

Committee	Dated:
Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee	18.04.2016
Subject: City of London Draft Biodiversity Action Plan (2016-2020)	Public
Report of: The Director of Open Spaces	For Decision
Report author: Louisa Allen	

Summary

This report is a follow-up report to that dated 1st February, and explains the consultation process regarding the production of the draft City of London Biodiversity Action Plan.

Following a period of consultation, proposed changes have been added where appropriate. Comments from the consultation have been summarised and collated and responses to these are illustrated at Appendix 1.

Members are asked to agree the final draft City of London Biodiversity Action Plan for adoption and publication.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Approve the final draft of the City of London Biodiversity Action Plan, attached at Appendix 2, for adoption and publication.

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. Consultation

7. To achieve a worthwhile process, the following stakeholder groups were consulted:
 - 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
8. The consultation period triggered constructive comments from 16 individuals including City of London Corporation colleagues, City of London Biodiversity

Action Plan Partnership Group other interested individuals. The comments have been acknowledged, addressed and added to the Draft Management Plan where appropriate. Comments received and the City Corporation's responses are included in Appendix 1. The City Gardens Team has made contact with all individuals to thank them for their contributions and to provide them, where appropriate, further information regarding their comments.

9. The draft management plan can be seen in Appendix 2. The published document will include photographs and will be in an accessible format.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

10. 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.
11. 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

12. There are no legal implications arising as a result of this report.
13. 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 to the City Corporation. 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.
14. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out in relation to the design and implementation of this draft policy and was found to have a low positive impact overall.

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 - Comments and responses from the consultation period February-March 2016.
- Appendix 2 - City of London Draft Biodiversity Action Plan (2016-2020)

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