



Wandsworth Council

Statutory Biodiversity Report:

Period 2021 – 2026

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Executive Summary

Between 2021 and 2026, Wandsworth Council has significantly strengthened its approach to biodiversity, delivering wide ranging habitat improvements, expanded ecological monitoring and stronger governance to meet its enhanced duties under the Environment Act 2021. As one of London's greenest inner boroughs, Wandsworth manages a diverse network of parks, commons, rivers and wildlife sites that support thousands of species, and this period has seen notable progress in restoring and enhancing these natural assets. Key achievements include the creation of new habitats, improved management of Local Wildlife Sites, extensive community led conservation activity and the introduction of structured species monitoring programmes. Biodiversity Net Gain has been integrated into the planning system, supported by new guidance, cross team working and digital tools that ensure transparent and consistent assessment of proposals.

The Council has also strengthened its strategic foundations through the in-housing of ecological expertise, updated planning policy, adoption of the Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document and active participation in London wide partnerships. Alongside these successes, the borough continues to face pressures from land use demands, climate change, intensive use of green spaces and the long-term resourcing required to safeguard habitats and species.

Looking ahead, the new Biodiversity Action Plan (2026–2031) sets out a focused, evidence-based and community-led programme built around three themes: creating fairer access to nature, responding to community needs and delivering measurable biodiversity outcomes. Through these actions, Wandsworth aims to achieve lasting ecological gains and support a healthier, more nature-connected borough.

1.0 Introduction

Under the Environment Act 2021, the Enhanced Biodiversity Duty (also known as the “strengthened biodiversity duty”) places new statutory obligations on public authorities in England.

Public authorities operating in England must actively consider how they can conserve and enhance biodiversity.

This means they are required to:

1. Identify actions they can take to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
2. Agree policies and set measurable objectives to deliver those actions.
3. Implement those policies and work towards achieving the objectives.
4. Report publicly on progress at least once every five years.

This report outlines the actions taken by Wandsworth Council (WC) between 2021 and 2026 to comply with its biodiversity duty as a Local Authority under the Environment Act 2021.

Wandsworth

Wandsworth is an inner London borough governed by Wandsworth London Borough Council and forms part of the wider Greater London system of local government. As such, it operates within a two-tier framework in which strategic services—such as transport, policing and fire—are delivered by the Greater London Authority, while the Council is responsible for local services. Wandsworth also serves as the Local Planning Authority, undertaking all statutory urban planning functions.

On 1 October 2016, Wandsworth Council and neighbouring London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames entered a shared staffing arrangement, bringing both authorities under the leadership of a single Chief Executive and unified senior management team, while each retained its own political governance structures. Together, the two councils employed approximately 2,846 staff as of August 2025.

Wandsworth is a densely populated and youthful borough with an estimated 337,655 residents as of mid-2024, reflecting steady long-term growth and a median age of around 33, significantly younger than the UK average. The borough is also ethnically diverse with a wide range of faith and cultural communities. Population density is high at approximately 9,855 people per km², reflecting strong housing demand and a significant rented sector, which accounts for over half of all households. Overall, the

borough's demographic profile is characterised by rapid turnover, high diversity, and a predominantly young, mobile, and urban population.

Wandsworth also supports over 4000 recorded wildlife species, 14 distinct habitats—including heathland, mudflats, rivers, lakes and ponds, woodlands, and grasslands—and 31 designated biodiversity sites (23.3% of the borough). 4.1% of the borough is classified as Areas of Deficiency in Access to Nature.

Wandsworth Council owns and manages 670 ha of parks, commons and open spaces which is nearly 27% of the total land area in the borough and includes a significant portion of the borough's Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). The Council's Biodiversity Team has overall responsibility for the biodiversity elements of the management plans for these sites and deliver them in partnership with experienced contractors and local volunteers.

2.0 Policies, Objectives and Actions

2.1 Biodiversity Strategy

The Wandsworth Biodiversity Strategy 2020 was formally adopted in February 2021. It sets out a vision to protect, enhance, and connect the borough's habitats, safeguard local species, and help wildlife populations thrive, as well as ensuring biodiversity is valued and integrated into local decision-making. The Strategy provides clear objectives and actions to strengthen ecological resilience, deliver ecosystem services – including physical and mental well-being benefits for residents – and engage communities in safeguarding nature for the future. The Council's Biodiversity Team has developed a new Biodiversity Action Plan which reviews progress to date and outlines further measures to implement the Strategy.

2.2 Local Plan

Wandsworth's current Local Plan (2023–2038), adopted in July 2023, sets out a 15-year plan for the development of the borough through its policies, area strategies and site allocations. It sets out the Council's proposed Vision, Objectives and Spatial Strategy. It is a key Council document that supports Wandsworth's growth and meets needs for housing, the economy, community services and infrastructure, while conserving and enhancing the borough's natural and historic environment, enabling adaptation to climate change, and promoting sustainable design.

The plan includes policies to protect and enhance biodiversity, green and blue infrastructure, open spaces, and rivers; ensures effective open space, sports provision and play space, protects existing allotments and food growing spaces, and includes a requirement for all developments to provide ecological enhancements and urban greening. Its policies provide guidance on tree management and landscaping. The Plan also recognises the well-being benefits from access to nature.

Table 1: Local planning policies relating to biodiversity

Policy	Biodiversity Implications
<i>LP53 – Protection & Enhancement of Green and Blue Infrastructure</i>	<i>Development must protect and enhance green and blue infrastructure, maintain connected networks, support and where possible enhance biodiversity in protected sites and elsewhere,</i>

Policy	Biodiversity Implications
	<i>enhance wildlife corridors, and integrate new biodiversity features into the design of proposals.</i>
<i>LP54 – Open Space, Sport & Recreation</i>	<i>Safeguards existing open spaces and indoor and outdoor sports facilities, resists their loss, and requires new development to provide or improve accessible, high-quality, multifunctional spaces.</i>
<i>LP55 – Biodiversity</i>	<i>Requires biodiversity gain, protects designated and non-designated sites, protects priority and non-priority species from harm, and promotes habitat creation, restoration, and ecological connectivity within development.</i>
<i>LP56 – Tree Management & Landscaping</i>	<i>Requires retention and protection of existing trees and landscaping, requires replacement or new planting, and supports high-quality landscape design to enhance amenity and biodiversity.</i>
<i>LP57 – Urban Greening Factor</i>	<i>All developments should contribute to urban greening. ‘Major’ developments must meet Urban Greening Factor thresholds set out in the London Plan through measures like green roofs, walls, and planting.</i>
<i>LP58 – River Corridors</i>	<i>Protects and enhances rivers (including the River Thames, River Wandle and Beverley Brook) and watercourses, promotes public</i>

Policy	Biodiversity Implications
	<i>access and biodiversity improvements and protects existing river infrastructure.</i>
<i>LP59 – Riverside Uses, including River-dependent, River-related and Adjacent Uses</i>	<i>Supports river-dependent and river-related uses, safeguards wharves (also in Policy LP 40) and ensures that new development does not harm the stability or continuity of tidal or flood defences. It provides specific guidance for development within the defined Thames Policy Area and in Focal Points of Activity.</i>
<i>LP60 – Moorings and Floating Structures</i>	<i>Permits moorings and floating structures only where they do not harm biodiversity, navigation, residential amenity, views, flood defences or create a barrier to access. The policy provides detailed guidance on proposals for floating structures and moorings. The culverting of streams is not to be permitted, and the naturalisation of river channels/watercourses is sought where appropriate and feasible.</i>

2.3 *In-housing of ecological expertise*

In September 2024, the Environment Committee voted to transfer management of the arboricultural and grounds maintenance contracts, along with responsibility for the biodiversity strategy, from Enable Leisure and Culture to Wandsworth Council. Staff moved into their new roles in April 2025. Bringing ecological expertise in-house has helped and continues to help the Council meet its new biodiversity related statutory responsibilities, strengthen partnerships with organisations that share its

biodiversity ambitions, and ensure biodiversity is fully integrated into decision-making across all departments.

2.4 Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

The Council has adopted its first Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which aims to provide additional guidance and practical advice for applicants seeking planning permission. Its purpose is to ensure biodiversity is considered at every stage of the process—from site selection through design and construction to long-term maintenance—so that biodiversity becomes integral to development proposals. While the SPD is not part of the statutory Local Plan, it will be taken into account when planning applications are determined.

The document offers detailed guidance on protected species and habitats within the borough and explains how to incorporate ecological enhancements such as swift bricks, bat boxes, and small mammal passes. It also advises on creating biodiverse gardens, recommends planting types, and provides tips for designing front gardens to encourage biodiversity when introducing parking spaces. Lighting design is addressed, highlighting the importance of dark corridors to maintain connectivity for nocturnal species. The SPD also covers aquatic and riverine environments, which are particularly significant in Wandsworth.

Finally, the SPD links to associated policy areas, including Urban Greening and Biodiversity Net Gain, ensuring a comprehensive approach to ecological design and enhancement.

2.5 Wild Wandsworth: Biodiversity Action Plan

Wild Wandsworth is the Council's ambitious new Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), developed over 2025 and adopted in February 2026. This plan builds on ongoing efforts to protect and enhance Wandsworth's habitats and species, aiming to create a borough where people and nature not only coexist but thrive together.



The BAP celebrates the many actions taken since 2020 to deliver the goals of the Biodiversity Strategy and set priorities for the next five years ahead of a new long-term strategy. It outlines how these actions will help nature flourish while providing more opportunities for residents to connect with wildlife and green spaces, improving access to the health and well-being benefits of nature.

Key priorities include:

- Creating, maintaining and enhancing habitats in key locations such as parks, commons, housing estates, and schools.
- Strengthening connections between habitats through actions like enhancing railway corridors, implementing Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes (SuDS) schemes, and creating dark corridors.
- Supporting local people to take action and engage with nature.
- Creating accessible pathways into biodiversity-related careers.
- Building partnerships with landowners, managers, and biodiversity organisations.
- Developing effective systems and policies to meet the Council's biodiversity responsibilities.
- Collecting evidence to monitor progress and guide future actions.

2.6 Actions

All actions taken to comply with our biodiversity duty have been driven by the policies and objectives described in the previous sub-sections. The table below presents the key actions which have been taken by the Council within the reporting period.

Table 2: Actions undertaken by Wandsworth Council in order to comply with the biodiversity duty.

Action Taken	Lead
<i>Policy and strategy</i>	
Formal adoption of the Biodiversity Strategy (February 2021)	Wandsworth Council and Enable Parks
Update Wandsworth Environment and Sustainability Strategy (March 2022)	Climate Change and Sustainability Team
Preparation and formal adoption of the Local Plan (July 2023)	Local Plan Team
Update Climate Action Plan (February 2024)	Climate Change and Sustainability Team
In-housing of parks, tree and biodiversity officers	Wandsworth Council
Development of the Wandsworth Biodiversity Action Plan	Biodiversity Team
SPDs on Biodiversity & Trees	Local Plan Team, Tree Team and Biodiversity Team
Tree Policy 2021	Wandsworth Council, Tree Team and Enable Parks

Action Taken	Lead
Tree and Woodland Framework 2023	Wandsworth Council, Tree Team and Enable Parks
<i>Habitat and species conservation</i>	
Over 2.2 hectares of new habitats, including grassland, scrub, wetlands, and deadwood, have been created in Council-managed greenspaces.	Enable Parks
74% of Wandsworth's Local Wildlife Sites are now in positive management for biodiversity, a 13% increase since 2021.	Enable Parks
Heavy horses used for sensitive grassland management across five parks and commons.	Enable Parks
Increased monitoring of existing grasslands and meadows alongside new sites included in the <i>No Mow May</i> campaign, with 24 sites surveyed in 2025.	Enable Parks
<i>No Mow May</i> and <i>Let it Bloom in June</i> campaigns have seen 59 areas in public parks, commons and green spaces being left unmown to allow pollinators and wildflowers to thrive, resulting in a measurable diversification of plant species.	Enable Parks
Twelve public parks and commons awarded Green Flags in 2025	Enable Parks
Parks for London 2024 saw Wandsworth Parks rise from 21st ranked in 2022 to 8th Ranked in 2024 across London with supporting nature a key criterion.	Enable Parks
£46,460 awarded from the Mayor of London's Rewild Fund in 2022 for grassland and scrub habitat	Enable Parks

Action Taken	Lead
creation in King Georges Park (“borough” grade Local Wildlife Site) (2022)	
£34,000 awarded from Wandsworth Council’s Local Fund for grassland habitat creation in Wandsworth Park. (“local” grade Local Wildlife Site)	Enable Parks
£13,000 to create wildflower verges along the historic Putney Park Lane to provide connectivity between Putney Lower Common (borough grade local wildlife site) and Putney Heath (site of metropolitan importance)	Enable Parks
Participatory borough in Butterfly Conservation’s Big City Butterflies project.	Enable Parks
MORPH training for two members of staff	Enable Parks
FISC Plant Assessment completed for one member of staff	Enable Parks
Twice yearly water quality monitoring for all shallow urban lakes including biochemical, invertebrate and vegetation surveys.	Enable Parks
Annual fish health surveys at all shallow urban lakes.	Enable Parks
Woodland habitat condition surveys undertaken on Wandsworth Common (borough grade Local wildlife Site) and Tooting Common (Site of Metropolitan Importance for Wildlife)	Enable Parks and Trees Team
A Habitat Survey using the UK Habitat Classification was undertaken on Tooting Common SMI to inform the production of a 10-year strategic plan	Enable Parks

Action Taken	Lead
Improving connectivity for hedgehogs through a programme of “hedgehog highway holes” through the boundaries of Putney Lower Common Cemetery and Putney Park Lane	Enable Parks
Supporting a PhD student from King’s College to record bats in Battersea Park for a project looking at 'Distribution mapping and habitat suitability modelling of bats in London as urbanised habitat'.	Enable Parks
£1,500 work of tree veteranisation works undertaken on trees in Wandsworth Common (“borough” grade Local Wildlife Site) to create woodland glades, increased dead wood and crevice habitat for bats and invertebrates.	Enable Parks and Tree Team
Over 2,600 street trees have been planted.	Tree Team
53 TPOs secured since 2021.	Tree Team
Six SuDS have been or are scheduled to be installed.	Highways
Numerous ecological features such as wildlife friendly planting, green roofs and bird and bat boxes have been secured via condition on new private and Council developments through planning.	Planning Team and Biodiversity Team
The Housing Team collaborated with SW15 Hedgehogs conservation group to plant 80m of new hedges to support hedgehogs on Dover House Estate.	Housing
Bat transects carried out on Wandsworth Common in 2024 and 2025 recorded 8 species, 4 of which had not been recorded on the common before. Findings from the survey informed habitat improvement	Enable Parks

Action Taken	Lead
including scrub planting, marginal planting in lakes and woodland glade creation.	
Newt surveys carried out on Tooting Commons in 2024 and 2025 recorded two species. Findings from the survey informed habitat improvements including willow removal to aid water retention and dead hedging.	Enable Parks
Bat habitat guidance for tree contractors produced in 2024, detailing habitat features for teams to install during works to increase ecological value of standing deadwood.	Enable Parks and Tree Team
Wildflower verges installed and maintained along Girdwood Road.	Enable Parks
Two Mini forests planted in the Miyawaki style on Wandsworth Common	Enable Parks and Tree Team
Community biodiversity planting projects supported through Wandsworth Big Green Week and Climate Action Microgrants	Climate Change and Sustainability Team
As part of the Business Low Emission Neighbourhood (BLEN) the air quality officer for Nine Elms coordinated a project which provided funding from the Mayor's Air Quality Fund to St George's Church of England Primary School to install green screening.	Air Quality Team
Landscape and play space improvement project at Downshire Field with a focus on introducing wildflower meadows to boost pollinator populations, woodland edge planting to create transitional habitats for birds and small mammals, and natural play features using timber that doubles as habitat for insects and fungi. Additional steps include step-free paths with green buffers acting as wildlife corridors, biodiversity-focused planting schemes offering nectar	Alton Renewal Team

Action Taken	Lead
<p>and shelter, and leaving deadwood and habitat piles to support decomposers and soil organisms. Together, these initiatives enhance ecological value, promote pollinators, and strengthen climate resilience while respecting the estate's heritage character.</p>	
<p>10 new family homes with access to either a private garden or balcony as well as a secure communal garden and play area. Swift and bat boxes built into the façade of the building.</p>	Alton Renewal Team
<p>The design of a 14-unit development which integrates biodiversity and environmental enhancements within a compact urban site. The landscaped setting retains mature trees and introduces new planting schemes that include native and pollinator-friendly species to support local wildlife. Communal gardens and private outdoor spaces feature permeable surfaces to aid rainwater infiltration and reduce runoff, while green buffers and soft landscaping create ecological corridors. The scheme maximises views of surrounding green spaces and uses natural play areas within communal zones, encouraging interaction with nature. Habitat features such as log piles and insect-friendly planting complement the existing Roehampton ecology, and the overall approach respects the site's proximity to Richmond Park and Roehampton Recreation Ground. These measures, combined with sustainable design principles and inclusive outdoor spaces, enhance biodiversity, promote resilience to climate change, and provide a healthier environment for residents and the wider community.</p>	Alton Renewal Team
<p>Refurbishment of Alton Activity Centre play space with a focus on biodiversity measures including climate-resilient planting with drought-tolerant and</p>	Alton Renewal Team

Action Taken	Lead
<p>native species, pollinator-friendly plants to attract bees and butterflies, permeable surfaces to support rainwater infiltration, and sensory gardens featuring aromatic and textured vegetation. Habitat creation is encouraged through bug hotels and log piles, alongside new tree planting to provide shade and improve carbon capture.</p>	
<p><i>Planning/Biodiversity Net Gain</i></p>	
<p>Employment of Biodiversity Planning Officer (October 2021)</p>	<p>Enable Parks</p>
<p>Implementation of mandatory BNG</p>	<p>Planning Team, Enable Parks and Biodiversity Team</p>
<p>Production of Supplementary Planning Document for Biodiversity</p>	<p>Local Plan Team and Biodiversity Team</p>
<p><i>Public engagement and inclusion</i></p>	
<p>First <i>Wandsworth in Bloom</i> competition held in June 2025.</p>	<p>Parks Operations Team</p>
<p>In 2024, Enable's Citizen Science programme delivered over 25 training sessions, supporting over 250 individuals in monitoring fauna and flora.</p>	<p>Enable Parks</p>
<p>Regular volunteer conservation sessions led by Enable since 2022, helping to manage and expand wildlife habitats on Wandsworth and Tooting Commons with 195 registered volunteers. 1500 volunteer hours since 2022.</p>	<p>Enable Parks</p>

Action Taken	Lead
Regular Citizen Science volunteer sessions led by Enable since 2023 with 125 registered citizen science volunteers. 140 hours for bat transects.	Enable Parks
Over 800 residents participating in the On Your Street survey, sharing habitat and species information.	Enable Parks
Heavy horse grassland management community engagement (2025): 7 nurseries, 12 primary schools and 6 secondary schools attending the sessions; 2 schools integrating the heavy horses management into their curriculum; 41 people volunteering and providing a total of 103 volunteer hours.	Enable Parks
Supporting local community groups to deliver Bioblitz events.	Enable Parks
Biodiversity Action Plan public engagement (August to September 2025) including online survey and in person workshops.	Biodiversity Team
Parklet Opportunity Mapping	Climate Change and Sustainability Team
Biodiversity themed Wandsworth Sustainability Network event for residents at Doddington & Rollo Community Centre & Roof Garden	Climate Change and Sustainability Team
Our Beautiful Neighbourhood: Collaborative schools art project for London Borough of Culture 2025, in partnership with RCA. Schools take part in workshops looking at local biodiversity before creating collages which will be exhibited on banners across the borough in Spring 2026	Arts and Culture Service

Action Taken	Lead
<p>A set of meanwhile-use green infrastructure projects was installed around derelict buildings on the Alton Estate, including three reclaimed-timber seater-planters, six raised planters made from salvaged steel bath tubs on Danebury Avenue, and a small living wall constructed from a wooden trellis and repurposed tin cans; all were supported by strong community involvement, with Roehampton Community Shed building and preparing the structures, the Alton Greened group leading community planting and ongoing maintenance, and local children taking part in a dedicated living-wall planting workshop.</p>	<p>Alton Renewal Team</p>
<p>Partnerships</p>	
<p>London Borough's Biodiversity Forum – chaired by Wandsworth since 2024</p>	<p>Enable Parks</p>
<p>River Wandle Catchment Management Partnership (2013 to date)</p>	<p>Enable Park</p>
<p>Beverley Brook Catchment Partnership (2016 to date)</p>	<p>Enable Parks</p>
<p>SLA holder with GiGL since 2013</p>	<p>Enable Parks</p>
<p>London Rewilding Action Group member representing all boroughs 2024-2025</p>	<p>Enable Parks</p>
<p>London Invasive Species Initiative steering group (2010 to 2024)</p>	<p>Enable Parks</p>
<p>London SINC review scrutiny panel representing all boroughs 2024-25</p>	<p>Enable Parks</p>

3.0 Biodiversity Net Gain

The Council's Biodiversity Team is consulted on all planning applications where Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) applies, working closely with Planning Case Officers and the Planning Validation Team to assess, verify and approve BNG proposals. Wandsworth also uses Verna's Mycelia, a cloud-based platform that manages BNG data and workflows, providing automated metric recreation, error-checking, monitoring tools and centralised reporting. This enables the borough to maintain a robust, consistent and transparent record of all BNG submissions and long-term habitat delivery.

Additional guidance for developers has been prepared jointly with the Local Plan Team and Wandsworth's Biodiversity Team and is available on the Council's website, as well as within the Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document adopted in December 2025.

As of December 2025, 47 planning applications had been required to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain, with 5 Biodiversity Gain Plans approved to date. Table 3 summarises the types and extent of habitats secured through approved Biodiversity Gain Plans.

Building on this early implementation phase, a key priority for the next reporting period is to establish a robust and proportionate monitoring framework to track the long-term delivery of BNG commitments secured for 30 years. This forms part of a wider programme to strengthen data management, compliance oversight and cross-departmental processes, ensuring that BNG becomes an embedded and consistently monitored component of development across Wandsworth.

Table 3: Approved BNG habitats 2024-2026.

Area Habitats	Size (Hectares)	Target Condition	Enhanced/ Create	Secured for 30 years	Onsite/ Offsite
Vegetated garden	0.07	N/A	Create	N	Onsite
Vegetated garden	0.088	N/A	Create	Y	Onsite
Urban tree	1.4381	Moderate	Create	Y	Onsite
Urban tree	0.012	Poor	Create	Y	Onsite
Modified grassland	0.13	Poor	Create	Y	Onsite

Area Habitats	Size (Hectares)	Target Condition	Enhanced/ Create	Secured for 30 years	Onsite/ Offsite
Other neutral grassland	1.23	Moderate	Enhanced	Y	Onsite
Other neutral grassland	0.071	Moderate	Create	Y	Onsite
Introduced shrub	0.46	N/A	Create	Y	Onsite
Biodiverse green roof	0.055	Moderate	Create	Y	Onsite
Ground based green wall	0.0024	Poor	Create	Y	Onsite
Mixed scrub	0.021	Moderate	Create	Y	Onsite
Lowland meadow	0.033	Good	Enhanced	Y	Off-site
Linear Habitats	Length (km)	Target Condition	Enhanced/ Create	Secured for 30 years	Onsite/ Offsite
Species-rich native hedgerow	0.025	Poor	Create	Y	Onsite
Native hedgerow	0.039	Moderate	Create	Y	Onsite
Ditch	0.12	Poor	Create	Y	Onsite

4.0 Strategic Considerations

4.1 Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Wandsworth Council has been central to collaborations with the Greater London Authority (GLA) who are developing the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Greater London. Wandsworth Council, in collaboration with its contractor Enable, has contributed hours of staff time, provided all official responses to consultations within the required timeframes and sent representatives to focus group workshops.

One of the key actions within the new Biodiversity Action Plan is to make full use of the LNRS, once published, to identify priority areas for improving habitat connectivity across the borough. These improvements will be delivered collaboratively, working in partnership with key landowners and neighbouring boroughs to strengthen ecological networks.

4.2 Protected site strategies

All of the borough's publicly owned Nature Conservation Sites are supported by up-to-date Management Plans in which biodiversity enhancement is a primary focus. These plans set out a rolling ten-year programme of conservation actions, delivered by the Council's parks, trees and biodiversity teams, together with their grounds maintenance, tree and nature conservation contractors and supported by local volunteers.

In line with the London Plan requirement for all authorities to review their Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) at intervals of no more than ten years, Wandsworth will undertake a full resurvey of its SINC network as part of the new Biodiversity Action Plan. This process will update baseline habitat data across the entire borough and ensure that management and policy decisions are informed by the most current ecological evidence.

4.3 Protected species strategies

Pending publication of the LNRS, the Council's primary framework for species conservation remains the Biodiversity Strategy. A core action within the new Biodiversity Action Plan is the development of individual Species Action Plans for all priority species, ensuring targeted, evidence-based measures can be implemented as soon as the LNRS becomes available.

5.0 Case Studies

Case Study 1: Heavy Horse Traditional Grassland Management



Introduction

Since 2022, Wandsworth Council has used traditional heavy horse meadow management across selected parks and open spaces to enhance biodiversity and support delivery of the statutory Biodiversity Duty. This approach has improved meadow habitat quality while reducing environmental impacts and increasing community engagement.

Background

Much of the borough's open space consists of amenity grassland, which typically supports very low plant diversity. In contrast, grassland meadows managed through late cutting and removal of arisings can support diverse wildflower communities when soil nutrients and

compaction are kept low.

Several sites are managed as meadows using tractors to cut-and-collect in late summer. From 2022 onwards, this management was refined through the introduction of heavy horses at Wandsworth Park and King George's Park expanding to Wandsworth Common, Tooting Bec Common and Morden Cemetery in 2025.

Analysis

Monitoring data collected between 2022 and 2025 demonstrates that meadow areas managed using cut-and-collect methods support substantially higher plant species richness than amenity grassland. At Wandsworth Park, amenity grassland supported only 3 plant species, whereas adjacent meadow areas consistently supported between 21 and 29 species over multiple survey years.

At King George's Park, species richness has increased steadily since monitoring began, reaching a peak of 42 species recorded in July 2025. These figures have

continued to improve despite seasonal variation, indicating resilient meadow communities.

The use of heavy horses has contributed to these outcomes by reducing soil compaction compared with mechanical mowing, protecting soil structure and below-ground biodiversity. Allowing vegetation to flower and set seed before cutting, followed by removal of arisings, has reduced nutrient levels over time and created favourable conditions for wildflowers to establish. Variability in the cut by horse-drawn equipment has also increased structural diversity within meadow swards, benefiting invertebrates and other fauna.

Outcomes

Heavy horse meadow management has proven to be an effective, practical solution for enhancing biodiversity within urban green spaces. The approach integrates well into existing parks management while delivering increased ecological benefits, including rising plant species richness and improved habitat condition.

Beyond biodiversity gains, the project has delivered wider environmental and social benefits. The method is low-carbon and low-noise, supporting climate and wellbeing objectives. Community involvement has been a core element of delivery, with volunteers contributing to hay raking, bale collection and wildflower seeding, with schools and community groups engaging directly with the work. Public interpretation, on-site engagement and regional media coverage have increased awareness of biodiversity-friendly land management and strengthened local stewardship of green spaces.

This project demonstrates how traditional land management techniques can be successfully adapted to a modern urban context to meet statutory biodiversity duties. Continued application of heavy horse meadow management will support long-term habitat enhancement and contribute to nature recovery across Wandsworth's parks and open spaces.

Case Study 2: Citizen Science Bat Transects

Introduction

From 2024, Wandsworth Council and Enable established a formal bat monitoring programme on Wandsworth Common to improve understanding of bat activity and inform habitat management. The project supports delivery of the Biodiversity Duty by strengthening the local evidence base, monitoring species presence and guiding targeted habitat enhancements.

Background

Bats are protected species and key indicators of habitat quality, relying on a connected network of woodland, grassland and water features for foraging and roosting. Prior to 2024, bat records for Wandsworth Common were limited, with only four species recorded between 2015 and 2021 and many records lacking detail. This restricted the ability to assess habitat use or long-term trends.

To address this gap, a volunteer-led bat transect programme was developed in line with Bat Conservation Trust good practice guidelines. The intention was to establish monitoring that could be directly linked to management decisions.

Analysis

Bat transect surveys were carried out between April and September in 2024 and 2025 along two fixed routes across Wandsworth Common. Volunteers walked the transects at night in suitable weather conditions using bat detectors, recording bat passes at set points.

The surveys recorded a greater diversity of species than previously documented, including common and soprano pipistrelle, noctule, Leisler's bat and newly recorded species such as Nathusius' pipistrelle, Daubenton's bat and serotine. The presence of several migratory and higher-conservation-concern species confirms the importance of the Common's mosaic of woodland, grassland and aquatic habitats. Results also showed strong bat activity along habitat edges, woodland glades, eco grass areas and water features.

Across the 2024 and 2025 seasons, 28 volunteers contributed over 140 hours, completing 13 full transect surveys and generating a baseline dataset for future comparison.

Outcomes

The bat transect programme has established an evidence base to guide habitat management on Wandsworth Common. Survey findings have directly informed immediate practical actions, including enhancements to expansion of eco grass areas in 2024 and 2025, retention of standing deadwood and creation of loggeries.



Findings from the bat surveys also informed larger-scale habitat interventions. These included the creation of new woodland glades through the targeted reduction of non-native tree species, opening the canopy to improve foraging conditions and enabling roost features to be cut into retained tree stems. Resulting arisings were reused by volunteers to construct dead hedges, providing additional habitat for invertebrates. Bat boxes were installed to further increase the availability of roosting opportunities. Aquatic habitats were also enhanced through the installation of planted coir rolls to increase marginal vegetation, improving water quality and supporting aquatic invertebrates that form a key food source for bats.

The project has also delivered significant social value by developing volunteer skills and increasing community involvement in biodiversity. Future plans include refining habitat management based on emerging data and expanding bat monitoring to additional sites across the borough. The project demonstrates how structured ecological monitoring can be embedded within routine parks management to enhance biodiversity, inform evidence-led decision-making and support long-term species. To recognise this work, Parks for London also selected the project to feature as a case study for the 'Supporting Nature' section of the Good Parks for London 2024 report, recognising Wandsworth's biodiversity efforts.

Case Study 3: Habitat Management Volunteering



Introduction

Since 2022, Enable has led habitat management volunteering programme across Wandsworth Common and Tooting Commons, supporting delivery of the Council's Biodiversity Duty by enhancing habitats, improving site condition and strengthening community involvement in nature recovery.

Background

Both commons contain diverse habitats requiring regular, skilled management to maintain ecological value, including grasslands, woodland edges, scrub, ponds and deadwood features. Enable developed a volunteering programme to increase capacity for essential

conservation tasks and support long-term habitat enhancement across these high-value Local Wildlife Sites.

Analysis

Since 2022, 195 registered volunteers have delivered over 1,500 volunteer hours, undertaking practical work that directly improves habitat quality. Activities include collecting hay from heavy-horse cut-and-collect meadow management, bramble management and woodland path creation to protect sensitive ground flora. Volunteers have also constructed dead hedges, installed stag beetle loggeries, assisted with pond maintenance, and carried out hedgerow and scrub planting, alongside wildflower seeding to diversify grassland structure. These interventions benefit a wide range of species, including invertebrates, birds, bats, and amphibians, which rely on improved water quality, marginal vegetation and structurally diverse terrestrial habitat.



Outcomes

Volunteer-led habitat management has measurably improved the ecological condition and connectivity of habitats across both commons. The programme increases structural diversity, enhances breeding and foraging opportunities, and supports species of conservation concern while strengthening community understanding and ownership of local green spaces. The initiative now forms a core mechanism through which Enable and the Council deliver sustained, evidence-based habitat enhancement across the borough.

6.0 Impacts of our Policies and Actions

Over the 2021–2026 reporting period, Wandsworth Council has delivered measurable improvements to local biodiversity through coordinated habitat creation, strengthened site management and enhanced ecological monitoring. By 2025, 74% of Local Wildlife Sites were in positive management, and twelve parks achieved Green Flag status, reflecting improved ecological quality.



Expanded monitoring has strengthened the evidence base that informs management decisions. Structured initiatives such as the bat transect programme have directly shaped actions such as woodland glade creation, enhancement of ecogress areas and improvements to marginal aquatic habitats. These interventions have increased habitat complexity and foraging opportunities across key sites.

The Council has also enhanced ecological connectivity at landscape scale. The planting of over 2,600 street trees, installation of new SuDS features, creation of wildflower corridors and delivery of parklet and verge improvements have strengthened green networks across the borough. The planning process has also played an important role, with ecological enhancements such as green roofs, biodiverse planting and nesting provision secured through planning conditions, alongside the early implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain.



Community involvement has grown substantially, supporting both stewardship and monitoring capacity. Conservation volunteering, citizen science programmes, school participation and local competitions have engaged residents in ecological recovery efforts and contributed well over a thousand volunteer hours since 2022. These activities help embed biodiversity awareness across the borough and expand the Council's ability to collect high quality local ecological data.

Finally, biodiversity has become more firmly integrated into Council functions and governance. New strategies, updated planning policy, in housing of ecological expertise and strong cross departmental partnerships have made biodiversity a consistent consideration in decision-making. Collaboration with boroughwide and Londonwide partners has also further supported delivery.

Collectively, these outcomes demonstrate sustained progress in conserving and enhancing biodiversity, supported by stronger evidence, improved practice and an increasingly engaged local community.

7.0 Challenges

Wandsworth continues to face several ongoing challenges that affect its ability to protect and enhance biodiversity. These pressures reflect both borough-specific conditions – particularly the constraints of delivering nature recovery within a densely built-up urban area – and wider environmental trends:

- **Ensuring sufficient long-term resourcing for habitat management and species monitoring**, including the staffing, expertise and funding needed to maintain and track biodiversity improvements over extended timeframes. This is particularly critical as many actions such as 30-year Biodiversity Net Gain commitments require long-term oversight, placing sustained pressure on teams and budgets.
- **Ensuring effective enforcement of biodiversity related legal requirements**, including compliance with planning conditions, protected species legislation, and controls on activities such as front garden-to-driveway conversions. Limited capacity for proactive enforcement makes it challenging to prevent or remedy ecological harm, and demand for monitoring continues to grow.
- **Intensifying pressure on land use**, particularly the need to accommodate new housing within an already densely developed borough, which limits opportunities for habitat creation and enhancement.
- **The growing impacts of climate change**, which influence habitat condition, species distribution and the long-term resilience of local ecosystems.
- **Balancing diverse community uses within public green spaces**, including heavy recreational use by dog walkers, sports groups and residents, which can place additional strain on ecologically sensitive areas.
- **Increasing public desire to connect with nature**, which is positive but can inadvertently put pressure on sensitive habitats as visitor numbers rise.
- **Managing invasive non-native species**, a challenge expected to intensify as the climate warms, requiring more coordinated, long-term management approaches.

Together, these challenges highlight the need for a strategic, coordinated and community centred approach to biodiversity recovery across the borough –

precisely the direction set out in the new BAP. Ensuring that improvements are resilient, adequately resourced and effectively coordinated across departments, partners and communities remains a central challenge for the next reporting period.

8.0 Future Actions

Over the next five years, Wandsworth will deliver an ambitious, evidence-based and community-centred programme of biodiversity enhancement, rooted in fairness, community involvement and robust ecological data. Through habitat creation, sustainable land management, updated ecological evidence, improved guidance for developers and residents, and strengthened partnerships, the borough aims to achieve meaningful, measurable gains for wildlife while fostering a more nature-connected community.

This programme is structured around three core themes – creating fairer access to nature, responding compassionately to community needs, and delivering effective, measurable biodiversity outcomes – which together guide a comprehensive suite of actions designed to restore habitats, support priority species and embed biodiversity considerations across all areas of local decision-making.

Creating Fairer Access to Nature for All

Wandsworth is committed to ensuring that residents across all neighbourhoods can benefit from healthy, resilient natural spaces. Over the next five years, the Council will:

- Improve access to nature close to where residents live, including targeted habitat creation and enhancement on Housing land, private developments and along street corridors.
- Provide clear, accessible information about local species, habitats and biodiversity-related responsibilities through annual biodiversity reporting, public communications and an online biodiversity hub. These resources will help residents understand actions being taken and how they can contribute.
- Enable meaningful community participation through offering volunteering opportunities in habitat management and citizen science.

Through these initiatives, the Council aims to give every resident the knowledge and opportunities needed to connect with nature and support ecological recovery.

Responding to Community Needs Through a Compassionate Approach

The strategy recognises that biodiversity improvements can strengthen community wellbeing, climate resilience and neighbourhood pride. Key actions for 2026–2031 include:

- Delivering nature-based solutions, including wetland creation at Tooting Commons, wildflower verge expansion, and safeguarding habitats along transport corridors through work with statutory partners.
- Supporting and celebrating community action, such as through Wandsworth in Bloom awards and a new Allotments Handbook empowering tenants to garden for priority species.
- Building local green skills and careers by offering staff training, work-shadowing placements, “lunch & learn” sessions, and collaboration with schools and higher education institutions on biodiversity monitoring and applied learning.
- Improving our understanding of species sensitivities, including mapping Dark Corridors to support bat movement and guide lighting decisions that minimise ecological harm.

This theme emphasises working with communities and ensuring that biodiversity enhancement aligns with local needs and values.

Delivering Effective, Evidence-Based Biodiversity Outcomes

A central pillar of the five-year programme is ensuring that all actions are grounded in robust ecological evidence and deliver measurable improvements for habitats and species. The Council will:

- Maximise biodiversity benefits of green infrastructure, including SuDS, parklets, pocket parks and community gardens, ensuring these spaces provide priority habitats and support priority species.
- Strengthen habitat quality across parks, commons and Local Wildlife Sites, with targeted interventions such as meadow enhancement, pond improvements, woodland management trials, and creation of butterfly banks.
- Continue to embed biodiversity into planning and development, prioritising onsite Biodiversity Net Gain and producing guidance on urban greening, lighting design for nocturnal species and biodiversity-friendly landscaping.
- Update and expand borough-wide ecological data, including resurveying SINC sites, surveying potential new SINC sites, evaluating woodland and other habitats, and using this evidence to inform future management and project targeting.

- Develop better tools to measure impact, including improved monitoring frameworks and annual reviews to track progress for priority habitats and species.

This evidence-driven approach will ensure that Wandsworth's biodiversity gains are real, targeted and long-lasting.

Strengthening Collaboration and Partnerships

Across all themes, the strategy recognises the importance of partnership working. Over the next five years the Council will:

- Build stronger relationships with GiGL, landowners, statutory bodies, catchment partnerships and neighbouring boroughs to deliver landscape-scale connectivity.
- Establish a Wandsworth Nature Recovery Forum to enhance information sharing and create new opportunities for multi-partner biodiversity action.
- These networks will enable more cohesive ecological management and accelerate borough-wide habitat recovery.