

Tower Hamlets Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) Sept 2009 – Sept 2014



One of Tower Hamlets' many green roofs - Barclays Bank HQ, 1 Churchill Place, E14

Green roofs are not just fantastic for biodiversity but offer a wealth of wider benefits including reduction in costs (extended roof life; fuel savings; reduced drainage costs; re-use of aggregates) as well as environmental benefits – creation of green space; urban heat island effect mitigation; dramatic reduction in surface water run off and therefore reduced flood risk; reduction in construction waste and CO2 emissions.

This green roof is close to a known **black redstart nesting habitat** and it is hoped that the species will use the roof to nest and potentially breed.

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1. Introduction

What is Biodiversity?

Biodiversity is the term used to describe the variety of all living things and includes the diversity (number and variation) of places where animals and plants live, the genetic diversity within a species and diversity of species. When talking about biodiversity we mean 'wildlife', which includes bacteria, algae, lichens, fungi, plants, trees, mammals, insects, reptiles, butterflies, moths, birds, aquatic life – in fact, all living organisms. Although humans are not always included in biodiversity definitions, they are part of the whole process. The fact that humans have viewed themselves as separate is probably a key reason for the loss of species and habitats.

Here we use the word 'wildlife' to mean all living things and not just animals. The places where wildlife live, such as forests, deserts, oceans, rivers, canals and parks are what we refer to as 'habitats'. Biodiversity conservation means sustaining the diversity of species in each ecosystem¹ as we plan human activities that affect the use of the land and natural resources. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity is not only important for the intrinsic worth of the wildlife itself, but also because it provides opportunities for us to be in contact with, and enjoy the natural environment.

It is worth keeping in mind that relatively species-poor habitats can have a higher protected status than more diverse habitats. This can be because of their scarcity, fragility or importance to particular plants or animals.

Why does biodiversity matter?

Biodiversity is the foundation of the natural world. It is our life support system, providing air, water, food, raw materials for manufacturing and protection from ultra-violet light. Without biodiversity we simply would not be able to survive. A mass of evidence in recent years has shown not only that nature is good for human health – physical, psychological and spiritual – but that it's essential to the vitality of cities.

Health, economic, social and equalities benefits

The provision of good quality natural greenspace can provide local communities with places for education, exercise and relaxation. In addition, natural greenspaces can benefit the local economy through encouraging tourism, and attracting economic development and local investment.

Tower Hamlets has some of the starkest inequalities in health to be found in the UK. Deprivation and poverty contribute to ill health and poor mental well-being, with children and young people, ethnic communities and the elderly most likely to suffer.

¹ An ecosystem is a natural unit consisting of all plants, animals and micro-organisms in an area functioning together with all of the physical factors of the environment. An ecosystem is a unit of interdependent organisms which share the same habitat.

Evidence shows that contact with the natural world and access to natural environments can promote healthy lifestyles by providing opportunities for physical activity, as well as benefits to mental health and well-being. The Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy and Health Inequalities Strategy recognise that programmes that improve accessible natural greenspace and reduce areas of deficiency in access to nature can contribute to improve health outcomes.

Because of the relationship between poor health, deprivation and areas which are deficient in accessible natural greenspace, addressing deficiencies through well designed high quality greenspace can go a long way to addressing some of the health inequalities affecting the Borough's deprived communities.

In addition, accessible natural greenspace can improve social integration by increasing social contact amongst adults and promoting unstructured creative play by children.

Biodiversity and Sustainable Development

Biodiversity is an indicator for sustainable development. At the heart of sustainable development is the simple idea of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come. A widely used international definition is "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland Report, 1987). The concept of sustainable development has been around for a number of decades. Although the idea is simple, the task is substantial.



A nest of carder bees (*Bombus humilis*) in Tower Hamlets. They help to pollinate flowers, an essential biodiversity service

According to a United Nations report published in March 2005, UN goals to halve poverty and hunger by 2015 will not be met, and hunger and malnutrition will remain a problem even in 2050 unless governments pay greater attention to what nature does for humanity.

Biodiversity can help us adapt for Climate Change, for example by mitigating against urban heat island effect. Manchester University scientists have reported that adding 10% of green cover in cities could reduce surface temperatures by 4°C.

Biodiversity enhancements can also contribute to flood risk mitigation, particularly important in the southern and eastern areas of the borough categorized as flood risk 2 (medium risk, between 0.1% to 1.0% probability) and 3 (high probability, over 1% probability). Green roofs and SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems) are particularly effective in this respect.

Biodiversity loss

Biodiversity extinction rates are currently very significant and undiscovered species are disappearing, some of which could have had a significant use to humans. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, the most comprehensive audit to date of the health of our planet, carried out by 1,300 researchers from 95 nations over four years and published in 2005 found that “a third of all amphibians, a fifth of mammals and an eighth of all birds are now threatened with extinction. It is thought 90% of the large predatory fish in the oceans have gone since the beginning of industrial trawling. And these are just the vertebrates – the species we know most about. Ninety percent of species, maybe more, have not even been catalogued by science yet”.

We also do not really know what the significance of losing each individual species is, i.e. how much and what we can lose before one of the world’s life support systems starts to malfunction, such as water and soil systems. Biodiversity conservation is not just important in the National Parks or the countryside. The urban environment also provides a home to a large variety of wildlife and everyone living and working in London has the right to enjoy an environment where biodiversity is protected and encouraged to flourish.

Global concerns about biodiversity

Signed by 150 government leaders at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty dedicated to promoting sustainable development. Conceived as a practical tool for translating the principles of Agenda 21 into reality, the Convention recognises that biological diversity is about more than plants, animals and micro organisms and their ecosystems – it is about people and our need for food security, medicines, fresh air and water, shelter, and a clean and healthy environment in which to live.

2. Tower Hamlets’ Local Biodiversity Action Plan

What is a Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)?

A Local Biodiversity Action Plan sets out the objectives for the protection, conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in a distinct local area. It reflects international, national and regional priorities and caters for local distinctiveness, with measurable targets to be implemented at the local level.

Local partnerships

A Local Biodiversity Action Plan will bring together the local council, other statutory groups, local community groups and local people together into a partnership to use local knowledge and resources work out the best ways to protect, conserve and enhance local biodiversity.

Habitat and Species Action Plans

A Local Biodiversity Action Plan contains 'Habitat Action Plans' that look at ways of protecting, conserving and enhancing local habitats such as woodlands, parks, gardens and lakes. A LBAP usually covers most of the habitats where plants and animals in the local area can be found. Some species that may be seen as particularly in need of protection will also have a 'Species Action Plan'.

The first Tower Hamlets' LBAP

Tower Hamlets has had a LBAP since 2003. The local partnership that supports the LBAP is called Tower Habitats and the first LBAP document can be found on the Tower Habitats web site at www.towerhabitats.org. This original document contains a lot of background information and maps covering the range of habitats and species that can be found in the borough.

Tower Hamlets' LBAP 2009 – 2013

This LBAP seeks to review and build on the work of the previous LBAP. Some simplifications have been made to the new LBAP, for example the introduction has been shortened as much is still relevant in the original document. The Habitat Action Plans have also been condensed into 4 major plans that encompass the species action plans. The new LBAP also sets new targets and puts forward new actions to help achieve them.

Vision for the LBAP

This Biodiversity Action Plan, in parallel with the borough's emerging Local Development Framework (LDF), has the following visions for the Borough;

- Vision 1: Incorporate opportunities for biodiversity within the Borough
- Vision 2: Ensure communities are able to experience wildlife locally
- Vision 3: Enhance habitat connectivity for wildlife through the Borough
- Vision 4: Reduce Areas of Deficiency for Access to Nature

Local wildlife

Despite being one of the most densely populated areas of the UK Tower Hamlets has a wide array of wildlife. In order to protect biodiversity it is important to understand what species are present in the borough and how their numbers may be changing.

One of the aims of the LBAP is to record information about local biodiversity (for example the number and types of beetles found in Mile End Park). Information collected is fed into Greenspace Information for Greater London (GIGL) database from where a picture of species across the borough can be built up. These species exist in different habitats and one of the ways they can be protected is by looking at ways in which the habitats can be protected and enhanced for species diversity in general.

For simplicity the LBAP splits the Borough into four habitat types and each has its own Habitat Action Plan (HAP) with a lead partner who coordinates and drives forward the activities relating to that HAP.

Responsibility for overseeing the overall implementation of the LBAP lies with the Chair of the Tower Hamlets Biodiversity Partnership, a post currently held by the Sustainability Officer, based within the Council’s Sustainable Development team.

Habitat Action Plan	Lead Partner
Gardens and Grounds	Tower Hamlets Homes
Parks, Squares and Burial Grounds	LBTH Parks Service
Rivers and Standing Water	Thames 21
The Built Environment	LBTH Strategic Planning

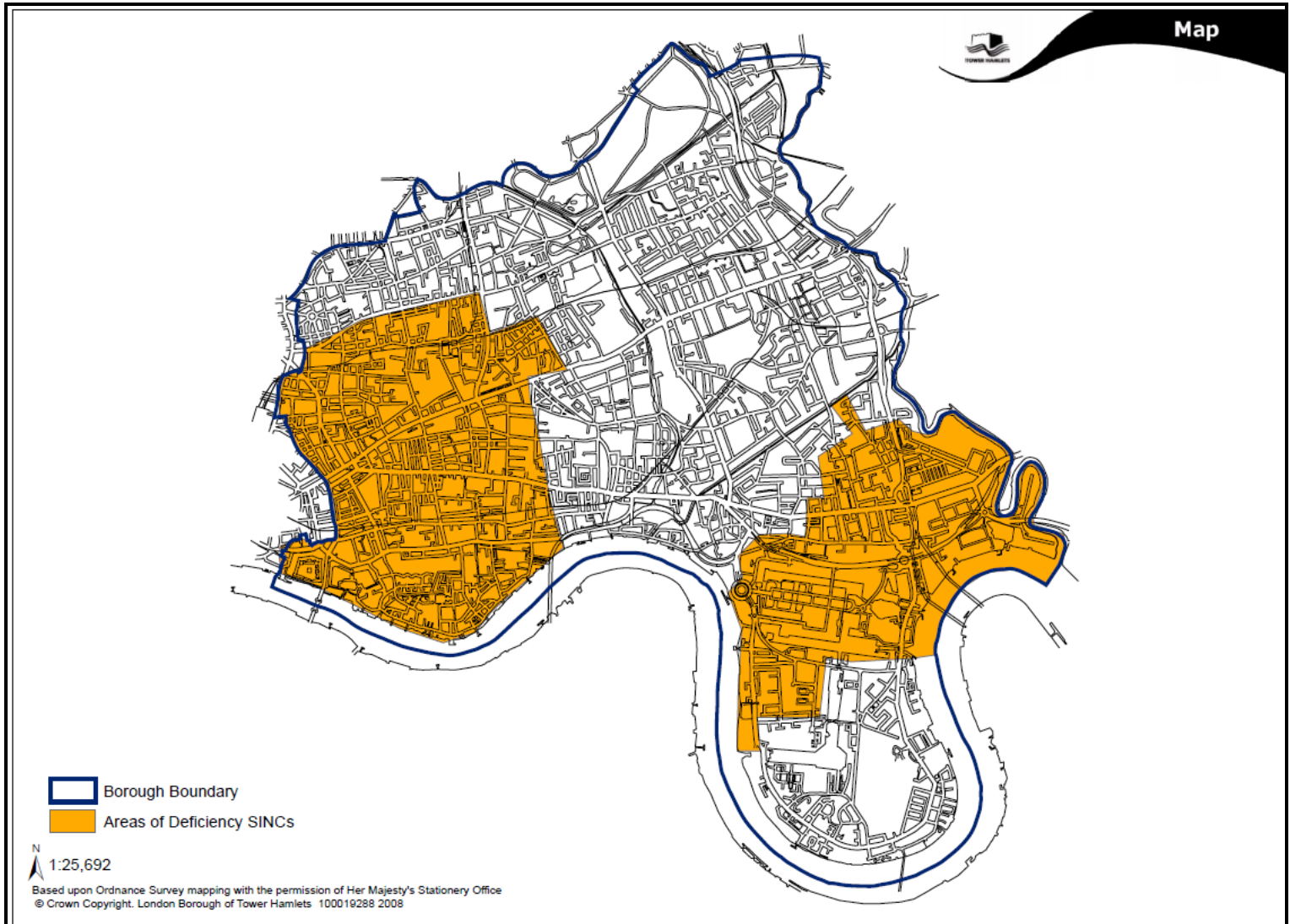


Areas of abundance

Tower Hamlets has a large amount of rivers and standing water providing habitats for species such as kingfishers and amphibians. Many of the parks are maintained in a way that encourages wildlife for example with the creation of wildflower meadows. The numerous green roofs in Canary Wharf provide habitat for rare bees and other invertebrates.

Areas of Deficiency for Access to Nature²

Despite an abundance of wildlife in some areas, Tower Hamlets has a high population and this can mean that in some areas opportunities to experience wildlife can be few and far between. The Borough has two large Areas of Deficiency (AoD) for Access to Nature (the yellow areas on the map below).



² The Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy (A1.2.13 – page 118) defines Areas of Deficiency (AoD) as built-up areas more than one kilometre actual walking distance from an accessible Metropolitan or Borough Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). In defining these areas there are several considerations that come into play e.g accessibility, size of the site etc.



People and wildlife

The LBAP is not just concerned about biodiversity in Tower Hamlets but also with local people's ability to access it. As stated earlier biodiversity is important to human welfare. Learning about biodiversity is an important part of education. As a result the LBAP contains a number of ideas around enhancing people's experience of biodiversity and opportunities for education.

Preparing for the future

With pressure on Tower Hamlets for more housing and associated infrastructure and the potential effects of global warming it is all the more important that the LBAP is working effectively to protect biodiversity.

Partnerships in Tower Hamlets

This LBAP has been widely consulted on and has had input from a wide range of groups and individuals. A partnership 'Tower Habitats' with representatives from a range of local groups with an interest in biodiversity meets on a regular basis. The group reviews the biodiversity action plan, checking on progress and raising any concerns or ideas that have been brought to the attention of any members.

Is biodiversity really being protected and enhanced?

It is important that data is readily available in order to judge how well the LBAP is working and that there is a transparent process of review in order to make sure that the best decisions are being made. There will be an annual review of each HAP at a workshop that involves a wide range of stakeholders and aims to share best practice and review progress.

There are also two external monitoring and evaluation tools available for monitoring of the LBAP's performance;

GIGL (Greenspace Information for Greater London)

GIGL is the capital's open space and biodiversity records centre – they collate, manage and make available detailed information on London's wildlife, parks, nature reserves, gardens and other open spaces. This enables changes in species and habitats to be monitored. The Council has had a Service Level Agreement with GIGL since 2006. GIGL undertake a number of activities on our behalf such as data collection, data storage, mapping, GIS, surveying and IT support. GIGL is currently developing a Planning Screening Tool which will enable all planning applications to

be screened against biodiversity criteria, providing guidance to planners and developers on recommended action.

BARS (Biodiversity Action Reporting System)

BARS is the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan reporting system. It includes all national, local and company Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) and the Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans of all four countries. All actions from this LBAP will be entered into this national database and performance can be monitored. The database is publicly available.

Internal monitoring

The council's ecology officer, based in the Sustainable Development Team within the Development & Renewal directorate, takes the lead on implementation and monitoring delivery of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan working alongside and with the support and input of the various partners. The ecology officer will report annually to the council's Corporate Management Team (CMT) on LBAP performance particularly in relation to the targets contained therein.

Partnerships

The Local Biodiversity Partnership, Tower Habitats, is an important open forum where successes or failures can be discussed and changes made. The LBAP is fully reviewed every 5 years with a wide consultation process. New national strategies are incorporated and new targets and actions developed.

3. Working alongside other policies and laws

Other policies and laws

This LBAP does not exist in isolation but is designed to work with other policies and laws.

For example at a local level the LBAP can help inform developers about the need for green roofs and can work on greening policies to suggest species of trees to plant along roads. On a global level information gathered can feed into global monitoring of species. There are a number of species in Tower Hamlets listed internationally in the 'Red Data Book' system as threatened with extinction and the LBAP can help monitor and protect them.

Tower Hamlets policies

Local Development Framework (LDF) - The London Plan has designated two Areas of Deficiency for Access to Nature in the west and south east of the borough that indicate that people living and working in these areas have little access to observe and interact with wildlife. The borough's Local Biodiversity Action Plan working with other policies seeks to address these deficiencies, in particular two key studies, carried out as part of the evidence base for the LDF;



Wildflower planting on Ackroyd Drive Green Link

Opportunities for Sustainable Energy and Biodiversity Enhancement”, a study carried out by Land Use Consultants, which was highly commended at the Royal Town Planning Institute Planning Awards 2008. This report designates 14 “Biodiversity Enhancement Zones (BEZ)” for focused action in addition to borough-wide activities. The BEZ maps are available to download on the www.towerhabitats.org website. Further guidance is being developed to support the BEZ recommendations.

The Green Grid. The vision for the Green Grid is to develop a comprehensive strategic plan which will deliver an interlinked network of high-quality, multi-functional accessible, ‘green’ open spaces in Tower Hamlets with the ultimate goals of maximising opportunities for improving quality of life, and making the borough a healthier place to live in. The Green Grid aims to encourage accessible green spaces, tree, hedge and flower planting along roads, living roofs and other biodiversity improvements to buildings (as well as create new green spaces)

Borough’s Community Plan: Biodiversity conservation and enhancement contributes to all four themes of the Borough’s Community Plan;

A great place to live
A prosperous community
A safe and supportive community
A healthy community

London Policies

In 2002 the Mayor of London published 'Connecting with London's Nature', the first statutory Biodiversity Strategy at regional level. The strategy sets two targets to measure the success of strategic objectives for biodiversity in London:

- No net loss of important wildlife habitat
- Areas of Deficiency in accessible wildlife sites are reduced

The London Plan sets the strategic context for open space planning, based on protecting and promoting a network of open spaces throughout London

BAP species are also recognised in the London Plan: 'The Mayor will and boroughs should resist development that would have a significant adverse impact on the population or conservation status of protected species or priority species identified in the London Biodiversity Action Plan and borough BAPs

The Mayor will and Boroughs should take account of the protection of wildlife habitats and biodiversity in the consideration of all planning applications.

The Mayor will and Boroughs should ensure that new development capitalises on opportunities to create, manage and enhance wildlife habitat and natural landscape. Priority should be given to sites within or near to areas deficient in accessible wildlife sites, areas of regeneration, and adjacent to existing wildlife sites. In further support of this, every London Authority is encouraged to work towards the principles and proposals it sets by producing its own Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

UK policies and law

Conserving and enhancing biodiversity is becoming an increasingly important policy driver at the national level. In 2006 the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC Act or "Biodiversity Duty") came into force. This legislation means that, from 1st October 2006, all local authorities and other public authorities in England and Wales have a duty to promote and enhance biodiversity in all of their functions. The official wording of the legislation, in section 40 of the Act, 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".

Section 48 of the DEFRA Circular (04/01) states that Local Biodiversity Action Plans should form an integral part of a local authority's Community Plan. Therefore, it is, by implication, a statutory requirement to produce a Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC)

On 1st October 2006 the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act came into force in England and Wales, Section 40 of the Act 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

The Audit Commission is currently developing "Protecting and enhancing biodiversity" (Natural Environment module) within its inspections of Public Bodies.

BREEAM (BRE Environmental Assessment Method) is the leading and most widely used environmental assessment method for buildings. It sets the standard for best practice in sustainable design and has become the de facto measure used to describe a building's environmental performance. Biodiversity improvements can contribute to 30% of the BREEAM weightings (Land use and ecology & Health and wellbeing). Biodiversity improvements can also contribute to a school's performance within the National Sustainable Schools Framework, which requires all schools to be sustainable by 2020, to prepare young people for a lifetime of sustainable living.

There are a number of designations of sites in London that offer protection including Sites of Special Scientific interest (SSSI) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). LNRs are a material consideration in planning. Local authorities have a considerable amount of control over what does and doesn't happen. There are also Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). These sites are classified into Sites of Metropolitan Importance, Borough and Local Importance for Nature Conservation. Although not a statutory designation, SINCs are given some protection under the London Plan, in borough unitary development plans and local development frameworks.

There are 46 SINCs in Tower Hamlets including two LNRs. They are listed in the table below.

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCS) in Tower Hamlets

Site name	Site Ref	Area (m²)
Sites of Metropolitan Importance		
London's Canals	M006 TH	200,617
The River Thames and tidal tributaries	M031 TH	1,804,396
Lea Valley	M071 TH	68,466
Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park and the Soanes Centre	M117	116,108
Mudchute Park and Farm	M133	132,002
Sites of Borough Importance - Grade 1		
The Greenway in Tower Hamlets	THBI01	7,635
Victoria Park	THBI02	868,393
Mile End Park	THBI03	226,429
East India Dock Basin	THBI04	39,404
Poplar Dock and Blackwall Basin	THBI08	69,194
Sites of Borough Importance - Grade 2		
Millwall and West India Docks	THBII01	348,678
St Judes Nature Park (Bethnal Green Nature Reserve)	THBII03	2,527
Cable Street Community Garden	THBII04	5,540
Stepping Stones Farm	THBII05	13,455
Spitalfields City Farm and Allen Gardens	THBII06	18,268
London Wall and the wall of the Tower of London	THBII07	354
Spitalfields Viaduct	THBII08	49,623
Pinchin Street Disused Railway	THBII11	2,036

Sites of Local Importance

St George in the East Church Gardens	THL01	12,793
Wapping Park	THL02	9,774
Old Railway at Fairfoot Road	THL03	5,697
Ion Square Gardens	THL04	13,402
Weavers Fields	THL05	61,878
Stoneyard Lane	THL06	1,434
Shadwell Basin	THL07	35,911
Swedenborg Gardens	THL08	14,905
Bancroft Road Nature Garden	THL09	426
St Leonards Adventurous Playspace	THL10	2,468
Perring Community Garden	THL12	970
Disused railway Bow	THL13	19,811
Hermitage Basin	THL14	3,225
St Katharine's Dock	THL15	41,945
St Dunstan's Churchyard Stepney	THL16	19,070
St Anne's Churchyard, Limehouse	THL17	10,007
Wellclose Street Rough	THL18	1,981
St Paul's Churchyard, Shadwell	THL19	3,463
All Saints Churchyard, Poplar	THL20	10,233
Poplar Park and St Matthias Old Churchyard	THL21	18,606
Millwall Park	THL22	77,108
Cyril Jackson School Nature Area	THL23	805
St Luke's C of E Primary School Wild Area	THL24	2,073
Aberfeldy Millennium Green	THL25	3,833
Robin Hood Gardens	THL26	8,288
Meath Gardens	THL27	39,145
Ropemakers Field	THL28	15,802
St Bartholomew's Gardens	THL29	3,692

European and Global polices and law

Some species are protected under European legislation - the Habitats Regulations, while others are protected by domestic legislation - Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (See Appendix D, page 48), as amended by CRoW. The levels of protection are different.

Some species have legal protection that is relevant to anyone who comes into contact with them (e.g. badgers and bats), others have protection that planners and developers need to be aware of (e.g. water voles, whose burrows are protected).

In 1992, the UK Government signed up to the Convention of Biological Diversity at the Rio Earth Summit. This required the creation and enforcement of national strategies and action plans to conserve, protect and enhance biodiversity.

The Johannesburg Summit in 2002 reaffirmed the importance of conserving the natural resource base and set the target of a "substantial reduction in the rate of loss of biological diversity" by 2010.

4. Habitat Action Plan (HAP) 1 - The Built Environment



Adria Bellflower (*Campanula portensclagiana*) in Tower Hamlets

Introduction

This section is primarily aimed at planners and developers to ensure that new developments and renovations are designed to maximise biodiversity. Sources of more detailed information to aid design and related council policies are listed at the end of this section.

The built environment in Tower Hamlets consists of buildings, roads and associated areas as well as previously developed (brownfield) sites. This is a significant proportion of the borough and an important habitat for plants and animals as well as a key place for people to experience wildlife.

Buildings

Old developments provide unplanned roosting sites for bats and swifts and support plants such as buddleia and ivy that offer food and shelter for wildlife. New developments tend to offer fewer opportunities for wildlife unless these are deliberately included in the design. Living roofs and walls, bat and swift boxes and other design features significantly increase a building's biodiversity.

Transport Corridors

Trees and plants along roads and railway lines can provide important corridors for wildlife to travel along linking together green spaces such as parks and gardens. This planting also makes travelling around the borough more enjoyable.

Brownfield sites

Areas that were once developed and are now disused are classed as brownfield sites, although they may sometimes appear derelict and litter strewn these areas can support a range of species that enrich the urban environment.

Current Status

Tower Hamlets covers just less than 8 square miles, with about 33% defined as 'Built Environment' i.e buildings, transport corridors (e.g roads, verges and railway lines) and previously developed (brownfield) sites.

The borough also has two large Areas of Deficiency for Access to Nature – as defined by the GLA - in the south east of the Borough and around Poplar. These areas coincide with the highest density of buildings and population. This means that people living and moving around in these areas see very little wildlife on a day to day basis. The built environment in Tower Hamlets is therefore of great importance for both protecting biodiversity and for allowing people to experience local wildlife.

On a positive note Tower Hamlets has over a third of London's living roof and living wall area, mainly around Canary Wharf. The Borough installed 26,520m² or 11% of London's green roofs between 2004 - 8, making it the second highest performer of all London Local Authorities, providing valuable habitat for rare bird species such as the Black Redstart. Quality green roofs can be a valuable addition to habitats but should not be an excuse for the loss of green space.

Factors Affecting the Habitat

The main factor affecting this habitat type is pressure from development and increased use. New development will continue to shrink brownfield areas that provide a resource for wildlife and the redevelopment of old buildings can damage their capacity to provide homes for wildlife, especially swifts and bats.

The Further Alterations to the London Plan proposes 31,500 new homes and associated development plus 100,000 new jobs for the Borough by 2017. The successful Olympic bid for the capital is further intensifying pressure on the borough's green spaces. The national standard of open space is 2.4 hectares per 1000 population (National Playing Fields Association Standard). Tower Hamlets is deficient in open space level at 1.2 hectares and the new homes will increase pressure on existing open space.

Current Action

The Green Grid is a plan for Green Corridors or Biodiversity Enhancement Zones (BEZ) in Tower Hamlets that will link together areas of biodiversity (such as parks) and at the same time increase people access to nature and make travelling around the borough by foot or on bike more pleasurable. The Green Grid aims to encourage accessible green spaces, tree, hedge and flower planting along roads, living roofs and other biodiversity improvements to buildings. Officers will implement the Green Grid by ensuring that developers are made aware of the recommendations and have the necessary supporting information. Community groups will also be involved in implementing improvements to the Green Grid.

The council is ensuring that biodiversity issues are integrated fully into the Planning Pre-Application stage process by including biodiversity in its Pre Application forum

meetings with developers and involving the Borough ecologist on all pre-application consultations received (see Action # 9 below).

Flagship Species

A flagships species is one where its population level reflects the overall biodiversity and health of a particular habitat. For example Black Redstarts feed on a range of insects and their numbers can be increased by the creation of living roofs that promote insect biodiversity. Flagship species can also act as ambassadors for publicly promoting habitat protection. Flagship species are not an exhaustive list and this plan is concerned with all UK biodiversity Action Plan Species. The following species have been identified for the Built Environment in Tower Hamlets:

Category	Common Name	Latin	Brief Description
Birds	Peregrine falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	A swift flying falcon that often nests on undisturbed ledges high on tower blocks.
	Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	An aerial bird, which is a superb flier. Migrates from Africa annually. Nests in the eaves of buildings but will use swift boxes.
	Black redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	Small robin-sized bird that has adapted to live at the heart of industrial and urban centres. With fewer than 100 breeding pairs in the UK, Tower Hamlets is home to over 1% of the national population. They can find food on brownfield sites and living roofs.
Mammals	Common Pipistrelle Bat	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	Pipistrelle bats are frequently seen in Tower Hamlets but need suitable summer and winter roosts. Bat roosts are protected and bat boxes can offer them new spaces.
Plants	Ivy	Family: <i>Araliaceae</i>	Evergreen climber found on many walls in Tower Hamlets. Provides habitat for Brimstone butterfly amongst other species.
	London Rocket	<i>Sysimbrium irio</i>	A nationally rare plant first found in Britain in Whitechapel in the early 1650s. It spread after the Great Fire of London in 1666. It grows on old walls and untended corners.
Invertebrates	Brown-banded Carder Bee	<i>Bombus humilis</i>	Together with about half British species of bumble bee this bee has suffered serious decline in recent years. Its stronghold is along the Thames. Flowers on ivy and on plants on living roofs provide nectar and pollen for this species.

Mission Statement

Alongside improving data on biodiversity in the built environment and seeking to protect and enhance it, there are also a number of educational aims. These include seeking to raise awareness across Tower Hamlets of the potential of existing built structures and surrounding areas and new developments to support plant and animal life and to increase access to biodiverse areas of the built environment so as to allow people to enjoy and appreciate them to a greater extent.

Targets

1) To improve data on biodiversity in Tower Hamlets so as to form a baseline.

2) To protect and mitigate losses of biodiversity from future redevelopment of brownfield sites and enhance biodiversity in the built environment.

1) SMART Actions

To improve data on biodiversity in Tower Hamlets in order to form a baseline.

No.	Action	Lead partner	Start Date	End Date	Resources (per annum)
1	Collect baseline data for living roof area and brownfield area in Tower Hamlets. Baseline and targets for increasing living roofs to be established and adopted within LDF.	LBTH Planning	2009	2014	£500 [D&R]
2	Collect baseline data for current populations of bats, black redstarts and swifts.	Chair Tower Habitats*	2009	2014	ER (Existing Resources)
3	To work with volunteers to gather data on species to be fed into GIGL	Chair Tower Habitats	2009	2014	ER

*Chair Tower Habitats = Sustainability Officer based in Sustainable Development team within Development & Renewal directorate. This role will pass to the Borough ecologist once in post.

To protect and enhance biodiversity in the built environment.

No.	Action	Lead partner	Start Date	End Date	Resources (per annum)
4	Produce a guide for planners, developers and businesses which will enable the specification, creation and management of habitats for local wildlife. Include links to external organisations that can offer further support.	Chair Tower Habitats	2009	2014	ER
5	Increase proportion of living	LBTH	2009	2014	ER

	roofs/ walls in new development as a percentage of Planning Application approvals with a particular focus on Biodiversity Enhancement Zones (BEZ)	Planning			
6	Conduct/ commission a study to assess the potential for improving council owned or managed buildings for biodiversity	Chair Tower Habitats	2009	2011	£5K [D&R, one-off cost]
7	To obtain maximum ecology credits in the CLG's Code for Sustainable Homes for all developments	LBTH Planning	2009	2014	ER
8	To tie this Biodiversity Action Plan in with Environmental Impact Assessments scoping guidance so that all planners take account of it	LBTH Planning	2009	2010	ER
9	The borough ecologist to be copied into pre-application consultations as each is received	LBTH Planning	2010	2010	ER
10	Investigate the effect of climate change on street tree survival and consider changes in species	LBTH Planning	2009	2014	ER

To raise awareness across Tower Hamlets of the potential of existing built structures and surrounding areas and new developments to support plant and animal life.

No.	Action	Lead partner	Start Date	End Date	Resources (per annum)
11	Set up a nest box /bat box installation scheme for the Borough	Friends Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park (FTHCP)	2009	2014	£500 [D&R]
12	Promote awareness of sustainable urban drainage systems that also promote biodiversity, through inputting to planning policy and liaising with developers	Chair Tower Habitats	2009	2014	ER
13	Organise one Local Area Plan (LAP) tour per year per LAP to living roofs or other	Tower Hamlets Strategic	2009	2014	Participatory budgeting

	examples of biodiversity good practice to raise awareness	Partnership			
14	Deliver three annual site visits for planners and developers to see best-practice examples of Design for Biodiversity in the built environment locally.	Chair Tower Habitats	2009	2014	£300 [D&R]
15	Expand the number of green roofs on Tower Hamlets Homes sites with the involvement of local residents. 2 new sites	Tower Hamlet Homes	2009	2014	ER
16	Maintain the towerhabitats.org website with comprehensive and current guidance and biodiversity best practice for developers and planners. Newsletter to be sent out electronically to subscribers monthly.	Chair Tower Habitats	2009	2014	£200 [D&R]

To increase access to biodiverse areas of the built environment.

No.	Action	Lead partner	Start Date	End Date	Resources (per annum)
17	Promote access to nature by encouraging new living roofs to be accessible to those that work or live in the building where feasible	LBTH Planning	2009	2014	ER
18	Produce detailed guidance for Biodiversity Enhancement Zones (BEZ) for planners and developers	Chair Tower Habitats to coordinate. D&R to fund.	2009	2014	£10K [D&R, one-off cost]

To mitigate losses of biodiversity from future redevelopment of brownfield sites.

No.	Action	Lead partner	Start Date	End Date	Resources (per annum)
19	Ensure that the loss of brownfield sites is mitigated by the creation of living roofs incorporating materials and seeds from the site.	LBTH Planning	2009	2014	ER

Total					£1,500 (+ £15K one off cost)

2) Links with other policies / tools

- Environmental Impact Assessment scoping guidance
- CLG Code for Sustainable Homes
- Local Development Framework (LDF)
- Green Grid and Biodiversity Enhancement Zones (BEZ)
- Biodiversity and renewable energy opportunities in the Central Area Action Plan study (evidence base for LDF)
- Open Space Strategy
- Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)
- Housing Strategy
- Strategic Environmental Assessment
- Regulatory Impact Assessment

3) Sources of further information

There are many sources of good practice guidance available to developers. The Mayor of London has Supplementary Planning Guidance on Sustainable Design and Construction; the Town and Country Planning Association has produced Biodiversity by Design – A Guide for Sustainable Communities; and the London Development Agency, Natural England and Greater London Authority have published Design for Biodiversity – A guidance document for development in London.

DCLG (the Department of Communities and Local Government) has a Code for Sustainable Homes which includes ecology as a standard in a national sustainability rating system for homes.

In 2008 the Council funded the development of the Tower Hamlets Biodiversity Partnership website – www.towerhabitats.org – a resource for all biodiversity stakeholders including planners and developers. The site will be developed further with biodiversity guidance and best practice case studies. www.livingroofs.org provides information on living roofs.

4) Lead Partner Organisation and Working Group Members

The Lead Partner for this Plan is London Borough Tower Hamlets - Strategic planning team. Working group members include;

- LBTH Strategic Housing
- Canary Wharf Group
- www.Livingroofs.org

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5. Habitat Action Plan (HAP) 2 - Gardens and Grounds



The smallest spaces in Tower Hamlets are often used for growing flowers and vegetables

Introduction

Gardens and grounds provide many benefits including an opportunity for people to grow their own food and experience biodiversity first hand. This section is aimed at individuals, housing estate managers, schools, businesses and other groups maintaining gardens or grounds in Tower Hamlets. It aims to support and encourage those who want to protect and enhance biodiversity. Sources of more detailed information about wildlife gardening and biodiversity can be found at the end of this section.

Current Status

Gardens and grounds in Tower Hamlets provide an important patchwork of different habitats making up about 39% of the land in Tower Hamlets, the largest proportion of all 4 habitat types in this Plan. A single garden with compost heap, pond, hedges, log piles, wildflowers, climbing plants and trees can contain a huge variety of life, offering important homes to birds, amphibians and invertebrates. Together gardens and grounds can help link green spaces in Tower Hamlets making it easier for wildlife to travel. They also provide an important place for people to experience biodiversity.

Factors affecting the habitat

As with the previous HAP, a major factor that affects this habitat type is development pressure with 31,500 new homes to be built in the Borough by 2017. Some of this development may include extending buildings and the loss of gardens and grounds. Paving over gardens for parking or to reduce maintenance causes further garden loss.

The upkeep and maintenance of gardens and grounds can be seen as time-consuming and expensive. Many sites are maintained with limited planting, short grass and with the use of chemical pesticides reducing the capacity for wildlife to thrive. Low maintenance planting that is beneficial for wildlife is possible however.

A study by the UK Climate Impacts Programme has shown that climate change will affect millions of domestic gardens in the UK and could ultimately threaten the long-term survival of common species.

Current Action

Wildlife gardening and organic techniques have been promoted by a number of organisations in Tower Hamlets including the three city farms, the Environment Trust and The Women’s Environment Network. In 2008 the London Borough of Tower Hamlets produced a guide to wildlife gardening in conjunction with the Environment Trust. Several housing estates including Island Gardens on the Isle of Dogs have run biodiversity improvement projects. Schools which are part of the BSF programme, the eco-schools programme or other environmental management schemes are also improving their school grounds for biodiversity. An example of this is Thomas Buxton infant school in Spitalfields where a wildflower garden has been created.

Flagship species

A flagship species is one where its population level reflects the overall biodiversity and health of a particular habitat. For example hedgehogs rely on a healthy population of invertebrates to feed on and undisturbed vegetation and log piles for hibernation. Flagship species can also act as ambassadors for publically promoting habitat protection. Flagship species are not an exhaustive list and this plan is concerned with all UK biodiversity Action Plan Species. The following species have been identified for Gardens and Grounds in Tower Hamlets:

Category	Common Name	Latin	Brief Description
Birds	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	A familiar and popular bird that is quite territorial and can become fairly tame in gardens
	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Another familiar garden bird with a lovely song
Mammals	hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	Hedgehogs are found in a few places in Tower Hamlets and are in urgent need of help. They could be extinct in the UK by 2025 without intervention. They feed on slugs and other invertebrates and need cover to hibernate.
Reptiles	Slow Worm	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>	The slow worm looks superficially like a snake, but is actually a legless lizard. They

			can make their homes in back gardens, particularly those with open compost heaps that offer shelter.
Amphibians	Newt	<i>Triturus vulgaris</i>	Smooth newts are nocturnal and spend the day hiding under large stones or compost heaps. From mid-October they hibernate, emerging again in February or March.
Plants	Dog Violet	<i>Viola riviniana</i>	This attractive flower can grow in mown lawns and in corners of gardens
	Black Knapweed	<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	With mauve thistle-like flowers this species provides an important source of nectar for many butterflies
Invertebrates	Meadow brown butterfly	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>	A brown butterfly that thrives on meadows with a wide diversity of grasses and flowers
	banded snails	<i>Cepaea nemoralis</i> / <i>hortensis</i>	Banded snails can be found around Tower Hamlets
	Garden Tiger Moth	<i>Arctia caja</i>	A brightly patterned moth with furry caterpillars. Its numbers in the UK have declined by 89% over the past 30 years

Vision Statement

We aim to raise interest and understanding of the importance of garden and grounds and enlist the public to help collect data on biodiversity.

We aim to protect gardens and grounds from development and increase the number and area of gardens and grounds which are managed sustainably for wildlife.

We aim to involve social housing providers in improving their green spaces for biodiversity

We aim to encourage residents to garden for food organically in areas that would otherwise be amenity grass with lower biodiversity value.

Action Plan Targets

- To collect data on the biodiversity of gardens and grounds
- To protect the overall resource of private gardens in London by discouraging building on existing gardens.
- To increase the number and area of gardens and grounds which are managed sustainably for wildlife and identify areas for enhancement.

Smart actions

To raise interest and understanding of the importance of gardens and grounds and enlist the public to help collect data on biodiversity.

No.	Action	Lead partner	Start Date	End Date	Resources (per annum)
1	Promote the Garden Bird Watch Survey run by the British Trust for Ornithology through two bird walks a year coinciding with the launch and an article on the Tower Habitats website.	Chair Tower Habitats	2009	2014	£250 [THH]
2	Promote London Wildlife Trust's 'Wildlife in Gardens' survey through the Tower Habitats website.	Chair Tower Habitats	2009	2014	ER
3	Publish a list of sources for identifying garden invertebrates and a guide to birds found in Tower Hamlets on the Tower Habitats website.	Chair Tower Habitats	2009	2014	ER
4	Organise one good practice demonstration of wildlife gardening per year to key stakeholders including RSLs.	Chair Tower Habitats	2009	2014	£300 [THH]
5	Raise public interest in and awareness of the value of private gardens as an important wildlife habitat through distribution of wildlife gardening leaflet and seeds to 500 households with gardens per year.	Chair Tower Habitats	2009	2014	£200 [THH]
6	Promote information on wildlife gardening through 4 public talks and training sessions to be held at Friends Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park (FTHCP)	FTHCP	2009	2014	ER

To involve social housing providers in improving their green spaces for biodiversity

No.	Action	Lead partner	Start Date	End Date	Resources (per annum)
7	Encourage Registered Social Landlords and social housing providers to audit their green spaces for use and to identify	THH	2009	2014	ER

	areas that could be made more biodiverse. Minimum of 3 face to face meetings per year.				
8	Encourage Landlords to specify maintenance methods that protect and enhance biodiversity to green space maintenance contractors	Chair Tower Habitats	2009	2014	ER
9	Establish a working partnership between LBTH, FTHC, Social Landlords and others to enhance Biodiversity around Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park	FTHCP	2009	2014	ER

To protect the overall resource of private gardens in London by discouraging building on existing gardens.

No.	Action	Lead partner	Start Date	End Date	Resources (per annum)
10	Establish and publicise policy and criteria for protection of garden sites from built development.	LBTH Strategic Planning	2009	2014	ER
11	Emphasise to homeowners that extensions taking up garden space will be more likely to succeed if they meet biodiversity aims	LBTH Strategic Planning	2009	2014	ER

To increase the number and area of gardens and grounds which are managed sustainably for wildlife and identify areas for enhancement.

No.	Action	Lead partner	Start Date	End Date	Resources (per annum)
12	Support community groups to develop wildlife friendly gardens. One extra wildlife friendly garden to be created each year. (5 out of 10 actions from list to be implemented)	Chair Tower Habitats	2009	2014	£500 [THH]
13	Develop a template for businesses to develop and implement their own biodiversity action plan that can be downloaded from	Chair Tower Habitats	2011	2012	ER

	the Tower Habitats website.				
14	Work with 4 schools per year on biodiversity enhancement or educational projects.	LBTH Children, Schools & Families / Chair Tower Habitats	2009	2014	£2000 [THH]
15	Increase the number and area of housing estate grounds which are managed sustainably for wildlife with active involvement of all stakeholders. One improvement per year per major housing provider (from approved list)	THH	2009	2014	ER / corporate challenges
16	Deliver one annual presentation to affordable housing developers in the principles of Design for Biodiversity via Tower Hamlets Housing Forum (THHF)/ Public Realm Sub Group.	Chair Tower Habitats	2009	2014	ER
17	Install a subterranean hedgehog hibernation home on one housing estate each year	Chair Tower Habitats	2009	2014	£1000 [THH]
18	Identify opportunities for biodiversity improvements in housing estates especially those that fall within Biodiversity Enhancement Zones (BEZ) and those that are due for renewal and ensure that biodiversity is considered during allocation of budgets	Strategic Housing	2009	2014	ER
19	Co-ordinate 3 offers per year to residents of Tower Hamlets of high biodiversity value plants, seeds or trees.	Chair Tower Habitats/ FTHCP	2009	2014	Funding from grants
20	Start biodiversity audit at Queen Mary university and identify areas for biodiversity improvement including the potential for wild flower meadows.	Environmental manager Queen Mary University	2009	2014	ER
21	Encourage the installation	Chair Tower	2009	2014	ER

	of bee hives in suitable gardens	Habitats			
Total					£4,250

Links with other policies

Housing strategy

Open Space Strategy

The Local Development Framework (LDF)

Green Grid and Biodiversity Enhancement Zones (BEZ)

Private homes improvement team – any strategy

Sources of further information

www.neighbourhoodsgreen.org.uk

www.wildlifetrusts.org

Lead partner organisations and working group members

The Lead partner for this Plan is Tower Hamlets Homes.

Working group members include;

- LBTH Housing Strategy
- LBTH Children, Schools & Families (TBC)
- Borough landscape contractors
- THHF
- RSLs / social landlords
- Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park
- Queen Mary University

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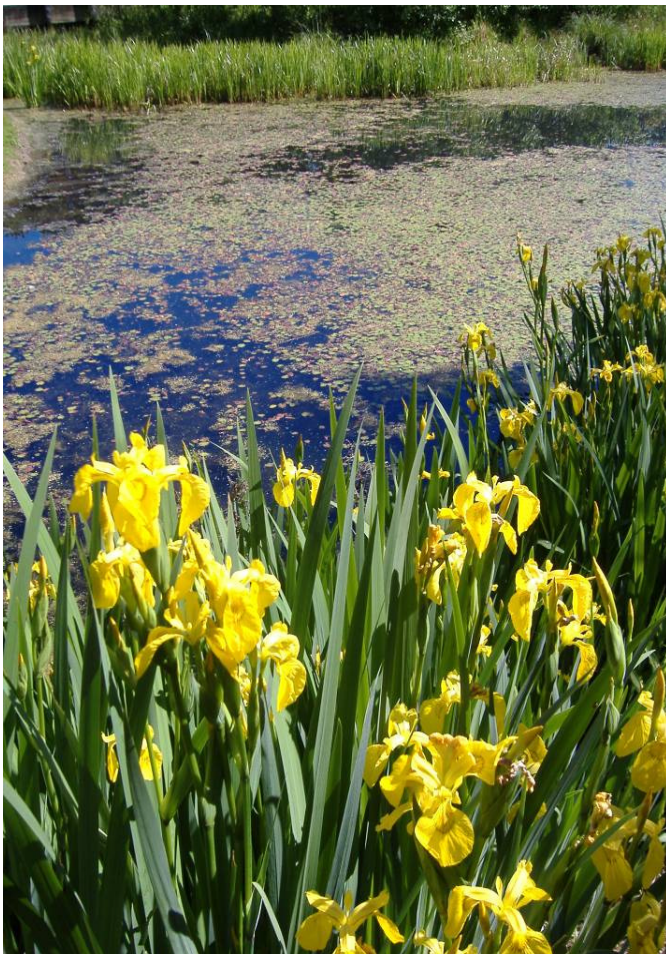
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6. Habitat Action Plan (HAP) 3 - Rivers and Standing Water



An ecology pond in Mile End Park

Introduction

This action plan is aimed at individuals and organisations involved in activities affecting the rivers and standing water in Tower Hamlets. This plan aims to assist in co-ordinating the process of protecting and enhancing these habitats.

Tower Hamlets has significant water habitats with several canals, the River Lea and the Thames and numerous lakes, ponds and docks. The River Thames and its banks, together with its tidal tributaries, are London's largest natural wildlife resource, recognised as a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation (The Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy). Other bodies of water from docks and canals to ponds and lakes also provide important habitats for many species.

Current Status

Rivers and Standing Water make up about 15% of the land area in Tower Hamlets.

Rivers

The Thames and the Lower Lea are valuable for a broad range of biodiversity and key for many migratory species and a 'green corridor' that runs through Tower Hamlets

Tower Hamlets is defined on its southern and eastern boundaries by the River Thames and the River Lea (Bow Creek section). Several reed beds have become established and support a wide variety of plants including wild celery, foals water cress, hemlock water dropwort and garden angelica. In addition ribbons of mudflats, important feeding grounds for birds, are exposed at low tide interspersed along the rivers banks. Recent improvements to water quality have increased the number of fish. However much of the seven kilometres of the River Thames and Bow Creek that form the border of Tower Hamlets are confined by vertical embankments, which restrict the natural development of marginal vegetation.

Canals

All the canals within London are designated Sites of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation. Tower Hamlets is fortunate to have sections of three canals pass through the Borough; the Limehouse Cut, the Hertford Union Canal and the Regent's Canal (part of the Grand Union Canal). The three sections of canal in Tower Hamlets are managed by British Waterways. Part of this responsibility is to improve environmental management and safeguard the ecology. Information available about the plant and animal communities of the canals is incomplete. The ecological status varies between and within stretches.

Docks

Tower Hamlets is home to many of London's docks, a number have undergone redevelopment in the last couple of decades. The water space is increasingly being recognised for its ecological value and ecology is being considered more frequently in regeneration and development projects.

Lakes and Ponds

There are several lakes and large ponds in the borough including the ecology ponds in Mile End Park and the east and west lakes in Victoria Park. These are also small ponds in the borough, many in private gardens and schools grounds, these provide an important habitat for amphibians.

Ecological improvements to the east lake in Victoria Park have brought about improvements in biodiversity and ponds have been created in Friends Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park and other sites in the last five years. Many lakes and ponds in the borough are eutrophic, they contain high levels of nutrients which can lead to shortages of oxygen in the summer months restricting the species that can survive.

Factors Affecting the Habitat

Building pressure represents one of the most significant threats to rivers and canals, mainly through disturbance and increased shading. The potential effect of shading starts at the bottom of the food chain and suppresses or prevents the growth of marginal and aquatic vegetation. This leads to a reduced food source for invertebrates and their predators such as fish and dragonfly, which consequently leads to a reduction in bird life such as kingfishers, cormorants and gulls.

Invasive and non-native species including Japanese Knotweed along the river Lea have a negative impact on biodiversity by their invasive nature and tendency to die back in the winter leaving banks exposed. The Lea River has suffered from contamination from local industries, from pollution and fly-tipping from neighbouring businesses, as well as the decline in commercial boat movement.

Public perception and concern over health and safety may threaten ponds in places where there is a risk children will have unsupervised access. Nutrient levels in the lakes are adversely affected from the feeding of bread to birds by the general public. Climate change may cause ponds to dry out more frequently in the summer and reduce river water levels.

There are also changes likely with the redevelopment for the Olympics, some of these may be positive, such as the reduction in Japanese Knotweed and creation of riverside habitats. Others may be less positive such as inadvertent damage and disruption to existing habitats.

Current Action

The council is working with partners British Waterways, Thames 21 and the Environment Agency to formulate a programme of practical enhancements to improve the waterways of Tower Hamlets for wildlife.

Thames 21 run river clean-up events on the tidal Thames as well as numerous other activities. The East Lake in Victoria Park has been enhanced for biodiversity and lakes and ponds in several parks are monitored for biodiversity. Mile End Park, Mudchute Park and Farm, Friends Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park and Victoria Park run public education activities around their ponds and lakes to increase understanding of their biodiversity.

Flagship species

A flagships species is one where its population level reflects the overall biodiversity and health of a particular habitat. For example the kingfisher relies on water bodies that are healthy enough to supply fish and banks that allow nesting opportunities. Flagship species can also act as ambassadors for publicly promoting habitat protection. Flagship species are not an exhaustive list and this plan is concerned with all UK biodiversity Action Plan Species. The following species have been identified for the Rivers and Standing Water Habitat in Tower Hamlets:

Category	Common Name	Latin	Brief Description
Birds	Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	It is a bird of the waterside, since it feeds entirely upon aquatic animals. It is frequent beside lakes, ponds, canals or dykes and streams.
	Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	This species breeds in colonies in trees close to lakes, the sea-shore or other wetlands, although it will also nest in reed beds. It builds a bulky stick nest. It feeds in shallow water, catching fish or frogs with its long bill.
Mammals	Common Pipistrelle Bat	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	Highly adapted nocturnal mammals that only eat insects and therefore they feed close to standing water, especially canals.
	Otters	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	Apart from fish, otters also feed on crustaceans, water birds, frogs and voles. An otter was killed on a road in Tower Hamlets 2007 suggesting that the species may one day be able to naturally re-colonise the borough.
	Bank Voles	<i>Clethrionomys glareolus</i>	The smallest of the UK's voles, bank voles are found in hedgerows, banks and verges,

			especially in deciduous woodland.
Amphibian	Great crested newt	<i>Triturus cristatus</i>	Great crested newts are Britain's largest newt species, numbers have declined over recent years but a population exists in Tower Hamlets living in a number of small ponds.
Fish	Crucian carp	<i>Carassius carassius</i>	A small carp native to British ponds and lakes.
Plants	Common reed	<i>Phragmites australis</i>	It commonly forms extensive stands, up to a square kilometre or more (known as reed beds) that provide shelter for a range of species.
Invertebrates	Emperor Dragonfly	<i>Anax imperator</i>	A large bright blue/ green dragonfly, active and mostly associated with large, well vegetated ponds and lakes, but may be found over canals and slow moving rivers

Vision Statement

To ensure the protection and enhancement for biodiversity of river and standing water habitats in Tower Hamlets

Promote awareness and appreciation of these habitats in the local community.

Targets

- To collect data and monitor the existing status of biodiversity in river and standing water habitats.
- To conserve and manage existing wildlife habitats, species diversity and local distinctiveness of the rivers and standing water in Tower Hamlets and develop the capacity to make improvements to these habitats.
- To deliver biodiversity improvements to river and standing water habitats in Tower Hamlets

SMART Actions to meet Vision Statement and Targets

To collect data and monitor the existing status of biodiversity in River and standing water habitats.

No.	Action	Lead partner	Start Date	End Date	Resources (per annum)
1	Survey the amount of reed bed and softened banks in the borough and link to the mapping work of Thames 21.	Thames 21	2009	2014	ER
2	Survey the amount of invasive species including Giant Hogweed, Himalayan Balsam, Floating Pennywort	Thames 21	2009	2014	ER

	and Japanese Knotweed alongside and in rivers and canals in Tower Hamlets				
3	Monitor the quality of water in Bow Creek and investigate any missed connections and sewage input into the river.	Thames 21 / Environment agency	2009	2014	ER
4	Monitor lake water quality and species diversity in Victoria park lakes and Mile End Park at least three times a year	LBTH Parks	2009	2014	ER

To conserve and manage existing wildlife habitats, species diversity and local distinctiveness of the rivers and standing water in Tower Hamlets and develop the capacity to make improvements to these habitats.

No.	Action	Lead partner	Start Date	End Date	Resources (per annum)
5	Research how the rivers, docks and canals can link into the Tower Hamlets Green Grid	LBTH Strategic Planning	2009	2014	ER
6	Seek more funding for the work by Kings College in developing methods and running trials on different softening methods	Thames 21	2009	2014	ER
7	Identify potential areas for softening and associated methods including fitting green strips into steel pilings	Thames 21	2009	2014	ER
8	Develop guidance focused at developers for increasing the amount of softened banks and vegetation in the boroughs rivers and canals by 50m per year through cladding, green walls and other methods. Include guidance on constructing kingfisher boxes.	Thames 21	2009	2014	ER
9	Investigate the potential of reintroducing water voles to Mile End Park, Regents Canal, Hertford Union Canal and Victoria Park	Chair Tower Habitats /London Wildlife Trust	2009	2014	ER
10	Develop a design for a	Thames 21	2009	2014	ER

	floating raft that has approval of planning department for ease of planning approval.	/LBTH Planning			
11	Contact Crossrail and organise at least one meeting to discuss the possibility of raising the bed of the dock where they are building the Isle of Dog's Station and creating a reed bed or similar habitat.	Chair Tower Habitats	2009	2014	ER
12	Work with DEFRA to explore the possibility of supporting Bow Creek being classified as a water protection zone	Chair Tower Habitats	2009	2014	ER

To deliver biodiversity improvements to river and standing water habitats in Tower Hamlets

No.	Action	Lead partner	Start Date	End Date	Resources (per annum)
13	Provide developers with guidance in the early stages of planning new developments along the waterways	Chair Tower Habitats	2009	2014	ER
14	Through working with developers create 50 metres of soft margins of Tower Hamlets canals and rivers each year.	LBTH Planning	2009	2014	ER
15	Trial a form of green wall with a plant matrix similar to that at the Westfield shopping centre on the Limehouse dock.	Thames 21	2009	2014	ER
16	Remove invasive species including Giant Hogweed, Himalayan Balsam, floating pennywort and Japanese Knotweed so that these species are reduced to 10% of their 2009 distribution in Tower Hamlets.	Thames 21	2009	2014	ER
17	Installation of minimum of one kingfisher nesting site and one otter holt as part of a new development along a river or canal bank	LBTH Planning	Jan 2010	2014	ER

18	Trial 3 wire cage fish refuges with reed planting in the limehouse cut.	Thames 21	2009	2014	ER
19	Create at least one new pond per year in the Borough's schools.	LBTH Children, Schools & Families / Chair Tower Habitats	2009	2014	£500 [CSF] / schools would fund within existing budgets
20	Install at least one raft / floating island or green wall in a dock each year	Thames 21	2009	2014	ER
21	Meet with Canary Wharf Group to investigate biodiversity improvements with the new Crossrail Canary Wharf Station especially green roofs and reed beds	Chair Tower Habitats	2009	2014	ER

To promote awareness and appreciation of rivers and standing water in the local community.

No.	Action	Lead partner	Start Date	End Date	Resources (per annum)
22	Host one presentation/ site visit per year for planners and developers on how to treat waterside developments	Chair Tower Habitats / Thames 21	2009	2014	ER
23	Run two public river walks with an emphasis on wildlife each year on the River Lea	Thames 21	2009	2014	ER
24	Run a stickleback project with at least 4 schools in Tower Hamlets each year to encourage understanding of river biodiversity	Thames 21	2009	2014	ER
25	Run at least 10 litter pick events on the tidal Thames each year	Thames 21	2009	2014	ER
26	Erect 2 signs near Victoria Park East & West lakes containing wildfowl providing species identification and explaining why birds should not be fed	LBTH Parks	2009	2014	£4000 [CLC]
27	Continue to run at least one fishing education event for young people and two pond	Thames 21	2009	2014	ER

	dipping events in Victoria park each year.				
28	Run one pond dipping event each in Mile End Park, Victoria Park and two in Friends Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park each year with community groups using the Thames Explorers Trust pond survey techniques and recording and sharing the species data through systems such as GIGL	LBTH Parks and FTHCP	2009	2014	£800 [CLC]
Total					£5300

Links with other policies

London Standing Water Habitat Action Plan
Tower Hamlets Green Grid

Sources of further information

www.thames21.org.uk

www.britishwaterways.co.uk

www.environment-agency.org.uk

Lead Partner Organisation and Working Group Members

The Lead Partner for this HAP is Thames 21.

Working group members include;

- London Borough Tower Hamlets
- British Waterways
- Environment Agency
- Thames Estuary Partnership

Contact

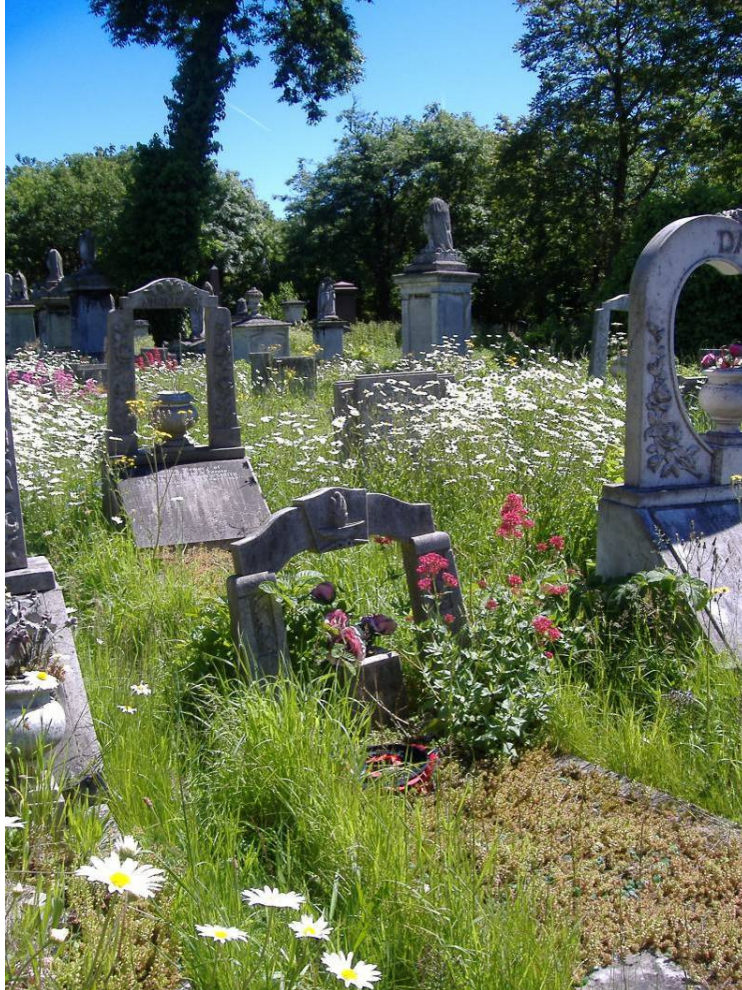
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7. Habitat Action Plan (HAP) 4 - Parks, Squares and Burial Grounds



Wildflowers in Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park

Introduction

Parks, squares and burial grounds in Tower Hamlets offer valuable habitats for many species and at the same time are heavily used by people, partly because they offer an opportunity to experience nature.

This plan is aimed at helping park, square and burial ground managers to improve these spaces for biodiversity, maintain these improvements and encourage public understanding of biodiversity. This plan is aimed at spaces that ultimately come under the responsibility of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets although some spaces are managed in partnership with other organisations. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets Parks Department also co-ordinates work on Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and street trees. This action plan covers SINCs; street trees are covered in the Build Environment Habitat Action Plan.

Current Status

Parks, Squares and Burial Grounds make up about 13% of the land use in Tower Hamlets. All parks and public open spaces are protected from development by planning policy and are an important part of the Tower Hamlets Green Grid, the Biodiversity Enhancement Zones (BEZ) and the Local Development Framework.

The Parks, Squares and Burial grounds vary in their capacity to support biodiversity partly as a result of maintenance schemes. Some are maintained in a commercial horticultural manner and others are maintained with a strong ecological focus.

Tower Hamlets consists of just under 8 square miles of inner city London and is deficient in Open Space. The borough also has two large Areas of Deficiency for Access to Nature – as defined by the GLA - in the south east of the Borough in the Poplar area. These areas coincide with the highest density of buildings and population.

The borough contains: 5 sites of metropolitan importance for nature conservation, 3 Major Parks, 53 Local Parks and many other spaces. There are 46 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation - SINCs (See page 13 for full list, Appendix C for map) and two parks designated as Local Nature Reserves, a statutory designation, which affords an enhanced level of protection.

Factors Affecting the Habitat

Pressure for Development.

As with the other 3 HAPs development pressure is a significant factor affecting this habitat.

Skills within Contracted Services

The horticultural management systems that benefit biodiversity are mostly implemented by contract staff. It is recognised that there is a lack of knowledge with respect to ecological issues within the horticultural industry. This can make it difficult to implement the management systems. However training and incorporating biodiversity enhancements to maintenance contracts has proved successful in some cases within the Borough.

Public Perception

Feedback from the public reveals that some people consider neatness as desirable. This can present challenges, for example the accumulation of leaf litter is good for biodiversity, with its associated invertebrates and cover for hedgehogs, but may appear to some people as untidy. Similarly when developing wildflower meadows some people express concern that the area has not been mowed. Success has been found by mowing a strip around the edge of a meadow area to demonstrate that the area has not been neglected, similar techniques have been developed in other areas and public education and information are used to communicate the reasons for maintenance changes.

Current Action

Traditionally, landscape management within Tower Hamlets' parks, squares and burial grounds has tended to have a formal quality. Over the last ten years, there has been greater emphasis on managing landscapes to create habitats for wildlife and to increase local people's access to natural green space.

A series of habitat creation projects undertaken within the parks service, and through third sector partners, has led to the establishment of annual and perennial meadow areas; ecological shrub site maintenance; woodland management for nature conservation; large scale tree planting programmes and marginal wetland enhancement.

The public interpretation of these new habitats is supported by the provision of interpretation signs and nature walk leaflets in addition to involving the local community in habitat creation and species.

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets will be working towards National Indicator 197 – 'Improved Local Biodiversity'. This measures the performance of local authorities by assessing their management for biodiversity of 'Local Sites'. To be included a site must have a management plan that makes a positive contribution to biodiversity and the LBAP and partnership groups must be involved to help deliver and monitor the plan. National Indicator 197 should help to highlight biodiversity as a key issue in the development and maintenance of parks, squares and burial grounds.

National Indicator 197 states 'Local Authorities should provide leadership in establishing and maintaining partnerships and systems to identify and manage Local Sites. Other partners include representatives from the voluntary and community sector. The Partnership should agree clear roles and responsibilities for the partners involved. The Partnership will also be responsible for verifying the evidence that sites are under positive conservation management.' In Tower Hamlets the partnership is Tower Habitats.

Tower Hamlets also includes National Indicator 7 'Environment for a thriving third sector' within its Local Area Agreement. This means that as a Borough we place great importance on fostering thriving relationships with the third sector. As such the Biodiversity Partnership is a key area where the Council can demonstrate this commitment to partnership working.

Flagship Species

A flagship species is one where its population level reflects the overall biodiversity and health of a particular habitat. For example Greater spotted woodpeckers feed on a range of insects and rely on an adequate level of dead wood that promotes insect biodiversity. Flagship species can also act as ambassadors for publically promoting habitat protection. Flagship species are not an exhaustive list and this plan is concerned with all UK biodiversity Action Plan Species. The following species have been identified for Parks, Squares and Burial Grounds in Tower Hamlets:

Category	Common Name	Latin	Brief Description
Birds	Greater Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	Eating insects seeds and nuts these birds do best in mature woodland with plenty of dead wood.
	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	These brightly coloured birds travel in groups and feed on seeds from plants such as teasel
Amphibian	Toad	<i>Bufo bufo</i>	Toads need both ponds to reproduce and places such as wood piles to overwinter
Mammals	Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	Hedgehogs are found in a few places in Tower Hamlets and are in urgent need of help. They could be extinct in the UK by 2025 without intervention. They feed on slugs and other invertebrates and need cover to hibernate.
Plants	Field Scabious	<i>Knautia arvensis</i>	This tallish, hairy perennial with a mauve flower offers nectar to insects and is a member of the teasel family
	Bird's Foot Trefoil	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	A good plant for bees and butterflies it can survive and flower even in grass that is regularly mowed.
	Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	This prickly tree tolerates almost every kind of soil but flowers and fruits best in full sun. Abundantly found in hedges and offers shelter and food to a range of species.
Invertebrates	Greater Stag Beetle	<i>Lucanus cervus</i>	This beetle is not yet established in Tower Hamlets but is present in other areas of London. It takes six or seven years for young in rotting wood to reach maturity
	Brimstone butterfly	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>	Feeding on buckthorn this large yellow butterfly is one of the earliest seen and can travel some distance to find buckthorn plants.

Vision statement

To ensure the protection and enhancement of park, square and burial ground habitats in Tower Hamlets.

To integrate biodiversity within maintenance and enhancement activities in parks, squares and burial grounds and to meet the requirements of national indicator 197.

To promote the enjoyment and understanding of wildlife in Tower Hamlets' parks, squares and burial grounds through education activities.

Targets

- To increase the diversity, and extent, of wildlife friendly habitats in Tower Hamlets' parks, squares and burial grounds especially in areas of open space deficiency
- To integrate biodiversity within maintenance and enhancement activities in parks, squares and burial grounds
- To promote the enjoyment of wildlife in Tower Hamlets' parks, squares and burial grounds

SMART Actions

Some of the actions below that identify the need for additional resources do not as yet have the source of funding identified. However, potential sources of funding including: S106, capital, revenue, applications for external grants will all be explored.

- 1) Increasing the diversity, and extent, of wildlife friendly habitats in Tower Hamlets' parks, squares and burial grounds

No.	Action	Lead partner	Start Date	End Date	Resources (per annum)
1	Tower Habitats to develop a strategy to advise owners of SINC sites regarding NI 197 and deliver the strategy through the provision of at least three face to face meetings per year	LBTH Parks	2009	2014	ER
2	Parks Service to establish 2000m ² of new woodland habitats; 10,000m ² meadow over the 5 years	LBTH Parks	2009	2014	£5000 [CLC]
3	Community rangers to run at least three native bulb and flower planting project with a community each year.	LBTH Parks	2009	2014	£2000 [CLC]

- 2) Integrating biodiversity within maintenance and enhancement activities in parks, squares and burial grounds

No.	Action	Lead partner	Start Date	End Date	Resources (per annum)
4	Parks Service to enhance	LBTH Parks	2009	2014	ER

	one local SINC site per year through positive conservation management and to raise the status of one SINC by 2014				
5	Parks Service to incorporate biodiversity improvements into 70% of Capital Schemes	LBTH Parks	2009	2014	ER
6	Parks Service to incorporate biodiversity outputs into all new Third Sector contracts for green space management by 2010.	LBTH Parks	2009	2014	ER
7	One days training in ecological methods to be offered to new contract staff and offer extended to other staff. 2 training sessions to be available at different times of the year.	Friends Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park (FTHCP)	2009	2014	£500 [CLC]
8	Develop management plans that make a positive contribution to biodiversity for two SINC sites per year (part of the NI 197 targets)	LBTH Parks	2009	2014	£3000 [CLC]
9	Run a conservation grazing project at Mudchute Park and Farm converting 5 hectares to conservation grazing	Mudchute Park and Farm	2009	2014	ER
10	Millwall Park management and Mudchute Park and Farm management to work together to establish a programme of habitat improvements to both sites.	Mudchute Park and Farm and LBTH	2009	2014	ER

3) Promoting the enjoyment of wildlife in Tower Hamlets' parks, squares and burial grounds

No.	Action	Lead partner	Start Date	End Date	Resources
11	Parks Service to run an annual programme of at least 12 biodiversity events across the borough	LBTH	2009	2014	ER
12	Training to be provided on biodiversity @12 events per year	Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park	2009	2014	£3600 [D&R]
13	New signs to be erected in	LBTH Parks	2009	2014	£6000

	parks explaining biodiversity in the immediate vicinity. 3 signs per year				[CLC]
14	Run 1 stag beetle day with the public per year where buckets of wood chip are buried or wood piles created.	Chair Tower Habitats	2009	2014	£400 [D&R]
15	Run 1 hedgehog day with the public per year where subterranean hedgehog homes are constructed and installed.	Chair Tower Habitats	2009	2014	£1000 [THH]
16	Publish (with permission) David Harrison's bird report on the Tower Habitats web site each year and input data on spiders and beetles.	Chair Tower Habitats	2009	2014	ER
Total					£21,500

Links with other policies

- The Local Development Framework (LDF)
- National Indicator 197
- Mayor of London's Climate Change Strategy
- Green Grid and Biodiversity Enhancement Zones (BEZ)
- Open Space Strategy
- London and UK Biodiversity Action Plans
- Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)
- Thames Gateway London Partnership and East London Green Grid and Thames East Strategy.
- Leaside Area Action Plan Preferred Options Paper.
- Isle of Dogs Area Action Plan Preferred Options Paper and the City Fringe Area Action Plan Preferred Options Paper
- Lea Valley and the Olympic Park Plan
- The Mayor of London's Biodiversity Strategy (2002)
- The Mayor of London's "Connecting Londoners with Trees and Woodlands – The London Tree and Woodland Framework"

Sources of further information

www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk
www.wildlondon.org.uk
www.naturalengland.org.uk
www.neighbourhoodsgreen.org.uk

Lead Partner Organisation and Working Group Members

The Lead partner for this Plan is the London Borough Tower Hamlets Parks Service

Working group members include;

- Mudchute Park and Farm
- Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park
- Friends of Mile End Park

Contact:

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Tel: 020 7364 7104

Responsibility for overseeing the overall implementation of the LBAP lies with the Chair of the Tower Hamlets Biodiversity Partnership, a post currently held by the Sustainability Officer, based within the Council's Sustainable Development team.

Contact :

Rachel Carless

Sustainability Officer, Development and Renewal directorate

rachel.carless@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Tel: 020 7364 6649

Appendix A

The Biodiversity Duty for Local Authorities (2006 NERC Act)

Full document available for download here:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/pdf/biodiversity/la-guid-english.pdf>

Integrating Biodiversity into Local Authority Services

Many departments and functions of local authorities have a vital role to play in the conservation of biodiversity. The following are important aspects of integrating biodiversity into local authority services:

A. Fulfilling statutory obligations for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity within the forward planning and development control processes.

B. Incorporating the conservation of biodiversity and its benefits into relevant strategies of the local authority. These include Corporate Strategies, sustainable development strategies, procurement strategies, asset management plans, economic development plans and environmental management systems.

C. Having regard to biodiversity within partnership arrangements such as Community Strategies and Local Area Agreements.

D. Taking account of the links between biodiversity and other environmental programmes such as waste management, energy conservation and response to climate change.

E. Delivering the key principles for biodiversity set out in national planning guidance.

F. Participating in local biodiversity partnerships and helping to deliver objectives of Local Biodiversity Action Plans (and where appropriate UK Biodiversity Action Plans) within relevant local authority services.

G. Working in partnership with other organisations to promote beneficial land management for biodiversity.

H. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity on the local authority estate.

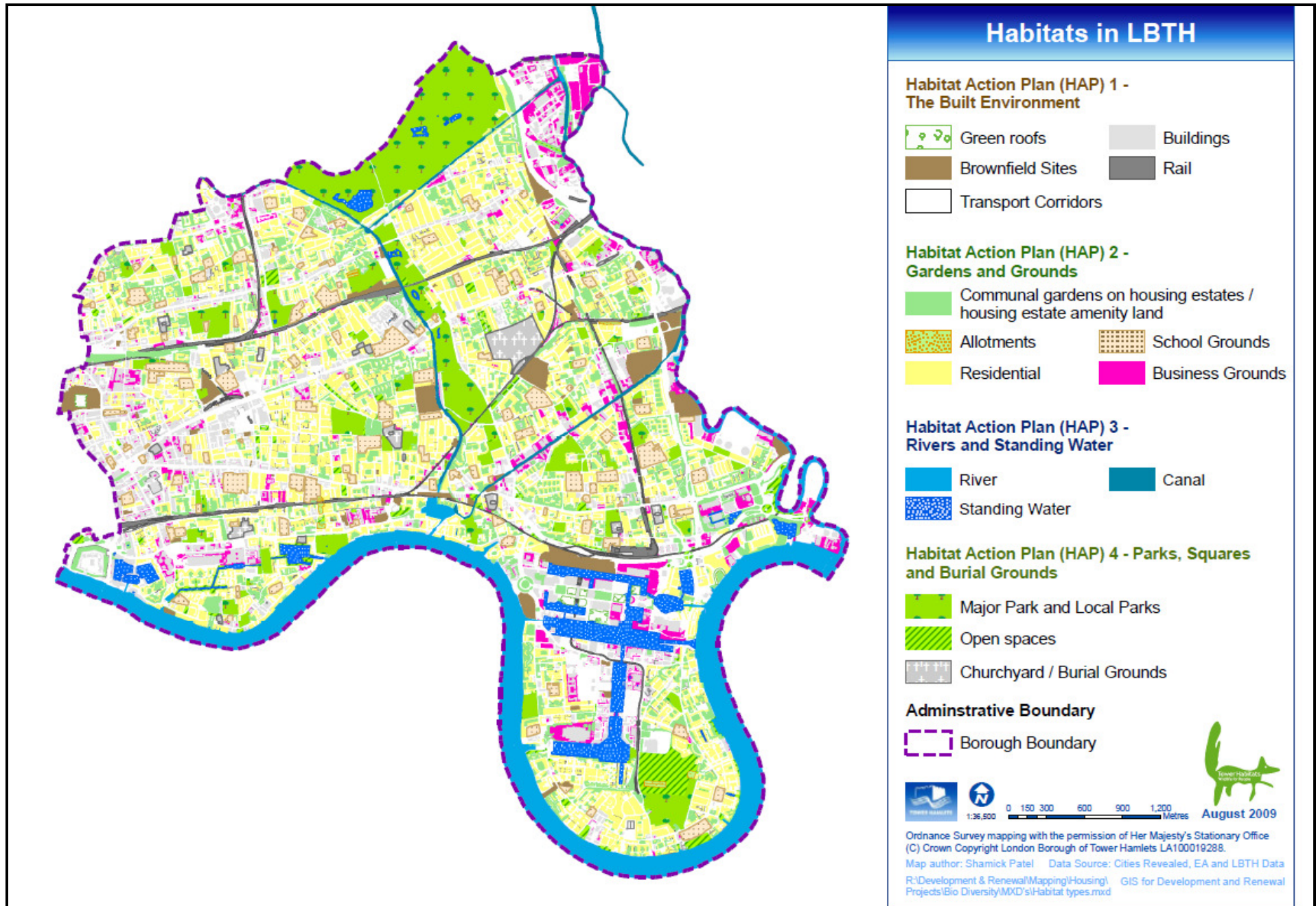
I. Identifying policy drivers and ensuring up-to-date biodiversity data is available to the local authority including support to Local Record Centres.

J. Identifying Local Sites of importance for biodiversity and managing systems, in partnership with others, to take these into account within the planning and land management processes.

K. Using the benefits of access to biodiversity in the delivery of services to the public such as social care, community development, health, and recreation.

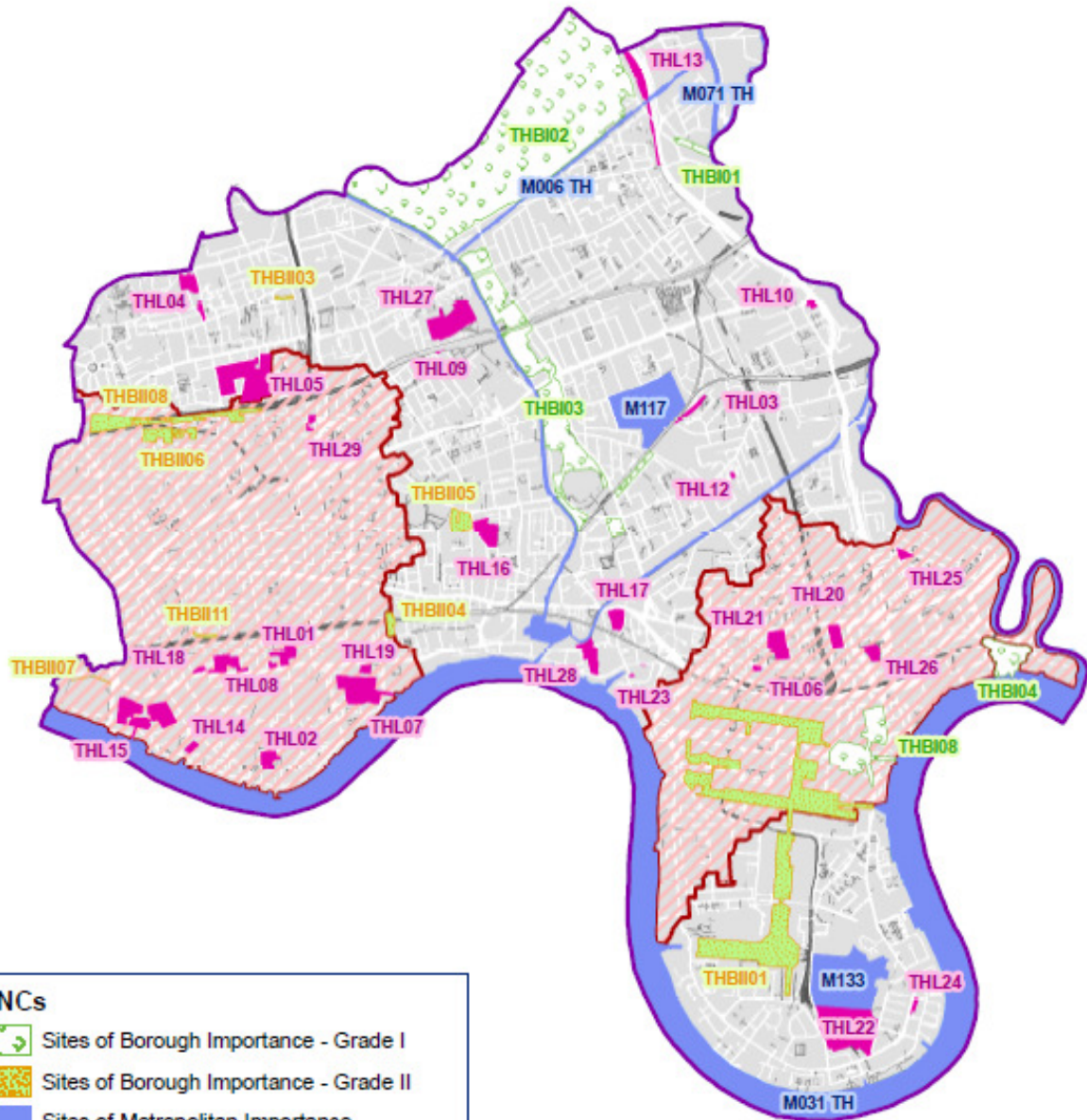
L. Supporting appropriate access to nature and understanding of the natural world within schools, community engagement, education programmes. and raising awareness of biodiversity to the public.

Appendix B










Appendix C

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCS) in Tower Hamlets



SINCS

-  Sites of Borough Importance - Grade I
-  Sites of Borough Importance - Grade II
-  Sites of Metropolitan Importance
-  Sites of Local Importance
-  Areas of Deficiency
-  Borough Boundary

 August 2009
 1:38,000 0 187.5 375 750 1,125 1,500 Metres

Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of Her Majesty's Stationary Office
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 Map author: Shamick Patel Data Source: OLA GIS for Development & Renewal



Appendix D



DISTURBANCE TO NESTING BIRDS

Every year the Metropolitan Police Wildlife Crime Unit receives countless telephone calls from members of the public reporting instances of disturbance to nesting birds in the London area. Usually these incidents involve work being done by builders, property developers, tree surgeons etc., and work being undertaken by the utilities on infrastructure management. The purpose of this Information Sheet is to draw attention to the law protecting nesting birds and to assist those undertaking work outdoors to understand how the law affects them.

This is not intended to be a definitive statement of the law. Full details can be found in the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) copies of which can be obtained from The Stationery Office.

All British wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. Section 1 of the Act details a number of specific offences, including-

- Killing, injuring or taking any wild bird,
- Taking, damaging or destroying the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built,
- Taking or destroying an egg of any wild bird.

In the case of some rarer species it is also an offence to disturb birds when they are building or occupying a nest. Some of these birds nest in the London area.

There are exceptions to these provisions but these only apply to certain designated “pest species”. These are mainly crows, Feral and Wood Pigeons, and some species of gulls. The full list is included in the Act, but these exceptions apply only in specific circumstances.

These are-

- Preserving public health or public or air safety,
- Preventing serious damage to livestock, foodstuffs for livestock, crops, timber or inland fisheries.
- The nests and eggs of some “pest species” can also be removed or destroyed for the purpose of conserving Wild birds.

However, it is important to understand that these are exceptions made only in very specific circumstances, and that to take these actions in other cases would be an offence.

It is not our purpose to prevent building and maintenance work but the Metropolitan Police is seeking the co-operation of landowners, planning authorities and companies in upholding the law protecting wild birds. When planning to undertake work which is likely to result in disturbance to nesting sites of specially protected species, or the destruction of nests or eggs of other wild birds the work should be deferred until the birds have finished using their nests.

In most cases nesting activity will have ceased by 1 August but some birds continue to use their nests after this date, and their nests remain protected for as long as they are in use.

ELIZABETH II



Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

1981 CHAPTER 69

An Act to repeal and re-enact with amendments the Protection of Birds Acts 1954 to 1967 and the Conservation of Wild Creatures and Wild Plants Act 1975; to prohibit certain methods of killing or taking wild animals; to amend the law relating to protection of certain mammals; to restrict the introduction of certain animals and plants; to amend the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976; to amend the law relating to nature conservation, the countryside and National Parks and to make provision with respect to the Countryside Commission; to amend the law relating to public rights of way; and for connected purposes.

[30th October 1981]

BE IT ENACTED by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:-

PART 1 - WILDLIFE

Protection of birds

<p>(1) Subject to the provisions of this Part, if any person intentionally-</p> <p>(a) kills, injures or takes any wild bird;</p> <p>(b) takes, damages or destroys the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or</p> <p>(c) takes or destroys an egg of any wild bird, he shall be guilty of an offence.</p>	<p>1.-</p> <p>Protection of wild birds, their nests and eggs.</p>
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