

Item No. 16.	Classification: Open	Date: 17 December 2019	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		The Southwark Nature Action Plan	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Rebecca Lury, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Equalities and Communities	

FOREWORD – COUNCILLOR REBECCA LURY, DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR LEISURE, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Protecting biodiversity and providing access to nature are paramount to the health and wellbeing of the borough.

Alongside the Climate Emergency it is well documented that there is a biodiversity crisis with many species and habitats suffering global decline.

Taking action to protect these valuable assets and broadening engagement with nature at all levels is at the core of this Southwark Nature Action Plan (SNAP), and the council’s ambitions for nature conservation in the borough. Whilst we have continued to protect nature we have also extended protection of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation with 17 new sites proposed in the emerging Southwark Plan.

The previous Biodiversity Action Plans have produced gains in natural habitats and species. This includes 2 hectares of wildflower meadow, 4 new ponds, the restoration of Benhill Road Nature Garden and 1 km of native hedgerow.

We are proud of Southwark’s long legacy for delivering innovative nature conservation project, through the creation of urban nature gardens, new parks and woodland such as Russia Dock Woodland and Burgess Park and supporting third sector groups who manage nature reserves and provide community engagement.

Building on the successes of the previous Biodiversity Action Plans, This plan sets out clear expectations for residents, businesses, developers and land managers such as housing and schools and third sector groups on how they can contribute towards helping wildlife in Southwark.

Along side this plan we are striving for greater engagement. Making nature accessible to all and community engagement is at the heart of this plan with future development of a Young SNAP and a cultural SNAP and a nature recovery plan.

This 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 ongoing support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation for the Cabinet

1. That the cabinet approve the Southwark Nature Action Plan (SNAP) for the planning and management of biodiversity in the borough.

Recommendation for the Leader of the Council

2. That the leader delegates the monitoring of the progress of the SNAP to the deputy leader and cabinet member for culture, leisure, equalities and communities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. This is the council's third biodiversity action plan for Southwark. This plan builds on the successes of the two previous biodiversity action plans started in 2005, and sets out a vision for the continued protection, conservation and enhancement of nature across the borough.
4. The council's previous biodiversity action plans "Making Space for Natural Neighbours" 2013 - 2019, and "Work for Wildlife" 2006 - 2010, delivered considerable gains for nature in Southwark. The plans delivered a number of key actions including: creation of new habitats, conservation of flora and fauna, improved management of parks and open spaces and increased engagement with nature.
5. Southwark Council has a long legacy of nature conservation. In 1976 The William Curtis Ecological Park, Britain's first urban ecological park was created in Southwark by the Thames near Tower Bridge. In 1982 London Wildlife Trust's first Nature Reserve was established at Sydenham Hill Wood. In the north of the borough Burgess Park, Russia Dock Woodland and Stave Hill Ecological Park were created from ambitious regeneration projects on brownfield sites. The Centre for Wildlife Gardening in Peckham was created in 1989.
6. On 27 March 2019, Southwark Council declared the Climate Emergency and committed to do all it can to make the borough carbon neutral by 2030 – twenty years earlier than the previous target.
7. Following this, Southwark is developing a single, overarching "Southwark Climate Strategy 2020 - 2030" that sets out our plans, activities, milestones and targets for the next decade. The strategy will be developed through a dozen work streams to shape how the council will approach housing, planning, energy, transport, biodiversity, waste and many other issues.
8. Achieving carbon neutrality in this timeframe will be a massive challenge for the council, and will mean that we fundamentally need to change both the council's and our communities' approaches to many aspects of our lives and activities.
9. The council is doing all it can to engage, consult and empower our local communities in the process, and protecting and encouraging biodiversity and the aims set out in the Southwark Nature Action Plan are central to the success of this strategy.
10. The Council Plan 2018-2022 includes the following commitments:

- a) To launch a Great Estates guarantee so that every estate is clean, safe and cared for
 - b) To give residents the tools to garden and improve their estate - In this commitment tools refers not simply to the provision of physical tools, but also the Estate Improvement Plans framework for agreeing the improvements needed.
11. The council has selected seven estates across the borough as pilots. The SNAP will support these pilots and the wider programme through engagement and provision of expert advice and services.
 12. A toolkit on creating habitats and biodiversity features is available on the Southwark ecology pages. This will be refreshed and relaunched as part of the SNAP.

A global issue

13. The recent Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) reported that the abundance of native species and major land based habitats have decreased by at least 20% since 1900.
14. The quality of habitats which support this biodiversity have suffered a 30% reduction in habitat integrity. The main reasons identified are; climate change, habitat loss, fragmentation, and deterioration.

The national picture

15. The latest State of Nature Report by the National Biodiversity Network found 13% of species in England are threatened with extinction. 26 plant species have become extinct. Also species in England have decreased by 35% since 1970 and they are found in 31% fewer places.

The council's role in improving biodiversity in an urban area

16. However, urban environments can support high levels of biodiversity and offer opportunities for some species.
17. London supports over 1500 species. Urbanisation can increase species richness for some groups, which has been associated with the mosaic of habitats available. Urban areas have been shown to support higher bee species richness than non-urban habitats and a recent study found that residential gardens and allotments are pollinator hotspots.
18. Green infrastructure such as parks, sustainable drainage systems, green roofs and walls can also provide habitats for a wide range of species, including amphibians (newts, frogs and toads) and invertebrates (mason bees, bumble bees and stag beetles).
19. The council has statutory duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, 'Every public body must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity'.

20. The SNAP provides the framework to increase biodiversity in Southwark and also directly relates to policies in the Council Plan, emerging Southwark Plan and the Open Spaces Strategy and informs the protection, enhancement and promotion of the natural environment.
21. The SNAP also contributes to national and regional targets for conserving and enhancing biodiversity which are detailed in the plan (Appendix 1).
22. This year the International Charter for a National Park City was signed on One Tree Hill. Becoming a National Park City brings opportunities to engage Londoners and London institutions to create a common vision of the environmental, social and economic benefits of London's green infrastructure.
23. The National Park City is a place, a vision and a city-wide community that is acting together to make life better for people, wildlife and nature. A defining feature is the widespread commitment to act so people, culture and nature work together to provide a better foundation for life. The SNAP will support the vision and objectives of the National Park City.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

24. The SNAP 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.
25. The Southwark Biodiversity Partnership, (SBP) is formed of the following organisations:
 - Southwark Council
 - The Conservation Volunteers - (Third sector ecology service provider)
 - The London Wildlife Trust - (Third sector ecology service provider)
 - Bankside Open Spaces Trust - (Third sector ecology service provider)
 - Better Bankside – (Business Improvement District)
 - Team London Bridge– (Business Improvement District)
 - Walworth Garden – (Garden education facility)
 - Surrey Docks Farm – City Farm
 - Idverde – (Parks Grounds Maintenance Contractor).
26. This SNAP includes three key themes and habitat and species focused action plans incorporating key environmental policy in development by the UK Government.
27. The three themes are:
 - Making Nature Accessible for all
 - Biodiversity Net Gain
 - Nature Recovery Network.
28. The habitat action plans are:
 - Built Environment Habitat Action Plan
 - Gardens and Grounds Habitat Action Plan
 - Parks and Open Spaces Habitat Action Plan
 - Woodland Habitat Action Plan.

29. The Species Action Plans are:
- Bats Species Action Plan
 - Hedgehog Species Action Plan
 - Stag Beetle Species Action Plan
 - Amphibians and Dragonflies and damselflies (Odonata Inc. sub-order Zygoptera) Species Action Plan
 - Birds Inc. House sparrow, Swift and Raptors Species Action Plan
 - Native trees, woodland flora and fungi Species Action Plan
 - Pollinators Inc. bees and butterflies Species Action Plan.
30. The delivery of the SNAP actions will lead to more effective planning and more efficient service delivery through proactive cyclical maintenance of wildlife areas.
31. This SNAP will produce tangible results and result in the following benefits for Southwark:
- Improved, more biodiverse, open spaces and parks
 - Increased educational opportunities through events and training
 - Increased health through promotion of walks and volunteering activities
 - Increased greening of the borough through habitat creation and management
 - Improved environmental management
 - Increased awareness of wildlife and conservation
 - Increased populations of endangered species
 - Increased sustainability of the built environment.
32. This plan sets out clear expectations for residents, businesses, developers and land managers such as housing and schools and third sector groups on how they can contribute towards helping wildlife in Southwark.
33. The SNAP will guide and support the following elements of ecological management provided by the 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 in partnership with the London biological records centre, Green Space Information for Greater London (GiGL)
 - Improve green space management through production of management plans for all Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in Southwark's management
 - Inform planning policies in protecting and enhancing nature.

Consultation

34. A number of consultation methods were used to engage with residents, key partner organisations and other stakeholders in the development of the SNAP.
35. The renewal of the strategy was started by consulting the Southwark Biodiversity Partnership who are involved in biodiversity and management of natural green

space and discussing and developing emerging themes which would shape the new action plan. A workshop was held as part of the Friends of Parks conference on 22 September 2018.

36. An online consultation was also undertaken using the Southwark Consultation hub website to allow residents and the wider community to have their say on the draft action plan. The consultation was open from 12 September 2019 until 27 October 2019. Internal consultation was undertaken with council departments. We received 170 responses to the online consultation. The full results of this consultation are in Appendix 2. A summary of key findings are as follows:

- A clear majority felt that nature was important in their daily lives. 98% felt it was important
- Parks are the most popular destination of choice for accessing and enjoying nature with 98% of respondents selecting this
- The main things respondents thought were important in making nature accessible for all were better facilities in green spaces 60% and improved footpaths and gateways 60%
- The preference of opening of nature areas was for controlled access either through booking, open by appointment, restricted access and set opening times. Only 10% wanted nature areas open all the time
- 68% of respondents said they were doing something to support nature in their area
- Of the barriers faced, 70% felt awareness of where wild spaces are was the biggest obstacle. 62% felt awareness of how people can get actively involved was the second largest obstacle. Site access and facilities were seen as obstacles for just under half of all respondents.

37. External consultation was also held with the GLA, London Borough's Biodiversity Forum and other external stakeholders. Comments from all the different elements of the consultation that contributed to the shaping of the SNAP are set out below.

- Awareness, skills, time and location were factors in helping wildlife -this will be addressed by partners who are best placed to work towards increasing awareness and skills
- More wild areas in parks and public places – we will develop the nature recovery plan and review habitat in parks
- Link the SNAP to the 'Climate Emergency' – the SNAP supports the Council's commitment to the 'Climate Emergency'. Many actions in the plan will help offset or provide adaptation for the impacts of climate change
- More green infrastructure in new and existing developments – this is addressed through the development management process and emerging climate adaptation plans

- Ensure there are revenue budgets to maintain habitat creation and provide funding for biodiversity and urban greening – a funding workshop with the biodiversity partnership will be held once the plan is adopted and we will develop a proactive approach to funding so we are ready to act when new funding streams become available
- Reduce light pollution – development management seeks to reduce light pollution in new developments on a case by case basis
- Access to nature areas is an issue where some respondents expressed their views that nature sites should not be open or closed all the time. The preferences expressed were for access to nature areas to be bookable by schools, other user groups or have restricted access – we will review access to nature sites in parks as part of the SNAP.

Policy implications

38. Whilst the action plan is a document intended for use by all organisations and residents of Southwark for the management of nature. It also important to note that it directly links to the council's commitment to a 'Fairer future for all' particularly in the area of;
 - Protecting biodiversity and making nature accessible for all.
39. 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.
40. The SNAP includes species which are afforded legal protection under the Conservation Regulations 1994. In Southwark bats fall into this category. Breeding birds and other flora and fauna are covered by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
41. The 25 year environment plan sets out key targets for mandatory biodiversity net gain and producing a nature recovery network based on Lawton's principals set out in the 'Making space for nature' report 2011. Local authorities are expected to play a key role in the delivery of these policies.
42. The SNAP contributes to the delivery of the national and regional biodiversity targets. The SNAP contributes to delivery of the London Plan, particularly chapter eight: Green Infrastructure and Natural Environment, policies G1 to G8.
43. The Council Plan 2018-19 – 2021-22 sets out a series of commitments across eight themes:
 - A place to call home
 - A place to belong
 - A greener borough
 - A full employment borough
 - A healthier life
 - A great start in life
 - A safer community
 - A vibrant Southwark.

44. The Council Plan objective of 'protecting biodiversity and making nature accessible to all' is woven into each of the habitat and species action plans. The Southwark Biodiversity Partnership (SBP) will lead on the community engagement in line with the Ecology management agreements and their ability and capacity to engage with all aspects of the community.
45. The Southwark Nature Action Plan also supports a number of other key council plans, statutory documents and strategies:
 - Emerging New Southwark Plan 2019
 - The Movement Plan – setting a direction for transport 2018
 - Cultural strategy 2017
 - Southwark Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2017
 - Climate Change Strategy 2010
 - Air Quality Strategy and Action Plan 2017
 - Tree Management Policy 2019
 - The Council Plan 2018-19 – 2021-22
 - The Community Strategy 2016
 - Open Spaces Strategy 2013
 - The Old Kent Road Area Action Plan
 - Canada Water Area Action Plan
 - Peckham and Nunhead Area Action Plan
 - Elephant and Castle Area Action Plan
 - Food Strategy 2019
 - Southwark Physical Activity and Sport Strategy 2014 - 2017
 - Housing Strategy to 2043
 - The Great Estates Programme 2018
 - Sustainable modes of transport strategy 2009 – 2019
 - New homes design standards 2015.

Governance and delivery

46. The plan will be monitored through out its life and progress will be reported back to the cabinet member annually.
47. The Biodiversity partnership will continue to deliver the core of the plan and be instrumental in the development of the key themes and subsequent plans.
48. Working groups will be set up for our action plans with a single working group covering the Built Environment and Gardens & Grounds Habitat Action Plans and a single working group covering the Parks and Open Spaces and Woodland Habitat Action Plans
49. The plan has built in flexibility and will respond to any changes that arise in the borough or across the biodiversity landscape.
50. The plan will have a policy update after 2 years or earlier if there is significant policy development, and a themes and actions review and update after 5 years.

Community impact statement

51. As set out under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality duty

(PSED) an equalities impact assessment was carried out during the development of the strategy. Extensive consultation has been carried out with internal departments, external groups and residents, and the aims of the strategy are broadly inclusive, and should foster good relations between people from different communities as well as advancing equality of opportunity.

52. The strategy has no clear detrimental impact to any group or protected characteristic as outlined in the Equalities Act or the PSED and the broad aims and actions programmed are likely to increase participation, representation and accessibility to sports and physical activity provision within the borough.
53. The SNAP has a positive impact on the community. The plan 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.
54. Corporate and community volunteering are vital in delivery of the plan. Southwark has developed regular volunteering with corporate volunteers and will continue to promote volunteering in our open spaces.
55. An equalities analysis was undertaken and it was found that the SNAP would have no negative impact on:
 - Faith/religious belief
 - Gender
 - Sexual orientation
 - Age
 - Disability.

Resource implications

56. The costs connected with delivery of the SNAP will be contained within existing revenue and capital budget of the Council. Where the need for additional funding arises this will be sought from external sources and applied for by members of the SBP.
57. The council has allocated £114,756 revenue funding per year for the Ecology management agreements for four years from 2019.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Law and Democracy

58. This report seeks approval of the Southwark Nature Action Plan (SNAP) for the purposes of planning and management of biodiversity in the borough.
59. Paragraph 4 of this report notes that the preparation of the SNAP is consistent with the council's statutory obligations and with the Council plan and associated strategy and policy. Paragraph 1.5 of the draft SNAP sets out an extensive range of European, national, regional and local legislation and policy which binds the council in exercising its functions in relation to biodiversity and the environment.
60. The report explains (from paragraph 20 and in Appendix 2) the consultation

process which has been undertaken and the feedback from that exercise which has informed the development of the SNAP. The report also confirms that an equality analysis has been carried out as part of its development, in order to establish the extent to which any individuals and groups having a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 might be adversely affected. The equality analysis should be reviewed periodically in order to assist the council to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty imposed by the Act.

61. The decision to approve the SNAP is one which is expressly reserved to cabinet under the council Constitution.

Strategic Director of Finance and Governance (FC19/023)

62. This report is requesting cabinet to approve the Southwark Nature Action Plan (SNAP) for the planning and management of biodiversity in the borough and to delegate the monitoring of the progress of the SNAP to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet member for Culture, Leisure, Equalities and Communities. Full details are contained within the main body of the report.
63. The strategic director of finance and governance notes all related costs will be contained within existing departmental revenue and capital resources.
64. Staffing and any other costs connected with this report to be contained within existing departmental revenue budgets.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Southwark Biodiversity Partnership Terms of reference	Parks and Open Spaces Business Unit, Southwark Council, Tooley Street	J Best 020 7525 0876
Web link: http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=302&MId=6571&Ver=4		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Southwark Nature Action Plan
Appendix 2	Southwark Nature Plan Consultation report

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Rebecca Lury, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Equalities and Communities	
Lead Officer	Caroline Bruce, Strategic Director Environment and Leisure	
Report Author	Jon Best, Ecology Officer	
Version	Final	
Dated	5 December 2019	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Director of Law and Democracy	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	Yes	Yes
Director of Planning	Yes	No
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		5 December 2019