

Item No. 11.	Classification: Open	Date: 29 January 2013	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		The Southwark Local Biodiversity Action Plan	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Barrie Hargrove, Transport, Environment and Recycling	

FOREWORD - COUNCILLOR BARRIE HARGROVE, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYLING

Southwark's open spaces and built environment provide homes for a range of common and rare wildlife, including birds, bats, invertebrates and plants. This biodiversity contributes to our health and wellbeing through providing access to nature and helps us to adapt to the challenge of climate change.

The Council, both as civic leader and a major landowner in Southwark, has a responsibility to protect the borough's natural heritage and leave a lasting legacy for the future.

In 2010 the council promised to increase biodiversity in Southwark and I am pleased to report that the biodiversity of Southwark's green spaces is improving and the percentage of all local spaces in where positive conservation management has taken place now stands at 76 per cent. Our achievements include:

- Brenchley Gardens and Snowfields School Nature Garden had enhancements to their ponds, stag beetle loggeries were built and native planting was undertaken by volunteers
- Southwark's parks and open spaces saw an increase in wildflower meadows, ponds and reedbeds providing valuable habitats
- Russia Dock Woodland had extensive ecological enhancements including the creation of new meadow, new reedbed, and enhancement of the wet woodland
- Peckham Rye Park now benefits from a new nature garden
- Over 500 volunteers have worked with the parks and open spaces business unit to manage and enhance the wildlife of Southwark.

Building on this success, this new plan sets out how the Council will continue the important work of conserving and enhancing our environment. The Action Plan has been developed by the Council in collaboration with the Southwark Biodiversity Partnership and I would like to thank them for their contribution and support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Cabinet approve the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for the planning and management of biodiversity in the borough.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The Greater London Authority has a statutory obligation to produce a regional biodiversity plan and although there is not a statutory requirement to do so all 33 London boroughs are producing, or have produced a Local Biodiversity Action Plan.
3. The Council however does have a duty, as a public body under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, to have regard to conserving biodiversity in exercising its functions. Furthermore a Biodiversity Action Plan underpins policies in the Council Plan, Core Strategy and Open Spaces strategy and offers guidance on the protection, enhancement and promotion of the natural environment. This BAP contributes to targets set in national and regional plans for conserving biodiversity.
4. The Council's first BAP "*Work for Wildlife*" adopted in 2006 has delivered specific actions for the conservation of national priority habitats and species in Southwark. It delivered a number of key actions including: creation of 20 new stag beetle loggeries, 50 new bat boxes, creation of 2.2 ha of wildflower meadows and 1.5 ha of new reed bed. The 2006 BAP also contributed to achieving the Green Flag awards and Britain in Bloom awards.
5. This second Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) sets out targets for the period 2013 to 2019, and will build on previous work and addresses the challenges facing our natural resources and the urban environment. The BAP will steer the management of the 72 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), the 5 Local Nature Reserves in Southwark and the wider environment.
6. The BAP has been developed in partnership with the Southwark Biodiversity Partnership (SBP) and outlines how the public, private and voluntary sectors will work together to deliver quantifiable results for biodiversity and the environment.
7. The Southwark Biodiversity Partnership, (SBP) includes the following organisations:
 - Southwark Council
 - The Conservation Volunteers
 - The London Wildlife Trust
 - Bankside Open Spaces trust
 - Groundwork London
 - Better Bankside
 - Southwark Friends of the Earth

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

8. This BAP moves away from individual habitat and species action plans and takes a theme based approach to conserving, managing, and promoting biodiversity in Southwark. The plan is structured on the following 5 themes:
 - The Natural Environment and Ecosystems Services
 - The Urban Forest
 - The Built Environment
 - Climate Change and Sustainability

- Connecting with Nature

9. Actions in the BAP are classified as 3 types

- Operational actions which address current management of flora and fauna.
- Planning actions which support spatial policies or address development management.
- Resources actions which set actions for increasing habitats and species in Southwark. These include aspirational targets for long term increase of natural habitat and species in line with national and regional targets.

10. Theme 1: The Natural Environment and Ecosystems Services sets out our actions with regards to conservation of nature.

11. The themes key objectives

- We will contribute to the core objectives of the England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Strategy
- We will produce management plans for all SINC and Green Flag parks and open spaces in Southwark's management by 2016
- We will maintain a baseline of ecological data annually
- We aim to ensure no net loss of biodiversity

12. Theme 2: The Urban Forest sets out our action with regards to the trees and woodland in Southwark. This theme includes actions to monitor our woodlands, maintain the current tree stock, plant new trees to replace any felled, manage our woodlands and manage and create hedges. This Theme has been developed in conjunction with the revised Tree Management Strategy.

- We aim to protect the current tree stock
- We will maintain the existing tree stock in line with London and local targets
- We will manage and enhance our woodlands for wildlife

13. Theme 3: The Built Environment sets out our actions to incorporate nature into the built environment and the public realm. This theme includes actions to seek ecological features such as green roofs, nesting boxes and bat boxes into new or existing developments, and managing housing land for biodiversity where applicable.

- We will enhance the built environment for biodiversity

14. Theme 4: Climate Change and Sustainability action address the impacts of Climate Change, invasive species and promotes sustainable practices in service delivery. This theme includes actions for water management, promoting bee keeping, and sourcing plants of local provenance.

- We aim to deliver ecological solutions to offset the impacts of climate change
- We aim to reduce the urban heat island effect and improve air quality
- We will manage invasive species in Southwark

15. Theme 5: Connecting with Nature sets out actions to provide increased access to nature, promote community cohesion, volunteering, raising awareness and contributes to the Government's 'Big Society' objective and the Council's A Fairer Future agenda. This theme includes actions for developing partnerships and campaigns in Southwark, holding events and providing guidance for Friends groups on conservation and habitat creation.
 - We aim to increase engagement with people through biodiversity
 - We aim to secure funding through the SBP from external or internal grants to deliver the BAP
16. The delivery of the BAP actions will lead to more effective planning and more efficient service delivery through proactive cyclical maintenance of wildlife areas.
17. This BAP will produce tangible results and result in the following benefits for Southwark:
 - Improved open spaces and safer parks
 - Increased educational opportunities through events and training
 - Increased health through promotion of walks and volunteering activities
 - Greening the borough through habitat management and creation
 - Improved environmental management
 - Increased awareness of wildlife and conservation
 - Increased populations of endangered species
 - Increased sustainability of the built environment
18. The BAP will guide and support the following elements of ecological management provided by Southwark Council.
 - Support Development Management through assessment of planning applications and advise on appropriate mitigation and ecological enhancement as required.
 - Maintain a database of species and habitats in Southwark
 - Provide performance scrutiny through the National Biodiversity Action Reporting System and through annual review of the BAP
 - Improve management through production of management plans for all our SINC sites.
 - Support planning policy in protecting and enhancing nature sites

Policy implications

Statutory obligations and national and regional policy

19. Southwark Council like all Local Authorities has a number of statutory obligations in relation to biodiversity policy and legislation. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty on all public bodies to have regard for biodiversity.
20. The BAP sets out the species which are afforded legal protection under the Conservation Regulations 1994. In Southwark Bats fall into this category. Breeding birds are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

21. The BAP underpins and helps demonstrate delivery of the national and regional BAP targets. The BAP contributes to delivery of the London Plan targets, particularly policy 7.19 biodiversity and access to nature.

Southwark policies

22. There are a number of Southwark policies and strategies that have relevance to the BAP and are considerations when determining the actions in the plan. The BAP demonstrates delivery of Core Strategy policies 1, 11, 13 and Strategic Objective F. The BAP demonstrates delivery of the saved policies of the Southwark Plan 2011 specifically policy 3.28 biodiversity further details are found in the page 11 of the Evidence base.

23. The actions under the BAP themes contribute to delivery of the following policies and strategies:

- Transport Local Implementation Plan 2011 through promotion of green links.
- Climate Change Strategy 2010 through greening of the built environment and targets for the Urban Forest.
- Sustainable Community Strategy 2016 through promotion of ecological enhancement and green corridors.
- Tree Strategy 2013 through management of the tree stock
- Open Spaces strategy 2012 through management and enhancement of biodiversity, community cohesion and health and wellbeing.
- Supplementary Planning Document, Sustainable Design and Construction 2008 through ensuring biodiversity is designed into new developments.

24. The single data list is a catalogue of all the datasets that local government must submit to central government in a given year. This BAP addresses the improved local biodiversity data set requirements. Southwark Council set a target 83% of the 62 SINC sites in positive management by 2014. in the Council Plan in 2011. This target was originally known as National Indicator 197.

2010 Baseline	2011/2012 Target	2012/13 Target	2013/2014 Target
72.88%	76.27%	81.35%	83.30%

25. The indicator is based on key deliverables on the SINC sites within the borough.

- A site management plan
- Delivery of Biodiversity action plan actions
- Ecology Officer or specialist advising 3rd parties such as Dulwich Estate and evidence they have acted on this advice.
- Evidence of active management undertaken on the site.

26. The BAP will contribute to the Council Plan in particular some of the 10 Fairer Future promises and the priority statements for each of the 9 Cabinet members specifically
- Transport, Environment and Recycling, in particular increasing the biodiversity of Southwark's green spaces.
 - Culture, Leisure, Sport and the Olympics, in particular increasing residents' satisfaction with leisure services.
 - Equalities and Community Engagement, in particular maintaining the high percentage of local people who think that Southwark is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together and contributing to the delivery of the volunteering strategy action plan.
27. Examples of how the BAP actions deliver against the Corporate Plan, education, health, and wellbeing are:
- We will restore the biodiversity value of selected sites such as Benhill Rd Nature garden and improve the condition of habitats making them available for public use. This improves access to the natural environment and contributes to health and well being by encouraging health lifestyles and life long learning and regeneration of the borough.
 - Developing the Forest schools initiative allows children to learn in an out door environment.
 - Ensuring new developments attain a minimum of 4 credits for biodiversity under the Code for Sustainable Homes will benefit the people of Southwark and deliver sustainable development.
 - Supporting schools in ecological surveying, providing training and guidance for grounds maintenance contractors and friends groups delivers on life on learning.
 - Holding events such as walks and talks and promoting voluntary action delivers on objectives for culture, leisure equalities and community engagement. Volunteering for conservation management also helps improve health and well being and saves money and resources.

Community impact statement

28. The Southwark BAP has a positive impact on the Community. The BAP promotes community cohesion through connecting people with nature and raising awareness of the natural environment. Many of the wildlife assets in Southwark are in parks and public places which are free to all users and assessable all year. Theme 5 of the BAP focuses on developing community cohesion through links with the natural environment.
29. Community consultation of the BAP and its delivery will continue through out its term through SBP partnership meetings and stakeholder meetings. The annual progress reports will be published online.
30. Corporate and community volunteering is a key factor in delivery of the plans actions and the management and enhancement of the SINC sites. Southwark has developed regular volunteering with corporate volunteers and will continue to promote volunteer involvement in our open spaces

31. An equalities analysis was undertaken and it was found that the BAP would have no negative impact on:
- Faith/religious belief
 - Gender
 - Sexual orientation
 - Age
 - Disability

Resource implications

32. In large part the actions in the BAP can be met from existing revenue and capital budget of the Council. Where the need for additional funding has been identified this will be sought from external sources identified in the funding strategy and applied for by the external members of the Southwark Biodiversity Partnership. The funding will be sought from the funders identified in section 3.21 and any other funders that become available during the term of this action plan. These actions would require approximately £96,000 of capital monies to deliver.
33. If funding is not secured for the actions identified as reliant on external monies Southwark Council will not deliver these actions.

Monitoring review

34. The plan will be monitored and progress will be reported on to the cabinet member biannually.

Consultation

35. Ongoing consultation has been undertaken through Southwark Biodiversity Partnership workshops and meetings.
36. A BAP workshop was held at the 2011 Friends of parks forum and an online consultation was held from 16th May until the 18th June 2012 for stakeholders and Council departments. This included:
- Southwark Biodiversity Partnership
 - Internal – Department: Planning Policy, Development Control, Housing, Highways, and trees.
 - Parks and Open Spaces staff members
 - Grounds Maintenance Contract Manager
37. External Consultation was also held with the GLA, London borough's biodiversity forum, London Wildlife Trust, Trust for Urban Ecology, Bankside Open Spaces Trust, Better Bankside, Groundwork London, Parks Friends Groups, Friends of the Earth Southwark and Southwark PCT. Details of the consultation are in Appendix 3.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Legal Services (JG/11/12/12)

38. The Council is under a statutory duty to have regard to the issue of biodiversity and to prevent harm to geological conservation interests. The adoption of the Biodiversity Action Plan and its proposed integration into key policies and strategies as outlined in this report are part of the discharge of that statutory duty.

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services (FC/13/004)

39. This report recommends that the Cabinet approves the formal adoption of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), notes the recommendations of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan in respect of planning policy and encourages further work by officers and other stakeholders to implement the Southwark BAP.
40. The strategic director notes the resource implications contained within the report. Officer time to effect the recommendations will be contained within existing budgeted revenue resources.

Director of Planning (SP/21/12/12)

41. The adoption of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan will assist the delivery of future planning policies and development decisions in the borough. The actions set out in the Biodiversity Action plan will be incorporated into planning decisions and planning policy development to ensure that the impact of future development on levels of biodiversity is taken into account

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Southwark Biodiversity Partnership Terms of reference.	Parks and Open Spaces Business Unit, Southwark Council, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH	J Best 020 7525 0876
Southwark Biodiversity Partnership SWOT analysis.		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Southwark Biodiversity Action Plan (circulated separately and available on the council's website)
Appendix 2	Southwark Biodiversity Action Plan Evidence Base (circulated separately and available on the council's website)
Appendix 3	Consultation Responses (circulated separately and available on the council's website)

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councilor Barrie Hargrove Cabinet Member for Transport, Environment and Recycling.	
Lead Officer	Deborah Collins, Strategic Director of Environment and Leisure	
Report Author	Des Waters, Head of Public Realm	
Version	Final	
Dated	18 January 2013	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Director of Legal Services	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services	Yes	Yes
Director of Planning	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		18 January 2013