Camden Biodiversity Action Plan 2013–18

Interim Review

Camden

Foreword

The Conservation Volunteers

This mid-term review of Camden's Biodiversity Action Plan (2013–18) highlights some of what has been achieved since 2013, by Camden Council and our partners, to protect and improve our wildlife and make the most of opportunities for people to get involved.

Camden's Biodiversity Action Plan really focuses on what nature can do to help improve peoples' lives in Camden. The Green Gym now provides opportunities for anyone to volunteer outdoors five days a week in green spaces all across the borough.

Green Gym volunteers have been busy in Camden for over seven years now, helping to improve nature in their neighbourhoods, and get active and healthy at the same time.

Partners including London Wildlife Trust and RSPB have been using nature on Hampstead Heath and at Camley Street Natural Park to help children learn and grow in confidence. Camden, City of London and The Royal Parks have restored grasslands and planted meadows, hedgerows and orchards. More habitat for wildlife and for people to enjoy.

But there's still a lot to do, from greening our built environment to managing our woodlands. One of the things we want to improve on between now and 2018 is recording our wildlife. Records of wildlife, even common species, are really important to help us make decisions about proposed developments and how we manage our green spaces now and in the future.

Alongside this report we are promoting our new Camden Spring Watch survey, and there will be an Autumn Watch survey to follow. So next time you are in your garden, park, or school yard, please look at and listen to what is around you, and let us know what wildlife you see.

Councillor Meric Apak

Cabinet Member for
Sustainability and Environment
Camden Council

Introduction

The Conservation Volunteers

The Camden Biodiversity Action Plan is a five year plan to protect and enhance biodiversity across the borough. It aims to make the most of nature across the borough to maximise benefits to residents' health, wellbeing and resilience to future challenges.

This mid-term review of the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) takes a look at what we've achieved so far, what's left to do and what you can do to help.

Camden's biodiversity

Camden is defined by both its built and natural environment and biodiversity plays a key role in defining this character - from the expanse of Hampstead Heath in the north to the tree-lined squares in the south and the Regent's Canal that weaves through the middle.

We rely on Camden's biodiversity for a wealth of vital services – our green spaces absorb rainfall, preventing local flooding, and provide us with places to be healthy, to exercise, relax and socialise; our trees clean pollution from the air and keep us cool when temperatures rise; and insects such as bees and butterflies pollinate flowers and support local food growing. The plan aims to support and improve these services through land management actions, the planning process and bespoke projects.

The Plan

The plan runs from 2013 to 2018 and contains 72 actions delivered by 27 partners including Camden Council, London Wildlife Trust, The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), Froglife, RSPB, City of London Corporation, The Royal Parks and our Friends of Parks and Nature Reserves groups. Activity is organised under three action plans: **Access to nature, The built environment** and **Open spaces and natural habitats**.

Overview of progress

Progress has been delivered against the broad range of objectives set out in the plan. This has meant more opportunities for people to connect with nature across the borough, particularly through volunteering, helping to increase physical activity levels and reduce health inequalities. These volunteers are helping to manage and maintain the extent of wildlife habitat across the borough to support both wildlife and people, and specific projects have created or restored new habitat such as acid grassland on Primrose Hill and floating reed beds in Regent's Canal. By installing 11 green roofs on housing estates across the borough, the council aims to lead by example to encourage developers to do more to ensure that our built environment makes a positive contribution to biodiversity.

At the end of 2015, 72% of all actions were on schedule and 13% were ahead of schedule. We had already achieved 26% of our actions, and 69% require further or different action. This reflects that many of the actions are 'ongoing' and require BAP partners to adapt activities as they go along. Some of the key achievements for each action plan are outlined below, together with some of the things we have left to do and how you might be able to help us achieve these moving towards 2018.

For details of progress against specific actions please see the technical report on the Camden website.

Access to nature

What we want to achieve:

Opportunities are available for Camden residents to access and engage with the natural environment across the borough for the range of health, wellbeing and social benefits it can provide

Some of the things we have done so far

More than **1,050 events** were run engaging over **10,500 people** and **1,500 volunteers** in wildlife activities across the borough as part of BAP projects such as Wild about Hampstead Heath, Camden Green Gym, Wildlife on your Waterways, and Greening Camden.

From 2015 we will have **Green Gyms** running five days per week (including weekends) at sites across the borough after establishing three new community Green Gyms at Belsize Woods and Adelaide Local Nature Reserves, West Hampstead and at Oasis Sports Centre, as well as the regular mid-week Camden Green Gym which will help to improve the nature value of our parks and housing estates.

Over **16,000 children** have been involved in nature education activities on Hampstead Heath and at Camley Street Natural Park.

We have created new **Camden in Bloom** categories for biodiversity and environmental sustainability.

What we still need to do

We need to tackle **unequal access to nature** across the borough. In 2016 we will begin a study to examine how we can help alleviate areas of deficiency and barriers to physical and social access to nature, so that the people who need it most have the opportunities to interact with nature every day.

We need to get more people involved in **recording our wildlife**, so that we have the data to help us make better decisions about green space improvements, planning and development and management of our spaces for wildlife. In 2016 we will be launching Camden Spring and Autumn Watch surveys where residents can record the wildlife they see in their gardens or local green spaces; and the People's Trust for Endangered Species will be training up volunteers to monitor hedgehog populations on Hampstead Heath.

Get involved

Join a Camden Green Gym!

Be a Citizen Scientist! Take part in Camden Nature Watch and other surveys like the Big Butterfly Count in July and the RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch in January.

Wild about Hampstead Heath

Wild about Hampstead Heath

What we want to achieve:

Camden's built environment makes a positive contribution to the green infrastructure and biodiversity of the borough

Some of the things we have done so far

In 2013 we completed a **review of Camden's Sites of Importance of Nature (SINC) Conservation** as part of the new draft Local Plan, which evidenced the strength of Camden's planning policies in protecting the extent of the SINC network since the previous survey in 2002.

We have distributed **advice notes** on 'landscaping for biodiversity' and 'living roofs and walls' to developers and to the Camden Climate Change Alliance.

Camden has installed **11 living roofs on housing estates** across the borough, and we have included green roofs as an option for all roof replacement by incorporating them into our Better Homes technical standards.

What we still need to do

We need to establish a mechanism to more accurately record biodiversity enhancements in the built environments.

We need to explore what can be done to secure improvements to gaps that exist along strategic wildlife corridors (joined up bits of habitat) as identified in the SINC review.

We need to explore and appraise opportunities for living walls at sites across the borough.

Who can help?

Every development can make a positive contribution to wildlife – follow our BAP advice notes on landscaping and living roofs to find out more.

Open spaces and natural habitats

What we want to achieve:

Camden's open spaces and natural habitats are managed to benefit wildlife across the borough

Some of the things we have done so far

We have consistently increased the proportion of **Camden's Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation** considered to be in 'positive conservation management' from 54% in 2012 to 63% in 2015.

Acid grassland used to be widespread across the north of the borough but is now a rare habitat in London and a priority for conservation. Since 2012, Camden and The Royal Parks have been working together, with help from Green Gym volunteers and funding from SITA Trust, to restore and manage 1.6 hectares of acid grassland at Primrose Hill.

The City of London has also been working to restore and manage patches of acid grassland on **Hampstead Heath,** as well as other important habitats including wet heath, perennial wildflower meadows, veteran trees and native hedgerows.

London Wildlife Trust planted two floating pocket wetlands, providing 60m2 of habitat and improving water quality in **the Regent's Canal**, as part of the Wildlife on your Waterways project.

What we still need to do

We have a number of **wildflower meadows** that have been planted over the years in Camden's green spaces. We need to properly establish the condition of these meadows and implement appropriate maintenance regimes.

We need to develop a project to help identify and remove **invasive species** associated with the Regent's Canal.

We need to define our approach to beekeeping – which will focus on educational hives and habitat provision for bees and wild pollinators. Camden will be a key delivery partner in the '**Making a B-Line for London**' project which is a large landscape-scale partnership project to improve and connect pollinator habitat and engage communities across London.

What can you do?

BAP partners should continue to work together to ensure that we maintain the extent of wildlife habitat across the borough – or even better increase it.

BAP case studies

The Conservation Volunteers

Camden Green Gym

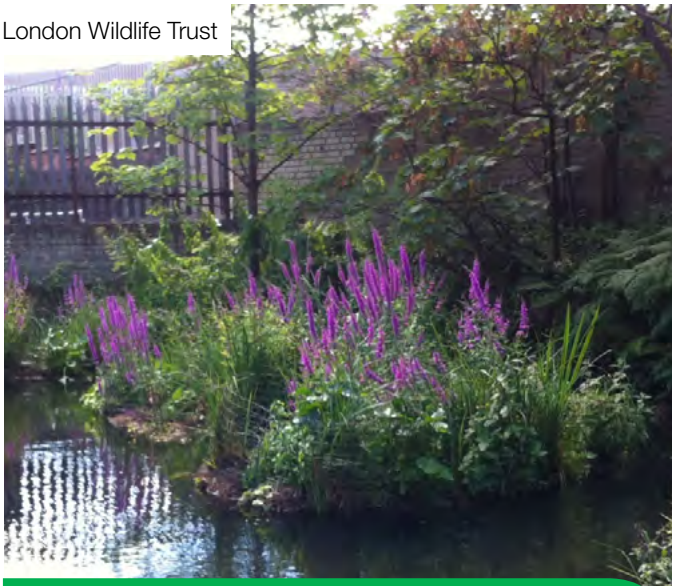
The Green Gym tackles health inequalities with a regular programme of 'green exercise', through fun and inclusive conservation activities such as managing woodlands, growing food, and planting trees and hedgerows. The Camden Green Gym was launched in November 2008, in partnership with Camden Council and the National Health Service (NHS), running twice-weekly sessions in green spaces across the borough.

Over the last seven years the Green Gym in Camden has transformed many green spaces, including the creation of new community orchards on housing estates, a kitchen garden in Waterlow Park and a new food growing garden at Oasis Sports Centre. From 2013 to 2015 TCV engaged 1,684 volunteers in improving over 30 sites across Camden, with many participants referred from health or wellbeing partners around the borough.

There are now Green Gym sessions running five days a week, including weekends, at sites across the borough. TCV's new greening contract with Camden continues to support individual volunteering and community groups with a much wider remit, building volunteer capacity and skills to manage green spaces in a self-sustaining way.

tcv.org.uk/london/green-gym-london/camden-green-gym

London Wildlife Trust



Wildlife on your Waterways

Led by London Wildlife Trust, and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Royal Bank of Canada, 'Wildlife on your Waterways' aimed to raise awareness of the natural and industrial heritage of the Regent's Canal and help local people get involved in improving its biodiversity.

The project delivered 277 practical workdays engaging 382 volunteers on the canal. They removed over two tonnes of floating litter, created new wildlife habitats, completed wildlife surveys and monitored invasive species. Thirty six volunteers completed accredited training in canal management and the project supported three internships.

The project was guided by a stakeholder group which will continue to work in partnership to identify priorities for practical work and ways to engage the local community who live and work around the canal.

wildlondon.org.uk/wildlife-on-your-waterways

Open spaces and natural habitats

Wild about Hampstead Heath

Wild about Hampstead Heath

Led by RSPB, and involving Camden BAP Partners City of London Corporation, Heath Hands and English Heritage, this three year project aimed to connect local people and schools with the wildlife and natural heritage of Hampstead Heath. Using specially equipped tricycles, newly trained **'Nature Interpreters'** delivered over 100 fun discovery events on and around the Heath.

The 'Heath Friendly Schools' programme supported three local primary schools in developing outdoor learning activities on the Heath. Teachers gained the skills and confidence to run sessions independently, and reported that children were more engaged in learning both outdoors and back in the classroom.

www.wildhampsteadheath.org.uk

Salix Ecology

Primrose Hill – Acid Grassland Restoration

Funded by SITA Trust, The Royal Parks and Camden Council have been working in partnership with local volunteers to help restore 1.6ha of acid grassland on Primrose Hill.

Acid grassland forms on acidic soils with low nutrient levels and it is a priority habitat for London and the UK. Primrose Hill was identified, by the London Biodiversity Partnership, as a site for potential acid grassland restoration. Over three years, The Royal Parks adopted a new management regime of mowing and soil scarification, and Camden Green Gym volunteers raked up the grass cuttings and sowed seed to help restore the grassland community on a section of the hill. Local Volunteers were trained in plant identification by Salix Ecology and now carry out annual surveys to help monitor progress, and education packs were distributed to local schools. The grassland is slowly establishing with areas of fine grasses and wildflowers such as tormentil and heath bedstraw. Restoration is a long term goal and The Royal Parks have committed to a further ten years positive conservation management to increase the quality and size of restored habitat.

www.royalparks.org.uk

If you have any questions or comments please contact us at **greencamden@camden.gov.uk** or **020 7974 4444**

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