

Tower Hamlets Local Biodiversity Action Plan



Annual Report 2011



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The Tower Hamlets Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) was adopted by the Council's Cabinet in September 2009. The LBAP was developed, and is being delivered, by a wide range of organisations and individuals. These make up the Tower Hamlets biodiversity partnership, known as Tower Habitats. Membership of the partnership and its steering group is given on the back page of this report.

This report covers progress on delivering the LBAP for the 18 months up to the end of March 2011. It provides a summary of the main achievements to date, and the priorities for the coming year, in each of the four Habitat Action Plans which make up the LBAP. These are built environment, gardens and grounds, rivers and standing water, and parks and open spaces. It then provides a similar summary for the management and monitoring of the plan.

Full details on progress against each action in the LBAP can be viewed on the Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS) at https://ukbars.defra.gov.uk/plans/lbap_plans.asp?LBAP=%7BB1E3BA17%2D42AB%2D4D6D%2D809F%2D94B05A862B48%7D&CO=



Reedmace at Mile End Park (LBTH)

Front cover photo: Canary Wharf from Mudchute Farm

Built environment



One of the many green roofs at Canary Wharf (Dusty Gedge)

Achievements so far

- Nearly all major new developments include green roofs.
- Tower Hamlets Green Grid Strategy report published.
- Information for planners and developers on Tower Habitats website updated, with links to green roof organisations.



Shed with green roof and bug wall at the 2011 Chelsea Flower Show (John Archer)

Priorities for 2011-12

- Arrange visits to Canary Wharf for planners and developers to see examples of best practice in incorporating biodiversity into the built environment
- Develop strong policies in Development Management DPD to promote green roofs and biodiversity enhancements through development
- Continue to push for green roofs in new developments

Case study: Tower Hamlets Green Grid Strategy



The Green Grid is a combination of spaces and routes that encourage people to walk, cycle and enjoy their local environment. Put simply, the more attractive, safe and convenient these spaces and routes are, the more people will use and care for them. And at the same time, greener spaces and routes can help tackle climate change, promote regeneration and enhance biodiversity. It's all about linking green spaces, and promoting green links through the built environment. The Tower Hamlets Green Grid links into the wider East London Green Grid, promoted by the Mayor of London. In spring 2011 Tower Hamlets Council published its strategy for stimulating and responding to the demand for investment in the Green Grid in the coming years. To find out more, see the strategy on the Council's website at www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgs/851-900/856_local_development_framework/evidence_base.aspx

The action plan for the built environment is led by Tower Hamlets Strategic Planning. For more information contact Manmohan Dayal (manmohan.dayal@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

Gardens and grounds



Hedgehog

Achievements so far

- A wildflower meadow, copse, new community gardens and a hedgehog home installed on the Manchester Estate by Trees for Cities, in partnership with EastendHomes
- Two new orchards planted on the Hollybush Estate by Tower Hamlets Homes (see case study below)
- Trees for Cities working on projects to rejuvenate green areas on the Westferry Estate (with EastendHomes) and Grundy Estate (with Poplar HARCA)
- A reprint of London Wildlife Trust's wildlife gardening pack is being printed for distribution by the Council in summer 2011
- Green skills workshops run for Manchester Estate residents by Trees for Cities



Volunteers planting the new garden on the Manchester Estate (Trees for Cities)

Priorities for 2011-12

- Provide grants for school grounds improvements
- Provide grants for wildlife-friendly community gardens
- Ensure wildlife gardening pack is distributed
- Complete an urban nature trail on the Manchester Estate
- Plant more new orchards on Tower Hamlets Homes land
- Continue enhancements to green spaces on Westferry and Grundy Estates
- Arrange training in managing grounds for biodiversity for staff, contractors and residents of Tower Hamlets Homes and other registered social landlords

Case study: Tower Hamlets Homes orchard project



Volunteers planting the orchard at Stapleton House (Tower Hamlets Homes)

Tower Hamlets Homes planted the first two of 27 planned new orchards in January 2011. The orchards were planted on the Hollybush Estate, one at Stapleton House and the other at Rocky Park, by volunteers from the Rocky Park Urban Growers, working closely with Teesdale & Hollybush TRA. Each orchard consists of about 30 young fruit trees, including apple, plum, peach and greengage. The project was funded by Capital Growth, the Mayor of London's scheme to encourage local food growing.

Tower Hamlets Homes intends to roll out more orchards in 2011-12, so that there is at least one orchard in each neighbourhood. Traditional orchards are excellent places for wildlife, and have disappeared from much of the countryside over the last few decades.

The action plan for gardens and grounds is led by Tower Hamlets Homes. For more information contact Roy MacPepple (roy.macpepple@towerhamletshomes.org.uk)

Rivers and standing water



Fish refuges in the Limehouse Cut (John Archer/LBTH)

Achievements so far

- Fish refuges with reeds installed in Limehouse Cut by Thames21
- Over 20 river clean-up events on the Thames run by Thames21
- Art Pavilion pond in Mile End park enhanced (see case study overleaf)
- New pond planned for Phoenix School, to be created in spring 2011 by Thames21 in partnership with Tower hamlets Council



A raft for nesting terns and ducks on the Shadwell Basin (John Archer/LBTH)

Priorities for 2011-12

- Start to address invasive species on the River Lea in a co-ordinated way
- Restore the lakes in Victoria Park
- Complete the new pond in Phoenix School

Case study: the Art Pavilion pond in Mile End Park



The Arts Pavilion pond before its makeover (Froglife)

The Art Pavilion pond in Mile End Park received a make-over in March 2011, being transformed into a thriving wildlife haven for urban animals. The Veolia Environmental Trust awarded funding to Froglife, in partnership with Tower Hamlets Council, to increase the biodiversity of the pond and encourage an array of animals such as frogs, dragonflies and bats.

Before its make-over, the pond had hard concrete edges, making it very difficult for plants to colonise. Coir rolls and pallets made of natural coconut matting, pre-planted with native wildflower and grass seeds, have been established all the way around the pond edges.

Volunteer days were organised to plant up hundreds of wildflower plants around the pond in the spring, to attract nectar loving insects such as bumblebees and butterflies as well as local families to picnic by the pond in the summer.

The action plan for rivers and standing water is led by Thames21. For more information contact Rita Serra (rita.serra@thames21.org.uk)

Parks and open spaces



Wildflower meadow in Ion Square Gardens (John Archer/LBTH)

Achievements so far

- 2500 m² of wildflower meadow created in Ion Square Gardens
- 855 m² of woodland planted in Swedenborg Gardens
- Native bulbs planted in at least 11 parks
- Interpretative signs installed in Weavers Fields and Swedenborg Gardens
- A loggery installed in King Edward Memorial Park to provide habitat for stag beetles and other invertebrates
- 10 Park Rangers trained in managing parks for biodiversity
- Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park won the biodiversity award in the 2010 London Tree and Woodland Awards



Bulb planting in Selwyn Gardens (Peter Murray/LBTH)

Priorities for 2011-12

- Ensure the restoration of Victoria Park delivers maximum benefits for biodiversity
- Deliver significant biodiversity enhancements in Millwall Park
- Ensure delivery for biodiversity continues following restructuring of the Parks Service

Case study: community picnic and stag beetle day in King Edward Memorial Park



Children enjoy learning about stag beetles (Trees for Cities)

Tower Habitats, Trees for Cities, the People's Trust for Endangered Species and the Save KEMP group joined forces in February 2011 to put on a free community event in King Edward Memorial Park. Mayor Lutfur Rahman, cabinet members Cllr Rabina Khan and Cllr Alibor Choudhury, and over 130 local residents came down to the park to help plant wildflowers and learn more about the elusive and charismatic stag beetle – one of the UK's largest insects. Participants were offered free stag beetle bucket homes to encourage this rare insect back into urban areas. The event also gave the chance for the community to come together to find out more about the work the Save KEMP group are doing to preserve the future of the park, and to enjoy nature themed arts and crafts, face painting, entertainment, a Bengali folk dance performance and a picnic.

The action plan for parks and open spaces is led by Tower Hamlets Parks Service. For more information contact Mohammed Raja (mohammed.raja@twerhamlets.gov.uk)

Action plan management and monitoring



Pond dipping in Mile End Park

Main achievements

- Biodiversity Officer appointed by Tower Hamlets Council on a temporary contract from September 2010 to oversee delivery of the Biodiversity Action Plan
- Tower Habitats website revamped and updated (see case study overleaf)
- The four action plans have been added to the online Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS)
- New structure and terms of reference put in place for the biodiversity partnership
- Public wildlife survey developed by Greenspace Information for Greater London in partnership with the Council, for launch in spring 2011



The Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park receive their London Tree & Woodland Award

Priorities for 2011-12

- Secure a permanent Biodiversity Officer post within the Council's Sustainable Development team
- Continue to update and develop the Tower habitats website
- Publicise the public wildlife survey to ensure a good response
- Review Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation across the borough to feed into LDF proposals map, to ensure all important wildlife habitat is protected

Case study: Tower Habitats website



www.towerhabitats.org

The Tower Habitats website was set up by the Tower Hamlets Biodiversity Partnership in 2007 to provide a source of information and inspiration around the borough's biodiversity for residents, visitors, land managers, planners and developers. From the middle of 2009, it received little attention until late 2010, when there was a concerted effort to bring it up to date and revamp the site to make it more dynamic, interesting and useful.

All the information has been brought fully up to date, new pages have been added, and news, events and latest wildlife sightings pages are kept regularly updated. So if you want to find out how to attract wildlife to your garden, where to see wildlife in your part of the borough, what birds, butterflies and other wildlife have been seen recently, or where to find information on green roofs or biodiversity in planning, visit www.towerhabitats.org

The Tower Hamlets Biodiversity Action Plan is led by the Biodiversity officer in the Council's Sustainable Development Team. For more information contact John Archer (phone 020 7364 7478 john.archer@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

Tower Habitats partners

A great many organisations and individuals have contributed to the development and delivery of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, and together make up Tower Habitats, the biodiversity partnership for Tower Hamlets. They include Tower Hamlets Council, EastendHomes, EcoSchemes, Environment Agency, Friends of Mile End Park, Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, Froglife, Gateway Housing Association, Grass Roof Company, Greenspace Information for Greater London, London Wildlife Trust, Mudchute Park & Farm, Poplar HARCA, Queen Mary University of London, Spitalfields City Farm, Stepney City Farm, Thames21, Tower Hamlets Community Homes, Tower Hamlets Homes, Trees for Cities, and local residents.

Steering Group membership

The following people were members of the partnership's Steering Group during the period of this report:

Halim Abdul (LBTH Sustainable Development Team, Secretary)
John Archer (Biodiversity Officer, Chair)
Derek Barclay (Poplar HARCA)
Ros Brewer (LBTH Parks)
Allan Cousens (local resident)
Manmohan Dayal (LBTH Strategic Planning)
Ken Greenway (Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park)
Abdul Khan (LBTH Sustainable Development Manager)
Terry Lyle (Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park)
Roy MacPepple (Tower Hamlets Homes)
Peter Murray (LBTH Parks)
PC Stephen Rodgers (Metropolitan Police Wildlife Crime Officer)
Katie Roberts (Trees for Cities)
Michael Rowan (LBTH Parks)
Rita Serra (Thames21)
John Swindells (local resident)
Bob Watts (Gateway Housing Association)