

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee	01/02/2016
<b>Subject:</b> City of London Draft Biodiversity Action Plan (2016-2020)	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> The Director of Open Spaces	<b>For Decision</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Summary</b></p> <p>This report sets out the background and production of a Draft Biodiversity Action Plan (2016-2020), attached at Appendix 1. It sets out the vision, objectives and priorities for the management of biodiversity for the ensuing four years and has been prepared by the City Gardens team.</p> <p>Members are asked to agree to the draft plan being made available for public consultation. Following consultation, any proposed changes to the draft plan will be brought back to Committee for approval and for formal adoption as a City-wide Biodiversity Action Plan.</p> <p><b>Recommendation</b></p> <p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approve the text of the Draft Biodiversity Action Plan, attached at Appendix 1, for public consultation.</li> </ul>	

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. The City of London produced its first Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) in 2003 followed by a revised version in 2010. In 2012 the UK Biodiversity Action Plan was replaced by a national strategy which in England was known as Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services'.
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.

3. Biodiversity is the term used to describe the variety of life on earth. This includes wildlife such as animals, birds and plants, the habitats which are the places they live and how they interact with their surroundings as part of the ecosystem. Conserving biodiversity includes restoring and enhancing the species populations and habitats as well implementing measures to promote them in the future. The development of a biodiversity action plan identifies and prioritises actions for biodiversity at a local level.
4. Since 2003, the Square Mile has increased and incorporated wildlife-friendly planting of trees and plants and the inclusion of suitable habitats to attract wildlife. Promotion of previous City of London Biodiversity Action Plans has resulted in raised community awareness and involvement with many projects funded through either sponsorship, volunteer labour and/or Section 106 funding. Please see Appendix 1 page 11 point 3.6 summarising the outcomes achieved as a result of the City's Biodiversity Action Plan 2010-2015.
5. In 2014, the City Gardens team in partnership with the Friends of City Gardens was awarded £15,000 from an allocation of 2007-2010 Local Area Agreement funding to launch, execute and evaluate a City of London Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-2020. This fund is currently paying for the following activities:
  - a. Review of 14 Sites of Importance to Nature Conservation (SINC)
  - b. A programme of volunteer on-site training with species experts
  - c. Green roof improvement case study, report and a workshop
  - d. Survey equipment and identification resources

## **Current Position**

6. The preparation of the City of London Draft Biodiversity Action Plan 2016 – 2020 has provided an opportunity to review and build on the previous 2010 plan, setting out how biodiversity will be protected and enhanced in the next four years. The draft plan incorporates guidance from the London Plan 2015 and the Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy and guidance from the City of London Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership Group, established in spring 2015. Membership of the group includes: City Corporation officers, local residents, City businesses, open spaces representatives from neighbouring boroughs and ecology and biodiversity professionals. Please see Appendix 2 of the Draft Biodiversity Action Plan attached, where page 36 details membership.
7. The draft plan will be delivered under the following themes:
  - Open space and habitat management
  - The built environment
  - Education and community engagement
  - Data collection, surveys and monitoring
8. Using these criteria the draft plan has been produced to provide a summary of objectives and activities.

## **Proposal**

9. It is proposed that stakeholder consultation takes place during the months of February and March 2016, with the aim of collating and incorporating comments and reporting back to the Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee in April 2016 and proposing a final draft for adoption.
10. Consultation will be undertaken to ensure stakeholder involvement and will include:
  - City of London Members;
  - Other City of London key stakeholder departments;
  - City of London Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership Group;
  - Garden users, through an advertising campaign on noticeboards, e-newsletters and through the extensive contacts database held by the City Gardens section
  - City of London website
  - Hard copies of the draft plan made available at the City libraries;
  - Contacts within neighbouring boroughs

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

11. The production of a draft plan fulfils key requirements highlighted within the City of London Local Plan, notably Core Strategic Policy CS19: Open Spaces and Recreation. Good quality open spaces improve the health of the City's communities and create a pleasant environment which encourages businesses to locate in the City.
12. The provision of high quality open space in the City supports a wide number of key City of London policies and objectives contained within the core objectives of the City of London Community Strategy:
  - To facilitate the opportunity for exemplary, innovative, inclusive and sustainable design which respects and enhances the distinctive character of the City.
  - To continue to minimise noise, land and water pollution and improve air quality where this is possible.
  - To conserve and enhance biodiversity.
  - To strengthen the City's third sector to further meet the needs of our communities and promote volunteering.

## **Implications**

13. There are no legal implications arising as a result of this report.
14. The programme of work associated with the draft plan will be delivered via the City of London Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership Group, volunteers and the Friends of City Gardens at no cost. These groups will be supported by the

City Gardens Project Support Officer as part of their existing role. Activities requiring funding will be delivered as outlined in point 5.

## **Conclusion**

15. The promotion of Biodiversity continues to be an important aspect in the management of the City's open spaces. The approach currently being adopted is resulting in a number of benefits in terms of sharing expertise in producing plans and the engagement of site users and partner organisations in delivering projects and initiatives.
16. The completion and adoption of a comprehensive revised City of London Biodiversity Action Plan will ensure that the City and partners are managing both publicly owned open space and privately owned land in accordance with regional and national good practice.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 - City of London Draft Biodiversity Action Plan (2016-2020)

## **Background Papers:**

- City of London Open Space Strategy, Supplementary Planning Document 2015
- City of London Tree Strategy, Supplementary Planning Document 2012
- City of London Biodiversity Plan 2015-2020
- City Gardens Management Plan 2011-2016

## **Louisa Allen**

City Gardens Manager, Open Spaces Department

T: 0207 374 4140

E: [Louisa.allen@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:Louisa.allen@cityoflondon.gov.uk)