened with extinction, equating to nearly one in six species at risk of being lost.
4. It is estimated that nature degradation could cause a 12% loss to UK GDP. This accelerating loss of biodiversity presents a systemic risk to the long-term sustainability of communities, economies, and environments.
5. To address this the UK Biodiversity Framework has committed to effectively conserve and manage at least 30% of land and sea by 2030, a commitment which is being translated into action through the Government’s Environmental Improvement Plans.
6. London supports over 14,000 species demonstrating its ecological significance and this biodiversity underpins significant economic and social value; these natural assets provide essential ecosystem services including air purification, urban cooling, flood mitigation, and health benefits and collectively are worth billions of pounds to London’s economy and public wellbeing.
7. Finally, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, as amended by the Environment Act 2021, placed a strengthened duty on public authorities in England ensuring they consider how they ‘enhance and conserve’ biodiversity.
8. Subsequently the Biodiversity Reporting Regulations 2023 places a statutory duty on Local Authorities to produce a report on actions and objectives taken to conserve and enhance biodiversity every five years, most recently in March 2026.

Current Position

9. The risks of continued nature decline are:
 - Loss of habitats, species and ecosystem resilience.
 - Risk to supply chains from impacts to biodiversity, pollinators and soil health.
 - Reduced climate resilience.
 - Impacts to public health and wellbeing.
10. A Nature Recovery Strategy for the City Corporation would provide an opportunity to go beyond our statutory roles to set a strategic direction going beyond compliance to drive restoration, ecological connectivity and long-term organisational and economic resilience, supporting regional and national targets for nature.
11. It would provide a cohesive framework to align existing strategies, plans and policies, ensuring they collectively contribute to shared, measurable nature positive outcomes.
12. The Corporate Plan 2024 - 2029 sets out six outcomes, including Leading Sustainable Environment, Flourishing Public Spaces and Vibrant Thriving Destination. Key actions include:
 - Increase in natural environment biodiversity.
 - Require increases in biodiversity from development.
13. Biodiversity and nature conservation are embedded across several City Corporation functions and priorities; however, delivery is currently dispersed across multiple policies, plans and services without a single cohesive strategic framework.
14. Existing approaches, including the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), Local Plan, and open spaces management, provide a strong foundation for compliance and enhancement but are largely focused on meeting statutory requirements and delivering site-specific outcomes.
15. There is an opportunity to move beyond this position to establish a more ambitious, coordinated and outcome-led approach that embeds nature recovery across corporate strategy, operations, investment and decision-making; setting long-term vision and targets for nature.
16. The strategy will support a consistent, corporate-wide approach to setting priorities for nature, ensuring biodiversity is systematically integrated across planning, asset management, procurement, infrastructure and open space management, while improving coordination, reducing duplication, and delivering efficiencies and potential cost savings through aligned investment and shared delivery.
17. The strategy could unlock significant value by identifying and leveraging funding opportunities; maximising grant funding, income generation including through planning obligations and biodiversity net gain, and emerging financing frameworks to deliver scalable, long-term nature recovery outcomes.

18. It will recognise and support City Corporation's role as sole trustee of eight charities responsible for the management of over 4,400ha of open space accelerating habitat restoration, species recovery, and climate resilience.
19. In practice, this would support more joined-up delivery through the creation of nature networks, embedding nature into investment decisions and partnerships, underpinned by clear priorities, targets and monitoring frameworks to measure progress, demonstrate impact and respond to emerging challenges and opportunities.

Options

20. **Option 1 (recommended):** Approve the proposed development approach to set out an ambitious corporate strategy influencing service delivery, operational and asset management, and prioritising the actions delivered through CAS 2027 - 2033.
21. Option 2 (not recommended): Do not approve the current approach as it is set out.

Proposals

22. The strategy development will take place over the next 12 months and include targeted consultation, a strategic governance and reporting framework that will align with the CAS and portfolio management framework, and a final strategy for endorsement, and then final approval.
23. Over the summer a full scope will be developed to prioritise the strategy and the high-level actions for CAS 2027 - 2033.
24. During this time targeted consultation of key stakeholder groups will take place to ensure alignment with their goals and priorities.
25. The Biodiversity and Nature Recovery Group, a cross-corporation steering group, will act as the primary internal consultee to ensure strategic alignment to business plans and workstreams.
26. Governance arrangements will be established through scoping and internal consultation with steering groups and portfolio boards, ensuring clear oversight, coordination and appropriate service committee engagement and endorsement.
27. Five strategic outcomes are proposed, subject to consultation:
 - **Enhancing and Restoring Nature:** Biodiversity across the estate is enhanced and restored through targeted, high-quality habitat management and improvement.
 - **Building Nature Networks:** Ecological connectivity is strengthened across landscapes and urban environments, creating more coherent and resilient nature networks.

- **Increasing Climate Resilience:** Assets are managed to improve their resilience to climate change, supporting adaptation for habitats, species, ecosystems and infrastructure.
- **Connecting People with Nature:** Opportunities for people to access, experience and engage with nature are expanded and enhanced.
- **Reducing Embodied Impacts:** Indirect environmental impacts across the value chain are reduced, supporting more sustainable and nature-positive practices.

28. The strategy scope, outcomes, and targets, actions and metrics will be developed over the summer, alongside the CAS 2027 – 2033 Nature Recovery programme, to be presented to members for further consultation.

Key Data

29. The Square Mile has 376 open spaces, totalling 32 hectares and an increasing network of green infrastructure including an additional 19,400m² delivered, to date, through CAS 2020 – 2027; the City Corporation is responsible for 180 of these sites and 1,400 trees.

30. The City Corporation's 4,400ha of open space outside of the Square Mile include 58,000 ancient trees, six Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and three National Nature Reserves (NNRs).

31. The City Corporation manages ~830 operational and commercial buildings and ~5000 homes across 14 housing estates.

32. The Square Mile is one of the world's global financial centres, supporting financial and professional services to locate, invest and grow.

33. Collectively, these assets, scale of influence and strategic position present a significant opportunity for the City Corporation to drive substantial, measurable and far-reaching nature recovery outcomes across both its estate and wider sphere of influence.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

34. The strategy will primarily address three of the six Corporate Plan outcomes however it will have a positive impact on all six as restoring and enhancing nature has benefits to the economy, communities and health.

35. Delivering a cohesive nature recovery strategy will provide a golden thread through the City Corporation's relevant plans and strategies, and as a result address its public duties.

Financial implications

36. There are no anticipated cost implications, as the development of the strategy is fully funded through the CAS, with the necessary internal resource and capacity already in place via the CAS and the Biodiversity and Nature Recovery Group.

37. Looking ahead, the strategy will position the City Corporation to secure and leverage a range of future funding opportunities and income streams, including grant funding, planning obligations and green finance, with dedicated funding already identified from April 2027 to support delivery of the CAS cross-cutting Nature Recovery Programme and generate long-term value and return on investment.

38. Included in the 2027 - 2033 programme's cost is the monitoring and evaluation framework to track and report on the implementation and progress of the strategy.

Resource implications

39. To develop the strategy, the CAS has funded an FTE post for 12 months.

40. Additional resourcing is not required, as the strategy will bring together and align existing and emerging plans and workstreams into a cohesive, organisation-wide framework developed in collaboration with relevant teams.

Legal implications

41. The strategy does not give rise to any new legal implications; rather, it will support a more coordinated and efficient approach to meeting existing statutory duties, strengthening reporting, embedding biodiversity in decision-making and ensuring compliance with Biodiversity Net Gain requirements.

Risk implications

42. The strategy and the programme will mitigate the following risks:

- Loss of species and habitats
- Risks to natural assets and carbon stores
- Climate risks to habitats and infrastructure

43. Setting out an ambitious yet deliverable strategy will also reduce future reputational risk through addressing impacts driving nature decline, supporting restoration and promoting resilience, ensuring we meet our commitments for stewardship, land-management, building climate resilience and ensuring responsible procurement.

44. Through taking this approach we will take leadership role in driving nature recovery at a corporate level.

Equalities implications

45. An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the strategy development.

Climate implications

46. The strategy will support climate action through prioritising and enabling projects that support mitigation and adaptation by enhancing habitats that store carbon, reduce risks such as overheating, flooding, and by strengthening ecosystem resilience to climate change.

Security implications

47. DEFRA released a strategic assessment (Jan 2026) that explores how global biodiversity loss could affect the UK's resilience, security and prosperity.
48. It presents material and escalating national security risk, with six critical ecosystems at risk of collapse as early as 2030; driving food insecurity, economic instability and geopolitical pressures that could directly impact the UK and global financial centres.

Conclusion

49. The development of a corporate Nature Recovery Strategy represents a critical step in strengthening the City Corporation's response to global, national and local biodiversity loss, fulfilling its statutory and strategic commitments.
50. By establishing a clear, coordinated and measurable framework, the strategy will embed nature recovery across functions, assets and decision-making processes. Through alignment with the CAS, Corporate Plan and wider policy landscape, it will enable the delivery of tangible improvements for biodiversity, climate resilience and public value.
51. Approval of the proposed approach will ensure the City Corporation is well positioned to demonstrate leadership, meet emerging requirements, and secure long-term environmental, social and economic benefits.

Appendices

- N/A

Background Papers

- [City of London Corporation Statutory Biodiversity Report 2023 – 26](#)
- [First Considerations of the Enhanced Biodiversity Duty](#)

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