



# KINGSTON BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

HOW KINGSTON CAN BECOME A  
LEADING BOROUGH IN  
CONSERVING OUR NATURAL  
HERITAGE

"How pleasant it would be each day to think, To-day I have done something that will tend to **render future generations more happy.**"

**Richard Jefferies**, Author and Naturalist,  
Lived in Tolworth 1877-1882



### Executive Summary

The Kingston Biodiversity Action Plan is part of the borough's response to some of the greatest challenges that face our residents and the wealth of biodiversity that can be found in the borough.

Kingston intends to be a borough that takes a leading role in protecting the environment, showcasing how a London borough can host an environment in which both humans and wildlife can thrive to mutual benefit, which can also contribute to the overall health of the planet. This plan is a toolkit, providing guidance on the protection, enhancement and promotion of the natural environment.

The Biodiversity Action Plan is material consideration in development management for determining planning applications. It underpins the borough's development plan and supports the delivery of sustainable development by informing decision to ensure that they protect and improve the natural environment, and enables us to deliver statutory requirements under the Environment Act (2021), including the securement of Biodiversity Net Gain, delivery of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy and our Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) duty to consider and enhance biodiversity.

This plan features a series of Habitat Action Plans and Flagship Species Action Plans, each with the intention of improving the conservation status of the focal species or habitat, and also the species that contribute to and are interrelated with that species survival or habitat's health. To ensure we are implementing the most effective conservation efforts we are engaging with the latest evidence and guidance as well as working with leading conservationists. Monitoring will be embedded at every possible opportunity to ensure we assess the impact of the conservation work that is being undertaken.

Despite being focused on a particular habitat type or species, each plan is based on underpinning strategic themes that inform the overall approach to enhancing the ecological processes and health of the borough. We are not viewing species or habitats in isolation, but acknowledge that they are components of the diverse tapestry that forms our landscape and building blocks of our wider ecosystems.

Working with local communities and inspiring residents to value the natural world is integral to achieving conservation and environmental goals, as this will catalyse a public will to bring about positive change. To achieve this we intend to embrace a rewilding narrative which can generate curiosity and engender hope amongst the wider community.

## 1 BACKGROUND

### 1.1 What is Biodiversity?

Biodiversity or biological diversity has the widely accepted definition of:

*“the variability among living organisms from all sources, including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species and ecosystems” (Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992).*

In simpler terms, biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth. It refers to all forms of life including plants, animals and the habitats in which they live. The more species coexisting in a single area, the higher the rate of biodiversity. Generally speaking, the higher this rate, the healthier the system.

Biodiversity represents the building blocks of the life support system that we all depend on, which have taken millennia to evolve. Having an intact species composition helps to create resilient and functioning natural systems (ecosystems) that bring a wide range of benefits that contribute to a healthy environment and positively impact our mental and physical wellbeing.

It is important to note that besides the benefits of biodiversity and nature to us as humans, all species have an intrinsic right to exist.

### 1.2 The Sixth Mass Extinction & Climate Emergency

We are now living in an extraordinary and unprecedented era, defined by climate and ecological collapse. The scientific community has stated we are currently living through the 6th Mass Extinction, where species extinction rates are comparable to the time when the asteroid hit the Earth 66 million years ago. Scientists believe that the current extinction rate could be 1,000 times greater than natural levels, and Britain is no exception to this. In fact, in the 2016 State of Nature Report the UK was rated 189th out of the 218 countries assessed for biodiversity ‘Intactness’ (Hayhow *et al.* 2016).

In 2018 the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a landmark report stating that we had twelve years to implement the urgent changes necessary to keep global temperatures from rising more than 1.5 degrees (IPCC 2018). This goal was reaffirmed at Conference of the Parties (COP) 26 in Glasgow in 2021, where nations adopted the Glasgow Climate Pact, aiming to turn the 2020s into a decade of climate action and support. Any further increases are predicted to bring significantly worse environmental challenges including devastating flooding and drought events. To compound these findings, the IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) report in 2019 stated that over one million species were on the brink of extinction bringing untold ecological collapse, with predicted consequences that are equally as devastating as those posed by climate change.

The challenges described by these reports pose the greatest threats that the human race has ever faced. Unprecedented action is required at both global and local levels to enable human life and the lives of countless species to continue to exist and thrive. Both the National Government and Kingston Council have now declared a Climate Emergency, which will help to enable an appropriate response to these existential threats. Our response requires a holistic approach, to help combat both climate breakdown and ecological collapse in a joined up, strategic and effective manner.

### **1.3 Legislation and Strategy from the Global to the Local Level**

#### *1.3.1 Global Strategy*

In 1992 the United Kingdom joined over 150 countries as a founding signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at the Earth Summit Rio de Janeiro. Three main aims were identified:

- Conservation of biological diversity;
- Sustainable use of its components; and
- Fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources.

As a signatory of the convention, the UK is committed to developing a strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Over the last 28 years, there have been further significant developments at the international level which has now seen the adoption of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals which address the greatest socioeconomic and environmental challenges of our time. This global action has informed and guided governments at both national and local levels to develop and pursue environmentally conscious policy.

2021 saw the launch of the United Nations 'Decade of Ecosystem Restoration', which states that: "There has never been a more urgent need to revive damaged ecosystems than now." with the ambitious but much needed target of "preventing, halting and reversing the degradation of ecosystems worldwide". Although Kingston only covers a small portion of land in the context of such goals, this BAP still looks to embrace and uphold these targets and integrate these themes into the fabric of the suggested outputs and actions.

In November 2021, at COP 26 in Glasgow, the United Nations Environment Programme and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, launched the 'Nature based solutions (NbS) for climate change mitigation' strategy. The strategy promotes embracing NbS as a key tool to combat and increase our resilience to climate breakdown. This BAP promotes the adoption of NbS wherever possible. In December of 2022, The Convention of Biological Diversity met in Montreal at COP 15. A landmark agreement was secured which included the target of "Effective conservation and management of at least 30% of the world's lands", this plan is cognisant of this historic package of measures and looks to embody and deliver the relevant elements.

### 1.3.2 European Strategy

As part of the European Union's target of 'Halting the loss of biodiversity and degradation of ecosystems' by 2020, it developed legally binding instruments including the Birds and Habitat Directives and a network of sites across Europe entitled the Natura 2000 Network. Though this ambitious target has unfortunately not been achieved, many of the positive aims have been enshrined in UK law before the UK left the European Union. Brexit now presents a potentially positive opportunity for the UK to take forward the positive lessons learned from European Directives as we create new leading environmental laws that will inform the future direction of nature conservation in Britain.

### 1.3.3 National Strategy

There are a range of domestic policies and strategies which work to protect the natural world, for the purposes of this document we briefly summarise some of the relevant legislation and strategies that inform conservation practice. However, the table below is not an exhaustive list and further reading would be required to gain a full understanding of legislation and national strategies especially with its relationship to planning applications.

Legislation / Strategy	Brief Synopsis
Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended	This Act of Parliament gives protection to native species (especially those at threat), controls the release of non-native species and enhances the protection of Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Species that fall under this protection include all bats and nesting birds.
Circular 06/05: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within The Planning System (2005)	This provides administrative guidance on the application of the law relating to planning and nature conservation as it applies in England. It complements the national planning policy in the National Planning Policy Framework and the Planning Practice Guidance.
Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006)	Section 40 of the NERC Act (2006) states a duty to conserve biodiversity by which a "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". In this context, conserving biodiversity includes restoring or enhancing a population or habitat.
Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2012)	This is the UK legislation that transposed the European Habitats and Birds Directives.

<p>UK Biodiversity Action Plan UK Post - 2010 Biodiversity Framework (2018) – (“Biodiversity 2020”)</p>	<p>The UK BAP was the government's response to the 1992 CBD. The BAP identified priority species and habitats which were deemed to be most threatened. The UK Post 2010 Biodiversity Framework succeeded the UK BAP following a significant extension to the list of habitats and species and a revised approach to consider the management of the environment as a whole. Revised in 2018 the strategy ended 2020.</p>
<p>National Planning Policy Framework (2019)</p>	<p>The purpose of this framework is to achieve sustainable development. It has an overarching environmental objective to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural environment and improving biodiversity. It references the benefits of providing biodiversity net gains throughout the document. The framework has guidance notes including the incorporation of swift boxes and hedgehog highways in all new developments.</p>
<p>25 Year Environment Plan (2019)</p>	<p>Published in May 2019 by DEFRA, this 25 year plan set out a long term approach to combat the environmental challenges ahead. The overarching ambition is to <i>'leave our environment in a better state than we found it'</i>. It has the aspiration for plants and wildlife to thrive in the UK, with a target of 75% restoration of habitats, mass creation of wildlife rich areas outside the protected site network while also taking action to recover threatened iconic species where possible.</p>
<p>Environment Act (2021)</p>	<p>The Environment Act (2021) aims to halt the decline of species by 2030, clean up our air and protect the health of our rivers, reform the way in which we deal with waste and tackle deforestation overseas. The Act includes legally binding targets on species abundance for 2030. Local Nature Recovery Strategies will be put in place to build a Nature Recovery Network across the country. A mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain for built development is introduced, and a healthier freshwater environment promoted.</p>

### Additional guidance

<p>Natural England: Nature Network Handbook (2020)</p>	<p>In line with the 25 Year Plan and furthering the work of the 'Making Space for Nature Report' (Lawton et al, 2010) Natural England produced a handbook for practitioners, including local authorities, outlining 10 principles of nature network design, informing how to create resilient nature networks, adopting a landscape level approach. These principles were considered in the creation of the Kingston BAP.</p>
<p>Building Better Building Beautiful - Living with Beauty (2020)</p>	<p>This newly proposed planning framework has three main themes; 1. Ask for Beauty 2. Refuse Ugliness 3. Promote Stewardship. Stating that developments should be regenerative and enhance the environment and biodiversity.</p>

### 1.3.4 London Wide Strategies

There are a number of London wide strategies and plans which are applicable to a local Biodiversity Action Plan. As with 1.3.3 this is not an exhaustive list and further reading is suggested.

Plan / document	Brief synopsis
<p>Connecting with London's Nature: The Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy (2002)</p>	<p>This strategy described London's ecology and called for increased protection of London's Natural Areas establishing a network of SINCs. Plus encouraging a wide range of actions improving habitat quality in both public and private land and creating more semi - natural areas including in the urban realm with living roofs and green infrastructure. While encouraging better access to nature for all.</p>
<p>The London Plan (2021)</p>	<p>The London Plan is a strategic plan setting out an integrated social, economic and environmental framework for the future of London. Chapter 8 concerns green infrastructure (GI) and the natural environment. Policy G1 encourages boroughs to develop GI strategies, and suggests developments to incorporate appropriate elements of GI that are integrated into London's wider GI network.</p>

	The plan outlines the protection of the Green Belt (G2) and Metropolitan Open Land (G3). G4 encourages councils to conduct open space needs assessments. Policy G5 introduces an Urban Greening Factor (UGF) to evaluate the quantity and quality of urban greening provided by a development proposal. G6 states that all SINC's should be protected. G7 encourages the protection of veteran trees and tree planting strategies. Good growing (G8) and geodiversity (G9) are also addressed.
London Biodiversity Action Plan	In the 17 years of the London Biodiversity Partnerships operation until its cessation in 2011, it created the London Biodiversity Action Plan which identified 214 priority species and habitats. Though the partnership is no longer in existence Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL) holds all the species and habitat action plans all of which are relevant today.
All London Green Grid (2012)	This is a green infrastructure strategy for London, including features such as street trees and green roofs. The strategy has multiple aims including increasing access to greenspace, conserving the natural environment and adapting the city to the impacts of climate change.
London Environment Strategy (2018)	This document outlines London's strategy to enhance the natural environment. For the first time there was an integrated approach looking at areas including air quality to waste. There is a strong theme through the document in utilising green infrastructure to increase London's resilience to climate change.

#### Other guidance

Urban Greening for Biodiversity Net Gain: A Design Guide (London Wildlife Trust & Mayor of London, 2021)	The London Plan (G5) requires new developments to include a green space factor (GSF) and deliver net gains for biodiversity. This guide shows how urban green infrastructure can be designed while helping to create engaging, healthy and resilient places for people too.
Greater London National Park City (2019)	In the Spring of 2019 London was declared the world's first National Park City, in celebration of the capital's wealth of



	<p>biodiversity and greenspaces and the ongoing conservation efforts. This introduced a new narrative for all who live in and work in London, enabling them to reimagine what it is to live in a national park city and how this can impact daily life.</p>
--	---

1.3.5 Kingston Strategy

Though Kingston did not have a Biodiversity Action Plan until now, it does have a number of policy and strategy documents which work to protect the local natural and green environment.

Policy / Strategy	Brief Synopsis
Kingston Core Strategy and draft Local Plan	<p>Kingston’s Local Plan is currently being drafted, however, the Kingston Core Strategy (2012) is still active in which CS 3 - states that the <i>‘Council will protect and improve Kingston’s valued natural and green environment’</i> with 6 underpinning aims which work to this effect.</p> <p>DM 6 in the strategy states: <i>‘Ensure new developments protect and promote biodiversity as part of sustainable design, through the inclusion of sustainable drainage, tree planting, soft landscaping, habitat enhancement and/or improvement, green roofs and new or improved semi natural habitats, where appropriate.’</i></p> <p>Policy KN1 of the Draft Local Plan will commit the Council to work positively with relevant partners to implement Kingston’s Biodiversity Action Plan. For relevant developments, the policy will require applicants to explain any impact on priority species and habitats and demonstrate how their proposal will contribute to the measures set out in the local BAP.</p> <p>Policy KN3 of the Draft Local Plan specifically addresses biodiversity and aims to maximise the opportunities for delivering a net gain in biodiversity in and around developments. The policy will require developments to contribute to the conservation of priority species and</p>

	habitats, limit as far as possible any negative impacts and provide an overall positive net gain for biodiversity (including a minimum requirement of 30% Biodiversity Net Gain). Applicants will be encouraged to submit any ecological records made as part of the planning application to the Local Ecological Centre in line with the latest CIEEM guidance.
Kingston Habitat Management Plans (2014)	Working with a group of local individuals facilitated by the Kingston Biodiversity Network a series of local Habitat Management Plans were submitted for adoption into the Kingston Green Spaces Strategy - these included Grasslands, Woodlands & Standing Open Water.
Kingston Good Practice Guide - Biodiversity (2015)	This document was intended to be an interim for the Biodiversity Action Plan and was designed in part to support planners in ensuring they follow environmental legislation and make biodiversity conscious decisions in line with good practice.
Kingston Green Spaces Strategy (2015 - 2021)	This strategy has community engagement at its heart looking to empower local people. It adopted a 'Destination Park' focus, in which each park would fulfil a particular service/ function while also aiming to protect and enhance our greenspace.

Supporting documents:

Nature Conservation in Kingston Upon Thames. Ecology Handbook 18 - London Ecology Unit (1992)	Although dated, this is one of the most comprehensive guides to Kingston's sites of nature conservation interest. Describing the history, habitat composition and species present on sites across the borough.
Kingston Open Space Assessment (2006)	The study has provided a qualitative and quantitative audit and analysis of the supply of, and demand for, open space provision in the Borough to inform the preparation of an Open Space Strategy.
Tolworth Green Space Infrastructure Audit (2020)	Led by The Community Brian as part of their SHEDx project, this audit accurately maps and analyses existing GI features across Tolworth, and highlights potential projects that will work to enhance local GI.

Review of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation - Kingston upon Thames (2021)	A boroughwide full review of existing and proposed Site of Importance for Nature Conservation, (SINCs). This review recommended the addition of 6 new SINC sites for the borough taking us to 45 across the borough.

## 1.4 The Benefits of Biodiversity

### 1.4.1 Ecosystem Services

There is now a wealth of research which is elucidating the multifaceted benefits of living within a healthy environment. This can positively impact our health, well-being, economic and social development as well as increase our resilience towards the challenges faced by climate change. This is pertinent to both the urban and peri-urban landscape with the UN stating that two thirds of the global population will be living in cities by 2050. Kingston’s current population of 180,000 people is predicted to exceed 200,000 by 2030.

The UK National Ecosystem Assessment (2014), and, on an international level, the Economics of Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity (TEEB 2012) study have contributed to our understanding of the flow of ecosystem services and of the natural capital that underpins them. The Dasgupta Review on the economics of biodiversity acknowledges the collective failure to engage with nature in sustainable ways, both institutional and market failures (Dasgupta 2021). The absence of ecosystem services in balance sheets in combination with institutional failure has led to a degradation of many of the world’s ecosystems.

Whether we are cognizant of it or not, our everyday needs are inextricably linked to the ‘ecosystem services’ which the surrounding natural environment provides. Indeed, the World Health Organisation states: *“A city of well connected, attractive green spaces, that offer safe opportunities for urban residents for active mobility and sports as well as for stress recovery, recreation and social contact, is likely to be more resilient to extreme environmental events... Such a city is also likely to have healthier citizens, reducing demands on health services and contributing to a stronger economy” (WHO, 2016)*

The community value of greenspaces became ever more evident during the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020. During this difficult period our local parks and nature reserves became invaluable areas in which local people could carry out their daily exercise and connect with nature, providing much needed space which greatly benefitted the wellbeing of all who engaged (Let’s Go Outside and Learn 2020). Greenspaces are not only ‘nice to have’ but vital in supporting the health of the communities which surround them.

### 1.4.2 Nature-based Solutions to Climate Change

The power of nature and greenspaces to be harnessed as a tool to combat climate change is being increasingly accepted in both academic and political circles.

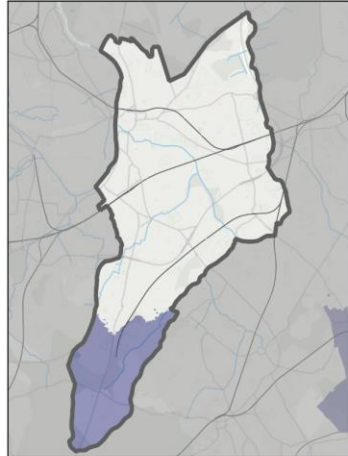
Having functional ecosystems within an urbanised/ suburban environment which support a wealth of biodiversity will help to increase our resilience to climate change and effectively help future-proof the borough for the challenges ahead. Benefits include reducing the risks of flooding, enhancing air and water quality, helping to regulate the temperature within our landscape, sequestering carbon, avoiding urban pollinator collapse and generally improving the aesthetic nature of the borough.

#### 1.4.3 Areas of nature deficiency in Kingston

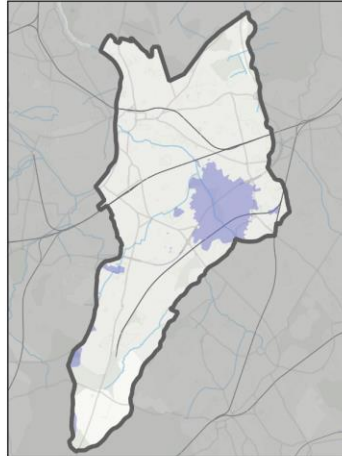
Kingston is perceived as a leafy green borough, and though this is true in many respects there are still numerous residents within the borough who do not have close access to an open green space. There are a number of categorizations which describe areas of deficiency to nature (AoD), as depicted in Map 1. It is clear to see that when adopting the various assessment criteria that significant areas of the borough are classified as deficient. Indeed Kingston scores poorly on a London scale when compared to other boroughs, being ranked in the bottom third of assessed boroughs. These deficiencies can result in serious implications for public health and community wellbeing within these areas. As such we should work where possible to increase the amount of available public open spaces which can provide opportunities for people to responsibly engage with the natural environment.

# Map 1 - Maps showing areas of deficiency in access to Public Open Spaces

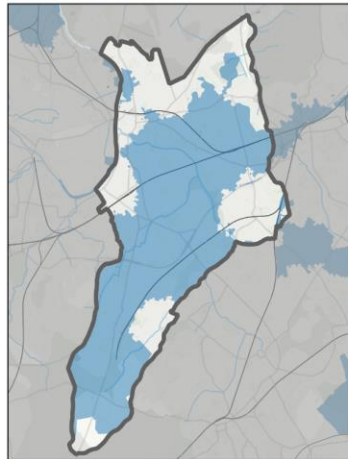
Areas of Deficiency in Access to Regional Parks



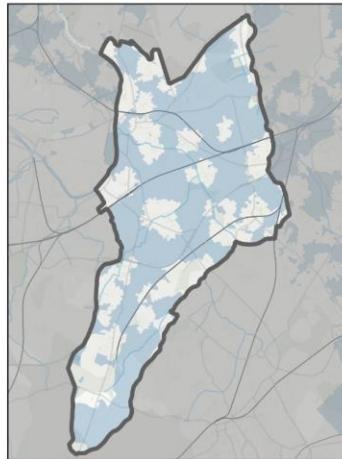
Areas of Deficiency in Access to Metropolitan Parks



Areas of Deficiency in Access to District Parks



Areas of Deficiency in Access to Local, Small & Pocket Parks



**Key**

-  RBK Borough Boundary
-  Areas of Deficiency in Access to Regional Parks
-  Areas of Deficiency in Access to Metropolitan Parks
-  Areas of Deficiency in Access to District Parks
-  Areas of Deficiency in Access to Local, Small & Pocket Parks

© Crown copyright and database right 2022.  
All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence  
Number 100026316 Royal Borough of Kingston  
upon Thames

## 2 The Kingston Biodiversity Action Plan

### 2.1 Why do we need a plan?

*Making Kingston Cleaner, Greener & Better Together*

The Kingston Biodiversity Action Plan is part of the borough's response to some of the greatest challenges that face our residents and the wealth of biodiversity that can be found in the borough. The legislative requirements as well as the importance of having a healthy environment for our communities and wildlife to live in have been illustrated in section one. Furthermore, there is a strong community mandate, with hundreds of residents stating in a 2019 community consultation that they would like to see the borough's open spaces managed in the future with overwhelming support for wildlife friendly adjustments.

Kingston strives to be a borough that takes a leading role in protecting the environment, showcasing how a London borough can host an environment in which both humans and wildlife can thrive to mutual benefit, that can also contribute to the overall health of the planet. This plan provides a toolkit, providing guidance on the protection, enhancement and promotion of the natural environment.

The Biodiversity Action Plan is a material document in development management for determining planning applications. The plan underpins the Council's Core Strategy (2012), which adopted policies that 'will protect and improve Kingston's valued natural and green environment'. It also informed the New Local Plan's objectives and relevant planning policies for biodiversity and green infrastructure. It will also play a key role in our Local Nature Recovery Network, guiding our strategic response to protect and enhance our natural environment at a landscape scale, ensuring we are considering connectivity between habitats and identifying core opportunity areas that can be improved for wildlife.

### 2.2 Who is this plan for?

This plan's intention is to be accessible to all, to

- Assist **policy makers** in making environmental conscious decisions.
- Guide **land managers** to create appropriate and effective management plans for parks, nature reserves and urban spaces.
- Support **developers** to ensure that they are prepared to submit designs that meet the necessary Biodiversity Net Gain targets, ensuring that their developments enhance the ecology of the landscape.
- Encourage local **researchers** to engage with scientific investigations which can demonstrate the impact of conservation interventions and assess the ecological health of the borough as well as socioeconomic impacts.
- While also being a document of interest for **local residents** and **community groups** who are curious about the local natural world, empowering them to engage with proactive conservation measures that can have a positive impact within their spheres of influence, whether these be gardens, places of work or local greenspaces.

## 2.3 Strategic Themes of Actions

### 2.3.1 Overview of strategic themes

This plan will feature a series of flagship species (SAP) and habitat action plans (HAP), each with the intention of improving the conservation status of the focal species or habitat, and also the species that contribute to and are interrelated with that species survival or habitat's health.

Each plan, despite being focused on a particular flagship habitat type or species, is based on underpinning strategic themes that inform the overall approach to enhancing the ecological processes and health of the borough in a strategic and unified fashion. These will ensure that we are not viewing species or habitats in isolation, but acknowledging that they are components of the diverse tapestry that forms our landscape and building blocks of our wider ecosystems.

We will also work to embed monitoring at every possible opportunity, to ensure we assess the impact of the conservation work that is being undertaken. We will be engaging with the latest evidence and guidance while also working with leading and pioneering conservationists to ensure we are implementing the most effective conservation efforts.

A fundamental value interwoven into this plan is a grassroots approach, working to engage and empower local communities. Inspiring local people to value the natural world is integral to achieving conservation and environmental goals. Engagement will catalyse a public will to bring positive change, which can be mobilised to scale up conservation actions in challenging economic circumstances. To this end we look to embrace a rewilding narrative which can generate curiosity and engender hope amongst the wider community.

### 2.3.2 Urban rewilding & functional ecology

Rewilding is a term that has gained much social and political traction in recent years. Although its application is far reaching, it has been increasingly applied to an urban setting and can be a great tool to engage with disconnected communities. In the Kingston context we interpret it as maximising the ecological value of existing green or street spaces, while raising the public awareness of our natural heritage. This plan adopts an approach that aims to increase the ecological complexity and richness of our environment, and potentially in some instances reduce the amount of active human intervention, to enable natural processes to take place and embrace ecological dynamism, which can bring multiple ecosystem services at a potentially reduced economic cost.

This will include, for example, the relaxation of some mowing regimes to establish biodiversity rich sward environments into our parks (please see our parks strategy) and on some roadside verges (please see our wildways strategy). In some cases we may encourage volunteer parties in nature reserves to emulate the actions of missing keystone species. For example, bramble bashing with mattocks simulates the behaviour of wild boar and installing woody deflectors in a stream can be compared to the ecological role of a beaver. This plan advocates an approach which encourages, where appropriate, the reintroduction of locally extinct native species, which can enhance the resilience and functionality of local ecosystems.

Rewilding must be viewed within the context of scale across the borough, and be sensitive to the land type. The term refers to different management techniques depending on the setting, for example:

- On a large **nature reserve** such as the 42 hectare Tolworth Court Farm in which there is the potential to introduce low densities of herbivores to create and steward a mixed mosaic of habitat types. This approach can take some learning points from the seminal project at the Knepp Estate in West Sussex and Wild Ken Hill in Norfolk and apply this to a peri-urban and smaller environment.
- An **amenity park** such as Manor Park where we encourage and support the friends group and greenspaces contractors to establish and manage a range of habitat features, such as planting a native hedgerow or establishing an area for wildflowers. This will be embodied in the borough-wide **PollinatorParks** HAP.
- A suburban **roadside verge**, in which we impose a cut and collect mowing regime to increase the diversity of wildflowers and pollinators. See point 3.5.2 which describes this **WildWays** approach.
- An **urbanised high street** in which we install green infrastructure such as raised beds and planting schemes which support urban pollinator populations. This will be embodied in the Urban Environment **BioBeds** HAP.
- **Private land and gardens:** though not under the control of the council, we will encourage individuals and businesses to view the greenspaces in their ownership in the context of the wider landscape and how these spaces can benefit local wildlife populations.

In some cases it might be appropriate to deliver more traditional conservation management schemes, where there is a particular community and social desire to maintain human controlled habitats. This approach may not only benefit a particular assemblage of species but also celebrate our cultural heritage. For instance on sites such as the Moated Manor and Fishponds park traditional hay meadow management is pursued where we teach local volunteers how to scythe the grassland and embrace an aftermath grazing regime.

### 2.3.2 Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs, Clauses 104-108) have been deemed essential to halt the decline in the abundance of species by 2030 set out in the Environment Act 2021 (Wildlife and Countryside LINK 2021). LNRSs will be local, likely county level, most likely in London led by the Greater London Authority. These individual strategies will align to form a England wide Nature Recovery Network, first outlined in the 25 Year Environment Plan. They will provide mapping and planning information to effectively guide relevant decisions to improve the environment. LNRS will have multiple roles including being a mechanism for targeting funding for nature's recovery, such as Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), Environmental Land Management (ELM) and the Nature for Climate Fund.

At the time of writing Defra were preparing the guidelines on LNRS and are talking to potential responsible authorities; funding for developing and implementing has yet to be confirmed.

### 2.3.4 Community engagement & empowerment



This Biodiversity Action Plan seeks to educate and inspire local communities about the wonders of the local natural world, as well as empower people to participate in proactive conservation action. In Kingston we are so fortunate to have a fantastic community which is willing to contribute to nature conservation. In the last five years the borough has experienced a dramatic increase in community led environmental and conservation action. This has seen a growth in 'Friend Groups', from 2 to approximately 30 within this period. A core value of this plan is to support and guide these groups while also catalysing the creation of new groups and encouraging participation. To this end the Council has facilitated the launch of a Friends Forum, which will support 'Friends Groups' and encourage knowledge sharing and a cohesive community across the borough.

To encourage general participation and knowledge sharing among residents who have an interest in conservation and ecology, this plan endorses the community-run Kingston Biodiversity Network. The network will be kept informed of updates regarding the delivery of the plan, and will be utilised as a community engagement forum. The plan will also work closely with the Kingston Libraries, Museum and Communication teams, to deliver a series of local nature themed events that is targeted at the general public to raise awareness of our natural heritage, this will include social media campaigns such as #WildlifeWednesday, #ReadingNature and #KingstonNature.

Further to these community objectives, this plan will work to ensure everyone in the borough has the opportunity to engage with and have access to nature, irrespective of where they live or if they have any disability. .

### **2.3.5 Nature-based solutions to climate breakdown**

Climate breakdown represents one of the greatest challenges facing Kingston in the coming years. However, having functional ecosystems and green infrastructure within our town can provide effective tools to increase our resilience to the difficult environmental conditions ahead. Examples are the creation of sustainable urban drainage systems, installation of living roofs, increased tree planting in urbanised areas or enhancing the floristic diversity of greenspaces and street space to support urban pollinators and air quality. This plan considers the benefit they can bring to mitigate the current climate crisis.

Each of the species and habitat action plan will provide a section referencing evidence on how that particular plan can provide some level of benefit when regarding the climate emergency, and thus express its importance in a broader sense and potentially support the boroughs Climate Action Plan.

### **2.3.6 Evidence-based action and scientific monitoring**

It is essential that we monitor the impact of our conservation efforts and the ecological health of the borough. Ensuring the borough has a service level agreement with Greenspace Information for Greater London (the ecological record holders for London), will enable us to efficiently access and collate species and habitat data. In 2020 the council commissioned a borough wide survey of the existing Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and biodiversity opportunity areas (Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, 2020). This review will be repeated every 5 - 10 years as stipulated by Defra.

It is essential that this plan both utilises and contributes to the existing evidence base. Kingston is fortunate to support a thriving community of researchers with the ever expanding Kingston University. This provides significant opportunities to engage with experts and students to implement robust scientific investigations to monitor the impact of conservation interventions at both environmental and socioeconomic scales. We will also endeavour to work with other leading universities, conservationists and organisations, to help guide and assess our conservation efforts. This will help to ensure that we follow best practices and potentially help to advance urban based conservation.

Citizen Science projects have exponentially grown in recent years, utilising communities to carry out robust scientific research and investigation that can inform conservation efforts. Across Kingston there are currently a number of successful citizen science initiatives. This is an approach that is very much endorsed by this plan and we encourage the implementation of citizen science where possible.

### **2.3.7 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)**

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) has become mandatory in the planning process through the Environment Act 2021. At the time of writing, the metric to be used to calculate BNG was still in development.

Kingston Council will determine how BNG is delivered in Kingston following publication of guidance from Defra which is due to be enforced from November 2023. The NPPF currently sets out the policy for protecting habitats and biodiversity by:

- Minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, through establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
- Identifying, mapping and safeguarding components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation;
- Promoting the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species, and identifying and pursuing opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity and continuing to deliver ongoing and long term management.

In addition to BNG, the London Plan encourages local authorities to set Urban Greening Factor (UGF) scores in their Local Plans. Where Local Plans do not have UGF scores, the London Plan UGF scores of 0.4 for predominantly residential and 0.3 for predominantly commercial developments should be applied as a minimum benchmark (Mayor of London, 2021).

## **2.4 The BAP and Planning - *Delivery through the planning system***

Policies CS3 and DM6 in the Core Strategy (adopted in 2012) supports the need for biodiversity improvements and seek to integrate biodiversity into relevant development proposals. It requires all development proposals to protect and promote biodiversity as part of sustainable design and to submit an Ecological Impact Assessment on major development proposals, or where a site contains or is next to significant areas of habitat or areas with wildlife potential.

The emerging new Local Plan sets out the borough's proposed vision, objectives and strategy for planning up to 2041, together with draft planning policies that will help guide future decisions on planning applications.

- Policy KN1 of the Draft Local Plan will commit the Council to work positively with relevant partners to implement Kingston's Biodiversity Action Plan. For relevant developments, the policy will require applicants to explain any impact on priority species and habitats and demonstrate how their proposal will contribute to the measures set out in the local BAP.
- Policy KN3 of the Draft Local Plan specifically addresses biodiversity and aims to maximise the opportunities for delivering a net gain in biodiversity in and around developments. The policy will require developments to contribute to the conservation of priority species and habitats, limit as far as possible any negative impacts and provide an overall positive net gain for biodiversity (including a minimum requirement of 30% Biodiversity Net Gain). Applicants will be encouraged to submit any ecological records made as part of the planning application to the Local Ecological Centre in line with the latest CIEEM guidance.

As with the Core Strategy, the new Local Plan will also require development proposals that are likely to have an adverse impact on biodiversity to submit an Ecological Impact Assessment.

In support of the development plan, this Biodiversity Action Plan will provide guidance for development proposals and local planning decisions. It will identify the different species and habitats of principal importance to biodiversity conservation within the borough (through the Habitat Action Plans and Species Action Plans). As part of the planning application process, applicants are required to demonstrate how their proposal will contribute to Kingston's Biodiversity Action Plan in the Ecological Impact Assessment.

## **2.5 - The Kingston Biodiversity Partnership**

In 2023 Kingston Council launched the Kingston Biodiversity Partnership (List of partners, Appendix), a group of local naturalists with specialised expertise and stakeholder groups who can guide the creation and implementation of the BAP. Each plan is assigned a lead partner.

Each partner will be in regular contact with Council's Biodiversity Officer, who will facilitate the creation of each plan and ensure the plans remain concurrent. The partnership will meet bi-annually to encourage partners to remain engaged, and provide general updates.

The partnership will also have a number of 'special advisers' who may have relevant expertise to share, though not able to commit to the requirements of being a formal partner.

This can include universities, organisations and conservationists and individuals with other relevant areas of expertise.

## 3 Wild Kingston

### 3.1 Introduction to Kingston's ecological landscape

The leafy Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames situated in South West London is one of the capital's outermost boroughs. The borough is surrounded by significant greenspaces with Richmond Park to the North, Wimbledon Common to the East, Home Park to the West and the greenbelt to the South with the river Thames flowing along the western boundary. This means that from a geographical perspective, Kingston is strategically important to ensure that wildlife populations can move through the borough to connect with other populations.

Kingston itself is 37% greenspace, with 272 open spaces covering an area of 1,369 hectares. The primary habitats which can be found in the borough include grasslands, woodlands, hedgerows, standing open water, rivers, streams and the Thames, all of which have designated habitat action plans included within this BAP. This plan will also address artificial habitats such as interventions within the urban realm, including urban greening solutions, while also highlighting the role of our parks and roadside verges, which can provide important habitats. These contexts also have habitat action plans.

The geology of Kingston has significant influence on the ecology of the borough and should therefore be acknowledged. The borough is dominated by London Clay which was laid down 55 million years ago when a shallow sea covered the London area, which has resulted in heavy, damp, neutral soils. Interestingly there is a history of extracting clay from Kingston for the creation of bricks, examples of which can be seen to this day at Fishponds Park and the Richard Jefferies Bird Sanctuary, leaving steep sided slopes. The higher areas of Kingston which include Winey Hill, Castle Hill and Coombe Hill are composed of High - Level Terrace Gravels which can be associated with acid grasslands. There are also deposits of gravels of River Terraces that extend narrow fingers up the valleys of all the rivers and streams, most notably the Tolworth Brook. Due to the prominence of London Clay much of the borough's grasslands are mesotrophic. There are notable exceptions, which include Coombe Wood Golf Course, which has areas of heathland and acid grassland due to the underlying High - Level Terrace Gravels.

Some of the most important habitats within Kingston are concentrated around the rivers and streams, which include the Hogsmill river and the Beverley Brook. These rivers do not only provide vital riverine habitats but are essential wildlife corridors. The Hogsmill itself is an internationally rare chalk stream, one of only an approximate 200 across the globe. There are also significant areas of habitat located within the greenbelt to the south of Kingston. In the north of the borough the golf courses also provide large areas of importance for wildlife.

Forty-five of the sites in the borough are designated as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), comprising approximately 10.9% of the borough's landmass. This includes 12 Local Nature Reserves (RBK, 2015). These SINC's and nature reserves reflect the borough's diverse natural heritage, with 8 of the priority habitats outlined within the

London Biodiversity Action Plan; from the ancient hedgerows and grasslands at the 42 hectare Tolworth Court Farm Field to the deciduous woodlands at Coombe Wood. .

Throughout the borough 2,062 species have been recorded, 294 of which have some form of designation (GiGL, 2021). This figure, though probably an underestimate of the true number, provides an insight into the wealth of biodiversity that an urban environment can support. Indeed, across London nearly 16,000 species have been recorded. Kingston is home to true marvels of the natural world; from peregrine falcons stooping at speeds in excess of 200 mph to enigmatic stag beetles battling on a warm summer's day. It is vital that this plan recognises, communicates and protects the biodiversity which calls Kingston home. Like much of London, there are also well established groups of invasive species which can have detrimental impacts to ecosystems, including ringneck parakeet, himalayan balsam, rhododendron, cherry laurel, grey squirrels and crassula helmsii. This plan encourages issues surrounding invasive species to be addressed if possible.

### **3.2 Kingston's Local Nature Reserves & Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation**

#### **Local Nature Reserves:**

Although the borough does not have an extensive coverage of Local Nature Reserves (LNR) there are 12 sites which reflect the habitats and species within the borough, many of which are located along the Hogsmill River & Bonesgate Stream, thus enabling good levels of ecological connectivity. These are all mapped on the DEFRA, ['MAGIC' mapping system](#). This plan states that all of our LNR's should be in active management and have concurrent management plans, which define how the sites are managed with the support of nature conservation volunteering groups.

Below we briefly describe the council owned LNRs, however please refer to their respective management plan document for more information.

#### **1. The Wood & Richard Jefferies Bird Sanctuary Local Nature Reserve**

The Wood and Richard Jefferies Bird Sanctuary is a little known nature reserve in the heart of Surbiton, tucked behind Surbiton station. In the Victorian period a small cottage occupied the area with a small lake, which was a result of historic clay extraction; the house was demolished in 1933. The area is now a beautiful mature woodland with yew and oak, there are also tree species present which were part of the Victorian planting, including horse chestnut and copper beech. The woods support an array of wildlife, including woodland birds such as tawny owl, great spotted woodpeckers, song thrush, blackcaps and even one of our smallest birds, the firecrest. At night, bats can be seen foraging amongst the canopy, with 6 species recorded locally, badgers are also known to snuffle amongst the undergrowth. The site was historically managed by the Environment Trust.

In 2022 a new gate was installed, which has enabled controlled access to the Richard Jefferies Bird Sanctuary which was established in 1951, named after the Victorian nature writer who had a passion for the natural world and who lived in Tolworth between 1877 - 1882. This enclosed area has an important ecological role as it creates space where wildlife

can seek refuge in a busy residential area. This area supports good levels of standing deadwood which can host many species. The gates enabled a number of conservation work parties which took place in 2022 led by RBK. In 2023 there will be work to establish a Friends group for the site working with the Surbiton Wildlife Group, who will support the active management of the area. This will include the removal of invasive species, most notably bamboo and cherry laurel which are out-competing the woodland understory and woodland flora.

Go Parks London Webpage: <https://www.goparks.london/park/oakhill/>

Relevant Species and Habitat Action Plans:

Management Plan: (When available)

## **2. Raeburn Open Space Local Nature Reserve - *Commonly known at the Berrylands Nature Reserve***

The Berrylands Nature Reserve is a much loved 5 hectare nature reserve nestled in the heart of Berrylands. The site straddles the banks of the Tolworth Brook and supports a mosaic of habitats, including secondary deciduous native woodland with mature oaks and an understory of hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn elder and aspen. The brook provides riverine habitats and there is a small wildlife pond. On the eastern component of the site there are areas of amenity grasslands well used by dog walkers. This could potentially support increased areas of rough grassland which would not interfere with current use.

In 2017 the site benefitted from a large-scale restoration project led by the Environment Trust and funded by Thames Water. This included re-naturalisation of the streams banks by removing hundreds of tonnes of concrete from a culverted channel and instream weir. The banks were reprofiled with berms and deflectors installed and the planting of native marginal aquatic plants. A bridge was also installed to improve public accessibility. At this time the wildlife pond was created and woodland management commenced. This project facilitated the establishment of the 'Friends of Berrylands Nature Reserve' who successfully run regular conservation days which are well attended by volunteers.

Species which can be regularly seen in the nature reserve include, riverine birds such as kingfishers, grey wagtails & moorhens, a range of odonata including emperor dragonflies, banded demoiselles and broad bodied chasers as well as good numbers of amphibians and woodland birds; sparrowhawks have been seen with young within the woodland and likely nest within or near to the woodland.

Website for Friends Group - <https://berrylandsnaturereserve.org/nature-reserve/>

Go Parks London Webpage - <https://www.goparks.london/park/berrylands-nature-reserve>

Relevant Species and Habitat Action Plans:

Management Plan: (When available)

## **3. Edith Gardens Local Nature Reserve**

Edith Gardens at 0.4 Hectares, is a small yet peaceful nature reserve in Surbiton. The site has an interesting history – previously used as an air-raid shelter during World War 2 and later converted into an allotment. In 1992, however, it was designated a Local Nature

Reserve and with it came its associated protections. The site is situated along the Tolworth Brook, which feeds into the Hogsmill River and with no public access.

The site was largely neglected in the period between 1992 - 2018, becoming overgrown and filled with rubbish and debris. Citizen Zoo led a restoration project in 2019, to enhance the wildlife corridor and to create a safe place for people to enjoy nature. The project was supported by Kingston Council and local volunteers, with funding from the Ministry of Housing. Citizen Zoo restored the reserve, removing rubbish, installing a wheelchair accessible path, wildlife pond, dead-hedge and planting live hedges, whilst also enacting woodland management. Citizen Zoo now runs education and eco-therapy sessions on the site, with Kingston Young Carers, Kingston Mind and Kingston Centre for Independent Living.

Website Page for Citizen Zoo's Edith Garden Project: <https://www.citizenzoo.org/our-work/edith-gardens/>

Relevant Species and Habitat Action Plans:  
Management Plan: (When available)

### **Hogsmill Valley River Park**

The Hogsmill Valley River Park is the collective name for a cluster of nature reserves found along the Hogsmill river corridor from Berrylands railway station south to Malden Lane on the edge of the borough, spanning an area of approximately 32.91 hectares. The area is a vital component of the boroughs ecological network supporting a complex mosaic of habitats centred around the Hogsmill river. Habitats represented here include woodland, mesotrophic grasslands, alluvial flood meadow and riverine communities. There are issues associated with invasive species, such as Himalayan Balsam which is thought to have arrived in 1974 which dominates large swathes of bankside and inland habitat. The area is also heavily used by local residents many of whom are likely unaware the area is declared as a local nature reserve, this can lead to and exacerbate issues including dog walking which can present challenges to local wildlife populations, including heavy poaching of the river banks.

### **4. Rose Walk Local Nature Reserve**

Rose walk is a small nature reserve at the northern tip of the Hogsmill Valley, with a circular path. The site supports areas of scrub dominated by blackthorn, with small areas of mesotrophic grassland and scattered yellow meadow ant mounds. The bank side habitat supports an array of marginal aquatic floral species including flag iris, marsh marigold, pendulous sedge, meadow sweet, purple loosestrife and hard rush, some of which were planted in 2022. These are in part, protected by a series of dead hedges installed by Citizen Zoo, which restricts dog access to the bank and provides habitat for nesting birds and invertebrates. Water vole sign has been spotted on this nature reserve following the 2022 reintroduction led by Citizen Zoo. Moving forward, this nature reserve should be managed favourably to support the conservation of the water vole population. At the northern end of the site there are some hops that are the larval host plant of red admiral and comma butterflies. The blackthorn is also known to support brown hairstreak butterflies.

Other species which are regularly observed in this nature reserve include buzzard, kingfisher, moorhen, great spotted woodpecker, house sparrow and a range of tit species including long tailed tit, blue tit and great tit.

Relevant Species and Habitat Action Plans:  
Management Plan: (When available)

## **5. Elmbridge Open Space Local Nature Reserve**

The Elmbridge Open Space Local Nature Reserve is a long ribbon of habitat that dominates the western parcel of land to the west of the Hogsmill. The area supports a diversity of habitats including secondary woodland, with species such as mature willows, oaks, aspen and sycamore and an understory of elder and hazel, which in winter periods can support wet woodland characteristics. To the north of the site there are areas of amenity grassland which are well used for recreational purposes. Through the reserve there are areas of scrubland with a good amount of dead wood. The entirety of the site also supports bankside habitat along the Hogsmill. Much of the Hogsmill is canalised within little instream sinuosity and there are significant areas of bank poaching, primarily as a result of high levels of dog use. The site also supports alluvial flood meadow and neutral grassland, which is speckled with yellow meadow ant mounds.

In 2022, community supported ecological monitoring led by the Field Studies Council, has helped to increase the amount of species data for the site. The good levels of deadwood help to support saproxylic invertebrate communities with species such as stag beetle, lesser stag beetle and welsh oak longhorn beetle being recorded, all which require dead wood for their larval stage.

The area has been managed by a number of entities including regular sessions led by the Lower Mole Project which has been part of the Higher Level Stewardship Agreement with Natural England, as well volunteering day led by the Friends of Berrylands Nature Reserve, South East Rivers Trust and Kingston University to primarily combat the high levels of Himalayan Balsam which can be found on the site. The local Butterfly Conservation group have also planted a number of European white elm saplings, which is a larval host plant for white-letter hairstreak butterflies. In 2023, South East Rivers Trust are developing a large scale ecological restoration project which will look to enhance instream river habitat and reinstate a series of scrapes across the site. The project will also look to establish a new backwater. To ensure the long term sustainability of this project, a Friends Group will look to be established to complement the management of the site, as well as the securement of a new Countryside Stewardship Agreement with Natural England.

Other species which are regularly observed in this nature reserve include buzzard, little egret, kingfisher, moorhen, great spotted woodpecker, house sparrow and a range of tit species including long tailed tit, blue tit and great tit.

Relevant Species and Habitat Action Plans:  
Management Plan: (When available)

## **6. The Hogsmill Wood Local Nature Reserve**



The Hogsmill Wood Nature Reserve is a small (0.69 ha) area of woodland situated immediately to the north of the A3 Kingston Bypass, adjacent to the Hogsmill River. Lying within the wider area of the Hogsmill River Open Space, the site attracts a range of woodland and riparian wildlife. Between the period of 1998 - 2002 the site was managed by the London Wildlife Trust, however in subsequent years the site has suffered chronic issues with fly tipping and there has been a lack of proactive management. However, in 2023 the council are looking to work with the Lower Mole Project to reestablish proactive management of the site.

Relevant Species and Habitat Action Plans:  
Management Plan: (When available)

### **7. The Southwood Open Space Local Nature Reserve (& Six Acre Meadow)**

The Southwood Open Space Local Nature Reserve follows the Hogsmill River on the Southern Side of the A3. It supports a number of woodland copses with a range of mature willow species, ash and oak with an understory of holly, blackthorn and hawthorn. Across the reserve there are areas of scrub dominated by blackthorn and large areas of mesotrophic grassland.

Kestrels can be regularly spotted hovering above the grassland as they hunt for small rodents including field vole. Buzzards are also seen perching on the woodland edges. Roe deer use the site frequently and their tracks can be easily spotted when the ground conditions are soft. Jays can be seen carrying and planting acorns.

The reserve leads to Six Acre Meadow, which though not a designated LNR still falls under RBK management. Thanks to the extensive research of the late Barbara Webb, it is thought to be the site where the background John Evert Millais famous masterpiece Ophelia was painted in 1851. The painting provides a fascinating insight into what the Hogsmill would have looked like at that time. The meadow is one of the oldest meadows in the borough and supports a range of floral species including meadowsweet, meadow cranesbill and ragwort which is the food plant of the cinnabar moth. The river corridor is heavily shaded, dominated by mature sycamores. To the west of the site there is an area of mature woodland which surrounds a wet meadow which can be accessed via a boardwalk. This meadow can support great numbers of meadowsweet, although unfortunately himalayan balsam has established in great densities. To combat this the South East Rivers Trust are trying to utilise a biocontrol in the form of fungal rust to help eradicate balsam from the catchment.

The site has historically been managed as part of the Higher Level Stewardship agreement with Natural England, which has included an annual hay cut of the grassland as well as woodland management which has been conducted by Red Kite and Lower Mole Project. The site supports a nature trail, which was designed and implemented with the support of Sustrans and the local community.

Relevant Species and Habitat Action Plans:  
Management Plan: (When available)

## 8. Tolworth Court Farm Fields Local Nature Reserve (& Moated Manor)

Tolworth Court Farm Fields, at 42ha, is Kingston's largest nature reserve. This, combined with its position along the Hogsmill River means it plays an important role in the green corridor that runs through the Borough. Tolworth Court Farm (TCF) was first documented in the Domesday Book c1086 and has been farmed in different ways throughout its recorded history. In fact, the ancient Roman Road that runs through the site was once used to drive livestock into London from Surrey and other surrounding counties.

Today it consists of a relic enclosed farmed field system comprising of seven fields, of neutral, semi-natural and unimproved, lowland grassland of which one meadow is wet grassland. The site is rectangular in shape and extends over an area of approximately 52ha. Old hedges and associated veteran trees with small pockets of secondary woodland dissect and bound the site.

The site lies to the southwest of Kingston Road forming one side of a broad shallow valley along the course of the Hogsmill River. There are two Public Rights of Way (RoW), the first footpath is an old route that runs down the centre of the site and divides the valley of the Hogsmill/Bonesgate from the more level ground running parallel to Jubilee Way. A second footpath (RoW) runs across the site at its southwestern boundary and leads out across the Bonesgate Stream.

The roadside boundaries of Tolworth Court Farm Fields consist of large grassed bunds. These extend along the Kingston Road in the northeast and along Jubilee Way to the northwest where the bunds are situated on the southern side of the boundary woodland and hedges. The Hogsmill River and Bonesgate Stream run along the southern edge of the site. An ancient trackway provides a boundary along the southwest. In the northeast corner of Field 7, a small pond was dug in 2002 to alleviate the waterlogging at the end of the path which passes through the bunds.

A new management plan is currently being developed in a partnership project with RBK, Citizen Zoo and the Community Brain. This will be a co-created plan based on comprehensive ecological surveys, extensive community engagement and working with leading conservationists, to produce a plan and vision to ensure the site reaches its ecological potential. The hope is to demonstrate how the site can support complex ecological processes, adopting rewilding principles in an peri-urban setting, becoming an exemplar for Greater London.

To the North East of the site on the other side of the A240, lies the Moated Manor site, a small 2.4 hectare area that has no public access. Although the site is not a LNR, it was once part of the wider site. Today the site has a large meadow area which is speckled with yellow meadow ant hills. The meadow is now managed in a traditional method with scything and aftermath grazing with the support of the Downlands Grazing Partnership. The site also supports an area of wetland which was once a moat that surrounded a mediaeval manor and areas of native woodland.

Relevant Species and Habitat Action Plans:

Management Plan: (When available)

### **9. Bonesgate Open Space Local Nature Reserve**

The Bonesgate Open Space Local Nature Reserve is located along the Bonesgate tributary, to the west of Tolworth Court Farm and directly east of the Castle Hill Nature Reserve, and serves as a green corridor. The site backs on to private back gardens and the stream is heavily shaded in parts. There is an area of closely mowed amenity grassland. The western side of the Bonesgate is wooded with mature blackthorn and hawthorn scrub and mature oak trees, providing habitat for a range of woodland bird species.

The area has seen volunteer work parties coordinated by both the Lower Moles and Habitats & Heritage.

Relevant Species and Habitat Action Plans:

Management Plan: (When available)

### **10. Castle Hill Local Nature Reserve**

This is an area of mature oak woodland and hazel coppice, with scrub and grassland. It is located on the banks of the Bonesgate which combine to make a varied wildlife site. Though not conclusively proven the site is believed to be on the site of a mediaeval hunting lodge. What is certain, is that an ancient track runs along the eastern side which used to be known as Chessington Park Lane.

The site is in the active management of the Lower Mole Project who are based in the neighbouring Horton Country Park. South East River Trust have also carried out work parties along the Bonesgate with the reserve.

Relevant Species and Habitat Action Plans:

Management Plan: (When available)

### **11. Coombe Wood Local Nature Reserve**

Coombe Wood was once an extensive woodland which is depicted in the Milne's Land Map of London published in 1800. The woodland was referenced in a Charter of 967 thus indicating the age of the woodland area. The woodland is dominated by mature oak trees, with sporadic ash and silver birch. In areas there is a dense understory of hazel, hawthorn, dog rose, bramble and elder. However, unfortunately there are significant compartments of the site where rhododendron and snowberry are prevalent. In recent years the woodland was managed as part of the Lower Moles Living Woodland project, and in 2022 the Lower Mole Project volunteers, with support from the local community, erected a dead hedge on the western boundary of the site.

The woodland supports an array of woodland birds and badgers are known to forage amongst the undergrowth. More work is required to combat the invasive species which can be found in the woodland.

Relevant Species and Habitat Action Plans:  
Management Plan: (When available)

## **12. Jubilee Wood Local Nature Reserve**

Located in the South of Borough, adjoining Sixty Acre Wood, the wood was planted in 1887 to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria, thus adding to the level of woodland cover in the area. Much of the woodland is wet year-round exhibiting wet woodland characteristics. The woodland area has a remnant pillbox which was converted to a bat roost by volunteers. An owl box has also been installed on one of the pedunculate oaks. To the north of the site there is a small area of mesotrophic grassland. Attempts have been made by the Lower Moles and the Environment Trust to improve the floristic diversity, however more work is required to get this area into a good ecological condition. The site supports two ponds which have recorded populations of great crested newt. Unfortunately the ponds are now dominated by vegetation with little standing open water and there is crassula in one of the ponds. Plans are currently being drawn up by RBK and the Lower Moles to restore these ponds to a good condition.

Relevant Species and Habitat Action Plans:  
Management Plan: (When available)

## **Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation**

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) are a London specific non-statutory designation, which afford the respective sites additional protection within the planning process. Following guidance from the GLA, Kingston Council has a duty as a Local Authority to periodically assess the condition of the existing SINCs within the borough and identify possible areas which could be assigned the designation. The Council commissioned a full review of the SINCs in 2020 (RBK, 2021); this reviewed the existing 39 SINCs and identified 6 additional sites, to bring the total number of sites to 45. The SINC review also recommended that a number of sites be upgraded in terms of their designation which included Kingston Cemetery to be upgraded to a Borough Level SINC. As per GLA guidelines all local and borough level recommendations were reviewed by the Local Wildlife Sites Board, and all Metropolitan level recommendations were reviewed by the London Wildlife Sites Board. Following this process these were put forward for full adoption within the Local Plan.

The full SINC review assessment conducted by Land Use Consultants can be found here:

<https://www.kingston.gov.uk/downloads/download/187/review-of-sites-of-importance-for-nature-conservation-land-use-consultants-2020>

## Map 2 - Summary of SINC Review:

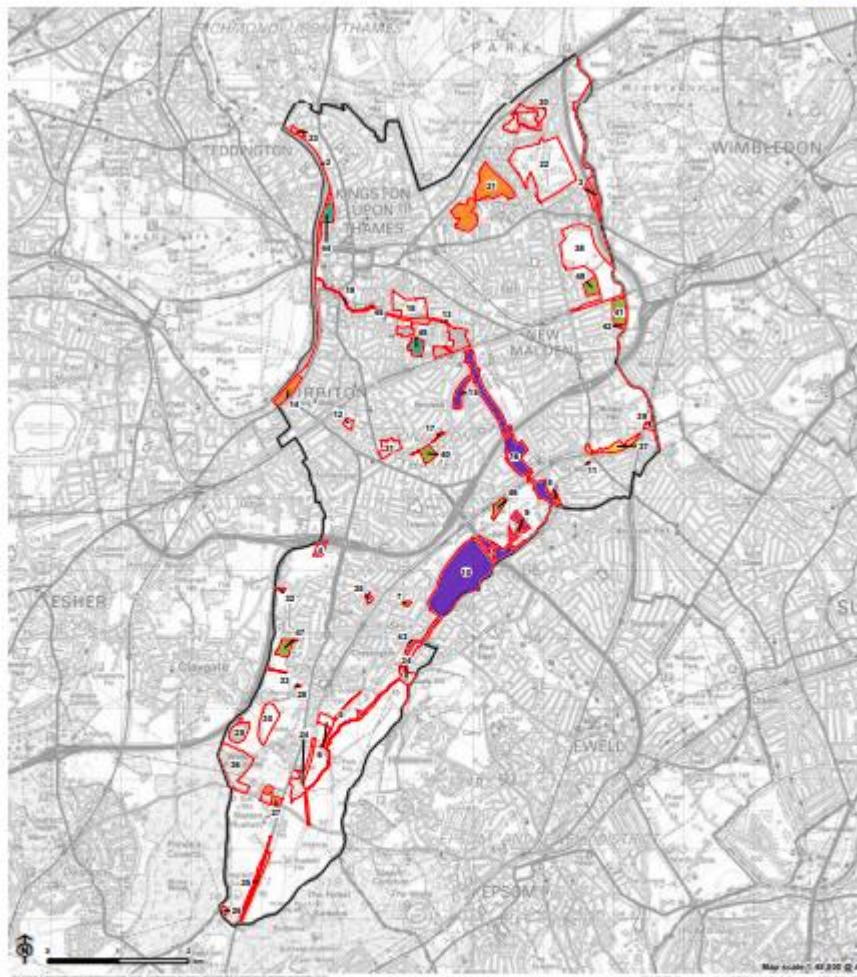


Figure 3.1: Summary of SINC Sites

Kingston upon Thames boundary	No SINC designated	10. Tolworth Court Farm, Fields and Medieval Buried Manor	18. Kingston Cemetery	27. Jubilee Meadows ("Deadbank")	36. Maiden Gulf Course and Charles Water Pipe Trench (Ponghul)	45. Huggell Community Garden and Kingston University Land
Other local authority boundary	No Change	11. Old Malden Pond	19. Huggell River in Central Kingston	28. The Meadows	37. Boreley Brook in Kingston	46. Kewford Meadows
SINC boundary	1. Windlesham Common and Putney Heath	12. Canal, The Ponds and Ponds adjacent to St. Nicholas	20. Kingston University Kingston Hill	29. Rowell Statue Lane	38. Boreley Brook in Kingston	47. King's College
SINC boundaries	2. River Thames and Salt Meadows	13. Conder Wood	21. Coumbe Wood Out Crops	30. Palswood	39. Rowland Mitchell Drive	48. St. John's Cemetery
SINC boundaries	3. Kewall Green Meadows	14. Huggell Valley Storage Works and Huggell River	22. Columbia Hill Out Crops	31. Clayton Road Wood	40. Rowland Mitchell Drive	49. Allotment Allotments
SINC boundaries	4. Sunningdale Stream	15. Seething Vets Private Site	23. Royal Park Date Open Space	32. The Oldways	41. Boreley Park Allotments	
SINC boundaries	5. Dieren Lane	16. Rastellin Open Space	24. Chesham Wood	33. Castle Hill and Boreley Open Space	42. Boreley Park Allotments	
SINC boundaries	6. Mount Road Open Space	17. Huggell Valley	25. Rastellin Farm, Rastellin Common & Telegraph Hill	34. Cemetery Copse	43. Sunningdale Open Space (M1)	
SINC boundaries	7. The Layfield for Old Millers Cemetery	18. Rastellin Open Space	26. World's End	35. Holywell Wood and Jubilee Wood	44. Canbury Gardens	
SINC boundaries	8. The Layfield for Old Millers Cemetery	19. Huggell Valley				
SINC boundaries	9. Rastellin House					

### 3.3 Kingston's Parks, Community Gardens and Allotments - #PollinatorParks

It is imperative that we not only focus on our conservation efforts on the borough's site of importance for nature conservation, but take a more holistic and strategic approach, viewing our landscape as a tapestry of interconnected habitats all with varying levels of value to biodiversity. Kingston is home to 30 parks and 22 allotment sites, these are fantastic community assets essential to recreation, social interaction, personal wellbeing and local food growing efforts. However, these sites can also support vital biodiversity, enabling species to thrive alongside the other activities that take place. We can significantly enhance the ecological health of these sites and the varied habitats which they can support, which will in no way infringe on the other important public services these sites have to offer.

The BAP includes a #PollinatorParks strategy which will encourage managers and users of all our parks and allotment sites to enhance biodiversity. This will bring far reaching benefits to the communities which surround these sites.

### **3.4 Site specific management plans**

Management plans should be revised or developed for and implemented on all SINC's, Local Nature Reserves (LNR) and large parks. These plans should incorporate actions and good practice guidance suggested in the BAP as appropriate. Local community volunteering groups will be consulted in the creation of these plans. The plans will also act as a guide to local volunteers. empowering them to bring additional value to our greenspaces, over and above what is achievable within the Greenspace Contract.

### **3.5 The Urban Environment**

The built environment's importance for biodiversity is often forgotten and its potential rarely fulfilled. Our built environment represents a fantastic opportunity to integrate green infrastructure and habitat features which enable this land to provide a wealth of ecosystem services increasing our resilience to climate change and creating habitat for some awe inspiring species. The #BioBeds and #WildWays strategies encourage us to embrace nature within our more built up environments.

#### **3.5.1 #BioBeds**

The #Biobeds approach encourages all raised planters in the borough to support an array of forage and larval host plants for a range of pollinators throughout the season. The #BioBeds HAP provides a plant list based on recommendations by the Butterfly Conservation Trust and the RHS planting for pollinator guidelines. The selected species will also need to be hardy enough not to require intensive maintenance and watering.

#### **3.5.2 #WildWays**

The #WildWays HAP encourages to embrace modified mowing regimes on appropriate highway locations, which will work to reduce the nutrient value of the soil thus creating a more appropriate environment for an array of wildflower species. This approach is based on the latest evidence and recommendations, led by Dr. Phil Sterling with the support of Butterfly Conservation Trust and PlantLife, which has been successfully applied to a number of Local Authorities across the country. This method is currently being piloted at 8 trial locations. If successful this approach will be expanded across the borough.

#### **3.5.3 - Green Infrastructure Solutions**

There are now a number of innovative green infrastructure solutions which can be implemented and retrofitted within the built environment. These solutions can help to transform grey ecologically impoverished areas into nature rich, aesthetically pleasing and sustainable environments which can help to secure a number of ecosystem services. To this end this plan advocates the implementation of green infrastructure wherever possible to help future proof the borough to the challenges ahead.

### 3.6 Private Gardens

Across greater London there are approximately 3.8 million gardens occupying a total area of around 37,900 ha, which is approximately 24% of Greater London's total area (Smith, 2010). Many residents within the borough are fortunate to have access to a private or shared garden, this area represents a fantastic opportunity for wildlife. This Biodiversity Action Plan advocates for people to engage with wildlife friendly gardening techniques and ensure that gardens support ecological connectivity throughout the landscape.

### 3.7 The other large landowners in Kingston

Kingston Council is not the only significant landowner within the borough. Organisations such as Kingston University and Thames Water own large land holdings which have significant biodiversity value. Large farms and golf courses can be managed in ways that enhance biodiversity. Many of these sites such as Kingston University and the Thames Water Hogsmill sewage plant undertake habitat restoration and management works. This plan encourages a collaborative approach in which there is good communication between large landowners in the borough, fostering and catalysing actions to enhance biodiversity at scale.

### 3.8 Habitat Action Plans (HAP) & Flagship Species Action Plans (SAP)

The range of HAPs and SAPS will encourage a socioecological systems thinking approach, which is ecologically led but benefits from a multidisciplinary outlook. Where possible Habitat Action Plans and Flagship Species Action Plans will work to restore ecosystem structure, functions and processes that support biodiversity and a wealth of ecosystem services. This will need to take into account interactions between biotic and abiotic factors. We accept that the outcomes of interventions may at times be unexpected, however actions must be evidence based and monitoring must be in place to understand the change which occurs; not only focusing on species composition and status but the functionality of the system as whole. We ask for a holistic view of the landscape in which ecological connectivity is considered and the wider reverberations this may have to meta-populations. Fundamentally we want plans to be aspirational, not content with the current biodiversity crisis and look towards a better and wilder future to the benefit of all.

Plans will be supported by lead members of the Kingston Biodiversity Partnership, and always remain under review to ensure that they reflect an adaptive management approach. These plans will also help to underpin site management plans moving forward.

This BAP includes the following **Habitat Action Plans**:

- Urban Environment - #Biobeds and urban greening elements
- Grassland
- Hedgerow
- Open standing water
- Parks and Open Spaces #PollinatorParks
- Rivers and streams

- The River Thames
- Woodland

and the following **Species Action Plans**:

- Amphibians
- Badgers
- Bats
- Hedgehogs
- Stag Beetles
- Swifts
- Water Voles

The plans outline aims for the species or habitat, give an introduction to its characteristics and its role in Kingston. Its current status is outlined, including the legal framework, policy and conservation status, and distribution within the borough. The plans further outline ecosystem functionality and ecosystem services and explain the habitat/species role in the climate emergency. After an exploration of threats, the actions to achieve a good status are outlined. The plans conclude with advice on the planning context and specify the monitoring process for actions.