Open Agenda

# Environment Scrutiny Commission

Monday 22 July 2024
7.00 pm
160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

# Supplemental Agenda

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| 4. | **Minutes** | 1 - 5 |
| 6. | **Healthy Weight**<br>Public Health will provide a presentation on the Healthy Weight Strategy with particular reference to active travel and green spaces, in order to support the review<br><br>The following officers will present:<br>• Sangeeta Leahy, Director of Public Health<br>• Gillian Boundy, Senior Public Health Programme Manager – Place and Health Improvement | 6 - 27 |
| 7. | **Scrutiny review: Environmental Health-the health and wellbeing impacts of active travel and improved access to nature**<br>This item will consider the proposed scrutiny review topic of 'Environmental Health: The health and wellbeing impacts of active travel and improved access to nature and how these can be extended through our borough'.<br><br>Jack McKenna, Senior Public Affairs Manager UK and Ireland, Lime will present. A paper is enclosed. | 28 - 29 |



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Date: 19 July 2024

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# ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMISSION

MINUTES of the Environment Scrutiny Commission held on Tuesday 7 May 2024 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02B - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

| | |
|---|---|
| **PRESENT:** | Councillor Margy Newens (Chair)<br>Councillor Cassandra Brown<br>Councillor David Watson<br>Anna Colligan<br>Simon Saville |
| **OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT:** | Councillor James McAsh, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, Clean Air and Streets |
| **OFFICER SUPPORT:** | Michael McNicholas, Head of Waste and Cleaning, Environment.<br>Tara Quinn, Head of Parks<br>Julian Fowgies, Parks, Trees & Ecology Manager presented.<br>Julie Timbrell, Project Manager , Scrutiny |

## 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Graham Neale, Youcef Hassaine and Leo Pollak.

## 2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

There were none.

## 3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were none.

**4. MINUTES**

It was noted that Penny Frith is now more commonly known as Penny Metal, and the minutes will be amended . The minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

**5. TOPIC: WASTE, RECYCLING, REDUCING FLY-TIPPING AND STREET CLEANING : USING RESOURCES BETTER**

Councillor James McAsh, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, Clean Air and Streets presented, with support from Michael McNicholas, Head of Waste and Cleaning, Environment.

Members then asked questions and the following points were made:

- There is a permanent presence of waste cleaners in Town Centres.

- Residential roads have a full sweep of detritus every 5 weeks, with litter picking every 2 to 6 weeks.

- Graffiti removal can take time as the shop owners are not necessarily the same as shop operators, and their permission is required. In addition, they may not mind, if for example the graffiti is on shutters which are closed when the shop is not operated. There are seven teams with an approximate spend of £450,000 annually.

- Positive behaviour change is encouraged through a combination of enforcement with commercial business and also practices such as placing bins in places with community oversight on housing estates.

- Garden and kitchen waste will be collected by the council separately from October, with food waste going to an anaerobic plant. The government has mandated anaerobic collection by 2026. The council will be working with housing in estates to collect food waste, then working with other housing providers such as Registered Social Landlords. Members were advised that some homes are harder to provide food waste collection facilities, such as flats above shops with limited storage.

- Rubbish collection is linked to biodiversity as the wrong type of rubbish attracts the wrong type of wildlife. Good landscape design can mitigate or prevent this.

- The Head of Waste and Cleaning said that 95% of fly tipping is removed in 24hours. A member queried performance based on anecdotal feedback from constituents and noted that the council is the 7th worse performer on fly tipping in London. The officer said that while the council is not the best our reporting is more granular than many boroughs.

- Enforcement of fly tipping offences is not straightforward as CVTV evidence can be complex. There is preference for behaviour change, but the council is looking at all options.

- The removal and cleaning agents are citrus based, and the least toxic.

- There is a program of work to repair broken rubbish shoots in housing estates, with seven estates prioritised to to fix these over the coming months, rather than year.

- Community skips have not been done since 2015. They are well liked by residents, however they can be open to abuse.

**RESOLVED**

Officers will provide further information on:

- The ingredients of cleaning and graffiti removal products,
- More detail on the rubbish shot repair programme on housing estates.

## 6. WASTE IN PARKS

Tara Quinn, Head of Parks, and Julian Fowgies, Parks, Trees & Ecology Manager presented.

The chair then invited questions and the following points were made:

- There are park liaison officers who talk to people in parks to address problems such as littler and also loud music . Most people are amenable; however this is not always the case and the service has been working with community leaders to encourage better communication. The service is also

encouraging better social norms, by using social media, for example .

- Members suggested signs saying 'please bring your litter home' . Officer said they are looking at communications, and the work of other boroughs. They said there is a risk of littering the park with signs. The campaign by Glastonbury Festival to 'leave no trace' was suggested by commission members.

- Officers said they will be looking at prevention measures over the summer . The service is proud of the 30 green flags ( which include litter provision) and the council's work with park amenity groups such as 'friends of'.

- Waste collection is subject to re-contracting and as part of the Gateway zero process officers will be doing some soft market testing as well as giving consideration of bringing in-house.

- There was a discussion on large bins with out lids to deal with heavy demand and concern from constituents and 'friends of' groups that open bins enable foxes to feed. Officers were asked it is would it be better to provide more Euro bins and they said this is under consideration and would require capital investment. There are bins that send back information on how full that that could aid collection

**7. GROWING CITIES**

The chair welcomed Leanne Werner, author of Growing Cities, a report looking at urban agriculture in North America. Leanne is a former Southwark Councillor (and past chair of the Environment Scrutiny Commission). She is also founder director of Wilder, a social enterprise based in London, working to create more spaces for wildlife.

Leanne Werner gave a summary of her report and then the commission were invited to ask questions, and the following points were made:

- Leanne recommended that the council develops an urban agriculture policy.

- Roof tops offer an opportunity to expand growing spaces for food. The Old Kent Road Opportunity Area could be a test.

- Rainwater harvesting is important for food growing. A coopted member advised that existing rainwater requirements since 2015 mean that developments are already conditioned to save storm water, so it is a relatively easy to pivot to providing this for urban agriculture.

- Agroponic farms were visited by Leanne, however her focus was on food growing projects that delivered biodiversity gains.

- A co-opted members advised that living roofs in cities can be expensive so need political will and incentives. Leanne said this is there in North America

- There is link with green jobs and a huge investment in skills in Detroit. An urban agriculture course or college would be very beneficial as there are not yet sufficient skills in the city.

**8. SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORT ON SUSTAINABLE FREIGHT**

**RESOLVED**

The Commission agreed the scrutiny review report.

**9. SCRUTINY REVIEW ON BIODIVERSITY**

The scrutiny review on Biodiversity will be rolled over for completion in the next administrative year.

**10. WORK PROGRAMME**

The work programme was noted.

# Healthy Weight in Southwark

## Environment Scrutiny Commission

Southwark Public Health Division

22 July 2024

Agenda Item 6



Southwark Council

# Contents


- Introduction
- Prevalence of excess weight
- Healthy Weight Strategy 2022-27
- Case studies: School Superzones, Food Growing, Health Walks
- Find out more

# Introduction



Southwark Council

# We are working to increase opportunities for residents to be healthy and tackle the obesogenic environment

**We have an obesity crisis in Southwark, which has a significant impact on our residents' health and wellbeing, our economy and our community as a whole.**

- Obesity is one of the five significant risk factors for premature death. Council and ICB strategies are focusing on addressing the 'Vital 5' factors of BMI, smoking, harmful drinking, blood pressure, and mental health and wellbeing.

- To address obesity we must not only focus on increasing the opportunities for residents to be healthy, through prevention and treatment services, but will also focus on improving the environments we work, study and grow up in.

- Physical activity has significant benefits for health, both physical and mental, and can help to prevent and manage over 20 chronic conditions and diseases.

# Prevalence of excess weight



Southwark Council

# Childhood obesity

## Prevalence of overweight and obesity has remained high, but relatively stable in recent years

- Year 6 children twice as likely to be obese than children in Reception; but similarly as likely to be overweight.
- In 2022/23, 22% of Reception children were classed as having excess weight (overweight or obese) , this rose to 42% for children in Year 6[1].
- Gender has little effect on weight status overall, however boys in Year 6 are more likely to be living with obesity compared to girls.
- Children from a black ethnic background are more likely to be living with obesity than those from a white ethnic background; children from Asian, mixed or other ethnic backgrounds fall in the middle.
- Children living in the most deprived areas are more likely to be overweight or obese compared to those living in the least deprived areas.



Source: **(1)** Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. Public health profiles. 2024

# Ward of pupil residence: excess weight

**These areas are high deprivation which is associated with higher rates of obesity**

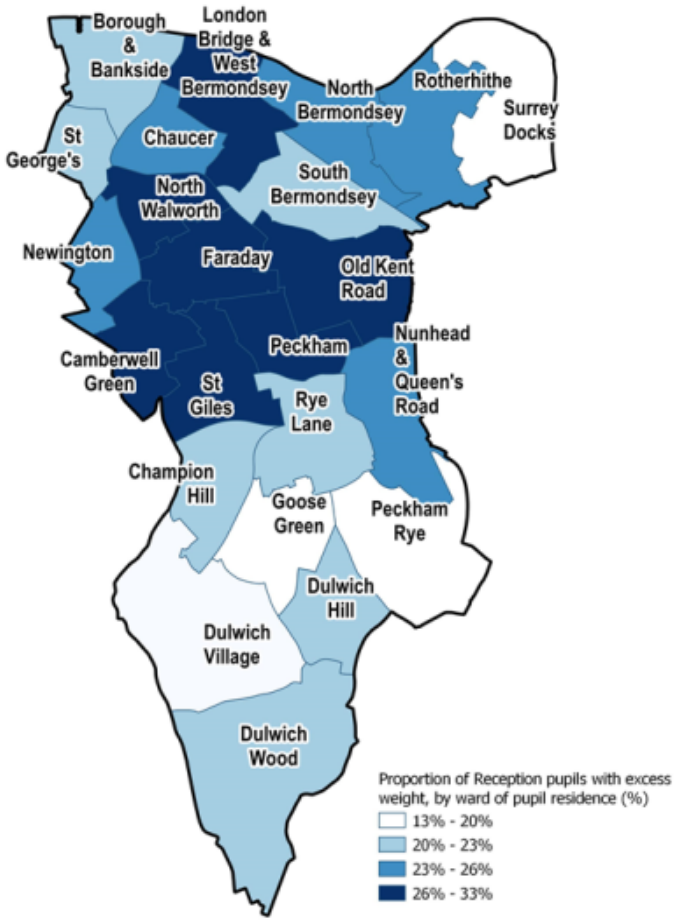



**Figure 1.** Proportion of Reception pupils with excess weight by ward of pupil residence: 3-year data 2018-2022 (excl. 2020/21)

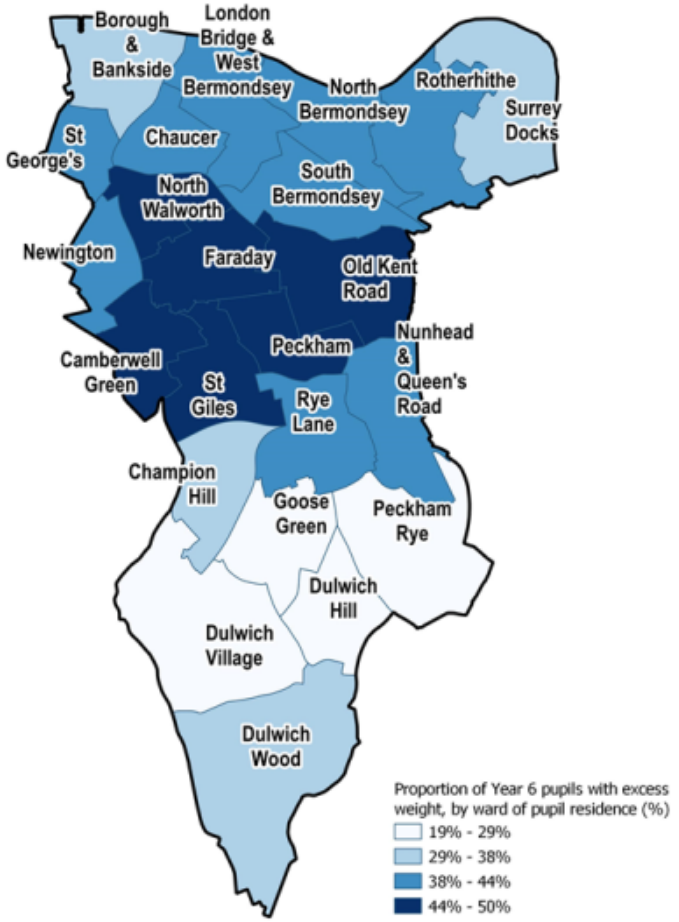



**Figure 4.** Proportion of Year 6 pupils with excess weight by ward of pupil residence: 3 -year data 2018-2022 (excl. 2020/21)

Source: (2) **OHID Local Health Tool** Local Health - Office for Health Improvement and Disparities - Indicators, maps, data and charts

# Adult obesity

## Southwark has similar rates of excess weight and obesity in adults compared to the rest of London, but lower than England.

- In 2022/23, 56.5% of adults were classed as overweight or obese, compared to 57.2% in London and 64% nationally. In Southwark, the prevalence of excess weight amongst men aged between 45-74 years is the highest of any age group.[1]

## Rates of obesity during early pregnancy are lower in Southwark than London and England.

- In 2018/19, the proportion of pregnant women and birthing parents who have obesity (BMI>=30kg/m$^2$) in early pregnancy in Southwark was 17%. [1] Nationally, 66% Black women overweight & obese in early pregnancy. [2]

- At present there is not enough data to identify trends over time or patterns at a local level.

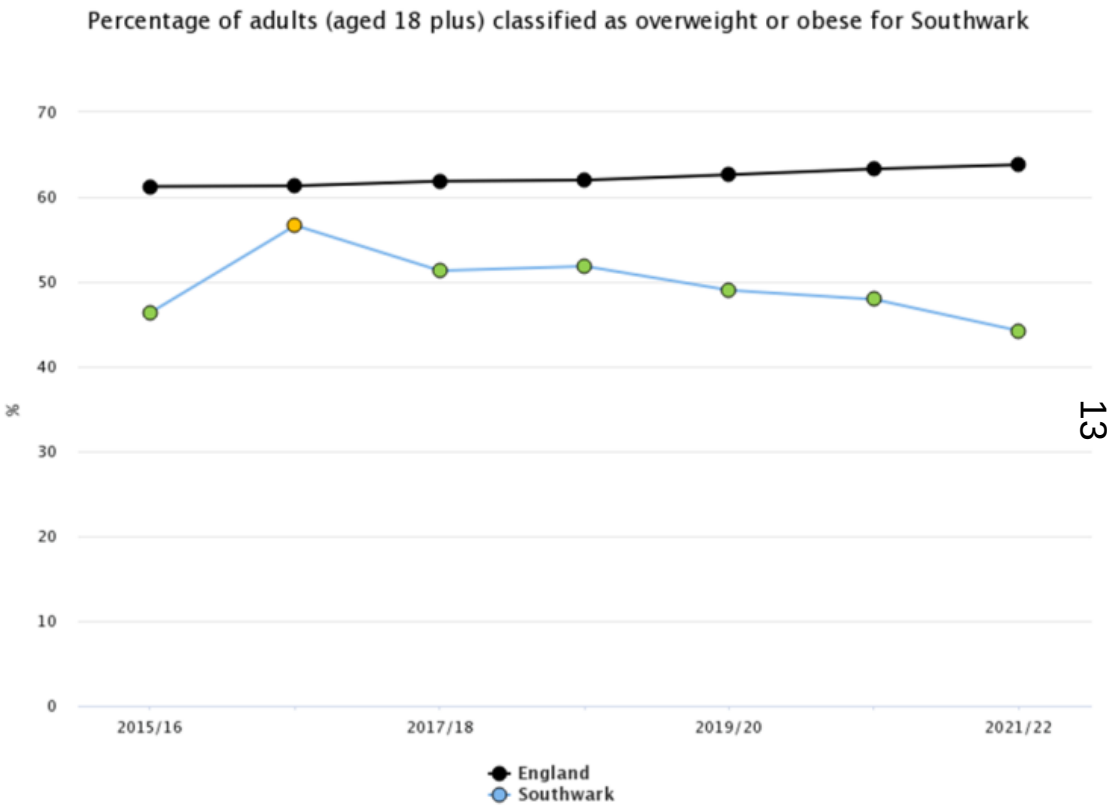



**Figure 3.** Percentage of adults (aged 18 plus) classified as overweight or obese for Southwark[3]



Source: **(1)** (3) Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (based on the Active Lives Adult Survey, Sport England) (2021) (2) Health of women before and during pregnancy: health behaviours, risk factors and inequalities (publishing.service.gov.uk)

# Healthy Weight Strategy 2022-27



Southwark Council

# Southwark Healthy Weight Strategy 2022-27

- Partnership between Southwark Council, the South East London ICB (Southwark) and VCS.
- Adopts a whole systems approach, working with partners across the borough's healthy weight network to deliver effective prevention and treatment services that aim to reduce inequalities and improve health .
- Inequalities within obesity rates in Southwark have informed the identification of the 5 population groups prioritised in this strategy:
  - Maternity and early years
  - Children and young people
  - Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups
  - People experiencing food insecurity
  - Men aged 45 years and above

A set of ambitions have been developed for each priority group and are reviewed annually.

# Obesity is determined by a complex interaction between individual characteristics, lifestyle and the wider environment

# The strategy applies a whole systems approach to address the obesogenic environment and inequalities

# Progress to date and achievements

Healthy Start take up increased to 72% (January 2024) alongside provision of Rose Vouchers to over 800 families

New fast food outlets restricted from opening within 400m of a school and Healthier Advertising policy

Southwark are providing free nursery, primary and secondary school meals

240+ tonnes of surplus food redistributed to community organisations including 5184 hot meals

Commissioned and developed a range of weight management services, including WW and programmes targeting men from black ethnic groups and Latin American people

42 stores involved in Good Food Retail, with a 22% increase in healthier food stocked

10 schools and 2 children and family centres involved in Fizz Free Feb 2024

Sustainable Food Places Award Winner BRONZE

Good Food Local
The London report
Tracking council action on food
sustain

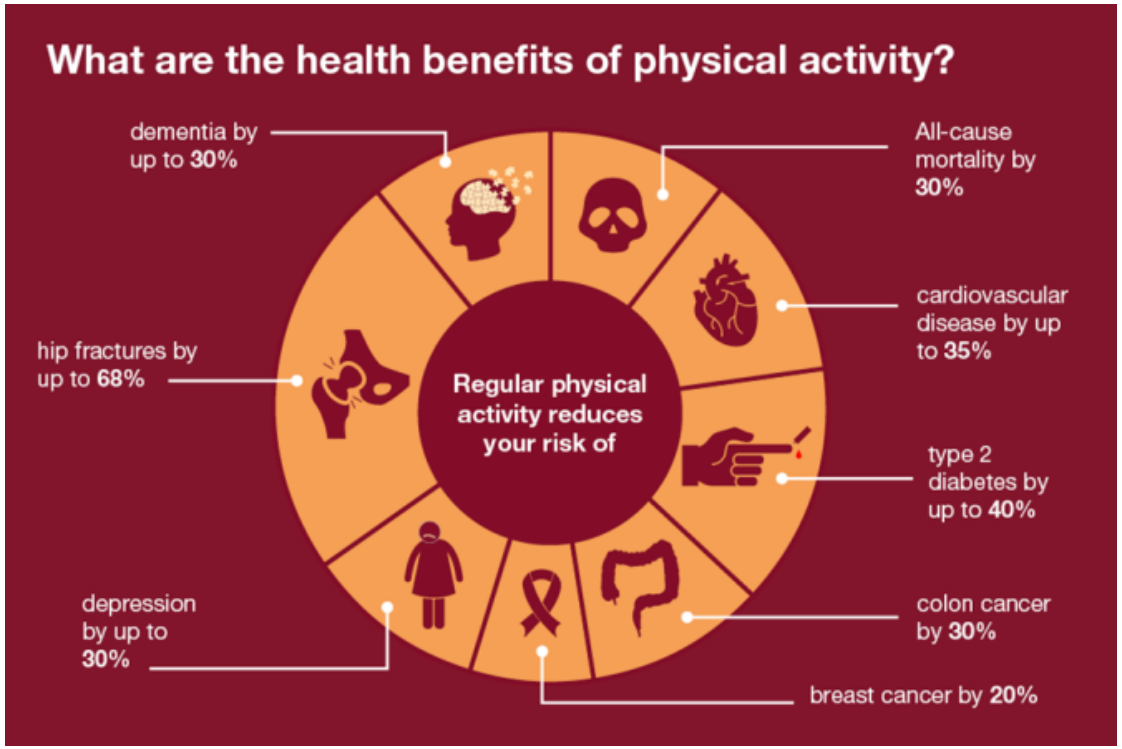
2024 Commendation Award

Over 600 signed up to Healthy Weight Training

Reference
1. Images: www.flaticon.com

# Physical activity and health

- Physical inactivity is the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality accounting for 6% of deaths globally.[4]
- Regular physical activity is also associated with a reduced risk of a number of conditions.
- Around 1 in 3 (34%) of men and 1 in 2 (42%) of women in the UK are not active enough for good health.[4]
- People with disabilities or long-term conditions are twice as likely not to be active enough for good health.
- The UK Chief Medical Officers' Guidelines recommend each week adults do:
  - at least 150 minutes moderate intensity activity, 75 minutes' vigorous activity, or a mixture of both
  - strengthening activities on two days
  - reducing extended periods of sitting






Source: (4) OHID, 2022. Physical activity: applying All Our Health

# Case studies: School Superzones, Food Growing, Health Walks



Southwark Council

# School Superzones

**School Superzones are place-based interventions around schools. They aim to protect  children's health and enable healthy behaviours through the place-shaping powers of Local Authorities and local partnership working.**


# Superzones in Southwark

**Two Superzones across three schools were established in 2022, with a further three added in 2024. The following are examples of interventions and activities taking place in and around these schools to improve the health environment:**

- Coffee Mornings
- Arts Workshops
- Bike Maintenance
- Walking Maps
- School Streets
- Air Quality Monitors
- Assemblies
- Snack Packs
- Food Growing

# Active travel at St Francis & Bird in Bush

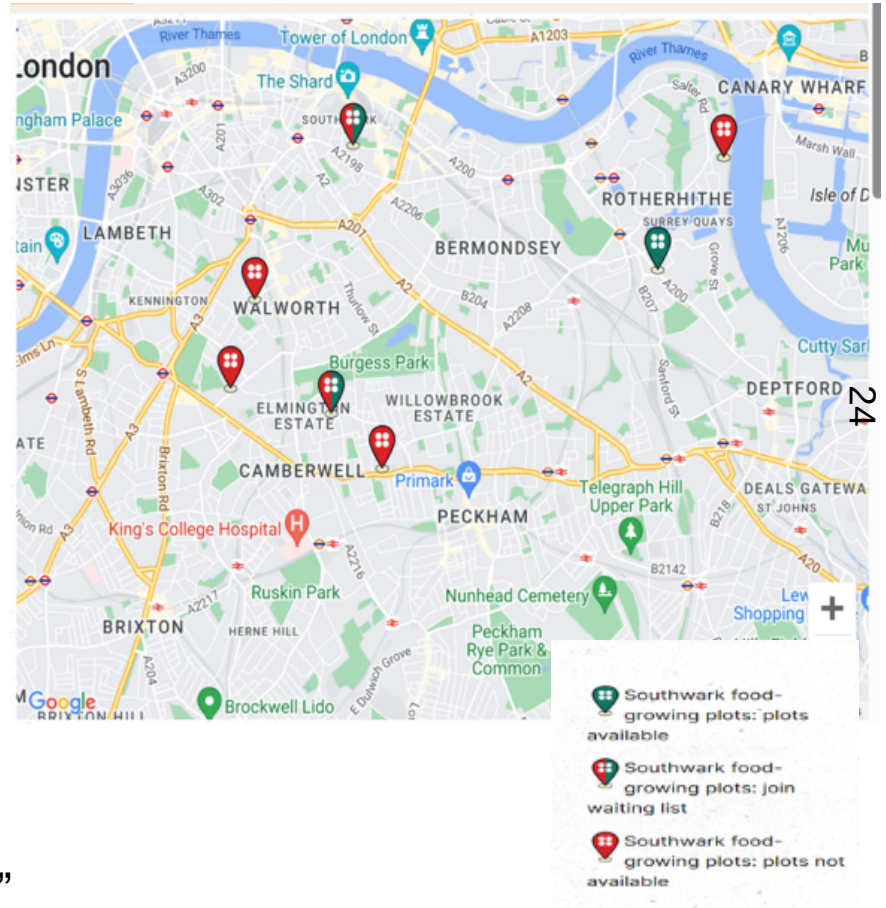
**Active travel is a key strand of the Superzones programme. Below are a few examples of initiatives that two Peckham schools have been involved in which aim to increase the number of active journeys to and from school.**

- **School Streets** – Highways colleagues have been part of coffee mornings to find out parent's perceptions of the school street. In both cases, school streets have been extended and made permanent.
- **Walking Maps** – children at these schools took part in workshops to map out local amenities and co-design their schools walking map, which has been shared with all parents and placed outside the school gates.
- **Bike Maintenance** – key bike maintenance skills have been taught to children and their parents, to promote more active forms of travel
- **Assemblies and lessons** – children have led assemblies to parents/guardians on benefits of active travel and being physically active.

# Food growing in Southwark

**The vision of the *Southwark Sustainable Food Strategy 2023-2026* is to enable a sustainable food system in Southwark to improve health and wellbeing for our population, reduce inequalities and protect the planet.**

- Strategy has been developed by Southwark Council in partnership with Southwark Food Action Alliance
- In Year 1, we aim to build on the existing *Good To Grow* map of food growing spaces, and identify suitable, unused public spaces that could be utilised for food growing, cooking and other food activities.
- We are working with the Community Gardening team to promote the "Compost Doctor"
    - Aim is for at least two SFAA members to set up composting of (only) vegetable peelings with support and advice from the "Compost Doctor"



# Walking for Health: Southwark Health Walks

**Walking is a great, low-impact, accessible and completely free form of physical activity**

- Everyone Health has partnered with Southwark Council to provide healthy lifestyle services, including Health Walks,  that will help improve residents' physical and mental health.

- Health Walks for Southwark residents.
  - Weekly health walks
  - Led by fully-trained walk leaders
  - Last between 30 minutes-one hour
  - Enables people to walk with others, meet new people and improve social skills
  - 1,048 residents participated in the last year

- Everyone Health also have an offer for pregnant women (Southwark Park buggy walks)

Find out more at:

Southwark's Healthy Weight Strategy:
www.southwark.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/public-health/reports-and-strategies?chapter=4

Wider Determinants of Health fingertips tool:
https://www.youtube.com/embed/eF7ZstmCgVs

Southwark's Sustainable Food Strategy:
www.southwark.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/public-health/reports-and-strategies?chapter=4



Southwark Council

# Questions?



Southwark Council

Agenda Item 7

| Item: | Classification: | Date: | Meeting: |
|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | Open | 22 July 2024 | Environment Scrutiny Commission |
| **Report title:** | | Lime and Southwark | |
| **Ward(s) or groups affected:** | | All | |
| **From:** | | Jack McKenna, Senior Public Affairs Manager UK and Ireland, Lime | |

**Lime and Southwark**

Phase 1 of our Southwark service has been a huge success, with both trip numbers and user numbers increasing exponentially to record-breaking levels each month. The record-breaking popularity and usage of micromobility and shared e-bikes in the borough is a direct result of the Council's design of the service, which has maximised vehicle availability and access for users, which in turn maximises both the benefits of cycling for residents and the positive impact on achieving the Council's ambitious goals on climate, the environment, active travel and mode shift. Ensuring adequate and convenient vehicle availability to meet user demand through Preferred Parking rules as enforced in Southwark is absolutely essential to maximising the benefits that shared e-bikes deliver in terms of health, climate and environment and mode shift, in addition to women's safety, improving access to transport in underserved parts of the borough and boosting cycling amongst under-represented groups.

Moving forward, Lime is committed to working with Southwark to deliver a long term and mutually beneficial partnership, supporting the Council in achieving its goals on climate, the environment and active travel.

**Share the Joy**

Lime has teamed up with the London Cycling Campaign and Loud Mobility to launch a new £100,000 'Share the Joy' fund to increase cycling within underrepresented groups and deliver equitable access to its benefits.

The Share the Joy fund will support organisations and community groups who are improving a) Accessibility and Inclusion, b) Health and Wellbeing and c) Skills and Connectivity across London through cycling. Funded by Lime, this community cycling fund is managed by London Cycling Campaign with support from Loud Mobility.

The first cohort of fund recipients are each receiving £2500 to support things like core costs, project costs and new equipment. The first recipients of the funding include Cycle Sisters, London Bike Kitchen, Wheels for Wellbeing, and Londra Bisiklet Külübü , a Turkish and Kurdish focused cycling club that provides cycle training sessions and bike maintenance sessions to community members.

The fund is designed to support organisations and community groups who are working to increase equitable access to the benefits of cycling. Many of the grants

are urgently needed and will be immediately put to use. This is just the start of a very exciting project and the next round of fund grants will take place in September 2024, with three more before the end of 2025.

You can read more examples of organisations who received funds in the first cohort in the Share the Joy coffee table book: https://www.loudmobility.co.uk/campaign/share-the-joy#book.

**Changing Spaces**

Earlier this year, Steer and Centre for London published a report on tackling London's shared e-bike parking challenge.

London is missing out on tens of thousands of emission-free journeys per day from rental e-bikes, as demand for cycling exceeds space to park bikes. In comparison, more than 1 in 3 car drivers in London use their cars for trips that are shorter than 1 mile, but on-street car parking in London takes up a space equivalent to 10 Hyde Parks.

By working together with local authorities and campaigners, Lime is committed to reimagining our cities, reallocating our shared space away from cars and towards bikes. This is essential to creating a greener Southwark that prioritises our environment and climate, improves our air quality, reduces emissions and promotes carbon-free and active travel.

Steer and Centre for London recommend the implementation of a single Mandatory Parking Zone in central London boroughs, together with a Flexible Parking Zone across less central London boroughs. The report also recommends the utilisation of shared and expanded cycle stands as parking locations.

In Flexible Parking Zone boroughs, parking locations should be implemented in high demand areas (e.g. high streets and transport hubs) to prevent street obstructions, whereas outside of these areas users will be required to park considerately (enforced by mandatory end trip photos). In less central boroughs providing a usable bay network for users (25 bays per sq. km) in low density residential areas is neither practical nor affordable.

The Flexible Parking Zone approach enables a borough such as Southwark to mandate grouped parking in high-usage and high-footfall areas whilst maximising the benefits of cycling in terms of usage, convenience and access in all other areas. Mandatory Parking Zones also require significant up-front infrastructure costs and time to implement a bay network and work through consultations, TMOs and other processes. The benefits of shared e-bike schemes are only realised under Mandatory Parking Zones if sufficient density (25 bays per sq. km) is achieved - something which no London borough has managed.

You can read the report and recommendations here: https://uk.steergroup.com/sites/default/files/2024-05/E-bike_parking_bay_gap_analysis_report.pdf

Agenda Item 8

# Southwark Plan Biodiversity policies

# Update to the Environment Commission (Scrutiny)

April 2024 www.southwark.gov.uk

**Overview**

1.1 The February 2024 Biodiversity report to the Environment Scrutiny Commission included reference to three biodiversity policies in the current Southwark Plan (2022). It stated that the Planning Policy team will be updating the policies in the next Southwark Plan review. The Planning Policy team have subsequently been asked for further detail on the timeframe for the policy updates.

**Timeframe for Biodiversity Policy updates**

1.2 The biodiversity policies referenced in the February 2024 Scrutiny report are P59 Green Infrastructure, P60 Biodiversity and P61 Trees. In addition, policies P57 Open Space and P58 Open water space are relevant to biodiversity in terms of the linkages between the blue and green infrastructure within the borough.

1.3 Work on the Southwark Plan full review will commence in late 2024. The Regulation 19 Submission version of the Southwark Plan, with the updated biodiversity policies, will be completed in 2027.

1.4 It should be noted that, prior to the full Southwark Plan review, the Policy team are undertaking an Early Review of the Southwark Plan. This concerns Southwark Plan energy policies P69 and P70 - biodiversity policies are not within the scope of this review. The Regulation 19 Submission version of the Southwark Plan Early Review will be finalised in 2025.

**Process**

1.5 The production of the new Southwark Plan must proceed in a structured and evidenced way. Specific, mandatory stages must be followed. Revised or new policies must be based on robust evidence, analysis and consultation.

1.6 The update to the biodiversity policies will therefore be dependent on a range of new evidence and actions. This will include;

- The ongoing monitoring of Biodiversity Net Gain (mandatory since February and April 2024 for major and small sites respectively).
- The production of the pan-London Local Nature Recovery Strategy by the GLA, which Southwark will feed into.

- The commissioning of a new evidence base strategies by Planning and Environment and Leisure. These strategies will include an Open Space Needs Assessment, an updated Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and an updated SINC review.
- The need to meet new London Plan (2021) requirements concerning green infrastructure. This will include the development of a new Green Infrastructure Strategy for Southwark. This will be informed by the above documents and will be undertaken by Planning officers.
- Partnership working with a range of stakeholder groups and organisations.

1.6 The development of the strategies and the iterative policy development process will occur in dialogue with other departments and teams, including Environment and Leisure and Southwark's Flood Risk teams. Synergies with other Council strategies, such as the Climate Risk and Adaptation Strategy, will also be considered. Councillors will be kept updated throughout. Based on the procurement and assembly of this evidence, the Regulation 18 Southwark Plan consultation document, containing updated policies, will be prepared by 2026.

1.7 In terms of work planning, the Planning Policy team are currently finalising five Supplementary Planning Documents and the Early Plan review of energy and carbon policies (P69 and P70). Resources will then pivot to starting work on the Southwark Plan full review.

**Summary of key dates**

1.8 The biodiversity policies will be updated as part of the Southwark Plan review. Summary dates are provided below.

| **Workstream** | **Milestone** | **Date** |
|---|---|---|
| **Southwark Plan Early Review** *(energy policies only – not biodiversity)* | Regulation 18 Consultation version | End 2024 |
| | Regulation 19 Submission version | 2025 |
| **Southwark Plan review** *(biodiversity policies to be updated)* | Work starts Q3 2024.<br><br>Strategies procured and developed internally. | <br><br>2025 |
| | Regulation 18 Consultation version | 2026 |
| | Regulation 19 Submission version of updated Southwark Plan | 2027 |

# DRAFT
# Biodiversity scrutiny review report

July 2024

Environment Scrutiny Commission

## Contents


## Executive Summary

## Introduction

## Biodiversity Context

## Policy Context

## BIGGER, BETTER, MORE JOINED UP, BOLDER and more ANIMATED

## Bigger

**Spotlight Strategy: Systematic de-paving and defaulting to providing a green public realm which includes Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS,)wherever possible**

## Better

**Spotlight Strategy – Going Pesticide Free**

## More Joined Up

## Bolder and more animated

## FOOD

## Executive Summary

Loss of biodiversity globally is leading to the sixth mass extinction, largely driven by loss of habitat and further compounded by climate change. The UK is officially one of the most the nature depleted countries on earth. The UK has lost over half of its biodiversity and is in a poorer position than most countries, with lower tree cover than the majority of European nations. A primary driver of loss of biodiversity in the UK is the early industrialisation of our food system, though there are other pressures to do with consumption, population and development .

The loss of natural habitats in the wider countryside means that wildlife is increasingly reliant on the urban environment for its survival. Nature conservation in cities is, therefore, very important in the context of the global trend of biodiversity decline. London is almost 50% green and blue space.

Given the urban nature of Southwark, the pressures that the borough's nature and biodiversity face are arise primarily from pressure on land because of development for housing and infrastructure, as well as climate change. (The countryside faces additional pressures from intensive farming.) These development pressures are more likely to increase rather than decrease. A recent example of the pressures are the loss of roughland due to development and the paving over of front gardens to provide personalised parking space, especially now to charge EVs.

The way we manage parks, gardens and other green and blue spaces also impacts positively or negatively on nature and biodiversity. Small changes such as "no may May", leaving deadwood, using more native plants, harvesting rainwater, and planting for the whole life cycle of insects can make a huge difference . The commission heard from *Insectinside*, where local resident has documented over 600 species in a small park in Peckham. The Butterfly Conservation Trust told us most parks could support 24 -30 species.

Meanwhile, in recent years there have been many positive changes, including a widespread adoption of nature friendly gardening, and more can be done here, both in public parks, housing estates, verges and in private spaces, such as gardens. The Commission felt that there is even room for optimism here, as are more and more groups and residents are becoming engaged in gardening for nature in community projects and gardens, and there is an increasing understanding of the harms of pesticides and a growing call for pesticide free management of public spaces. The Council's devolved Cleaner Greener Safer fund has empowered local parents and schools across the borough to apply for funding to build green walls, and resident groups to reclaim spaces for nature, with public gardens and mini forests being established and tended throughout the borough.

The growth in urban agriculture also represents an opportunity to improve biodiversity. Whilst intensive monocultural farming is often almost completely devoid

of wildlife, the opposite is true of many allotments and community growing spaces, which are often rich sources of biodiversity . These spaces can be very productive and help build connections to nature and both the food produced and activity involved can contribute significantly to our residents' health and well-being. The council recently employed two part-time community gardeners and is seeking to make 1000 plots of land avaible for growing. Even more can be done here by mapping out more plots and enabling residents to access growing space. The Commission also recommends that Council Assembly declares a Right to Grow, which will complement our existing Right to Food.

The council has had a longstanding commitment to protect biodiversity and has had a biodiversity officer in place for many years, retaining this role even when many councils felt unable to do so due to budgetary pressures. The council and has recently significantly increased officer capacity in this area, with ecologists in the Climate Emergency team, Parks, and a biodiversity specialist in Planning .

The recent Southwark Land Commission report 'Land for Good' provides a framework for managing more land for the benefit of people and the planet, and provides synergy through relationships and a well aligned and coherent framework for many of the review's recommendations .

Biodiversity has been moving slowly up the national agenda for many years. The overarching vision in the Making Space for Nature report, 2010, chaired by Professor John Lawton, was a key theme of the review, and has influenced many of the polices and plans which are now being developed, including the national Local Nature Recover Plan (LNRP), which will cover London. This influential report for government called for a step change in provision for nature, setting out a vision for large-scale habitat restoration and re-creation through 'More, Bigger, Better and Joined up' spaces for nature. Southwark Nature Action Volunteers co-optees' evidence particularly focused on this theme, and the creation of Ecological Networks, improving habitat management and increasing space for nature by depaving and other measures is a particular focus of the review.

The review considers the council's expanding array of duties in respect of improving biodiversity, including delivering Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) in Planning and enhanced Biodiversity Duty and reporting requirements. Natural England provided guidance on producing Green Infrastructure Plans in 2023 and the GLA is conducting a piece of work mapping Green Infrastructure to support the delivery of the LNRP. A key recommendation is that the council undertake its own mapping exercise to develop a borough Green Infrastructure Plan, helping to support the strategic development of Ecological Networks. These are essential to strategically plan the joining up and better protection of our many existing wildlife habitats along nature corridors, and plan where to prioritise improving and increasing wildlife habitats. SNAV have started this process and there is earlier research that the council can use as a foundation.

These Ecological Networks are best conceived as nature corridors, some with access for people, and others reserved for just wildlife. Our existing habitats would form the core area, and these would be joined up through the existing linear network,

such as green paths, railway cuttings and rivers. The Commission would urge ambition here to expand the number of green routes through the city and explore the vision shown by other cities who have daylighted covered rivers to provide arteries through the city for recreation and restoration of marginal river habitat.

The review also considers how Southwark can minimise, or even eliminate the use of glyphosate and other pesticides, given their proven harms to biodiversity and human health. Parks ceased the scheduled use of pesticides prior to 2018; although from a policy perspective, glyphosate could be still be used in the control of invasive species such as Japanese knotweed, no cases have been reported in recent years. The Commission heard from Lambeth Council on its Community Weeding Scheme, which was introduced to aid stopping the routine spraying of streets in Lambeth. This led to more resident volunteering to hand weed. Lambeth Council no longer sprays streets with pesticides and has seen a surge in rare species and more and more residents appreciating and welcoming wild plants on their streets. Officers have been involved in ensuring that residents understand which species can be left and which ones need to be removed (e.g. buddleia, which can cause structural problems).

Southwark's private gardens are another theme of the review. London has lost 50% of its front gardens and this trend is set to increase as demand for home charging of EV cars increase. The review considers what powers the council has to reduce or mitigate this loss including through its somewhat limited powers to restrict the associated installation of dropped kerbs. This may be possible where there is high parking stress and a CPZ . There is also an opportunity provide residents with advice on how to reduce the impact of hard standing and retain as much greenery and permeabilityas possible. Pavement Channels to facilitate domestic charging of EVs on the kerbside offer another potential solution, and government guidance is anticipated following a number of pilots.

Southwark has an many beautiful parks, many well protected habitats, the London Centre for Wild Life gardening in Peckham and a long tradition of investing in Ecology Officers and now Community Gardening. We have many enthusiastic gardeners and food growers in the community and an active voluntary sector, supporting the delivery and development of the Southwark Nature Action Plan The borough is in a good place to make a step change in increasing biodiversity which will depend on increasing the amount of habitat in a planned and strategic way to improve biodiversity by working with local stakeholders, including landlords, the community and voluntary sector and residents.

## Introduction

This review is mainly aimed at the council but is also seeking to increase collaboration by the council with the community, voluntary sector and, where appropriate, businesses.

The Commission considered the following themes :

i. The biodiversity requirements of the Environment Act (2021) have significantly increased the duties of local authorities and regional government to improve biodiversity, which makes the review particularly timely. New requirements include enhanced Biodiversity Duty and reporting requirements, mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) in planning and the requirement for Local Authorities to contribute to 33 regional Nature Recovery Strategies. The council will be contributing to London's Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

ii. The overarching vision in the Making Space for Nature report, 2010, chaired by Professor John Lawton, was a key theme of the review. This influential report for government called for a step change in provision for nature by setting out a vision for large-scale habitat restoration and re-creation through ***more, bigger, better and joined up*** spaces for nature. Southwark Nature Action Volunteers co-optee evidence particularly focused on this theme, and the creation of biodiversity networks, improving habitat management and finding ways to increase space for nature by depaving and other measures was a particular focus.

iii. Southwark has recently invested in community food growing and the potential for urban agriculture and local food production to deliver improvements to biodiversity, as well as improve well-being was considered, alongside the impacts of intensive farming. In particular the review considered:

- How to increase urban food production as an affordable path to greater food security
- Reducing scope 3 emissions and ecological degradation caused by consumption of food produced from mono-cultures and non-carbon sequestering land use, across the UK and beyond
- Increasing the proportion of consumption of food produced through agroecology

iv. Accelerating the phasing out of pesticides

v. Stemming or mitigating the loss of planting and permeability in front gardens as residents with cars increasingly prioritise hard standings for private parking, especially to accommodate the switch to Electric Vehicles, which require charging

vi. Southwark plans and strategies including:
- Southwark Nature Action Plan (SNAP)
- Southwark's Land Commission
- Streets for People, and the associated EV, walking and cycling plans
- Southwark Plan

# Biodiversity context

### Assessment of biodiversity

The collective impact of humans on the environment is now increasingly referred to as a ushering in a new geological epoch, the Anthropocene. The combination system pressures (including but not limited to climate change) means we are now heading towards a sixth mass extinction event as the globe faces a loss of both biodiversity and accelerating falls in the abundance of species, both of which are impacting on the viability of ecosystems.

### International

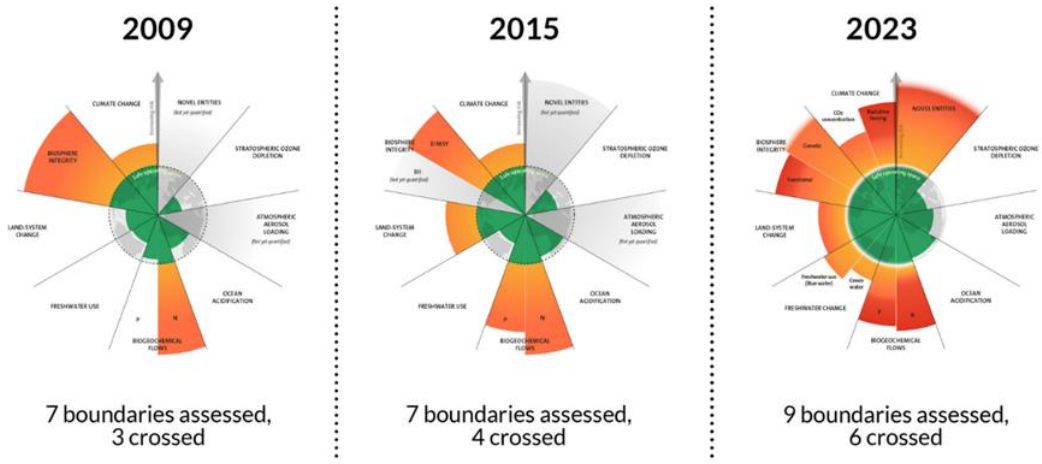
United Nations assessment

The 2019 Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) report finds that*: 'Nature across most of the globe has now been significantly altered by multiple human drivers, with the great majority of indicators of ecosystems and biodiversity showing rapid decline. Around one million species already face extinction, many within decades, unless action is taken to reduce the intensity of drivers of biodiversity loss. Without such action, there will be a further acceleration in the global rate of species extinction, which is already at least tens to hundreds of times higher than it has averaged over the past 10 million years'.*[1]

Planetary Boundaries

The most recent 2023 report on Planetary Boundaries finds that the Biosphere Integrity boundary has been crossed – both for loss of genetic diversity and planetary functionality.

[1] SUMMARY FOR POLICYMAKERS OF THE IPBES GLOBAL ASSESSMENT REPORT ON BIODIVERSITY AND
ECOSYSTEM SERVICES




According to the report, the boundary for planetary function of biosphere integrity was transgressed in late 19th Century, a time of large scale land transformation. It highlights that loss and degradation of habitat is the main driver for the depletion of ecosystems and that this is a historical process that has been underway for over a hundred years.

The work on planetary boundaries allows us to see the human impacts on the earth system across different domains and consider how they interact. It is now well established that climate change impacts negatively on biosphere integrity and, conversely, that biosphere integrity provides resilience against climate change.

There are other interrelationships which are as important – particularly the boundaries that have been crossed for Nitrogen and Potassium, Novel Entities, and freshwater flows. The breaching of Nitrogen and Potassium boundaries is associated with the use of fertilisers, as are some of the Noval Entities, all of which are impacting on biodiversity. The pressure on freshwater flows is also highly relevant to the UK and Southwark.

**UK**

In comparison with the rest of the world, the UK is not faring well. The 2023 State of Nature report found that the UK, like most other countries worldwide, has experienced a significant loss of biodiversity. The trends in nature examined in the report cover, at most, 50 years, but these follow on from major changes to the UK's nature over previous centuries. As a result, the UK is now one of the most nature-depleted countries on Earth.

Two main drivers of change[2] are summarised by the 2010 Space for Nature report as

- Habitat loss,
- Habitat deterioration.

The report goes on to identify 6 causes[3] which can be summarised as:

[2] Page 7 Space for Nature
[3] Page 21 of theSpace for Nature report in section 3.1

- Increased intensification of farming – facilitated by new technologies and agricultural policy
- Demographic changes , including population growth and increased single occupancy leading to more land being utilised for housing and infrastructure
- Consumption and economic growth driving land use change
- Climate change

The State of Nature 2023 report identifies agricultural intensification as the major driver of biodiversity decline on land in the UK[4]. The report says that a combination of technological advances, use of agro-chemicals and changing agricultural policy has reduced the capacity of farmed landscapes to support wildlife, resulting in widespread biodiversity loss. 71% of the UK's land is managed by farmers and other land managers.

The report finds that while many farmers are now adopting nature friendly practices, which will help specific species and stem losses, these are generally insufficient and overall the trajectory is still towards further decline of species' abundance and loss of genetic biodiversity.

### London

While much of the countryside has experienced significant losses of biodiversity over the last hundred years, conversely London – even inner London – is good for wildlife[5].

It has a warm and sheltered climate, accentuated by a significant ***urban heat island*** effect. About 47% of the area is classified as green space. Unlike in the countryside, the green spaces in London are (generally) not being intensively farmed or built upon, as they are mainly parks, cemeteries and other managed areas.

Gardens are another important habitat, although, as the report will discuss later, front gardens are under threat. However, overall, gardens still make an important contribution to habitat, and this may be increasing as people understand the value of wild life gardening.

## Policy Context

### Global

Biodiversity has a UN convened process similar to that relating to Climate Change. The 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) was held in Montreal in 2022, and led to the international agreement to protect 30% of land and oceans by 2030, and to the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). This Framework supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and

'Foresight Land Use Futures: Making the most of land in the 21st century' summarises the Foresight Land Use Futures 2010 report, which was a comprehensive review of the pressures on land-use in the UK.

[4] Page 56 State of Nature 2023
[5] Page 171 The Disappearance of Butterflies https://www.atroposbooks.co.uk/the-disappearance-of-butter

builds on the Convention's previous Strategic Plans, setting out an ambitious pathway to reach the global vision of a world living in harmony with nature by 2050. Among the Framework's key elements are 4 goals for 2050 and 23 targets for 2030.

**European**

The EU has conservation regulations that protect species and habitat , some of which remain in force in the UK post Brexit.

Formerly, the UK was part of the Natura 2000 ecological network. This was superseded by 2 regulations in 2019, which created a national site network on land and at sea, including both the onshore and offshore marine areas in the UK. The national site network includes existing and new Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs).

**UK**

**In 2010 the government commissioned an influential report 'Making Space for Nature: A review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network 2010' chaired by Professor Sir John Lawton CBE FRS**. The overarching vision is a key theme of the review. This influential report for government called for a step change in provision for nature by setting out a vision for large-scale habitat restoration and re-creation through 'More, Bigger, Better and Joined up' spaces for nature.

The review set out to establish whether or not the UK had a coherent and resilient ecological network and explained why in the summary:

*Ecological networks have become widely recognised as an effective response to conserve wildlife in environments that have become fragmented by human activities. An ecological network comprises a suite of high quality sites which collectively contain the diversity and area of habitat that are needed to support species and which have ecological connections between them that enable species, or at least their genes, to move.*

The review concluded that there are serious short-comings in the English network: wildlife sites are too small; losses of certain habitats have been so great that the area remaining is no longer enough to halt additional biodiversity losses without concerted efforts. The report also found that, with the exception of Natura 2000 sites and SSSIs, most of England's semi-natural habitats important for wildlife are generally insufficiently protected and under-managed. In addition, many of the natural connections have been degraded or lost, leading to isolation of sites; and too few people have easy access to wildlife.

The report called for a step-change in nature conservation, where we embrace a new, restorative approach which rebuilds nature and creates a more resilient natural environment for the benefit of wildlife and ourselves. It highlighted that this will require strong leadership from government, but is not a job for government alone, setting out necessity for effective and positive engagement with the landowners and land managers, as well as improved collaboration between local authorities, local

communities, statutory agencies, the voluntary and private sectors, farmers, other land-managers and individual citizens.

The overall vision was defined in four words: ***more, bigger, better and joined up***. The report said that it would not be possible to halt and reverse the collapse of England's wildlife documented without a larger network comprising more areas rich in wildlife, bigger sites, better managed sites, and more inter-connected sites.

This vision has been taken up and amplified by Southwark Nature Action Volunteers and has been used to frame much of the findings of the Commission's review.

**A green future '25 Year Environmental Plan' 2018** set out the Government's ambition to leave our environment in a better state than we found it. The 25 Year Environment Plan outlines the steps government proposes to take to achieve this ambition. It contains key targets for biodiversity including creating a nature recovery network.

**The National Biodiversity Strategy 2020** for England, Wales and Scotland shifted focus from the habitat and species based approach, where action plans focused on United Kingdom priority habitats and species, to a landscape-scale conservation strategy, with an overall target of no net loss of biodiversity by 2020. The vision set out to: 'halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people'.

**The Environment Act (2021)** new biodiversity requirements include enhanced Biodiversity Duty and reporting requirements, mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) in planning and the requirement for Local Authorities to contribute to 48 regional Nature Recovery Strategies. Southwark Council will be contributing to London's Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

- **Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)**
  Biodiversity Net Gain is a mandatory component of the Environment Act (2021) and the Council's Biodiversity Duty. It is a way of creating and improving natural habitats by ensuring that development has a measurably positive impact ('net gain') on biodiversity compared to what was there before. From 12 February 2024, BNG will be mandatory for major developments (classified as developments of over 10 dwellings ), with some exceptions. Developers must deliver a minimum BNG of 10% over the baseline biodiversity value of the site. Small sites will be required to meet 10% BNG from 2 April 2024
- **Enhanced Biodiversity Duty and reporting requirements**
  The Environment Act states that the Council must first consider what action it intends to take to conserve and enhance biodiversity, by early 2024. This consideration should include the measures to be taken by the Council to conserve and enhance biodiversity and the specific objectives to deliver these outcomes. The first subsequent Biodiversity Report setting out progress against the agreed priorities, interventions and objectives must be published no later than 1st January 2026.

- **Local Nature Recovery Strategy**
  The LNRS is a new system of spatial biodiversity strategies in England, required by law under the Environment Act 2021. London is one of the 48 regions tasked with creating this strategy. All the regions will work together to restore, create, and connect habitat.

**In January 2023, Natural England launched the new Green Infrastructure Framework.** The Green Infrastructure Framework is a commitment in the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. It supports the greening of our towns and cities and connections with the surrounding landscape as part of the Nature Recovery Network. Networks of green and blue spaces and other natural features can bring big benefits for nature, climate, health and prosperity.

## London

In July 2019, the National Park City Foundation confirmed London as the world's first National Park City. Our city is almost 50% green and blue – with thousands of parks, front gardens, allotments, street trees, green roofs, rivers, canals, and ponds.

GLA

The London Environment Strategy sets out how the Mayor will work with others to make sure that London's biodiversity is enhanced and that more Londoners can experience nature.

The London Plan contains the following policies linked to conservation of natural habitats and ecological management and enhancement:

- London Plan policy Green infrastructure
- London Plan policy Geodiversity
- London Plan policy Urban greening factor
- London Plan policy Sustainable drainage
- London Plan policy Local green and open space
- London Plan policy Biodiversity and access to nature
- London Plan policy Trees and woodlands
- London Plan policy Food growing
- London Plan policy Waterways

**London Local Nature Recovery Strategy**

The Greater London Authority (GLA) is the designated responsible authority for producing the statutory LNRS for London.

The GLA is working with Southwark as well as all 33 other London Boroughs (including the City of London), and the six neighbouring counties (Hertfordshire,

Kent, Essex, Buckinghamshire, Surrey, and Berkshire) to produce the London LNRS.

The GLA is using the Space for Nature theme i.e. that London's ecological network will be 'bigger, better, and more joined up'.

**London Green Infrastructure Framework (LGIF)**

The GLA is producing a new vision and new spatial framework to target and prioritise green and blue infrastructure across London so that nature and green space can flourish and is accessible to all Londoners. The London Green Infrastructure Framework (LGIF) will be developed alongside the London Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), which will become the LGIF biodiversity/nature digital map layer. It will inform any updates to the London Plan and will be completed by Summer 2025

**Southwark**

This section briefly outlines and reviews the following Southwark plans and strategies:

i. Climate Change strategy and action plan
ii. Southwark Plan and delivery
iii. Streets for People, and the associated EV, walking and cyling plans
iv. Land for Good - Southwark's Land Commission
v. Southwark Nature Action Plan (SNAP)

**Climate Change strategy and action plan**

Southwark Climate Change strategy identifies biodiversity as a key theme, and both the Climate Change action plan and the SNAP are integrated to ensure coherence in the setting and assessing of targets.

<u>Trees</u>

One of the major outcomes of the declaration of the Climate Emergency in 2019 was a commitment to increase tree coverage across the borough, and this is backed by a budget of £5,000,000. The aims of the programme are:

- Maintain and increase tree coverage, with tree planting encouraged amongst residents;
- Make Southwark the first inner London council to have over 100,000 trees (and endeavour to increase tree canopy to cover 24% of public land);
- Work with local people,schools and community groups to find locations for and plant a further 20,000 trees.

The commission heard that this ambitious programme is well underway, but encountered problems with drought in the summer of 2022 . The service set out a number of steps they are taking with contractors and parks to improve survival rates.

SNAV welcomed the tree planting programme, however they urged the council to ensure that this was integrated with other planting to improve biodiversity and that

adoption by the community was encouraged. In particular, they recommended that tree pits are made larger, to accommodate more plants and, ideally, two trees. They recommended that at least 50% of trees planted are species, with a preference fortrees that feed pollinators.

**Southwark Plan and planning**

The following policies in the Southwark Plan aim to retain and enhance biodiversity:

- P57 Open Space
- P58 Open water space,
- 59 Green Infrastructure,
- P60 Biodiversity,
- P61 Trees.

A review of these policies will occur as part of the Southwark Plan review in 2027.

Urban Greening Factor

Officers advised the commission that the council has already integrated the Urban Greening Factor into consideration of planning applications 100% of major sites in Q3 2023/24 achieved the required London Plan Urban Greening Factor target.

Green Infrastructure

The London Plan G1 Green infrastructure plan states that '*London's network of green and open spaces, and green features in the built environment, should be protected and enhanced. Green infrastructure should be planned, designed and managed in an integrated way to achieve multiple benefits.*

In addition to the commitment at a Londonwide level the London Plan also says that: '*Boroughs should prepare green infrastructure strategies that identify opportunities for cross-borough collaboration, ensure green infrastructure is optimised and consider green infrastructure in an integrated way as part of a network consistent with* [ the London Plan].

There is a Green Infrastructure policy in the Southwark Plan (p59) which says, amongst other stipulations, that developments ought to 'integrate with the wider green infrastructure network', however, as yet there is no coherent green infrastructure network identified, which is a significant gap.

Officers said that work will be carried out on the Green Infrastructure Strategy, as required by the London Plan.

Biodiversity Net Gain

As outlined earlier, from April 2024 it is now broadly mandatory for developers to deliver a minimum BNG of 10% over the baseline biodiversity value of all sites under development

The officer reported that in-depth planning has taken place to deliver this including

- The appointment of an Ecologist in the Planning team to lead on the assessment of BNG

- A free GIS mapping trial with data partner Gigl (Greenspace information for Greater London) to map existing ecological data across the borough in a way which is compliant with the statutory Biodiversity Net Gain assessment tool.

- The inclusion of a monitoring fee for significant BNG in the draft S106 and CIL SPD to cover the cost of the Council executing its duty to check that biodiversity gains on major developments are delivered over a thirty year period.

Officers said that analysis of applications which have included BNG data has shown that the achievement of BNG generally far exceeds the minimum 10% requirement, given the low biodiversity baseline value of many urban sites. The fact that the minimum requirement has consistently been achieved onsite suggests that the Council could set and realistically achieve a target higher than 10%, effectively signposting developers towards the borough's aspirations.

Officers said that Southwark Council will not ask developers to deliver offsite Biodiversity Net Gain on Council-owned land. To do so would require the Council to establish a Habitat Bank Vehicle, a legal entity. Officers said that, given developers are delivering this on-site, the cost of this was not warranted. This is supported by the Place for Nature report which states that on-site delivery of BNG is preferred to off-site delivery.

Officers said that the potential to increase the minimum BNG percentage will be investigated as part of the Southwark Plan full review when biodiversity policy P60 is updated. In the meantime, the emphasis from case officers will be on encouraging BNG which is multi-functional, suitable to the site context and joined up with surrounding green space and ecological corridors.

- Enhanced Biodiversity Duty and reporting requirements

As set out above the Environment Act states that the Council must first consider what action it intends to take to conserve and enhance biodiversity, by early 2024, however this has not yet been undertaken.

**Streets for People**

The Streets for People strategy sets out the council's commitment to improve residents' quality of life and take action on climate change by changing how we travel and use streets in our borough. The Streets for People Strategy is themed around 4 areas:

- Streets for Communities
- Streets for Journeys
- Streets for the Economy
- Streets for Nature.

and designed to support:

- cleaner air
- safer and quieter streets with less traffic and fewer accidents
- healthy travel options like walking, cycling or wheeling
- greener and more pleasant spaces for our communities to connect and socialise
- a better place for all who live, work, study and visit

The Streets for People Strategy has three subsidiary plans that the council consulted upon at the beginning of 2024. These cover:

- Electric Vehicles (EV)
- Cycling
- Walking

The Streets for People strategy is an excellent framework that is well placed to dovetail with the ecological networks for people and nature that the Space for Nature report recommends under its 'more joined up' vision. Similarly, the strategy is well placed to cohere with the Green Infrastructure Strategy, recommended by Natural England and required by the London Plan .

**Land for Good : Southwark Land Commission report 2023**

The Southwark Land Commission set out to examine how land could be used for the good of people and planet. There were seven recommendations, all of which could be considered relevant to the review in some way:

1: Put social purpose at the heart of land use

2: Map what's there and what isn't

3: Take control of our land and assets

4: Defend and extend affordable accommodation for all

5: Cherish our natural capital and decarbonise our land

6: Give the community real power and voice

7: Disrupt the status quo to unlock bigger changes

There are also detailed priority actions that emerge from the report recommendations which include, under Recommendation 5 (Cherish our natural capital and decarbonise our land) calls for a plan to 'Join up existing green spaces to create a network of Biodiversity Corridors'. As part of this the report draws attention to B-Lines, which are '*a series of 'insect pathways' running through our countryside and towns, along which a series of wildflower-rich habitat stepping stones are being created and restored. They link existing wildlife areas together, creating a network, like a railway, that will weave across the UK landscape'.*

The report notes that in a time of an intense cost-of living crisis, there is a clear need and opportunity for environmentally focussed land use and management decisions to help meet social and ecological objectives. The report notes the value local growing projects such as Walworth Neighbourhood Food Model and says this ought to be resourced and replicated to enhance food security for Southwark's diverse communities.

**Southwark Nature Action Plan**

The Council agreed the Southwark Nature Action Plan in 2020, which followed on from two previous Biodiversity Action Plans. This is a detailed document that takes stock of the borough's biodiversity and lays plans for its improvement, many of which have been acted upon.

Key highlights of strengths :

- Management of SINCs is done very well. In 2015 the council conducted a review of present and potential SINCS and produced an action plan for improvement: the 'SINC Review and Borough Ecological Survey of the London Borough of Southwark: Southwark Surveys 2014-2015' to support the SNAP. This was produced by The Ecological Consultancy and finalised in 2016. Recent reports to the Commission indicate that these are well managed. Good Management of SINCS is a key recommendation in the Space for Nature Report and we are in the top 3rd of council across the country, so our work here is exceptional.
- The former Ecology Officer was embedded in the planning process and gave detailed examples of work conditioned.
- Parks have taken concrete steps to increase biodiversity through improvements to habitat management and reduced pesticide use to best practice (i.e. for use only if necessary to control invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed); the council is reviewing its use of such chemicals on streets
- There has been a huge investment of £5 million in trees to increase the canopy cover to 24% led by a dedicated Tree officer (as outlined above)
- Rain gardens have been installed in various locations across the borough
- There is an ecological partnership overseeing the SNAP with good engagement and partners delivering important work across the borough
- Biodiversity Net Gain and the Urban Green Factor are embedded in Planning

Weakness

The report in 2020 referred to further work that will be undertaken to develop ecological networks, and this is anticipated to feed into the Local Nature Recovery plans. Initial mapping of nature corridors was undertaken as part of the 2015 SINC review, but this remains under developed. It may be this has been delayed because it was initially anticipated that the Nature Recovery Plans would be required sooner and at a more local level by government, and DEFRA guidance was anticipated imminently.

While other councils, such as Lambeth, have produced Green Infrastructure plans, and used them to map out ecological networks, Southwark has not moved forward with plans to develop nature corridors Instead, it has remained largely focused on habitats and species, rather than the delivering the landscape-scale conservation strategy required to deliver the vision of the Spaces for Nature report and national 2020 Biodiversity Plan. Without this strategic plan in place, it is unlikely that Southwark will able to halt overall biodiversity loss or support healthy well-functioning ecosystems. As such the main priority now ought to be establishing 'coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people. The most sensible place to start would be to immediately commence the development of a Green Infrastructure Strategy immediately.

The governance and oversight of the SNAP could be improved to ensure this is delivered in partnership and reviewed annually. The Commission welcomes the recent of an independent hair .

In summary, Southwark officers have clearly done some excellent work on the ground laying plans which are working well at a local level (Parks, management of SINCs, Planning ) to protect specific species and manage our existing habitat to a high standard. However, what is lacking is a well-developed strategic plan for the borough that sets out how spaces will be made ***more joined up, bigger and better*** in a coordinated way, ensuring that all parts of the council and wider community can feel invested in a shared plan. This is particularly crucial, as pressures on land are intense and so making the best use of existing land and seeking to expand this in strategic ways will be most impactful.

All the plans and strategies considered at a national, regional and local level support the development of ecological networks and thus either have existing commitments to do this, or take this forward to an extent already including the LNRS, the Southwark Plan, SNAP, Land for Good report of the Land Commission, the Climate Change Action Plan, and the Streets for People Strategy.

**Recommendations**

**Develop a Green Infrastructure Strategy, as a priority, to map out coherent ecological networks to be planned, designed and managed in an integrated way in conjunction with the SNAP Southwark Biodiversity Partnershipand other local groups/stakeholders The Green Infrastructure Strategy should also identify opportunities for cross-borough collaboration, ensure green infrastructure is optimised and consider green infrastructure in an integrated way as part of a wider network.**

**Undertake the Enhanced Biodiversity Duty first report as soon as possible.**

**Explore setting enhanced BNG requirements beyond the minimum 10% specified in the Environment Act 2021 when undertaking the review of the Southwark Plan in 2027,**

**As recommended in the Land for Good report of the Land Commission, careful consideration should be given to designating additional sites across the borough food growing, replicating and resourcing successful local growing projects such as Walworth Neighbourhood Food Model to enhance food security for Southwark's diverse communities.**

## Bigger, Better, More Joined Up and Bolder and more Animated

In their evidence to the Commission, Southwark Nature Action Volunteers (SNAV) outlined how the central recommendation of the Making Space for Nature report "more, bigger, better and joined-up" applies to urban areas as much as rural areas, and proposed actions for Southwark Council under each theme, with an added theme of "more exciting" to reflect the importance of engaging urban society in nature and wildlife. The review expands 'exciting' to consider how bold urban schemes revitalise the city, and take account of the benefits to people and nature of engaging local residents in biodiversity and food growing projects.

SNAV articulated a vision for Southwark as follows:

*A person, living anywhere in the borough, should be able to walk or wheel safely to anywhere else in the borough amid a chorus of birdsong increasing through the winter and spring, past fluttering butterflies and buzzing grasshoppers in the summer, and picking edible fruits along the way in the autumn.*

And for some of Southwark's many non-human residents:

- A dragonfly, damselfly, frog or toad should be able to safely and easily travel from one healthy pond to another, with grassy verges and safe hiding places along the way.
- A sparrow, dunnock, or blue tit should be able to find plentiful insect, fruit, and seed forage to feed her family within an easy 50m radius of her family nest.
- Southwark's more specialised invertebrates should be able to find their native partner plants, survive and thrive. A brimstone butterfly should be able to find a healthy buckthorn shrub on which to lay her eggs, and a common blue should be able to find birdsfoot trefoil, etc.
- Bats (of all nine different species known to be living in Southwark) should be able to navigate treelines and waterways easily, forage on plentiful insects, and have safe, undisturbed summer and winter roosting places .

## Bigger

A key message of both the COP Biodiversity Action plan and the UK Space for Nature report was that we need a bigger amount of habitat. The COP 15 commitment, known as 30x30, calls for the effective protection and management of 30% of the world's land, fresh waters and oceans by the year 2030. Given London

already has nearly 50% of green and blue space this an objective that Southwark could embrace locally.

*Size* matters and the Spaces for Nature report noted that while it is very important that remaining semi-natural habitats, corridors and stepping stones are well protected, that will not be enough because: *'the amount of habitat that remains and the small sizes of many of the fragments, mean that the current series of protected sites is insufficient to prevent further loss of species. Nor is it generally appreciated that loss of species from surviving habitat fragments can take a long time; some manage to cling on even though their populations are no longer viable in the long term – an effect called an extinction debt (Tilman et al. 2002). This is both bad and good news. Bad because in the longer term the situation is worse than we think. But good because we may be able to avoid paying much of our current extinction debt by both improving the quality of the habitats that remain and by restoring or re-creating habitats that we have lost' (page 45)*

The amount of existing urban development in Southwark and the pressures on land for other needs, including housing and infrastructure, mean that creating bigger habitat will not be easy. However, there are many incremental steps that, taken together, can make a big difference . Three of the most significant are managing existing green and blue spaces better so they become wildlife habitat, de-paving becoming the default, and expanding coverage of green roofs.

In addition there are some big bold steps that other cities have taken, in particular exposing hidden rivers. This kind of major project will likely best be done in a strategic way and linked to Local Nature Recovery Networks.



<u>Small incremental steps add up to much bigger habitat</u>

To expand the small areas of habitats available for biodiversity in the borough, Southwark should:

- Increase our greenspaces by de-paving the many unused areas of existing hardstanding to make room for 'pocket parks', new street trees, new hedgerows (which can contribute to air quality improvements), rain gardens, food growing spaces and other forms of new planting.

- Dovetailing with Southwark's push towards an increase in active travel and a reduction in the number of privately owned vehicles (helped by access to car clubs), we need a clear strategy to de-pave much of the vast area of land that is currently used or designated for parking privately owned vehicles, which already considerably exceeds parking requirements.. This would enable the area available for green space in estates and elsewhere to be enlargedproviding pleasant spaces for public interaction and food production, and healthy green corridors for nature and active travel.
- Look to use development and redevelopment opportunities to provide new green spaces and extend and link existing greenspaces and parks.

- Consider the full range of semi-natural habitats needed by wildlife, identifying gaps (e.g. ponds, absent in many areas of Southwark) and develop plans to address these gaps.

- Recognise that, whilst some play important amenity roles, many green spaces such as heavily-managed grass areas and amenity-planted bark chip beds do not support biodiversity. More space could be made for semi-natural habitats and native vegetation that do support a wide array of our wildlife species.

- Reconsider other open space, such as estate lands, schools, and sports field borders, as places for wildlife.

- Encourage and enable the installation (including retrofitting) of well-designed, wildlife-friendly green roof systems on structures less than 4 stories in height, especially along strategic SINC connection routes. Projects vary, but on average green roof systems have many of the ecological benefits of de-paving, at approximately half the cost per m2, sometimes less.

- Recognise a buffer zone around SINC boundaries, with attention to reducing artificial lighting, noise, height limits for tall buildings (overshadowing), and traffic.

**Recommendations**

1) **Investigate the viability of Southwark adopting the Biodiversity COP 15 commitment known as 30x30, which calls for the effective protection and management of 30% of the world's land, fresh waters and oceans by the year 2030. This is both an international and national aim and as such can potentially align local ambition and pride to national and global ambition. This is a proven way to increase commitment to environmental changes[6].**

2) **Encourage and enable the installation (including retrofitting) of well-designed, wildlife-friendly green roof systems on structures less than 4 stories in height, especially along strategic SINC connection routes**

3) **Recognise a buffer zone around SINC boundaries, with attention to reducing artificial lighting, noise, height limits for tall buildings (overshadowing) and traffic and increasing habitat for wildlife through depaving and installation of green roofs.**

4) Undertake a mapping exercise with community stakeholders ( as recommended by Southwark Land Commission) to identify further land that can be used for wildlife, in conjunction with the development of Ecological Corridors and as part of the Green Infrastructure plan, and link with the GLA exercise.

[6] See section 5 https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fenvs.2023.1103635/full#:~:text=In%20particular%2C%20the%20present%20study,national%20pride%20have%20higher%20PET.

## Spotlight Strategy: Systematic De-paving and defaulting to providing a green public realm and provision of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS)wherever possible .

Systematic de-paving is a powerful strategy for moving our borough towards climate change preparedness and carbon net zero, providing better conditions for biodiversity and flood attenuation and releasing land for food growing. The associated increase in greenery can also be very effective in improving citizens' physical and mental health and increasing community pride and engagement. De-paving also has a very strong alignment to the goals of the Southwark Council Climate Change Resilience and Adaptation Strategy, whose priorities include heat island and flood risk.

The Commission believes that we need a baseline shift so de-paved is the default, wherever possible.

There have been a number of small volunteer led schemes in Southwark which show the potential. The Octopus Garden community led project by Trees for Bermondsey beautifully illiterates the possibilities:

*De-paving for the Octopus Garden, Dunton and Lynton Roads, 2022*

*The garden view from Lynton Road, 2023*

**Making better use of water, reducing rain water run-off and increasing flood resilience**

Water is essential for plants and wildlife, our existing infrastructure diverts most of it straight into sewers. Harvesting rainwater to irrigate planted community spaces and rain gardens would benefit wildlife both by supporting viable and permeable green spaces and by reducing excessive run off of nutrients that flow into waterbodies increasing algae which de-oxygenates the water, killing fish. Evaporation of locally infiltrated water cools the soil. Across London there is an urgent need to better manage surface and ground water, diverting it away from the sewage system.

Areas of Southwark are already prone to surface water flooding and flash floods, and these events can only be expected to increase with the acceleration of climate change. Increasing the area of vegetated permeable land, which attenuates and allows infiltration of rainwater is key to adapting our urban environment to these changes.

Rain gardens, also known as Sustainable Drainage Systems ( SuDS) .
Meristem Design shared some information on schemes they have worked in Southwark and beyond. They install and plant
SuDS as rain gardens. These modify surface waterflow to more natural rates, allowing vegetation
and plants to absorb the majority of the rainwater. Rain gardens also filter water, preventing toxins from entering the sewage system.


*Forest Road, Meristem Design, Rain Gardens/ SUDs*

A SuDS study in northeast England found that the installation of only 6 trees, including only 2 structural tree pits designed for maximum rooting capacity, reduced peakflow between upstream and downstream manholes by 25-30%.

The Commission heard that highways pedestrianisation projects are being built with insufficient consideration for run-off reduction. Whilst Southwark's Developer's Guide for Surface Water Management calls for post-development site discharge rates to be equal to greenfield rates, the same standards do not seem to be applied to streetscape pedestrianisation projects.

Southwark Streetscape Design Manual (2020) states that “SUDS design must be integrated into new schemes with careful consideration of the maintenance and management responsibilities”. However, it does not state a runoff or peak flow reduction requirement or any engineering parameters[7].

Permeable paving

There are also permeable paving options, which allow hard standing for vehicles and room for plants to grow. Meanwhile, permeable paving still has much higher run-off rates than vegetated surfaces.

**Reduced heat island effect**

Vegetated land absorbs and stores much less heat than paved surfaces, a critical consideration as we face increasing temperatures. De-paving land creates space for larger-canopied trees to be planted, giving them a healthy environment to establish and mature, so that cooling benefits provided through evapo-transpiration and shade are maximised over time.

**Carbon sequestration and pollutant filtration and absorption**

Sealing the soil with hard surfaces stops plant growth from sequestering carbon and sends valuable rainwater into the sewage system, along with pollutants such as tyre particles and motor oil. Stressed trees, without enough rooting volume to be drought resilient, cease photosynthesizing and become carbon sources rather than sinks. Furthermore, the production of cement, a vital ingredient in concrete and other paving, accounts for 8% of carbon emissions worldwide, so reversing the tendency towards increased coverage of hard and impermeable surfaces that rely on these materials will not only build resilience in the public realm, but also reduce over all CO2e emissions.

There are opportunities with our present contractors to recycle hard standing for other landscape or construction projects. This should be maximised to reduce embodied/whole life carbon.

**Trees**

The Southwark Streetscape Design Manual (2020) states that “SuDS design must be integrated into new schemes with careful consideration of the maintenance and management responsibilities” and that “tree pits should be constructed as large as possible given the constraints of the site”. There are no other firm softscape requirements.

Integrating Tree planting with other planting and SuDS is likely to provide a much better habitat and survival rates for trees. Southwark’s Tree Section is diligently

[7] The goal for each redeveloped site should ideally be 100% local infiltration or return to greenfield conditions. If hydrogeologic conditions do not permit local infiltration, well-designed bio-attenuation in order to significantly reduce peak runoff. Susdrain recommends a goal of 50% reduction of peak runoff for each redeveloped site, and provides information on different land area and storage requirements needed to meet this goal for the most frequent to less frequent rainfall events. See SNAV Depaving report to February meeting of the Commsion

working to plant more trees, however sometimes these trees are being placed awkwardly or inappropriately, in tiny tree pits which do not allow sufficient mature rooting volume or provide significant wildlife benefit. Some of these plantings would offer much greater benefit and long term survival rates if coordinated with well-designed de-paving and SuDS.

*A lone eucalyptus tree awkwardly placed in a tiny treepit within a sea of little-used pavement. Could we de-pave more of the surrounding area, and create more flood resilience and real habitat?*

**Biodiversity: Soil, plants, trees, insects, and birds**

Protecting and restoring biodiversity is not just about iconic species in far-away places, or isolated provision for specific species. It is about the soil, plants, living organisms and water quality in our local environment creating connected habitat, catering to a diverse range of species that support healthy ecosystems.

Soil

The microorganisms that live in the soil perform essential and often underestimated roles in our ecosystem. Studies of phage therapy (using bacteria-specific viruses for a more targeted antibiotic), bacteria that digest methane or radio-active waste, root-nodule bacteria that help plants fix nitrogen, cyanobacteria that produce oxygen, the depleted gut and skin biomes of urban dwellers all point to the vital functions performed by microorganisms in the soil. Healthy soil biota rely on aerobic reactions and carbon and nutrient cycling involving plants, which are severely impeded by soil sealing and compaction. Thus a concerted effort to de-pave urban space could yield wider health benefits for wildlife and humans alike.

Planting

Not all local greening is equal from a biodiversity standpoint. It is important to include as many site-appropriate UK native plants as possible in a new planting, and to include as many UK- wildlife-friendly species as possible. Planting should also ideally consist of several “layers” comprising a variety of native wildlife friendly plants, including groundcover, native grasses or herbaceous plants, and a woody /

structural layer that will provide architecture and cover for larger animals such as birds. For this reason, the Commission would like to see much larger tree pits and trees incorporated into bigger habitat creations schemes.

**Releasing land: repurposing the public realm, kerbside and car parks for greenery by depaving**

When viewed through this lens, there is a huge amount of wasted land in Southwark, where potentially life-supporting soil is trapped beneath little-used hard surfaces.

Public Realm

SNAV have created this map identifying several sites with unnecessary paving, within a small sample area of Camberwell - 1,255m2 within 1.25 square kilometres. Extrapolating this number to the borough as a whole, there may be approximately 28,965m2 (approx 3ha) of little-used, unnecessary hard surface readily available for depaving in Southwark, even without reducing the number of car parking places. De-paving even this relatively small area of land would make a great difference for the pedestrian and resident experience, biodiversity, and flood resilience.

Kerbside

Including land dedicated to parked vehicles greatly increases the area under consideration. Lambeth's kerbside strategy calculated that its kerbside area alone, currently 94% of which is used for parking, is equal to 194 football pitches, or 1,158,000m2 (116ha) or over twice the area of Burgess Park.

The "Streets for People Strategy" has suggested that at least 10% of every Highways scheme footprint should be dedicated to planting and nature-based solutions, and calls for a plan for SuDS implementation to be developed this year. SNAV pointed out that 10% for biodiversity is much less than would be appropriate in many schemes (see Liverpool Grove).

Liverpool Grove pedestrianisation - a missed opportunity for SuDS and biodiversity. This mostly impermeably paved project is directly adjacent to a large churchyard green space and park. The small amount of planting provided is non-native.

Almost entirely paved forecourt outside a new development on Thurlow Street. To the right there is concrete seating but no sign of any shade.

**Depaving Front Gardens**

Gardens are an important source of greenery and can provide a rich habitat for wildlife. The UK has half a million hectares of garden, which is a bigger area than all of our nature reserves[8].Unfortunately, front gardens are being increasingly paved over to park cars and EV charging is further catalysing this trend . Measures to prevent further paving over are considered in the in a separate section.

Despite the EV charging pressures several councils have put forward successful programmes to encourage residents to depave their front gardens, which Southwark Council could replicate: .

- Lambeth Council worked with residents in Kennington, supplying skips and labour to help residents remove unwanted hard surfaces from private space, including front gardens and driveways. Lambeth has provided an open invitation (council phone number and email address) for other interested residents to get in touch.

- Hammersmith and Fulham Council have produced a Flood Mitigation Report which proposes an annual public de-paving programme similar to Lambeth's program in Kennington

- The city of Amsterdam in the Netherlands has a de-paving programme where the city supports any resident wishing to de-pave outside their unit.

[8] https://www.sciencefocus.com/nature/a-scientists-guide-to-life-how-to-garden-for-wildlife

**Community Pride, Engagement and Food Production**
De-paved land provides more opportunities for communities to gather and engage in nature-based activities such as food production, wildlife gardening, or just observation of natural processes, such as seasonal changes in plant, bird, and insect life.

**Maintenance/management**
Not every de-paved area needs to be expensively planted and maintained. With proper initial design, it is possible to create green spaces with very high biodiversity value, and acceptable aesthetic value, through initial seeding of wildflowers, tolerance of volunteer plants, annual mowing, and ongoing litter picking. Public awareness and increased tolerance of “weeds” simply as wild plants is already underway as part of the reduction in spraying of glyphosate throughout the borough. Any de-paved areas engineered as SuDS will have minimal additional maintenance requirements such as periodic unblocking of drains, similar to conventional drainage systems.
The encouragement, definition, and development of Public-Common Partnerships, as suggested in the Southwark Land Commission Report, where local community organisations share responsibility for land management with Southwark as the landowner, has great potential to increase community engagement while potentially lightening some of Southwark’s burden of management.

**Land contamination**
Prior to de-paving, soil sampling is advised. If heavy contamination beneath existing paving is detected, measures must be taken so that toxic materials do not become loose in the environment. It is important to note that even if the earth cannot be directly planted there is still the option of planters, including SuDS, and food growing in raised beds.

**Vehicular and pedestrian access requirements**
Not everywhere can or should be de-paved. It is essential that de-paving and pedestrianisation projects are thoughtfully and professionally designed, with pedestrian accessibility in mind, including ensuring that disabled parking is available nearby and prioritised over other vehicle parking, and that the mix of surfaces in redesigned areas is appropriate to support access for those with limited mobility: convenience and amenity must be balanced with finding creative ways to maximise biodiversity, habitats and greenery given the myriad of benefits to all.

Where hard surfaces are essential for vehicles, the council ought to consider the use of *Grasscrete* or similar products, which allow both specified vehicle loading and vegetative growth.

**Consideration of underground utilities locations and need for access**
The Commission notes that some areas which have been used as highway for decades will have a high concentration of utilities cables/pipes etc. embedded beneath them. It is acknowledged that areas with utilities lines running close to the surface are not suitable for planting of woody species. However shallow rooted herbaceous species may still be considered for overplanting, depending on the type

and location of utilities lines. Some lines are actually better accessible for service when set in easily replaced herbaceous planting than if buried in concrete; other lines may require hard surface protection. Investigation for de-paving is an occasion for more accurate mapping of underground lines.

The London borough of Enfield has established a “dig-once” programme, leveraging the Mayor of London’s Infrastructure Coordination Service to incorporate de-paving, SuDS, and streetscape improvements with already-scheduled necessary subgrade utilities improvements, thereby reducing cost and disruption.

**Cost and value**

Southwark's Flood Risk Management Strategy aims to promote the use of SuDS (draft for consultation June 2023), but identifies that funding is an issue. However, it is important to note that there is a difference between de-paving and SuDS and their respective associated costs de-paving simply means that the top hard surfaces are removed, and soil which allows plants to grow is exposed or added. –In contrast, SuDS may include engineered substrates, storage and piping systems, in addition to simpler run-off reduction measures.

Schemes incorporating less paving do not necessarily add costs if site works are already being undertaken.

There are also currently many outside funding streams available for de-paving and climate resilience-related improvement schemes, for example:

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-flood-management-programme

https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/environment-and-climate-change/parks-green-spaces-and-biodiversity/green-space-funding

It is much more cost-effective to de-pave and plant larger, more joined-up areas. In addition, with a larger root zone, the trees have a greater chance of survival, good growth and long life.

The value per square metre of de-paved land, as calculated through natural capital accounting methods, is potentially significant when taken in aggregate across the borough, considering the land’s improved value in terms of contributions to biodiversity, urban cooling, flood resilience, and improved air and water quality. This potential value should be taken into account alongside the inherent and unquantifiable benefits of biodiverse greenspace.

**Examples of successful systemic de-paving strategies employed by local authorities**

In Portland, Oregon, USA, local government has partnered with community organisation De-pave to successfully carry out community de-paving projects for over ten years, so far removing over 22,000m2 of hard surface and reducing Portland stormwater sewer loading by over 60,000,000 litres.

In the small town of Douai, France, systemic implementation of SuDS strategies has

reportedly led to the saving of 1 million euros per year, or the equivalent of 30 to 40% of budget compared to a regular rainwater management system of a town that size. (Herin et Dennin, 2016)

## Recommendations for depaved as default , wherever possible.

Depaving has the potential to be a powerful tool against the biodiversity and climate crises. In recognition of this, the Commission recommends the following actions:

**1. Employ an internal design review process to ensure that any new streetscape or housing projects incorporate green wildlife habitat, SuDS, and water attenuation to the maximum extent possible, and benefits from community input. (This should be part of an enhanced BNG approach.)**

**Consult the Southwark Biodiversity Partnership , as well as highways contractors and sub-contractors (e.g. FM Conway, Metis and Meristem) to ensure that projects benefit from a wide range of input from landscape architects, engineers, horticulturalists, ecologists, urban food growers and community leaders.**

**As part of this ensure that the Streetscape design, Climate Emergency Action plan, Southwark Biodiversity Partnership , Street for People strategy, Southwark Plan, tree planting plan etc are updated to provide a coherent approach to adopting depaved as default, wherever possible. This will involve ensuring that teams engaged in design and execution of the above, as well as the teams handling the design and execution of Cleaner Greener Safer projects across the borough are updated, aware of and onside with the ambition to depave.**

**2. Ensure clear communication, liaison, and sharing of resources between the GLA, Southwark's Flood Risk Team, Climate Emergency Team, Parks & Leisure (Trees, Ecology, Community Food Growing) , Highways, Housing, and Community Engagement to maximise de-paving programs and associated benefits to biodiversity, tree survival , flood mitigation, climate adaptation, carbon sequestration, food growing, community engagement and resident wellbeing.**

**3. Highways department should routinely consider applications from utility companies involving excavation of public space in the light of possible green infrastructure projects. Where possible, any scheduled infrastructure projects which involve digging or depaving to access underground utilities should be coordinated with permanent improvements to improve permeability and increase public green space.**

**4. Establish a strategic approach to nature corridors, involving depaving, between Southwark's larger parks and green spaces, with a strategic vision for connecting within and across borough bounadries linked to the Ecological Networks and Green Infrastructure plan recommended elsewhere.**

**5. Source and allocate funds to identify and implement public realm de-paving and SuDS projects throughout the borough, in over-paved sites such as those identified in the SNAV de-paving study area map, including LTN barrier zones.**

**The council's role should be at a minimum to:**

**a. On each site, design, de-pave, edge, and replace soil as required**
**b. Apply a well-adapted native UK seed mix / starter planting, and**
**c. Make it feasible for any interested local residents to adopt de-paved sites.**
**d. If any sites are not adopted, the council would then be responsible for annual mowing and strimming as required, and to continue with regular litter removal as on any public site.**

**6. Investigate sources of funding available to make a program of technical guidance and support available to any residents wishing to de-pave their own private land. Possible sources of finance to be investigated include DEFRA, Thames Water, insurance companies and environmental NGOs like the London Wildlife Trust alongside the local community.**

## Spotlight strategy: Preventing the loss of further front gardens to nature.

Wholesale paving of front gardens began in 1995, when the government relaxed planning regulations to allow vehicle owners to cross the pavement and park on their front gardens, if they had one. Vehicle Footway Crossovers (VFCs) in most cases became permitted development and fed an insatiable desire amongst car owners to have their vehicle stored within sight of their front door. VFCs ultimately rendered whole stretches of public highway unavailable for parking for anyone other than the occupier of the adjacent dwelling, stimulating further demand for offstreet parking and more VFCs, and so on in a vicious circle. The repetitive undulation in the pavement caused by multiple VFCs can be hazardous to disabled pedestrians and wheelchair users. With the growth in EVs, there is now an additional catalyst driving applications for VFCs.

The Commission considered reports including from the Royal Horticultural Society, National Park City Foundation and Ealing Front Gardens Project which highlight how, in the intervening period, London's front gardens have been paved over at an alarming rate. By 2010 approximately 12 square miles of London's front gardens – equivalent to 22 Hyde Parks - had been paved over. By 2015, 50% of all of London's front gardens had been paved over – a 36% increase through the decade.

National Park City estimates that today 75% of all front gardens in London have been covered with impermeable hard surface and the damage done by the loss of these formerly green spaces is huge:

*Thirty years ago, London's green front gardens were part of its lungs and sponge – oxygenating the air and soaking up rainwater. Now they're adding to surface water flooding and sewage discharges [into rivers and bathing water], overheating, biodiversity and habitat loss, subsidence and pollution – and leaving local authorities, water companies and transport infrastructure to pick up the pieces*.

The considerable environmental damage associated with loss of front gardens has been highlighted by the UK Climate Change Committee, National Infrastructure Commission and Ofwat.

In response to extensive flooding in several English cities in 2007, regulations were introduced specifying that paving larger than 5m2 should be permeable or include soakaways, however, this regulations have been frequently disregarded and enforcement is poor.

**Planning powers, reducing the installation of Vehicle Footway Crossovers and associated loss of front gardens**

Highways and planning officers were asked to explore what can be done to prevent further losses of front gardens, or failing that, to mitigate the effects of their loss. Highways officers advised that there is a general presumption to grant requests for dropped kerbs due to the 1995 legislation which effectively confers a common law right of vehicular access to residential properties from the public highway. There are some restrictions on providing dropped kerbs for vehicle crossovers, including safety considerations if the proposed location is too near a bus stop or a junction, or where the associated front garden is too small. . However, historic dropped kerbs often offer access gardens that were paved to accommodate much smaller vehicles and overhang onto to the pavement by modern cars is common. .

Officers informed the Commission that there is some leverage in Conservation areas to follow the RHS advice regarding materials and planting, however in a situation where there is no demolition in a Conservation area, or under 5 square metres of hard standing is laid down, options are limited due to permitted development rights.

More advice could be provided to residents explaining the environmental impact of hard standings and how this may be mitigated, in line with the RHS best practice, if they still choose to go ahead.

The council could also increase charges for dropped kerbs.  Currently, there is a non-refundable fee of £165 for a feasibility investigation that must be submitted with an application for to Highways. The Commission considered the range of fees that other London Boroughs charge and officers advised there is room to increase these. Some councils charge considerably more. The construction costs vary but are typically between £1000-2000.

CPZs are used as a condition for refusal of dropped kerbs in the London Boroughs of Haringey and Camden on the basis that dropped kerbs reduce access to parking

on the highway. The council may be able to amend the existing departmental standard for crossovers to seek to limit new crossovers in area with high parking stress/in a CPZ if the crossover would reduce the level of on street parking. This could not however be an absolute restriction because the law requires the councils to have regard to several factors (primarily safety) when determining crossover applications and the loss of on street parking would be just one factor under consideration. The downside is that this constraint would need to be considered on a case by case basis and would not apply in areas with low parking stress or where there are no CPZs/planned CPZs. Officers intend to discuss its effectiveness with their counterparts in other authorities.

The council may be able to issue an Article IV Direction under planning legislation to restrict the conversion of gardens to hard standing for vehicles. This would mean that every application within the area specified in the order would require planning permission. Officers advised that the council could be liable for any reduction in the property value arising from the loss of the right to install a hard standing/crossover although the Commssion felt that the move would be just as likely to improve the value of the property due to the improved amenity value of planted and permeable space

Officers reported that blanket Article IVs are not generally considered appropriate and that the Secretary of State has the power to intervene. Officers believed therefore that there is a consequent risk of appeal with residents seeking redress based in loss of value of parking. This is roughly estimated at £20k based on letting for garages. This is more of a high risk and untested approach.

**Installation of Pavement Channels**

In addition the Commission  heard from the CEOs of pavement channels providers – Charge Gully and Pavecross – as a potential solution for charging Electrical Vehicles on the street thus negating the need to pave over front gardens.
They both utilise similar approach, embedding a channel in the pavement to house an electrical charging cable running from from residents homes to a vehicle parked on the adjacent section of kerbside. In both cases the cable is securely enclosed and the channel is finished flush with the pavement. By facilitating home charging from the kerbside, this could help to stem the loss of front gardens for parking. Residents would be obliged to cover the costs of installation, just as they do with a dropped kerb.

This is emergent technology and there are currently hurdles to be overcome in managing permissions under Highway and Planning law. Concerns have been voiced by officers around health and safety, and systems that would need to be implemented to safeguard the public purse when installing, maintaining and removing the channels.  Companies provided a range of robust assurances and solutions to all these issues;  nevertheless they acknowledged that leadership by central government would provide the best framework to enable local authorities to facilitate installation.

There are ongoing pavement channel trials in East Lothian, Bath and with other local authorities. The government paper 'Plan for Drivers' is consulting on measures to increase charge point solutions, supporting pavement channel pilots and developing planning guidance for local authorities.

The Commission considered that pavement channels do provide a potential solution open up home EV charging without the need for a front garden. Meanwhile, there are bureaucratic obstacles to their implementation and concerns over health and safety to be overcome.

Recommendation **The Council should recognise that the installation of VFCs and associated hard standings are an environmental and social ill and stand at odds with council policies including the Climate Emergency Action Plan, the Climate Emergency Resilience and Adaptation Plan and the Streets for People strategy. The repetitive undulation of pavement sdue to installation of VfCs can be an obstacle to disabled pedestrians and wheelchair users. As such, the council should take steps to reduce the rate and extent of this loss of front gardens and installation of new VfCs wherever possible.**

**There should be a presumption against the linstallation of VFCs where there is a CPZ, in place and high parking stress and this should be restricted wherever possible.**

**Council tenancy agreement should contain a blanket ban on tenants paving over front gardens. This could be reviewed in exceptional individual circumstances.**

**Details of the adverse environmental impacts of loss of planting and permeability from front gardens should be posted on the council's website under the section where residents apply for a vehicle cross over, and sent to residents in response to their application. This could be done by setting up a dedicated email address for applications with an automatic response.**

**In the event that applications for vehicle footway crossovers are granted, applicants should be routinely provided with guidance on minimising the adverse environmental impact of the associated front garden conversion, including advice on paving the minimum area required and maximising permeability and planting based on best practice as described by organisations such as the RHS and National Park City Foundation.**

**Increase the application fee and installation charge for VFCs The increased charge for installation of the VFC will include the cost of 2 mandatory checks – 6 months and 1 year after installation – to determine that any associated hard standing conforms as a minimum with theTown and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) (No. 2) (England) Order 2008 which requires front garden hard surfacing of more than five square metres in area "to either be made of porous material or, if an impermeable surface, to direct runoff to a soakaway area or rainwater storage within the property's boundary".**

**The council should speed up the process for delivering disabled bays outside homes of disabled residents to remove the need for a front garden conversion and VFC on grounds of disability except in the most exceptional circumstances.**

**Explore becoming an early adopter of Pavement Channels and join a pilot if there is an opportunity to do so or if the government provides the appropriate assurances and planning guidance.**

## BETTER

### Wildlife friendly planting and management

A lot of habitat is required to support a diverse range of insects, small mammals and birds. The existing green areas in the city can be improved by increasing the volume, diversity, and type of plants, and managing for biodiversity better by reducing the harmful use of pesticides.

Parks, housing estates, gardens, verges, pathways and pockets of land all offer opportunities. Southwark has many large and small parks where habitats could be improved. The UK has half a million hectares of garden, which cover a larger area than all of our nature reserves and offer significant potential to improve habitats for wildlife.

All of these areas can be managed better for wildlife by reducing cutting, retaining leaf litter and collecting rain water. This will support worms, insects and over all biodiversity. Standing deadwood is important and can be made a safe feature if surrounded by bramble thickets.

Southwark Council has led the way on “no mow May” in many of its public spaces and residents are generally accepting of the concept. Meanwhile, a recent members’ enquiry about mowing alongside the Surrey canal path revealed that it is managed under a grounds maintenance contract which reads as follows:

“*Throughout the year grass will be no longer than 40mm or less than 25mm immediately after cutting and will not be allowed to grow longer than 65mm between cuts".*

It is recognised that different mowing schedules need to apply to areas such as sports pitches and picnic areas and that our public spaces must be managed according to their intended use. However, perhaps there are areas that are currently managed under higher maintenance regimes where mowing could be scaled back,

### A layered mosaic

The 2006 report from the Government's Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, explains that to better support biodiversity, green space must be designed and managed as a more complex "layered mosaic" of

1. Long grass with seeds and flowers (herbaceous layer)
2. Hedgerows and dense native shrubbery of varying heights, providing cover
3. Understory trees
4. Large canopy trees
5. Leaf litter allowed to remain, providing cover for insects
6. Significant amounts of deadwood (chips, sticks, logs, stumps) – very important for insects at different stages of life cycle.
7. Aquatic zones (with sloping natural banks and equal areas of open water vs associated vegetation

Around 50% of the trees ought to be native but other pollinators can be. Trees that can harbour insects, have nuts, berries or pollen should be prioritised.

**Insects – the base of the food chain**

Many insects and other invertebrates in London are limited by the availability of food and water. In creating or improving green spaces, it is important to cater for the whole life cycle, not just adult insects.

Pollinator plants (flowers) provide food for adult insects, but other plants are needed to support their immature stages (caterpillars),too, as well as places to shelter overnight and through the winter e.g. ivy.

One of the best habitats for insects is flower rich grassy areas, which thrive on low fertility soil. These have the added benefit of requiring little maintenance.

Many butterfly and moth larvae rely on a single plant species for food. For example, the Brimstone butterfly relies on buckthorn bushes. A thick hedge of native species will provide food, shelter, and nesting sites for a wide range of wildlife.

**Birds**

London Biodiversity Partnership report on urban animals in small parks and squares (from 2004) found that tits, wrens, dunnock, greenfinches and robins all show increased frequency when more tall and dense shrubbery, undergrowth, and dead wood are present.

**Water**

Rainwater harvesting, SuDS, raingardens and in bigger depaved areas should be maximised to improve survival rates for planting, including trees, which suffered during the drought of 2022.

Community gardens and food growing plots all need sources of easily available water to be sustainable. Officers reported that they do provide stand pipes using water from the Thames, and mobile sources of water, however there is a cost, supporting the view that the installation of waterbuts should be prioritised where possible.

SNAV highlighted that Southwark could benefit from increasing the number and distribution of ponds. Even very small ponds, if well designed and well managed, can support wildlife such as toads, frogs, dragonflies, and provide a place to grow our incredibly beautiful native wetland plants. Southwark has many mainly hidden rivers: The Peck, Earls Sluice & Neckinger run underground apart from the pond in Ruskin Park and lake in Peckham Rye park. Stretches of water in Dulwich Park and Belair Park are linked to the otherwise hidden Efra. These hidden water bodies present an opportunity to create temporary ponds or "scrapes". Being temporary, they do not support fish, so other species are able to thrive without being eaten. SNAV suggested that Peckham Rye Park would be a good location for this.

Southwark's few existing waterbodies all need to increase their associated marginal and emergent vegetation, to improve water quality and provide more and better habitat. Along the banks of the Thames, there may be opportunities to work with PLA and Thames 21 to explore possibilities for improvements to biodiversity. Officers said a wall set back in Surrey Docks Farm that may be a good location. In addition, there may be an opportunity to create a sandbanks to encourage birds that feed on mudflats, e.g. sand martins, black-tailed godwits, or to create reedbeds which support a multitude of invertebrates as well as birds such as reed warblers.

The Space for Nature report recommended that public bodies[9]:

- make space for water and wildlife along rivers and around wetlands;
- restore natural processes in river catchments, including in ways that support climate change adaptation and mitigation; and
- accelerate the programme to reduce nutrient overload, particularly from diffuse pollution.

**Light pollution and Southwark becoming a dark borough**

Light is disruptive to wildlife. The Ecology Officer said that developers are expected to consider light, especially near parks, and there is also a curfew applied to certain sports and use of floodlights in parks and other open spaces

SNAV advised that wildlife-friendly lighting includes positioning lights lower and closer together, using motion sensors and the lowest wattage or lumen output necessary, using longer wavelengths (eg red or amber LEDs) that are less disruptive to wildlife, and shielding, with no light above the 90-degree plane from the fixture.

[9] See recommendation 4 Space for Nature report

Modern technologies can enable motion sensors to shift lumen output or wavelength according to time of night or if pedestrians are detected.

Reducing artificial light in and around SINCS ought to be a priority. Bats are particularly sensitive to light pollution. A rare type of bat has been found in local woods, which has increased its range. Officers reported that there is a dialogue underway about creating dark bat corridors.

There is a movement to create make London a dark sky city and rewild the night. Canada Water is considered dark.

**Opportunities to improve Parks, verges and housing estates: build it and they will come**

With relatively small changes to habitats, most parks could support 20-25 species of butterfly.

The documentation of insect life in one small park done by Penny Frith from Insectinside demonstrates that small changes to habitat , such as retaining deadwood, leaving areas undisturbed, and varying mowing and thus grass and plant height can lead to high levels of diversity , with over 600 species of insects identified in a Warwick Gardens, a small park in Peckham.

**Promoting wildlife gardening**

People are increasingly gardening for diversity and this can be promoted further; more and more, shifting social norms encourage a less ordered approach. Wandsworth Council has promoted no mow May to private households. Southwark hosts the Peckham centre for Wildlife Gardening and as such has a great local resource.

**Summary**
To ensure that they contribute to enhancing biodiversity, Southwark's green spaces should be:

- Landscaped and managed to incorporate more native vegetation in mosaics with other habitats and, where appropriate, amenity planting that supports a wider range of species

- Managed to mimic the variation found in nature e.g. areas of reduced mowing to provide seedheads for birds, flowers for pollinators, and cover for insects throughout the lifecycle, allowing bare soil patches (in untrampled areas), or small pools and banks/bunds in grasslands, and wood left to decay safely.

- Planted to cater for the whole lifecycle of pollinators.

- Free from pesticide use (unless necessary for spot removal of noxious invasive species, employing an integrated invasive weed management scheme)

- Managed and gardened without the use of artificial fertilizers and peat, as far as possible

- Used for expanded food growing, using agroecological methods, as far as possible.

- As protected from artificial light as is possible whilst being compatible with safety needs.

- Provided with water through the mandating of water butts in community gardens, and installing SUDS where possible.

Recommendations

**Conduct an ecological audit of our parks, estates, verges and pockets of land in order to increase wildlife planting in line with the above summary and aim to achieve the COP15 aim of 30 by 30.**

**Mandate biodiverse-friendly planting in all new schemes including pocket parks, larger park planting schemes and SUDS.**

**Ensure that future tree planting is 50% native or otherwise valuable to the local ecology, in large pits, where possible with at least two trees to support a mosaic habitat designed to sustain the whole life cycle of insects, and as far as possible in a SuDS and under community management.**

**Increase blue habitat by expanding areas of marginal habitat of the borough's rivers, and increase the number of ponds, including temporary ponds.**

**Planning should condition new developments to include water butts and rain water harvesting as a matter of course to support community gardening and food growing. Water buts and their benefits should be promoted to residents to encourage uptake.**

**Actively promote wildlife gardening to residents, in partnership with the Centre for Wild Life Gardening and other members of the SNAP reference group.**

**Explore how domestic planning applications could be conditioned or at least encouraged to include wildlife friendly features such as swift bricks and water buts.**

## Spotlight Strategy – Going Pesticide Free

## One the biggest changes Southwark Council can make to improve biodiversity is to go pesticide free.

There is a growing international movement to end the use of pesticides in towns and cities because of the harms to humans, pets, wildlife and biodiversity. The Commission heard from the Pesticide Action Network (PAN) who said that the serious decline of  beesand other pollinators, birds and mammals have all been linked to pesticide use[10]. Children are most vulnerable to the negative health impacts of the pesticides, as are workers exposed to the chemicals during application. Domestic animals who walk where the chemicals have been applied and then lick their paws can ingest the chemicals directly.

“Pesticides” includes herbicides, insecticides and fungicides. Hundred of tonnes are used in cities every year to control wild plants, particularly on pavements;  to prevent insect damage to ornamental plants and to control invasive species.

Many cities are now going pesticide free, driven by growing Public Health concerns, in particular with Glyphosate. Surveys show that around 68% of people support ending the use of pesticide in parks, playgrounds and pavements. Paris has been completely pesticide free for 20 years.  Glastonbury was the first UK council to go pesticide free in 2015.

Southwark Council ended the routine application of pesticides in our parks several years ago (before 2018). Lambeth Council went one step further and stopped using pesticides on streets during the pandemic. A growing number of councils now only use pesticides to control invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed. PAN emphasised that if pesticide is to be used to control invasive species, it should be injected into the stem rather than sprayed to limit the potential harms. There are also ‘electronic control systems’ that can be used to exclude even this use, which kill plant root systems.

The Commission found that the approach to pesticide use across Southwark’s streets and estates varies. An officer managing an estate on Bermondsey informed the Commission during a visit that he had long shunned use of pesticides in his management area, whereas other areas continued to use pesticides. Anecdotally, in the south of the borough streets that had planted flowers

**Lambeth Council Community Weeding Scheme: a case study in staged community engagement approach to reducing pesticide use**

PAN recommended a staged approach that engages the public, similar to the approach taken by Lambeth Council.

In 2019 the council was approached by urban food growing charity Incredible Edible to end their pavement pesticide spraying and find alternatives to control wild plants. At the time, the the council  was in a three year contract, which would have been

[10] See page 4 Going Pesticide Free- A guide for Local Authorities

expensive to exit so, as a compromise, the council agreed that streets and communities could opt out if residents would be prepared to do hand weeding. The council promoted this and was pleasantly surprised that 30 streets joined. Then, during the pandemic, the council increased this to a 100 streets as people really enjoyed the neighbourhood aspects. After a further push the council reached 130 streets.

Following the success of this the council stopped spraying and now streets can opt into the Community Weeding Scheme and leave the wild plants to grow throughout the spring and summer. Residents remove the species that can harm pavements ( e.g Buddleia and Tree of Heaven ) or become trip hazards .

The scheme has been a big success and a botanist recently counted over 70 species on a single street including rare and endangered plants. The Commission was impressed by Community Weeding Scheme's achievements: both the reduction in pesticide use and the associated community engagement benefits.

Lambeth Council reported that the change process has been largely supported by officers and residents, with 700 champions. The council received far fewer complaints than expected. The Lambeth lead officer told the Commission that the change process has been in part about reframing plants on the pavements as a benefit to the environment rather than messy plants out of place.

**Cost**

Lambeth Council said that one challenge was that when they recommissioned the service there were not many contractors who were willing to hand weed. Glastonbury Council conducted a pilot and audit of costs. This found that use of the foam system to control weeds was cheaper than either hand weeding or pesticide use, once the investment in equipment were made. PAN reported that going pesticide free can be cost neutral or even cost negative after the initial investment stage.

**Pesticide Free Recommendation**

**Following on from the elimination of pesticide use from our parks several years ago, take a staged approach to eliminating pesticide use from our streets and estates.**

**To best understand and manage the challenges involved in this change of practice, including the relative costs and pitfalls, the Cabinet Member and officers should actively engage with counterparts in Lambeth and other councils that have already undertaken this change and gone pesticide free. Additionally the council should draw upon PAN's Toolkit for Local Authorities.**

**Consider replicating Lambeth Council's Community Weeding Scheme .**

## More joined up

One of the most impactful and timely actions the council can make now is to prioritise the planning and delivery of the Ecological Networks recommended in the Space for Nature report. This will ensure that the borough protects our existing biodiversity and can focus efforts on joining up gaps, and integrating Southwark's plans with the GLA's work on London's Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

The Making Space for Nature report summarised the elements that, taken together, characterize ecological networks[11]

- a focus on conserving wild plants and animals at the landscape, ecosystem or regional scale;
- an emphasis on maintaining or strengthening ecological coherence, primarily by increasing connectivity with corridors and 'stepping stones';
- ensuring that critical areas are buffered from the effects of potentially damaging external activities;
- restoring degraded ecosystems and ecological processes; and promoting the sustainable use of natural resources in areas of importance to wildlife.

The report goes on to set out good practice in developing Ecological Networks derived from the global and European experience[12]:

- The network must have clear aims and a vision, including quantified performance targets where appropriate. Without these, it is hard to properly design the network, engage stakeholders or assess success.
- Local stakeholder engagement, including landowners, is critical and they should be involved from the outset.
- Where appropriate, it is beneficial to establish multi-functional use of the network and its component sites, so that local people are not excluded from the benefits it provides.
- There is a need for local flexibility in delivery to reflect local differences in implementation options and aspirations.
- A sound evidence base is essential. This is important at the design stage to ensure the right sites are included to adequately support species and habitats and other ecological assets; for management of the network; and to assess whether it is achieving its objectives.
- There is a need for effective protection of all the network components (not just core areas).
- Proper funding is critical, and this need not be just, or even primarily, from government sources.

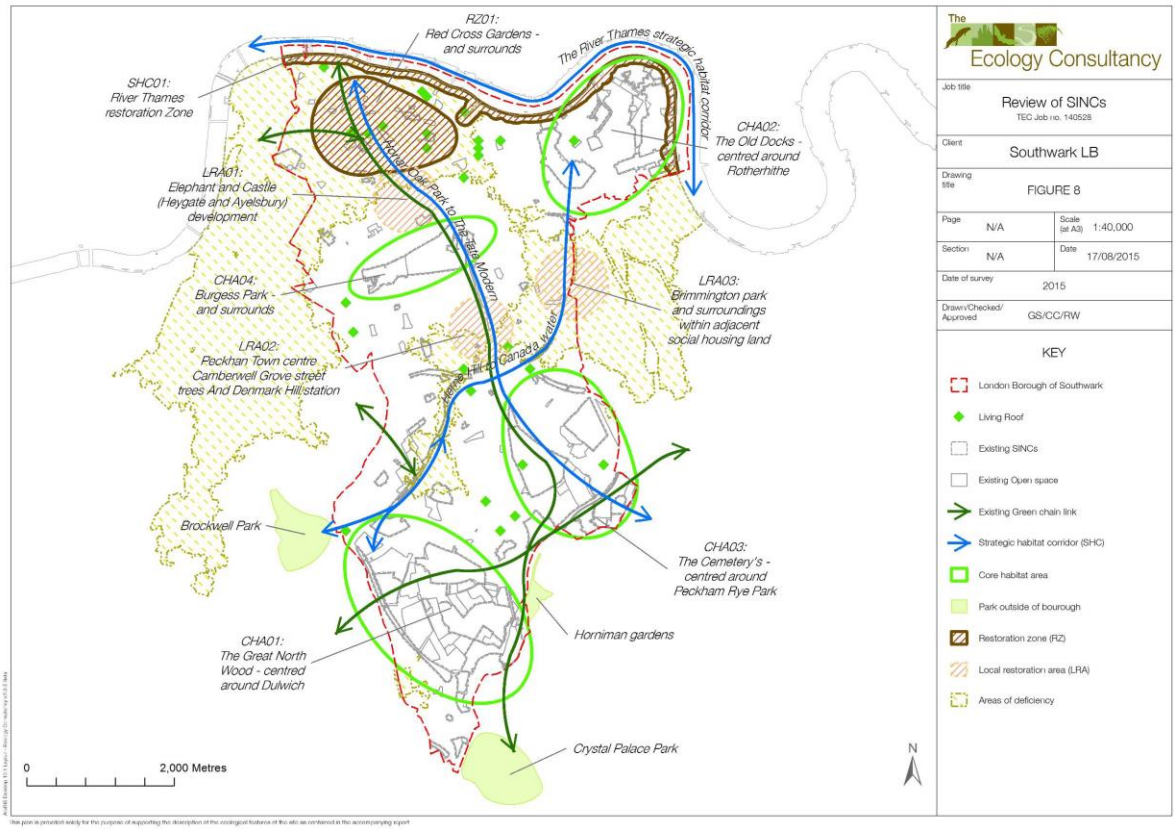
### The council's existing work on Ecological networks

[11] See Page ?? which reference the work of Bennett and Mulongoy 2006

[12] See Space for Nature Page 16 section 2.2.3 Components of an ecological network referencing Jones-Walters et al. 2009; IEEP & Alterra 2010.

The council has taken some foundational steps to deliver Ecological Networks: there is a commitment to develop these in the existing SNAP and references to Ecological Networks are threaded through the Southwark Plan, including in the Green Infrastructure policy.

The council commissioned a '*SINC Review and Borough Ecological Survey of the London Borough of Southwark: Southwark Surveys 2014-2015*' to support the SNAP. This was produced by The Ecological Consultancy and finalised in 2016. This included research on developing Ecological Networks. This project identified a number of biodiversity hotspots where clusters of SINC's could be referred to as Core Habitat Areas. The figure below was produced as part of the report and illustrates these and the other components that form the borough's primary ecological network, including three strategic habitat corridors.



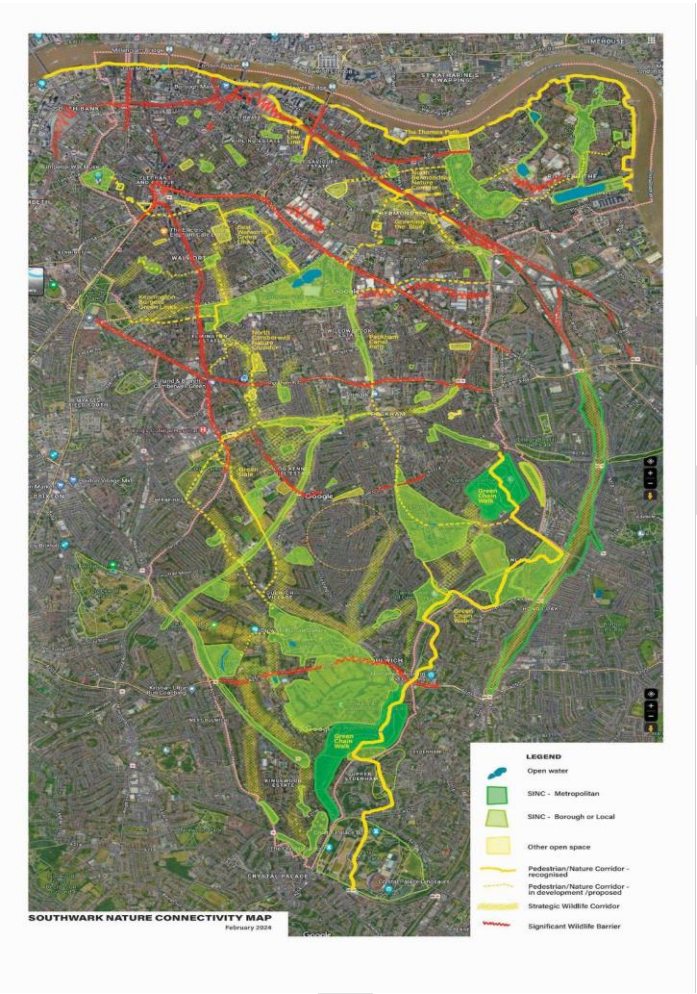

**Southwark Nature Action Volunteers Nature corridors**

SNAV have proposed two types of nature corridors, set out in a map – see Figure X

1. One for people and nature: 'Pedestrian/Nature Corridors' – these connect green spaces. These are continuous, or have very frequent "biodiversity stepping stones".

2. One for nature only: 'Strategic Nature Highways' – these inaccessible areas are critical for wildlife survival and nature recovery.

This is in line with Space for Nature's recommendation that 'Public bodies and other authorities responsible for canals, railways, roads, cycle ways and other linear features in the landscape, should ensure that they better achieve their potential to be wildlife corridors, thereby enhancing the connectivity of ecological networks, and improving opportunities for people to enjoy wildlife'[13].




When presenting the map to the Commission, SNAV highlighted specific points to be noted:

• Peckham's Rye Lane is a major missing link, as nature corridors go there and then get lost

• Canada Water is an opportunity

• Old Kent Road is also an opportunity area, as presently a barrier that ought to be made permeable to nature.

[13] See Recommendation 21 Space for Nature

SNAV and Butterfly Conservation evidence said that the long term vision is for complete nature connectivity throughout the borough, however the strategic starting point is to focus on connecting SINCs. This echoes the identification of Core Habitat Area in the Ecological Consultancy 2016 report for the SNAP.

SNAV advised mapping to enhance existing and new potential green routes/corridors that can connect parks and link up with Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) to maximise the land available. When creating wildlife corridors it is important to choose plants that provide a habitat for insects, the base of the food chain. In the meantime Southwark ought to avoid adding any new barriers for wildlife populations such as large expanses of paved areas, and prioritise ground-level planting (rather than raised planting) that is more accessible to terrestrial species. In addition, the council ought to continue and strengthen efforts to reduce vehicular traffic that contributes to wildlife mortality and impedes movement due to noise and pollution.

**Next steps**

The research conducted by The Ecological Consultancy for the council back in 2016 and SNAV's more recent mapping exercise and ongoing community research are both excellent resources for the council to build upon. SNAV is active in the SNAP reference group guiding the delivery of the SNAP, which has already identified the delivery of Ecological Networks as a key objective. This is an excellent stakeholder reference group for the council to develop.

The council has not yet produced a Green Infrastructure Strategy. The London Plan states that 'Boroughs should prepare green infrastructure strategies that identify opportunities for cross-borough collaboration, ensure green infrastructure is optimised and consider green infrastructure in an integrated way as part of a network'. The Space for Nature report recommends that local authorities ensure that ecological networks, including areas for restoration, are identified and protected through local planning. In addition they recommend that: *' before disposal of any public land, the impact on the ecological network should be fully evaluated. Where such land is identified as having high wildlife value (existing or potential) it should not be disposed of unless its wildlife value is secured for the future'*[14].

There is overlap here with the development of Ecological Networks as a key aim of Green Infrastructure Plans is to provide a strategy to deliver networks of green and blue spaces, as well as other natural features, in order to provide benefits for nature and climate, as well as increased health and prosperity.

Recommendations

[14] See Space for Nature Recommendation 8. Public bodies owning land which includes components of England's current or future ecological network should do more to realise its potential, in line with their biodiversity duty. Further, ***before disposal of any public land, the impact on the ecological network should be fully evaluated. Where such land is identified as having high wildlife value (existing or potential) it should not be disposed of unless its wildlife value is secured for the future.***

**Prioritise the planning and delivery of Ecological Networks using the SNAP stakeholder reference group, and existing council and community research conducted by SNAV.**

**Develop a Green Infrastructure Plan for the borough that incorporated Ecological Networks, and is fully integrated into planning, including ensuring that public land biodiversity value is assessed and protected .**

## A bolder, more animated, vision

There is an established body of evidence that connecting with nature is good for human health, and that good quality stewardship by humans increases ecological health.

Close proximity to nature increases physical activity, particularly in pre-school children, who prefer to play in natural or wild spaces. The benefits to mental health are even more pronounced with stress and depression alleviated, and attention levels increased in children with ADHD[15].

### Bolder

The Space for Nature report recommended the establishment of Ecological Restoration Zones (ERZs) that operate over large, discrete areas within which significant enhancements of ecological networks are achieved, by enhancing existing wildlife sites, improving ecological connections and restoring habitats . The report said that ERZs should be proposed and implemented by consortia of local authorities, local communities and landowners, the private sector and voluntary conservation organisations, and supported by national agencies. The London LNRS offers and excellent opportunity to take this forward.

SNAV highlighted the potential for ambitious, large scale projects to excite residents to engage with nature, as well as multiplying the positive impacts for biodiversity by acting at scale.

An existing example of such as project is the recently opened Green Link Walk, which was launched in March 2024. This new 15-mile walking route, the Green Link

[15] The Space for Nature report cited the following
'The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution 2007); many of the benefits are a result of people being more physically active if they have access to natural environments, and overall levels of physical activity across age groups are positively associated with the proximity and accessibility of green spaces to residential areas (Jones et al. 2009), particularly in pre-school children (Baranowski et al. 1993).
Evidence on mental health benefits from contact with nature is even more compelling. Stress and symptoms of depression are reduced (Wells & Evans 2003); concentration and self-discipline are enhanced (Faber Taylor et al. 2002) and levels of admissions for mental illness decrease (Bowler et al. 2010). Attention levels in children with attention deficit disorder increase when they have access to natural spaces (Faber Taylor et al. 2001). Children also often prefer to play in natural or wild places, helping them develop cognitive, physical and social skills (Muñoz 2009).

Walk, has been launched by Transport for London (TfL), the City of London, Southwark, Islington, Hackney and Waltham Forest, conceived in partnership with a range of different walking and wheeling groups, including Ramblers, London Living Streets, Sustrans and CPRE.

This  is the eighth route in the Walk London Network and runs from Epping Forest to Peckham town. It links almost 40 areas of green space. TFL says: *'The new route has been created to increase leisure walking in London, improve Londoners' health and wellbeing, and enhance community access to green space and nature. The Walk London Network is one of the largest walking and wheeling networks of any city in the world and includes the Capital Ring, Green Chain, Jubilee Greenway, Jubilee Walkway, Lea Valley, London Outer Orbital Path, and the Thames Path'.*

Rivers also offer an exciting opportunityproviding some of the most important natural connections. The Space for Nature report says that[16]: '*Rivers provide ecological connections across England. They supply a number of critical ecosystem services, not least water for drinking, crop irrigation and industry, as well as being important places for recreation. They provide a range of wildlife habitats and support species dispersal and migration. As such, their quality and function is very important for ecological networks.'*

A number of cities across the globe have daylighted rivers to provide space for nature and recreation for people, including projects in Seoul, South Korea; Los Angeles; Portland, Oregon.

***Daylighting the Cheong Gye Cheon River in Seoul, South Korea***


***Before daylighting the Gheong Gye Cheon River pre-2005.***

[16] Page 49 Space for Nature

The river is buried underneath an elevated highway, Seoul, South Korea. Photo is part of a historic photo tile mosaic along the now daylighted river. Source https://www.harvestingrainwater.com/gallery/daylighting-buried-waterways-show-the-flow-image-gallery/

***After daylighting river.***
Gheong Gye Cheon River Festival in 2008.
On average, the river park attracts 60,000 people per day. Its become a major draw for tourists as well as residents. Source:
https://www.harvestingrainwater.com/gallery/daylighting-buried-waterways-show-the-flow-image-gallery/

Like many London rivers, sadly the Effra, the Peck, Earl's Sluice & Neckinger run mostly underground apart from the pond in Ruskin Park and lakes in Peckham Rye park, Dulwich Park and Belair Park however there may be an opportunity to expose more of Southwark's rivers as part of more ambitions London wide schemes. In addition, as discussed above, the River Thames and the recent completion of the Super Sewer may also present an opportunity to engage with the Thames as a natural asset and improve foreshore habitats, for example creating a sand martin bank.

## More animated

There is increasing evidence that community management of natural habitats in a sustainable way, is good for people, wildlife and the economy. Increasingly, conservation efforts are switching to engaging local communities and institutions in the management of habitats. Conservation is seeking to integrate economic activities such as food growing in ecologically sustainable ways. The biodiversity increases that agroecology demonstrate, show the potential here.

Other examples of fostering small scale connections with nature include the adoption of trees. A structured example of this is the Portland Urban Forest Project provides

resources for the local community to adopt and look after trees. In Southwark Herne Hill Treewatch encourages residents to adopt and care for trees on the road where they live. Meanwhile,many young trees across the borough did not survive the drought of 2022 and encouraging more local community groups to look after young trees could enhance their survival rates. Officers reported that they have started to engage with schools (6 over the summer of 2023) to encourage more planting both within and beyond the school boundary. . Officers reported that the Peckham Rye Park Tiny Forest initiative engaged over a hundred volunteers and they are seeking to replicate this as amodel of good practice.

Nature audits are another way of encouraging connection with nature as well as providing valuable information on biodiversity, and can be done by community groups.

The commission heard from Penny Frith of Insectinside, who presented on her work documenting life in the bushes of a small Peckham park, Warwick Gardens. She has photographed and documented over 672 different types of insects. Her work has shown how the right habitats – such as left logs and uncut grass – are crucial. Penny's beautiful photographs have been published and she has presented in a couple of schools. She would like to do more community engagement to engage children and others in appreciating insects. Members suggested an exhibition in the atrium.

Southwark also encourages community participation through the Cleaner Greener Safer fund process, the Community Garden scheme and hosts the centre for Wildlife Gardening in Peckham .

**Recommendations**

**Encourage community and volunteer management, wherever there is interest, to reduce costs increase social benefits and enhance the sustainability of wildlife friendly habitat.**

**Facilitate an exhibition in the Tooley Street Atrium of Insectinside and encourage links to Southwark schools**

**Develop ambitious cross borough Ecological Networks , and particularly consider the ecological and social potential of daylighting more of Southwark's Rivers and increasing marginal habitat.**

# Food

As discussed above the UK's industrialised food system is key diver of loss of habitate, with agricultural intensification identified as the major driver of biodiversity decline on land in the UK .

Adopting and encouraging nature friendly food growing is important way of reversing this trend, and Southwark is leading the way with our Community Gardening scheme. Local food production is a significant opportunity to increase biodiversity, promote healthy food and encourage a connection with nature.

## Food policy

### INTERNATIONAL

The right to food is recognised under international human rights and humanitarian law in article 25 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

The United Nations has called for transformative change to towards modes of agricultural development that are 'highly productive, highly sustainable and that contribute to the progressive realization of the human right to food'. This is in the context of identifying unsustainable agriculture and food systems as a primary cause of biodiversity loss as well as the water and climate crises.

The UN has, since at least 2010, identified Agroecology as the most highly endorsed solution to climate, biodiversity and food crises. Reports by the Special Rapporteur on the right to Food and the 2019 report by United Nations Committee on World Food Security (CFS) *Agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition* set out the reasons in detail.

*The following have been given as a reasons for supporting Agroecology in the 2010 report:*

- *The contribution of agroecology to the right to food*
- *Availability: agroecology raises productivity at field level*
- *Accessibility: agroecology reduces rural poverty*
- *Adequacy: agroecology contributes to improving nutrition*
- *Sustainability: agroecology contributes to adapting to climate change*
- *Farmer's participation: an asset for the dissemination of best practices*

Agroecology is not clearly defined and exists on a continuum. In practice this comes down to the extent to which food systems[17]:

(i) rely on ecological processes as opposed to purchased inputs;

[17] Page 3 https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/hlpe/hlpe_documents/HLPE_S_and_R/HLPE_2019_Agroecological-and-Other-Innovative-Approaches_S-R_EN.pdf

(ii) are equitable, environmentally friendly, locally adapted and controlled
(iii) adopt a systems approach embracing management of interactions among components, rather than focusing only on specific technologies

**NATIONAL**

The UK has no overriding policy on food production. It has responded to an independent review: the National Food Strategy and it has an Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024. The latter has a section which sets out an ambition to link to the 25 year environment plan, Local Nature Recovery Networks and the UN Biodiversity COP 15 vision to have protect 30% of England's land for biodiversity by 2030. This paper also outlines initiatives linked to payments for farmers to increase biodiversity.

**LONDON**

The GLA has a London Food Programme which covers areas including:

- facilitating and supporting the London Food Board;
- implementing the new London Food Strategy; and
- supporting the delivery of projects, programmes and initiatives to help deliver good food for London.

The GLA endorses Capital Growth Network, London's most extensive network dedicated to food cultivation. The network includes voluntary sector groups that the Commission has heard from directly, such as Incredible Edible.

Policy G8 on Food Growing in the London Plan states that boroughs' development plans should:

- Protect existing allotments and encourage provision of space for urban agriculture, including community gardening, and food growing within new developments and as a meanwhile use on vacant or under-utilised sites
- Identify potential sites that could be used for food production.

**SOUTHWARK**

Southwark is leading the way in food growing and food security in London. The council employs two community gardeners, is committed to expanding allotments provision, and is a Right to Food borough, with a community plan to increase food security.

Growing food on allotments can be incredibly productive. Home grown food produces ten times the food of arable farms[18]. It does however requires a competent level of skills and is labour intensive , which is why both more land and community support are crucial to its success .

[18] https://ourworld.unu.edu/en/home-growing-produces-ten-times-the-food-of-arable-farms

**Community Gardening Service**

The Community Gardening service was created in June 2020 with the establishment of 2 fixed-term part-time Community Gardening Coordinator (CGC) posts with a mission to:

 Be the main point of contact within the council for community gardening and food growing enquiries

 Increase opportunities for residents to access community gardening

 Support a Southwark community gardening network

 Champion community gardening across the council

Incredible Edible, Lambeth, who are active throughout London within the Capital Growth network saw this as best practice that they would like to see replicated by other boroughs. Having two gardening coordinators directly employed by the council was considered a vital asset to food growing. In their role championing urban agriculture the gardening coordinators combine technical expertise in growing with a focus on working with local communities.

Incredible Edible supports local food growing groups, including fostering good relationships between residents, with non-violent communication workshops and other types of support. They emphasized that investing in people and community is very important for projects to thrive. This is often done through voluntary work, and hard to sustain, so having additional capacity from officers is an important asset.

The Capital Growth network event on the 27 April heard from black and marginalised groups such as Coco and Black Framer Market and both spoke of the difficulties face by black growers in having sufficient volunteer capacity to remediate sites and access funding, particularly in the context of racism, and a lack of paid work.

**Allotment Expansion Guarantee (AEG)**

Access to land is a key challenge to expanding food growing in an urban context. In April 2021, following the appointment of the Community Gardener, the council launched the Allotment Expansion Guarantee.

The Community Gardening team supports residents to set up new community gardens and food growing plots (raised beds) on housing land through the AEG. The service has created an AEG Commonplace link that gives information about the process for residents to create new community allotments and maps proposals. The team commissioned a Southwark portal on the national Good to Grow map identifying community gardens across the borough with links to the AEG page. This allows community gardens to advertise plots available and call out for volunteers, as well as advertising events and being a search engine for those looking for nearby growing spaces and community gardens. The team developed the AEG process

including site checks, governance agreements, maintenance agreements and plot holder agreements for gardening groups to run these new spaces.

**Right to Food**

Southwark Council declared itself as a Right to Food Borough, and is working with local businesses, community groups and schools to ensure everyone in Southwark has access to healthy, affordable food within a short walk of their home. A borough-wide action plan to increase household food security has been created, which came out of working with over 60 organisations locally over a year. It has three aims:

- Improved access for food insecure people to pathways of support.
- Improved education and learning about sustainable food.
- Improved access to healthy and affordable food for all.

*What more could Southwark do*

**Biodiversity, urban agriculture , agroecology, and Food Sovereignty**

Urban agriculture, particularly in allotments and community gardens, tends to be agroecological, and thus better for biodiversity than either untended land or land use for intensive farming, which, as discussed above, is often deleterious to biodiversity .

Incredible Edible advocates for Agroecology as the most adaptive practice, which is in tune with their core value of kindness, and that growing food in tune with nature supports both biodiversity and production of nutritious food.

The Commission considered a short film by Carolyn Steel which outlines the ideas expressed in her book Sitopia – How food can save the world. Carolyn Steel is also on the board of a volunteer-led organic, regenerative urban farm of the same name In Greenwich. Sitopia is a portmanteau of the Greek words ‘sitos,’ meaning food, and ‘topos,’ meaning place or site. In essence, sitopia refers to the idea of ‘food place’ or ‘food site.’

Steel uses food as a metaphor to explore life and death and how we steward our environment. She draws attention to the soullessness of much of our current food production and how low food prices of supermarkets mask the true costs and consequences industrial farming such as pollution, ecological destruction and the production of poor quality food that prices more sustainable producers out of the market leading to poor diets and health conditions such as obesity. . She calls for us to value food and create a “virtuous cycle” in which “the market would favour foods that nurtured nature, animals and people”. Sitopia reimagines food as sacred, highlighting the cultural importance of our culinary heritage and the social and spiritual significance and sacrifice involved in food production and consumption .

Leanne Werner’s report on Urban Agriculture in North America particularly focused on biodiversity. Her report states that: *If done in the right way, urban farming can lead to an increase in biodiversity. Plant diversity in urban agricultural sites is consistently higher than other forms of green space (Lin & Fuller, 2013; Taylor & Lovell, 2013).’*

She provides examples of spaces that people have used for farming, which are as diverse as the communities farming them:

FoodShare's Burmhampton High School

Burmhampton High School has a three-acre site divided into three areas: one acre for food, one acre for pollinators and the rest an orchard. Most of the plants and vegetables are grown from seeds or plug plants. There are 65–75 different crops and the type of crop grown is decided by the community. Each vegetable patch is divided by pollinators. It is a fully organic farm, and they use landscape fabric over cabbages to deter pests instead of using harmful pesticides.

Toronto Metropolitan University

The roof is divided into various sections including a sacred medicine wheel-shaped planting area where they grow sage, tobacco and sweet grass to name just a few. They often get party crashers on roof spaces – self-seeded plants that just appear. These plants are not removed as they thrive in this rooftop environment. The roof-top farm produces around 2,500kg of food per year from its market garden section, with around 100 different types of fruit and vegetables from April to October. The farm is fully organic, and uses crop rotation and a drip irrigation system.

City Beet Farm

City Beet Farm follows organic and sustainable farming practices, focusing on soil health, biodiversity and community engagement. The farm has installed a garden, which it maintains, and there are workshops to help residents convert their yards into productive food gardens. Through its efforts, City Beet Farm not only contributes to local food production but also promotes urban greening, biodiversity and neighbourhood resilience

Many North American urban farmers, particularly from black communities, have adopted Food Sovereignty, a framework that overlaps with Agroecology and arose from the La Via Campensia, the international alliance of peasant farmers. It is, therefore, rooted in the global south and advocates for culturally sensitive practices.

The seven pillars of food sovereignty

• Focuses on food for people: The primary purpose of food production and distribution should be to meet the nutritional needs and ensure the food security of people, rather than prioritising profits or export markets.

• Values food providers: Food sovereignty values and supports the rights and livelihoods of small-scale food producers, including family farmers, peasants, pastoralists, fisherfolk and indigenous peoples. It recognises their knowledge, skills, and contributions to food production.

• Localises food systems: Food sovereignty promotes decentralised food systems that prioritise local production, distribution, and consumption. It encourages communities to rely on locally adapted agricultural practices and traditional knowledge.

• Puts control locally: It advocates for democratic control over food systems, allowing communities and individuals to make decisions about food production and consumption that align with their needs, preferences, and cultural traditions.

• Builds knowledge and skills: Food sovereignty emphasies the importance of agroecological farming practices and traditional knowledge in building resilient and sustainable food systems. It promotes education and capacity-building to empower communities to produce their own food.

• Works with nature: It promotes environmentally sustainable agricultural practices that respect the ecological limits of the planet, conserve biodiversity, and mitigate climate change. Agroecology is a central component of food sovereignty, emphasising the integration of ecological principles into farming systems.

• Values food as culture and tradition: Food sovereignty recognises the cultural significance of food and the importance of preserving traditional foodways and culinary traditions. It seeks to protect food diversity and promote culturally appropriate diets.

***Right to Grow Bill***

Incredible Edible and Capital Growth Network are championing a Right to Grow Bill for councils to take forward. Hull has adopted this already. This is aimed at giving people and groups a positive right to grow food and encouraging councils to commit to this aim and develop the right mechanisms to support food growing in underused land.

Incredible Edible told the Commission that : *The biggest obstacle to more local food growing is the lack of available land close to people's homes. However, the land is there across our public realm, from verges to unloved, often forgotten, sites. It simply needs to be repurposed to better nurture our communities. In the middle of the cost-of-living crisis, unlocking local healthy food could be a life line for many communities, offering practical hope for everyone.*

Southwark Council is already enabling this in many ways, but a positive endorsement and commitment to undertake all the steps laid out in the Bill will strengthen the borough's food growing capacity and enhance associated benefits .

Moreover, the bill synchronises with the aims and delivery framework of the Land for Good report by the Land Commission to work with anchor institutions and civil society to deliver the recommendations. The Right to Grow bill is very much about collaboration and Incredible Edible says : *this new right would create opportunities for communities and the public sector to come together, play to each other's strengths, build trust and make the very best use of public sector land.*

**Recommendations**

**Council Assembly adopts a 'The Right to Grow' as below**

'The Right to Grow'

This council notes that the cost-of-living crisis and the continued efforts to

recover from the pandemic brings a new focus on ensuring that residents have access to enough fresh food for day to day living.

This council notes:

- The increasing need to put the health and well-being of residents at the heart of our corporate strategies.

- The powerful evidence which demonstrates the link between people's health and wellbeing and the availability of fresh locally produced food.

- That the cost-of-living crisis is creating real hunger reinforcing the need for healthy fresh food at an affordable price.

- That communities coming together to grow food can radically reduce costs to NHS and social care budgets by reducing loneliness and providing healthy food.

- That there is plenty of under used publicly owned land which could be used for community food growing while also improving the public realm.

This council agrees (or to the extent that the below concern executive functions, recommends to the executive) to adopt a right to grow on council owned land which is suitable or cultivation.

As a result, this council will:

-Identify and produce a map of all council owned land suitable for community cultivation.

- Make this land available for cultivation by a simple license to community organisations at no cost.

- Consider community food growing on sites awaiting development for otheruses on a fixed term basis.

- Write to MPs who represent the council area and ask them to support the Incredible Edible campaign or national right to grow.

*In addition the Council will work with partners through the Land for Good delivery process and encourage anchor institutions and civil society to join the council in the above endeavour* .

**Recommendations - continued**

**Include mapping food growing plots as part of larger piece of commissioned mapping work to support the Green Infrastructure Plan. This food mapping ought to include a public facing element that promotes the council's ability to locate ownership of land for interested residents who wish to investigate using particular plots, and also invites local landowners to submit potential food growing plots for community use under licence, for a minimum of 5 years .**

**Undertake to support Agroecology through all urban agriculture initiatives, future iterations of the Southwark Plan and food procurement.**

**Work with the Capital Growth network to monitor and measure how food growing projects in Southwark are increasing biodiversity and helping to tackle the ecological emergency.**

**Support local market initiatives, such as cooperative grocery stores[19], farmers markets[20] and other community hubs, in collaboration with food growing projects in the area and initiatives such as the Walworth Neighbourhood Food Model[21]), in order keep more food money circulating locally.**

**Create new food growing zones alongside new developments (roof tops, schools and new parks and green land). Old Kent Road would be a good test site for an integrated and inclusive food growing system.**

**Update the SNAP to include the community garden plan, which includes the right for residents to have a garden or food growing plots on their estate to ensure integration, plus include details on how Southwark can support urban agriculture to increase biodiversity.**

**Include a Food Policy in the next update of the Southwark Plan that requires developers to include spaces for urban agriculture , allotments and community gardening spaces**

**Integrate Food Growing in the Green Infrastructure Strategy**

[19] See https://fareshares.org.uk/
[20] See https://www.bfmarket.co.uk/
[21] Note the Land for Good priority action Walworth Neighbourhood Food Mode should be resourced and replicated to enhance food security for Southwark's diverse communities.

Agenda Item 10

| Item No. 10 | Classification: Open | Date: 22 July 2024 | Meeting Name: Environment Scrutiny Commission |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Report title:** | | Cover report for the Environment Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2024-25 | |
| **Ward(s) or groups affected:** | | N/a | |
| **From:** | | Project Manager, scrutiny. | |

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Environment Scrutiny Commission note the work programme attached as the Work Programme, plus appendix.

2. That the Environment Scrutiny Commission consider the addition of new items or allocation of previously identified items to specific meeting dates of the commission.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. The general terms of reference of the scrutiny commissions are set out in the council's constitution (overview and scrutiny procedure rules - paragraph 5). The constitution states that:

   Within their terms of reference, all scrutiny committees/commissions will:

   a) review and scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the council's functions

   b) review and scrutinise the decisions made by and performance of the cabinet and council officers both in relation to individual decisions and over time in areas covered by its terms of reference

   c) review and scrutinise the performance of the council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas

   d) question members of the cabinet and officers about their decisions and performance, whether generally in comparison with service plans and targets over a period of time, or in relation to particular decisions, initiatives or projects and about their views on issues and proposals affecting the area

   e) assist council assembly and the cabinet in the development of its budget and policy framework by in-depth analysis of policy issues

f) make reports and recommendations to the cabinet and or council assembly arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process

g) consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants

h) liaise with other external organisations operating in the area, whether national, regional or local, to ensure that the interests of local people are enhanced by collaborative working

i) review and scrutinise the performance of other public bodies in the area and invite reports from them by requesting them to address the scrutiny committee and local people about their activities and performance

j) conduct research and consultation on the analysis of policy issues and possible options

k) question and gather evidence from any other person (with their consent)

l) consider and implement mechanisms to encourage and enhance community participation in the scrutiny process and in the development of policy options

m) conclude inquiries promptly and normally within six months

4. The work programme document lists those items that have been or are to be considered in line with the commission's terms of reference.

**KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

5. Set out in the Work Programme and review scope appendixes are the issues and reviews the Environment and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission is due to consider in 2024-25.

6. The work programme is a standing item on the Environment and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission agenda and enables the commission to consider, monitor and plan issues for consideration at each meeting.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

| Background Papers | Held At | Contact |
|---|---|---|
| Environment Scrutiny Commission agenda and minutes | Southwark Council Website | Julie Timbrell Project Manager |
| Link: https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CommitteeId=518 | | |

## APPENDICES

| No. | Title |
|---|---|
| | Work Programme 2024-25<br>Appendix A<br>Appendix B |

## AUDIT TRAIL

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Lead Officer** | Everton Roberts, Head of Scrutiny | | |
| **Report Author** | Julie Timbrell, Project Manager, Scrutiny. | | |
| **Version** | Final | | |
| **Dated** | 19 July 2024 | | |
| **Key Decision?** | No | | |
| **CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER** | | | |
| **Officer Title** | | **Comments Sought** | **Comments Included** |
| Director of Law and Governance | | No | No |
| Strategic Director of Finance and Governance | | No | No |
| **Cabinet Member** | | No | No |
| **Date final report sent to Scrutiny Team** | | | 19 July 2024 |

# Environment Scrutiny Commission 24 /25 Workplan

**Proposed reviews :**

- Review: Biodiversity ***Appendix A***
- Review: Environmental Health: The health and wellbeing impacts of active travel and improved access to nature and how these can be extended through our borough. ***Appendix B***

***Topics***

- Topic: Cleaner, Greener , Safer fund
- TfL delivery of infrastructure in the borough

**Standing item – cabinet member interviews (tbc):**

- Councillor James McAsh: Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, Clean Air and Streets
- Councillor John Batteson: Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, Jobs & Business
- Councillor Emily Hickson: Deputy Cabinet Member for Green Finance

TBC

Councillor Helen Dennis : Cabinet Member for New Homes and Sustainable Development

Councillor Evelyn Akoto: Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing

Councillor Portia Mwangangye: Cabinet Member for Leisure, Parks & Young People

| **Meeting** | **Date** |
|---|---|
| 1 | Monday 22 July |
| 2 | September – date to be confirmed |
| 3 | Monday 14 October |
| 4 | Tuesday 3 December |
| 5 | Tuesday 28 January |
| 6 | Wednesday 30 April |

# Scrutiny review scoping proposal

**1 What is the review?**

Biodiversity

**2 What outcomes could realistically be achieved? Which agency does the review seek to influence?**

The review is mainly aimed at the council but is also seeking to increase collaboration by the council with the community, voluntary sector and, where appropriate, businesses.

**3 When should the review be carried out/completed?i**.e. does the review need to take place before/after a certain time?

Completed by the end of the administrative year 2023/24

**4 What format would suit this review? (eg full investigation, q&a with executive member/partners, public meeting, one-off session)**

Full investigation

**5 What are some of the key issues that you would like the review to look at?**

Kerbside strategy and the loss of front gardens, including:

- Provision of dropped curbs – Planning controls

- Option to promote pavement channels for EV charging as an alternative
- Impact of paved front gardens on biodiversity
- Ways to mitigate paving for vehicles e.g grass reinforcement systems

Food production and food consumption with reference to:

- Increasing urban food production, which is secure and affordable
- Reducing scope 3 emissions and ecological degradation caused by consumption of food produced from mono-cultures and non-carbon sequestering land use, across the UK and beyond
- Increasing consumption of food produced through agroecology

Southwark Land Commission – presentation and discussion of recommendations



Southwark Nature Action Plan and the development of the new requirement to have a Local Nature Recovery https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-nature-recovery-strategies/local-nature-recovery-strategies

Planning:

- Biodiversity net gain
- Reducing hard surfaces

Upskilling staff on biodiversity

Does the council requirement to consider the Climate Emergency in reports result in sufficient focus on the ecological and biodiversity emergency ?

Tree management and increasing the canopy.

Addressing biodiversity holistically including soil health, insects,  vegetation

Accelerating the phasing out of herbicides/pesticides

Communicating and engaging with residents and communities on the work of the council on biodiversity, and its importance.

Nature corridors ( see https://southwarknature.org.uk/camberwell-nature-corridors/ and https://southwarknature.org.uk/elmington-nature-corridor-2023/ )

Increasing the strategic provision of low carbon water supplies ( eg water butts, solar pumps)

Enabling more Community Gardening

Supporting community groups and community action.

Enhancing Streets for People
https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s115187/Appendix%201%20Streets%20for%20People%20Strategy%202023-2030.pdf



**6 Who would you like to receive evidence and advice from during the review?**

Incredible Edible

Southwark Nature Action Volunteers

Insectinside Me

Oriana's Gardens – work with London Bridge BID etc (tbc)  https://www.orianasgardens.co.uk/projects

Carolyn Steel :

- Sitopia: How Food Can Save the World
- Urban Farm in Greenwich

George Monbiot

Henry Dimbleby

Pesticide free London.

Initiatives by other London councils (e.g. Lambeth) to reduce use of herbicides/pesticides
Lambeth
https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/streets-roads-transport/community-weeding-scheme

Loughborough Farm See: https://loughboroughjunction.org/home/loughborough-farm-a-patchwork-of-community-growing-spaces

Pesticide Action Network UK (PAN UK) : Greener Cities: A guide to the plants on our pavements
Costs-of-going-pesticide-free.pdf (pan-uk.org)
PAN-UK has published this excellent guide to the plants which may grow in our pavements here:
https://issuu.com/pan-uk/docs/greener_cities_-_a_guide_to_our_pavement_plants
See page 18 for a discussion of Lambeth's program.

**RHS report https://www.rhs.org.uk/science/pdf/Gardening-matters-Front-Gardens-urban-greening.pdf**

**Evidence that loss of front gardens is environmentally damaging, destroying corridors of**

**biodiversity.** See work the Royal Horticultural Society has done work on impact and mitigation https://www.rhs.org.uk/communities/archive/PDF/Greener-Streets/greening-grey-britain-report.pdf

Southwark Biodiversity Partnership:

- The Conservation Volunteers
- Team London Bridge
- Walworth Garden
- Centre for Wildlife Gardening
- Surrey Docks Farm
- Bankside Open Spaces Trust
- IdVerde
- Better Bankside
- GIGL
- London Wildlife Trust



**7 Any suggestions for background information? Are you aware of any best practice on this topic?**

Included above

**8 What approaches could be useful for gathering evidence? What can be done outside committee meetings?**
e.g. verbal or written submissions, site visits, mystery-shopping, service observation, meeting with stakeholders, survey, consultation event

Commission meeting presentations, outreach visits, roundtable.

# Scrutiny review scoping proposal

## 1 What is the review?

Environmental Health: The health and wellbeing impacts of active travel and improved access to nature and how these can be extended through our borough.

## 2 What outcomes could realistically be achieved? Which agency does the review seek to influence?

Improved opportunities to access active travel and nature for all Southwark residents, regardless of ethnicity, sex, age, disability or socioeconomic circumstances.

The review will investigate the obesogenic environment and associated health inequalities and how active travel and access to nature could help to address these. In particular, explore how improved access to active travel could help Southwark residents build activity into their daily lives in order to reduce the incidence of conditions such as obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, heart disease, poor mental health and wellbeing, and other conditions that are frequently linked to a sedentary lifestyle.

The focus will be on people with a Protected Characteristic and experiencing socio- economic disadvantage, particularly people experiencing the below intersections:

- Ethnicity
- Sex
- Age
- Disability
- Socio economic disadvantage

The aim will be toplot a path towards achieving an increase in active travel by gaining an understanding of barriers that exist and how to break them down. The Commission's work will influence the cabinet and updates to the following strategies:

- Streets for People and associated Walking and Cycling Plans

- Air Quality Action Plan
- Healthy Weight Strategy
- Southwark Nature Action Plan (SNAP)
- Green infrastructure Plan (recommended by previous Biodiversity review)

**3 When should the review be carried out/completed?i**.e. does the review need to take place before/after a certain time?

Completed by March 2025

**4 What format would suit this review? (eg full investigation, q&a with executive member/partners, public meeting, one-off session)**

Full investigation.

**5 What are some of the key issues that you would like the review to look at?**

<u>How active travel can be increased and the obesogenic environment reduced by:</u>

Considering the needs of different demographics and how active travel can be made more appealing and accessible to those experiencing the highest levels of health inequalities, with particular reference to Southwark's Streets for People strategy and the associated walking and cycling plans.

<u>Reduce exposure to pollution and increase access to nature by considering the following:</u>

- How green measures can be further used to reduce exposure to air pollution and improve the attractiveness and health impacts of our streets and wider environment for walking, cycling and other healthy activities, including how these will interact with Nature Corridors.

**6 Who would you like to receive evidence and advice from during the review?**

Officer report on Southwark's Healthy Weight strategy.

TFL – with reference to infrastructure updates to increase active travel , working relationships, and improvements to cycling safety ( with particular reference to safety hotspots)

Biodiversity leads on development and delivery of nature corridors and intersection with active travel.

Streets for People and associated Cycling and Walking Plans –

Cabinet Members with other relevant portfolios:

- Councillor Evelyn Akoto: Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing
  Cllr Akoto's responsibilities include:Public health - including reducing health inequalities
- Councillor Portia Mwangangye: Cabinet Member for Leisure, Parks & Young People. Cllr Mwangangye's responsibilities include:
  Biodiversity and trees - tree planting and maintenance; increasing biodiversity and nature
- Councillor James McAsh: Cabinet Member for, Clean Air and Streets
- Councillor John Batteson: Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, Jobs and Business

Walking, cycling and nature groups such as:
Steppers UK
Wild in the City
Black Trail Runners
Flock Together
Black Girl Hike
Black Cyclists' Network
Cycle Sisters
Women of Colour Cycling Collective
Loud Mobility
Sustrans
Londra Bisiklet Kulubu
Lime Bikes

The Bike Project
London Bike Kitchen
Wheels for well-being

Update from Dr Ian Mudway , from Imperial , on research into particulates from tyres and brakes.

**7 Any suggestions for background information? Are you aware of any best practice on this topic?**

**8 What approaches could be useful for gathering evidence? What can be done outside committee meetings?**

e.g. verbal or written submissions, site visits, mystery-shopping, service observation, meeting with stakeholders, survey, consultation event

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**Environment Scrutiny Commission**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2024-25**

**AGENDA DISTRIBUTION LIST (OPEN)**

**NOTE:** Original held by Scrutiny Team; all amendments/queries to Julie Timbrell Tel: 020 7525 0514

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|---|---|---|---|
| | | Julie Timbrell, Scrutiny Team SPARES | 10 |
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| **Electronic Copy**<br><br>**Members**<br><br><u>Councillors:</u><br><br>Councillor Margy Newens (Chair)<br>Councillor Graham Neale (Vice-Chair)<br>Councillor Sabina Emmanuel<br>Councillor Bethan Roberts<br>Councillor Leo Pollak<br>Councillor Reggie Popoola<br>Councillor Hamish McCallum<br><br><u>Coopted members:</u><br>Anna Colligan<br>Simon Saville<br><br>**Reserves Members**<br><br>Councillor Darren Merrill<br>Councillor Naima Ali<br>Councillor Youcef Hassaine<br>Councillor Esme Dobson<br>Councillor Sunil Chopra<br>Councillor Rachel Bentley<br>Councillor Adam Hood | | **Total: 10**<br><br>**Dated: July 2024** | |