

BRENT BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

1.0 Introduction

Welcome to the Brent Biodiversity Action Plan.

The Brent Biodiversity Action Plan serves two inter-related purposes as the Local Biodiversity Action Plan for the geographic area of the London Borough of Brent; and as the Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan for Brent Council.

Local Biodiversity Action Plans form a national series with each Plan usually covering one geographic area. They link with regional and with the National Biodiversity Action Plan; and with individual Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) and Species Action Plans (SAPs). The Brent Biodiversity Action Plan was first approved and published by Brent Council in 2001. Though Biodiversity Action Plans take a long-term outlook, often fifty years or more, Plans are continually monitored and should be formally reviewed at periodic intervals. This review and the revised Plan will highlight implementation priorities during the years from 2007.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 introduced the 'Biodiversity Duty':

"Every public authority 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.'

Biodiversity is a core component of sustainable development; and of economic, social and environmental sustainability. The Biodiversity Duty aims to raise the profile and visibility of biodiversity, to clarify existing commitments, and to make biodiversity a natural and integral part of policy and decision making.

The Brent Biodiversity Action Plan is concerned not just with biodiversity in greens spaces, but with biodiversity throughout the environment including in urban areas and the built environment.

Biodiversity contributes to improved environmental quality. This is not limited to species and habitats only, but includes improved air quality both locally and globally, noise reduction, green space, walking routes for local journeys, landscaping, sustainable urban drainage systems and reduction in flood risks; and direct and indirect economic benefits. Trees and other vegetation are net absorbers of carbon during their lifetime which has the effect of reducing atmospheric carbon; and of potentially providing a carbon-neutral source of energy to substitute for the combustion of fossil fuels. Trees can also reduce winter heat loss around buildings; and provide summer shading for both buildings and people. The Council has adopted an Environmental Policy, and a Carbon Management Strategy and Implementation Plan for 2006-2011 that includes a target to cut CO₂ emissions; and includes a tree planting project (CMP36).

2.0 Review of the BAP since 2001

Particular strengths during this period were the establishment of the BAP; improved management of Brent's parks for biodiversity and the environment; increases in hay meadow, woodland, hedgerow and pond habitats at Fryent Country Park; and of marshland conservation at the Brent Reservoir and where a Local Nature Reserve was Declared. The concrete culverts were removed from a section of the River Brent at St. Raphael's and Tokyngton and meanders were restored. Other successes were at Roe Green Walled Garden and Mapesbury Dell. The Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation system was further integrated into Brent and London-wide Planning systems; though there were both gains and losses of actual sites and site quality. Special Planning Guidance was introduced which encouraged, amongst other environmental outputs, biodiversity as part of some built developments. There were changes, some positive and some negative, in the populations of wildlife species in the Borough. There are no figures available for changes in the biodiversity of private gardens in the Borough, though a proportion of people do take steps to manage gardens in more environmentally-friendly ways. Practical action was greatly enhanced by community groups and volunteers in the Borough; and there are a number of wildlife monitoring programmes in the Borough.

Weaknesses included the difficulty of mainstreaming biodiversity into the management of all green spaces and open spaces including private gardens; and the built environment. It was difficult to show a net gain for biodiversity after having taken account of losses; and/or because data is insufficient.

Climate change is expected to result from increasing CO₂ and other greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. The extent of the resultant warming and other changes to the climate including both increased drought and the risk of flash floods, are difficult to predict but expected to lead to increasing average temperatures in the UK. Temperatures in Brent are expected to be warmer than that for rural areas due to the heat sink effect of London. Consequential changes to flora and fauna are expected including a general northwards shift in the distribution of species. In general there is likely to be a trend locally towards species adapted to warmer and drier climates than that of the 20th century.

3.0 Proposed Habitat Action Plans from the review

The Biodiversity Action Plan should be implemented by all partners within the Borough including those who hold or manage land; and by those who are living in, working in or visiting Brent. The focus of the new Brent Biodiversity Action Plan will include:

- To focus on implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan by improved action and integration across Brent Council and with partner organisations in the Borough.

- To introduce biodiversity into the decision making process of all appropriate functions as required by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
- To provide a Brent Biodiversity Action Plan for use throughout the Borough with links to more detailed plans, strategies and guidance as necessary. To save resources, we have not attempted to reproduce all the detail in the Brent BAP, but links to other geographic, and to Habitat and to Species Action Plans can be accessed via the Brent Council Biodiversity Action Plan web-pages or via direct searches via the internet (e.g. for 'UK BAP').
- The Planning system has an important role through the Development Policies and the Local Development Framework.
- To adapt and mitigate for the effects of climate change. Whilst this should be aimed at the conservation of biodiversity, the opportunity should arise to design for increased vegetation and tree cover to reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide, to provide shade, reduce winter cooling of nearby building exteriors, and potentially to provide a source of renewable biomass energy. The role of biodiversity in ameliorating both the extremes of dry summers and of extreme flood events in the urban area should be considered.

Habitat Action Plans and Species Actions Plans are listed below.

3.1 Gardens and Allotments

Private gardens occupy approximately a fifth of the Borough by land area. There are 1,108 allotment plots in the Borough managed by Brent Council Parks Service and a number of private allotments. These areas provide opportunities for relaxation and exercise; for growing food and providing seasonally changing vegetation; in reducing urban flooding and helping to store carbon dioxide; and for providing wildlife and biodiversity on the doorstep. There are opportunities for:

- Gardening in a wildlife-friendly and sustainable manner.
- There is a clear link between the diversity and populations of birds on small urban sites with the diversity and amount of vegetation.
- Encourage habitat diversity.
- Protecting and providing space for gardens.
- Creating small gardens or vegetation into the built environment of new developments, on rooftops, on vertical surfaces and between buildings.
- Species that can be attracted to gardens include many garden birds, Hedgehog, Holly Blue, Hedge Brown and Brimstone butterflies, bees, ladybirds, many invertebrates in the soil, frogs and newts, wildflowers of a small meadow, and fruit trees.

3.2 Streetscene

The street scene and other transport corridors such as footpaths and rail-sides cover a high percentage of the Borough area. They may appear harsh environments for wildlife, but there is much potential. Street trees are the most obvious link with nature in our streets, but there are also verges, roundabouts, the potential for lichen growth where the air is cleaner, and the links with front gardens, housing estates and parks. Rail-sides can provide important habitats and corridors for wildlife. Our targets are:

- The maintenance of grass verges and the trialling of more wildlife friendly wildflower and grass mixes, for example to provide for low-flowering plants adapted to frequent cutting.
- Plant, care for and manage street trees.

3.3 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

A wide range of habitats are associated with trees and in Brent these include broadleaved woodland, lowland mixed deciduous woodland, wet woodland, street trees, veteran trees, orchards, hedges and hedgerows, and scrub.

Trees and other vegetation are net absorbers of carbon during their lifetime which has the effect of reducing atmospheric carbon; and of potentially providing a carbon-neutral source of energy to substitute for the combustion of fossil fuels. Trees can also reduce winter heat loss around buildings; and provide summer shading for both buildings and people. Brent Council have adopted an Environmental Policy, and a Carbon Management Strategy and Implementation Plan for 2006-2011 that includes a target to cut CO₂ emissions; and includes a tree planting project.

Trees are important in the urban landscape. Trees help to reduce urban flooding by providing adherence for rainwater and helping to transpire water, provide for some humidity in dry urban streets, help to reduce urban dust, provide landscape, and sometimes timber and food, play a role in the carbon cycle; and provide habitat for many species of wildlife.

Brent Council manages trees in streets and parks; and through the Planning system has a role in encouraging an appropriate stock of trees in the Borough. Sometimes trees have grown in an inappropriate location, but in general the Biodiversity Action Plan will encourage a well treed Borough. The BAP targets include:

- Plant hundreds of trees between 2006-2010 as described in the Brent Council Corporate Strategy.
- Implement 'London's Forest: A Tree and Woodland Framework for London.'
- In gardens and parks encourage hedges. Trees and shrubs are important features for birds, providing nesting and roosting sites and food e.g. berries, seeds, invertebrates. Tall and dense cover, which resembles natural woodland with undergrowth, is especially useful. Evergreens provide shelter in winter.

- Continue the restoration of hedgerows and their diversity at Fryent Country Park.
- Plant, care for and manage trees in streets, parks, open spaces, cemeteries and other areas.
- Through the Planning system, encourage the retention and planting of trees in the urban area.
- Encourage the appropriate design, species selection and management of trees in Brent to achieve multiple purposes; including where appropriate, the sustainable use of trees for timber, energy and food.
- Extend the Soil Association Organic Standard to include woodlands at Fryent Country Park.
- Species targets include woodland birds, bats, Stag Beetles and other invertebrates and fungi of dead wood, Holly Blue, Speckled Wood and Brimstone butterflies, the English Bluebell, and fruit trees.

3.4 Grasslands

Whilst much of the Borough has grassland cover and provides benefits for recreation, urban flood reduction and soil conservation, only a proportion is actively managed for wildlife. There is therefore much potential in terms of the selection of grass and wildflower species; and the management of grasslands.

Of the wildlife grasslands in the Borough, the hay meadows at Fryent Country Park are amongst the best in London. In some areas of the Borough, for example around the Brent Reservoir, on Barn Hill and at Gladstone Park, there are remnants of more acid grasslands. Elsewhere there are rough grasslands and wildflower meadows in a few gardens.

- Conserve, manage and improve the diversity of the hay meadows at Fryent Country Park.
- Conserve, where possible, areas of acid grassland in the Borough.
- Encourage the creation and management of small meadows in gardens, parks and other areas.
- Create and maintain areas of rough grassland where practical.
- The maintenance of grass verges and the trialling of more wildlife friendly wildflower and grass mixes, for example to provide for low-flowering plants adapted to frequent cutting.

3.5 Wetland habitats

Wetland habitats include habitats that provide for freshwater wildlife: rivers and streams, ditches, the Brent Reservoir, Canal Feeder, Grand Union Canal, freshwater marsh and reed-bed habitats; and ponds. Each of these could be considered individually and as contributing to a richer wildlife in

Brent. Most habitats could also be considered in terms of length or area, water quality, wildlife, access, and specific projects.

- Work on single site and watercourse projects to improve the quality of water, the wildlife habitats and access to rivers and streams, ditches, the Brent Reservoir, Canal Feeder, Grand Union Canal, freshwater marsh and reed-bed habitats; and ponds.
- River Brent restoration project: Work towards achieving the restoration of the River Brent and tributaries through Brent, including continuation of the restoration work at St. Raphael's Open Space and Tokyngton Recreation Ground. See also the Development Policies 'Green Chains and the Blue Ribbon Network'.

3.6 Rail-side habitats

Though generally inaccessible to people, rail-sides can provide areas of scrub, rough grassland and other habitats in the Borough. They may also be important corridors for wildlife. Our targets are:

- Through the transport operators and the Planning system, to encourage the retention of wildlife areas on rail-sides where this is consistent with transportation needs.

3.7 Churchyards and Cemeteries

Churchyards and cemeteries provide a range of intricate habitats, often with various grassland and open woodland habitats. They provide areas for contemplation and walking. We include here Carpenders Park Cemetery which lies outside of the Borough.

- Encourage good practice for wildlife by the managers of churchyards and cemeteries.

3.8 Parks and green spaces

Parks and green spaces provide much of the area of publicly accessible land in the Borough and encompass much of the semi-natural habitats including grasslands, trees, woodland, hedgerows and ponds. And there is a wide range of wildlife to be seen. Brent Council Parks Service and other Council services have introduced systems to improve the quality of the parks and to improve wildlife habitats.

- Increase the habitats in parks and open spaces.
- Maintain and use a range of systems to improve the overall quality, sustainability and wildlife habitat of parks and green spaces: ISO 9000 (Quality Management System), ISO 14001 (Environmental Management System) including a pesticide reduction programme,

Green Flag Awards (and Green Pennants), CharterMark, London In Bloom; and the Soil Association Organic Standard.

3.9 School Grounds

A small proportion of school grounds include Sites of Nature Conservation Importance. The Borough manages the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre as a dedicated facility for environmental education. Other initiatives include the Wild in the Parks project with the RSPB, and Roe Green Walled Garden.

There is much potential for taking a 'whole school grounds' approach to environmental education, sustainability and improving biodiversity to increase the environmental quality of school grounds to achieve benefits for education and for the environment.

- Improve the provision of wildlife habitat in school grounds.
- Enhance the provision of environmental education by the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre.
- Encourage other initiatives for example Wild in the Parks, and Roe Green Walled Garden.

3.10 Buildings and the built environment

Brent is an urban area, yet buildings present opportunities for wildlife habitat creation for example in green roofs, vertical planting, gardens, communal open areas and in the spaces between buildings. The re-development of existing building stock provides opportunities to work towards environmental sustainability and an improved quality of life including provision for wildlife. The Planning system will act as the catalyst for such changes.

- Encourage the provision of wildlife habitat to be incorporated into the urban and built environment through the Planning system, and in particular the Local Development Frameworks.

3.11 Species Action Plans

Species conservation will primarily be achieved in Brent by the implementation of the Habitat Action Plans and targets described above. There are however some species that are of conservation concern, for example species with small or declining populations, species which are endemic (more or less confined) to the British Isles; and species of particular cultural, economic or visual interest. Though the UK Government maintains a list of BAP Priority Species, the local lists could also include species of local concern or interest; even perhaps species introduced to the UK that are grown locally on allotments. Within reason we would like to keep the list open and inclusive. We would also like to encourage local 'champions' for

individual species or closely related species; people who would volunteer to manage the Species Action Plan for 'their' species.

- Adopt and implement all the London-wide and UK Species Action Plans that are applicable, or potentially applicable, to the Brent area.
- Seek 'champions' for the above and other Species Action Plans to encourage the conservation of selected individual species.

4.0 Implementing the Biodiversity Duty

As the Local Biodiversity Action Plan for the geographic area of the London Borough of Brent, the Brent Biodiversity Action Plan should be implemented by a partnership of all those with an interest in Brent. Additionally, the Brent Biodiversity Action Plan serves as the Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan for Brent Council. The following table provides examples of how Brent Council could implement the Biodiversity Duty. The outcomes from these actions should feed through, directly or indirectly, to improvements in the natural environment in Brent and to achieving the targets of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

Timescales:

Detailed timescales are not provided below, but more detail may be available following consideration by individual service areas. Some of the actions are on-going from existing activities.

Financial implications:

No specific financial implications have been identified below, many of which will need to be achieved within existing budgets, while others may be enhanced by additional funding.

It will be for each function to determine financial implications of implementing the Biodiversity Duty; or of the Biodiversity Action Plan. It is expected that while some actions will result in additional costs, others will be broadly neutral or even result in savings. Biodiversity benefits tend to include a high proportion of externalities; and the financial implications would more accurately be represented where a cost benefit analysis is undertaken by economic, environmental and social accounting. For example, the provision of vegetation at a site, may help to reduce urban flooding at nearby or downstream sites. Similarly, there may be savings to the Council's carbon footprint. The Biodiversity Duty places a duty on the Council to consider the biodiversity aspects during the early stages of project management. As such by considering biodiversity earlier rather than later there may be significant cost savings. An example consider the creation of a green roof as an integral part of a new building, rather than retro-fitting later onto existing buildings.

Indicators:

Specific indicators are not listed below. The Biodiversity Action Plan will use a range of existing indicators where practicable. Information on areas of habitats and on the Sites of Nature Conservation Importance is available via

Parks, and Planning Services. Data on the presence; and populations of some individual species at selected sites is also available; and this data is usually researched for local, regional and national indices. Data on the effect of Action Plans on habitat and species conservation is provided for the national Biodiversity Action Reporting Systems (BARS). Data may also be available where actions are included in Corporate Plans (e.g. street trees); for carbon management; and for those Services that are certified to the ISO 14001 Quality Management System.

Area	Objectives	Suggested example actions
All	Integrate biodiversity considerations into all relevant service areas and functions; to ensure that biodiversity is protected and enhanced in line with current statutory obligations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate lead. • Community Plan; and Local Strategic Partnership. • Compliance with the Biodiversity Duty. • Procurement decisions.
	Raise awareness of biodiversity issues with staff, managers and Members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information for management. • Article in Insight. • 'Improving Brent'.
	Demonstrate commitment to biodiversity initiatives such as the Local Biodiversity Action Plan; Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate lead. • Planning to lead on site protection, and creation, through the Planning system. • Land holding services to lead on site enhancement and management.
	Demonstrate progress against biodiversity indicators and targets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt existing, or easy to measure indicators. • Integrate with the UK BAP and BARS reporting systems. • Continue monitoring of local biodiversity indicators; and of the national biodiversity indicators appropriate to the Brent area.
Community Plan	Planning for biodiversity in an important part of the work of Local Strategic Partnerships. Local Biodiversity Action Plans are among the elements local authorities should build upon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Plan; and Local Strategic Partnership.

	when contributing to Community Strategies (DETR circular 04/2001).	
Children and Families	Management of school grounds and buildings for biodiversity. Provision of environmental education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a 'whole school grounds' and 'outdoor classroom' approaches to maximising the educational and wildlife value of school grounds. • Provide environmental education as appropriate to the curriculum.
Housing and Community Care	Housing: Improving the biodiversity of and access to green space. Community Care: Improving the biodiversity and access to green space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence the provision of biodiversity into, and around, new housing. • Enhance and manage the provision of biodiversity and a quality environment in the open spaces between existing housing. • Enhance and manage the provision of biodiversity and access to quality green space at community care facilities.
Environment and Culture	Planning: Protection and enhancement of the natural and the built environment. Designated Sites systems. SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems). Sustainable development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and enhance the provision, and access to, Sites of Nature Conservation Importance. • Lead on the provision of biodiversity through the Planning system, UDP, Development Plan Document, and Local Development Framework. • Increase the provision of biodiversity into new build (e.g. on vertical surfaces and on roofs) and around buildings, using tools such as Special Planning Guidance, TP6 and

		SUDS.
	Transportation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate biodiversity into the incidental land associated with transportation schemes; and to enhance the transportation environment.
	StreetCare: Biodiversity improvements to road verges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage and enhance biodiversity in the street scene, for example, by the provision of street trees; providing low growing wild grass/flower seed mixes for verges.
	Parks: Management of parks, and allotments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for biodiversity in all appropriate activities and parks.
	Cemeteries and Mortuary: Management of cemeteries and churchyards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for biodiversity in all cemeteries and in churchyards as appropriate.
	Sports: Biodiversity issues in the provision and management of sports facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the provision of biodiversity at the edges of sports facilities; for example for landscaping, shade, and to enhance the beneficial role of soil micro-fauna in the management of sports pitches.
	Libraries, Arts & Heritage:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the role of the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre; and the biodiversity of the habitats at the Centre.
Policy and Regeneration	Neighbourhood Renewal: improve the quality and access to green space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce consideration of biodiversity into all land and building regeneration schemes.