



## Tower Hamlets Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2019





### **Foreword by Mayor Lutfur Rahman**

I am very pleased to adopt the Tower Hamlets Local Biodiversity Action Plan for 2014-19, which has been produced by Tower Habitats, our biodiversity partnership.

It is very important that we conserve biodiversity, not only for its own sake but also to ensure people who live and work in Tower Hamlets have the opportunity to enjoy contact with nature. This Action Plan clearly sets out what the Council, registered housing providers, developers, community groups and residents can do to help conserve and enhance the important habitats and species in Tower Hamlets.

This Plan ties in very well with the pledges I have made for my second term as Mayor. My pledge to plant 2000 new trees will make a big contribution to the targets for woodland and orchards, as well as for the Black Poplar, Britain's rarest native timber tree which gave Poplar district its name. My pledge to increase the number of planting projects on estates will help deliver a range objectives set out for biodiversity in gardens and grounds, and my pledge to protect and invest in our parks will enable us to deliver biodiversity enhancements on parks and open spaces.

I look forward to working together with our partners to protect and enhance our environment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'L. Rahman'.

**Mayor Lutfur Rahman**



### **Foreword by Cllr Shahed Ali, Lead Member for Clean & Green**

This new Local Biodiversity Action Plan builds on the successes of the last plan, which was adopted in 2009. During those five years, a huge amount was achieved for biodiversity in the borough, including:

- the creation of over six hectares of new wildflower meadows in parks;
- new woodlands in Swedenborg Gardens and on the Manchester Estate;
- a new wetland area with four new ponds at Mudchute;
- new ponds in parks, community gardens and schools;
- eight new community orchards;
- 500 metres of reed bed and soft banks created along canals;
- a floating reed bed in West India Middle Dock.

This new plan demonstrates our continuing commitment to ensuring that Tower Hamlets becomes an even cleaner and more environmentally-friendly borough. It is crucial for us to conserve the environment around us, and it also makes the borough a more colourful and vibrant place to live.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Shahed Ali'.

**Councillor Shahed Ali**

# Tower Hamlets Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2019

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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Tower Hamlets is a densely built-up inner London borough. It nevertheless supports a surprising diversity of wild plants and animals in a range of habitats. These include protected species such as bats and the Black Redstart, and a number of rare invertebrates associated with brownfield land, such as the Brown-banded Carder Bee and Streaked Bombardier Beetle. There are two Local Nature Reserves in the borough at Mudchute and Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park. Both of these are also recognised as Sites of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation, along with Mile End Park, the River Thames, the River Lea and the canals. The east of the borough lies within the Lea Catchment Nature Improvement Area.
- 1.2 This Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) has been produced by the Tower Hamlets biodiversity partnership, known as Tower Habitats. This includes Tower Hamlets Council, Tower Hamlets Homes, social housing providers, local and Londonwide voluntary and community groups, businesses and local residents. All of these groups and individuals will be involved in implementation of the LBAP. This LBAP replaces previous LBAPs published in 2003 and 2009.
- 1.3 The plan identifies priority habitats and species in Tower Hamlets, and sets objectives and, where appropriate, targets for what needs to be done to ensure their conservation. This will inform the implementation of projects and actions by partner organisations. It also provides guidance to developers on the kinds of biodiversity enhancements expected in new developments. The LBAP does not include detailed actions. These will be developed throughout the five-year duration of the LBAP, and will be entered and reported on in the Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS)<sup>1</sup>, a national database set up by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee to monitor biodiversity action across the UK.

## **Box 1: What is biodiversity and why is it important?**

Biodiversity is the variety of life – the myriad species of plants and animals on earth and the range of habitats where they live. It also includes the genetic variation within species. Biodiversity includes elephants, sparrows and bluebells; woodlands, rivers and grassland.

There are many reasons why we should conserve biodiversity. It is important for its own sake, and most people agree that we have a moral duty to protect the other species of animals and plants with which we share this planet. It is important for people – most of us enjoy seeing flowers, hearing birdsong and being in natural places, and there is clear evidence that contact with nature is beneficial to our physical and mental wellbeing. Biodiversity also provides economic and functional benefits, such as pollination, flood risk reduction and local climate amelioration. These functional benefits will become increasingly important as climate change leads to more frequent extreme weather events.

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<sup>1</sup> [Biodiversity Action Reporting System ukbars.defra.gov.uk](http://ukbars.defra.gov.uk)



## **1.4 Structure of the LBAP**

- 1.4.1 The LBAP includes background information on how it fits in with other Council policies and initiatives, and with national and London-wide biodiversity plans. It then identifies priority habitats and species, setting objectives and, where appropriate, targets for each. Finally, there are four action plans.
- 1.4.2 Biodiversity Action Plans are generally made up of a series of habitat action plans and species action plans for each of the priority habitats and species. In Tower Hamlets, we have found it more useful to divide our LBAP into four action plans based around the major land uses in the borough: the built environment; gardens and grounds; rivers and standing water; and parks, squares and burial grounds.
- 1.4.3 Each action plan lists the priority species and habitats relevant to the plan. It then sets out what the key stakeholders can do to achieve the objectives and targets for these species and habitats, and what will be done to raise awareness of biodiversity. The action plans do not include lists of detailed actions that will be undertaken to achieve the objectives and targets. These will be identified throughout the life of the plan and entered and reported on in the online Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS)<sup>2</sup>.

## **2 Background**

### **2.1 Relationship to other policies and plans in Tower Hamlets**

A wide range of European, national and regional policy and legislation has a bearing on biodiversity conservation. Full details of these are available on the Tower Habitats website<sup>3</sup> and it is not necessary to detail them here, as this LBAP has no direct bearing on their implementation. The LBAP does, however, directly affect the implementation of Tower Hamlets Council's planning policy and the Tower Hamlets Green Grid.

#### **2.1.1 Planning Policy**

Planning Policy in Tower Hamlets is set out in the Local Plan. The two main Development Plan Documents, the Core Strategy (adopted 2010)<sup>4</sup> and the Managing Development Document (adopted 2013)<sup>5</sup>, both contain policies seeking to protect and enhance biodiversity. Policy SP04, part 3, in the adopted Core Strategy seeks to protect and enhance biodiversity value through the design of open space and buildings and ensuring development protects and enhances areas of biodiversity value in order to achieve a net gain in biodiversity. The more detailed Policy DM11 in the Managing Development Document (see Box 2 overleaf) includes two direct references to the LBAP. Clause 3 provides protection in planning to the priority species identified in the LBAP, and clause 4 indicates that biodiversity enhancements in major developments should contribute to the objectives in the LBAP. To assist developers in this, each action plan sets out details of how developers can contribute to the objectives and targets in this LBAP.

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<sup>2</sup> [Biodiversity Action Reporting System ukbars.defra.gov.uk](http://ukbars.defra.gov.uk)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.towerhabitats.org/>

<sup>4</sup> [Core Strategy Development Plan Document](#) (LB Tower Hamlets 2010)

<sup>5</sup> [Managing Development Document Development Plan Document](#) (LB Tower Hamlets 2013)

## **Box 2: Policy DM11 Living buildings & biodiversity**

1. Development will be required to provide elements of a 'living building'.
2. Existing elements of biodiversity value should be protected or replaced within the development and additional habitat provision made to increase biodiversity value.
3. Developments which will cause damage to a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation, or significantly harm the population or conservation status of a protected or priority species\*, will not be supported unless the social or economic benefits of the development clearly outweigh the loss of biodiversity.
4. Major development will need to submit an Ecology Assessment demonstrating biodiversity enhancement in accordance with the Council's Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

\*supporting paragraph 11.4 states "priority species are those identified in the UK, London, or Tower Hamlets Biodiversity Action Plans"

### **2.1.2 Tower Hamlets Green Grid**

The Tower Hamlets Green Grid Strategy<sup>6</sup> is the Council's strategy to create an interlinked network of high quality, multifunctional, accessible, green open spaces and waterways in Tower Hamlets that will encourage active lifestyles and improve quality of life. Improving biodiversity is one of the key principles behind the Green Grid, which is the key delivery mechanism to provide the connectivity of habitats which is an important element of biodiversity conservation. The priorities in this LBAP will guide the biodiversity enhancement to be delivered through Green Grid projects.

## **2.2 Relationship with other biodiversity action plans and strategies**

2.2.1 Action for biodiversity in Tower Hamlets can contribute to London-wide and national targets for priority species and habitats. These priorities and targets are, therefore, an important factor in setting our local priorities.

### **2.2.2 National**

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan has been replaced by national biodiversity strategies for England, Wales and Scotland. *Biodiversity 2020: a strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services* (DEFRA 2011)<sup>7</sup> has moved away from the habitat- and species-based approach and clearly-defined targets of a biodiversity action plan, and concentrates instead on landscape-scale conservation, with an overall target of halting biodiversity loss by 2020. Guidance on national priority habitats and species now comes from the list of Habitats and Species of Principal Importance in England<sup>8</sup>, identified under Section 41 of the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006<sup>9</sup>.

### **2.2.3 London**

Priority habitats<sup>10</sup> and species<sup>11</sup> in London have been identified by the London Biodiversity Partnership. There are London action plans in place for the habitats and a few of the species. The London Plan<sup>12</sup> sets targets for the areas of priority habitats to be maintained, enhanced and created by 2020.

<sup>6</sup> [Tower Hamlets Green Grid Strategy](#) (LB Tower Hamlets 2010)

<sup>7</sup> [Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services](#) (DEFRA 2011)

<sup>8</sup> [Habitats and Species of Principal Importance in England](#) (Secretary of State for Environment, Farming & Rural Affairs 2010)

<sup>9</sup> [Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006](#)

<sup>10</sup> [London's BAP priority habitats](#) (London Biodiversity Partnership)

<sup>11</sup> [London's BAP priority species](#) (London Biodiversity Partnership)

<sup>12</sup> [The London Plan – Spatial Development Strategy for London July 2011](#) (Mayor of London)

#### 2.2.4 Other local BAPs

At least two major landowners within the borough have their own biodiversity action plans. The eastern edge of Tower Hamlets lies within the Lee Valley Regional Park, which has published the Lee Valley Biodiversity Action Plan 2000<sup>13</sup>. Canary Wharf Ltd has also published a corporate biodiversity action plan<sup>14</sup> for its estate on the Isle of Dogs.

### 2.3 **Management and monitoring**

2.3.1 Implementation and monitoring of the LBAP is overseen by a Steering Group. This is chaired by the Council's Biodiversity Officer and includes representatives of relevant Council departments (including Parks and Strategic Planning), Tower Hamlets Homes, other social housing providers (currently Poplar Harca and EastendHomes), environmental groups (currently Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, Mudchute Association, Thames21 and Trees for Cities) and local residents. The Steering Group will publish an annual report detailing progress on implementation of the LBAP.

2.3.2 The four action plans are co-ordinated by three Working Groups of stakeholders, with a single Working Group covering the Built Environment and Gardens & Grounds Action Plans. The actions for habitats and species developed through this LBAP will be entered onto the Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS)<sup>15</sup>.



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<sup>13</sup> [Lee Valley Park Biodiversity Action Plan](#) (LVRPA 2000)

<sup>14</sup> [Canary Wharf Group Biodiversity Action Plan 2008-2013](#) (Canary Wharf Group 2008)

<sup>15</sup> [Biodiversity Action Reporting System ukbars.defra.gov.uk](http://ukbars.defra.gov.uk)



### 3 Priority habitats and species

#### 3.1 Priority habitats

The following habitats have been identified as priorities for conservation action in Tower Hamlets.

<b>Table 1: Priority habitats</b> <b>Habitat</b>	<b>England priority<sup>16</sup></b>	<b>London priority<sup>17</sup></b>
Neutral grassland		
Calcareous grassland	X	X
Open mosaic habitats	X	X
Native broadleaved woodland		X
Orchards	X	
Mixed native hedgerows	X	
Rivers	X	X
Standing water (canals & docks)		canals
Ponds	X	X
Reed beds	X	X

##### 3.1.1 Neutral grassland

Grassland is widespread in Tower Hamlets, especially in parks and around housing estates. Due to the underlying geology, almost all of this is on neutral, rather than acidic or alkaline, soils. Much of it is amenity grassland, which is short-mown and low in plant diversity, but there are also flower-rich meadows which support a wealth of invertebrates. Most of these have been deliberately created comparatively recently, but there are a few small areas which may be relict older grassland. The most extensive areas of meadow are in Mile End Park, Mudchute and Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park.



##### Objectives for neutral grassland

- To ensure existing meadows are protected and managed to retain their value.
- To enhance grassland in parks, housing estates and community gardens by planting bulbs and wildflower plugs and seeds. **[Target: 1 hectare]**
- To increase the area of biodiverse neutral grassland by creating new meadows in parks, housing estates, schools and community gardens. **[Target: 1 hectare]**

##### 3.1.2 Calcareous grassland

There is no natural calcareous (chalk) grassland in Tower Hamlets, but meadows planted on chalk rubble or crushed concrete will support chalk-loving plants. Scrapyard Meadow in Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park is the best example of this in the borough. There were areas of calcareous grassland at Mudchute until recently, but these are now more or less covered in bramble and coarse grasses. Chalk grassland is a priority habitat for



<sup>16</sup> [Habitats and Species of Principal Importance in England](#) (Secretary of State for Environment, Farming & Rural Affairs 2010)

<sup>17</sup> [London's BAP priority habitats](#) (London Biodiversity Partnership)

England and London, though national and London plans are directed at natural chalk grassland.

#### Objectives for calcareous grassland

- To ensure existing calcareous grassland is protected and managed to retain its value.
- To restore former calcareous grassland at Mudchute. **[Target: 0.25 hectare]**
- To increase the area of calcareous grassland by creating new calcareous grassland in parks, housing estates, schools and community gardens. **[No specific target]**

### **3.1.3 Open mosaic habitats**

The sparsely-vegetated but flower-rich habitats typical of wasteland or brownfield land support important communities of rare invertebrates as well as the Black Redstart, a specially-protected bird. Now termed “open mosaic habitats on previously developed land”, this is a priority habitat for England and London. Large areas of this habitat have been lost in recent years as derelict sites are redeveloped, and further losses are inevitable. It is not a habitat which readily lends itself to public amenity spaces as, although it can look beautiful when in flower, it is bare and unappealing in winter.



#### Objectives for open mosaic habitats

- To ensure that, where development leads to the loss of open mosaic habitats, at least an equal area of replacement open mosaic habitat is created.
- To increase the area of open mosaic habitats through creating new habitat on green roofs, within landscaping around industrial developments and, where appropriate, in parks. **[Target: 1 hectare]**

### **3.1.4 Native broadleaved woodland**

There is little woodland in Tower Hamlets, and none of it is ancient woodland. The largest area of woodland is in Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, and there are small areas in Mile End Park, Weavers Fields and Mudchute. Little of the woodland in the borough is exclusively native, with Cemetery Park dominated by Sycamore. Lowland mixed deciduous woodland is priority habitat in England and woodland is a London priority habitat. While not strictly woodland, the numerous trees in the borough’s parks, streets, housing estates and gardens are an important component of the “urban forest”, providing valuable habitat for birds, bats and invertebrates. This is particularly true of native trees and those which are good sources of nectar and/or berries, as well as large trees which provide structural habitat. Managing these trees properly, and planting more in places where they do not harm existing open habitats, will contribute to biodiversity conservation. The Mayor has pledged to plant 2000 trees by 2018.



#### Objectives for woodland

- To protect existing woodland and manage it to retain its biodiversity value.

- To enhance existing woodlands by gradually increasing the proportion of native trees and shrubs, increasing the diversity of ground flora and/or improving woodland structure. **[Target: 5 hectares]**
- To increase the area of native woodland through planting new woods in appropriate places in parks and housing estates. **[Target: 0.2 hectare]**

### 3.1.5 Orchards

Traditional orchards, composed of fruit and nut trees with meadow beneath, are a valuable habitat, supporting a number of specialist invertebrates. A number of small orchards have been planted in Tower Hamlets in the last few years, as part of the increasing trend for local food growing. Traditional orchards are a priority habitat in England.

#### Objectives for orchards

- To manage existing and new orchards to promote their biodiversity value.
- To increase the area of orchards by planting new orchards in parks, housing estates, schools and community gardens. **[Target: 0.5 hectare]**



### 3.1.6 Mixed native hedgerows

Hedgerows, especially those made up of a mixture of native shrubs and trees, provide food and shelter for a wide range of animals, and can act as corridors to help plants and animals disperse through the landscape. There are numerous hedges in Tower Hamlets. Hedgerows are a national priority habitat.

#### Objectives for hedgerows

- To ensure existing hedges are protected and managed to maintain their biodiversity value.
- To increase the length of hedgerows by planting more mixed native hedges in parks, amenity spaces, schools, gardens and streets. **[Target: 500 metres]**



### 3.1.7 Rivers

The Thames and Lea respectively form the southern and eastern boundaries of the borough. Both are tidal and have been highly modified, with vertical walls, and both have issues with water quality and invasive non-native species. Nevertheless, they support a wealth of aquatic birds, fish and invertebrates. Providing vegetation such as reed beds along the river walls can improve water quality and habitats for fish and birds. Sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) can also improve water quality through reducing the amount of runoff entering our rivers. Rivers are a priority habitat for England and London.



#### Objectives for rivers

- To enhance rivers by controlling invasive species, providing marginal vegetation on river walls, and encouraging schemes to improve water quality. **[Target: 200 metres enhanced]**



### 3.1.8 Standing open water (canals & docks)

Tower Hamlets contains a network of canals, which support populations of aquatic birds, fish, invertebrates and plants. The tow-paths also provide narrow green corridors. Some sections of canal are almost devoid of marginal vegetation. The docks also support fish and water birds, but are even more lacking in vegetation and places for birds to nest. The provision of marginal vegetation through innovative, low maintenance, robust solutions such as suspended gabion structures and suitably specified floating island technologies can address these issues providing they are agreed in advance with the waterway owner. Canals are a London priority habitat.



#### Objectives for canals and docks

- To maintain the biodiversity value of canals by controlling invasive species.
- To enhance canals by increasing the length of canal with emergent and marginal vegetation. **[Target: 250 metres]**
- To enhance docks by providing vegetation on dock walls and floating islands. **[Target: 5 sites]**

### 3.1.9 Ponds

Ponds are excellent for wildlife, supporting amphibians, dragonflies and many other invertebrates. There are numerous ponds in Tower Hamlets, in parks, community gardens, schools and private gardens. Ponds are a priority habitat for England and London.



#### Objectives for ponds

- To ensure existing ponds are protected and managed to maintain their biodiversity value.
- To increase the number of ponds by creating new ponds in appropriate places in parks, housing estates, schools and gardens. **[Target: 5 ponds]**

### 3.1.10 Reed beds

Reed beds are important for a number of specialist birds and invertebrates. Reed beds in Tower Hamlets are found as intermittent, mostly narrow, fringes along our rivers and canals, with a slightly more extensive area at East India Dock Basin. Some are suffering from invasive non-native species and scrub encroachment. Reed bed is a priority habitat for England and London.



#### Objectives for reed beds

- To ensure existing reed beds are protected and managed to maintain their biodiversity value.
- To enhance reed beds by removing scrub and invasive species. **[Target: 0.1 hectare]**
- To increase the area of reed beds by planting new reed beds along rivers, canals and dock walls and on floating islands in the docks. **[Target: 0.25 hectare]**



### 3.2 Priority species

The conservation of species is generally best delivered through action to protect and enhance their habitats. However, there are a number of species, or groups of species, which can benefit from specific, targeted actions. These have been identified as priority species in Tower Hamlets.

Table 2: priority species Species or group	Scientific name	England priority <sup>18</sup>	London priority <sup>19</sup>
Bats (all species)	Vespertilionidae	some	X
Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	X	X
Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	X	X
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>		X
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>		
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>		
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	X	X
Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>		
Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		X
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>		X
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>		
Amphibians (all species)	Amphibia	some	some
European Eel	<i>Anguilla anguilla</i>	X	X
Brimstone butterfly	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>		
Common Blue butterfly	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>		
Bumblebees (all species)	<i>Bombus</i> species		
Brown-banded Carder Bee	<i>Bombus humilis</i>	X	X
Stag Beetle	<i>Lucanus cervus</i>	X	X
Streaked Bombardier Beetle	<i>Brachinus sclopeta</i>	X	X
Black Poplar	<i>Populus nigra</i> ssp <i>betulifolia</i>		X
Jersey Cudweed	<i>Gnaphalium luteoalbum</i>		

#### 3.2.1 Bats

At least three species of bats are regularly recorded in Tower Hamlets. Common Pipistrelle and Soprano Pipistrelle are fairly widespread in the borough, and Daubenton's Bat occurs along waterways in the east. There have been occasional records of several other species, including Noctule and Nathusius' Pipistrelle, in recent years. Bats require safe places to roost, usually in buildings or old trees, and good foraging habitat with plenty of nocturnal insects. The likelihood of bats roosting in a building increases with the age of the building, the presence of features such as lofts and gable ends, and the proximity to good feeding habitat such as woodland, water and large open spaces. General improvements to, and increase in, habitats such as woods, hedgerows and meadows will benefit bats. Specific interventions for bats generally relate to provision of roosting sites, such as bat boxes, in appropriate places, and including night-flowering



<sup>18</sup> [Habitats and Species of Principal Importance in England](#) (Secretary of State for Environment, Farming & Rural Affairs 2010)

<sup>19</sup> [London's BAP priority species](#) (London Biodiversity Partnership)

plants in landscaping in areas where bats are likely to forage. All bats and their roosts are strictly protected under the European Union Habitats Directive<sup>20</sup>. All bats are London priority species, and Soprano Pipistrelle and Noctule are priority species in England.

#### Objectives for bats

- To ensure potential impacts on bats are considered in the assessment of all planning applications.
- To provide roost sites for bats, such as bat boxes or bat bricks, in new developments, housing estates, parks and schools in parts of the borough where bats are likely to use them. **[Target: 20 sites]**
- To encourage nocturnal insects by planting night-scented plants in landscaping schemes in parts of the borough where bats are likely to forage. **[No specific target]**

### 3.2.2 Hedgehog

Hedgehogs have declined alarmingly in Tower Hamlets in recent years, part of a national decline. They still survive in the south of the Isle of Dogs, but there are no confirmed recent records from elsewhere in the borough. As they are nocturnal and tend to occur in private gardens, surveying for Hedgehogs is difficult, and encouraging residents to report hedgehog sightings remains a priority. As much of their habitat is within private gardens, encouraging hedgehog-friendly gardening is likely to be more effective than direct interventions. This include increasing connectivity by ensuring Hedgehogs can pass under garden fences, avoiding use of slug pellets, and checking bonfires before lighting them. Specific interventions generally relate to providing secure places to hibernate. The Hedgehog is a priority species for England and London.

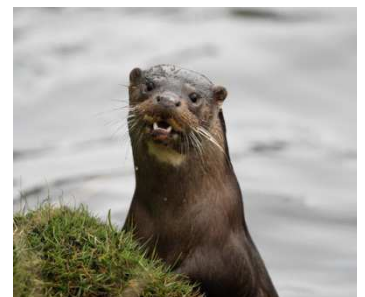


#### Objectives for Hedgehog

- Continue to seek information on the distribution of Hedgehogs in the borough.
- Encourage Hedgehog-friendly gardening in areas where Hedgehogs are still present by providing information to residents on how to help hedgehogs.
- Install Hedgehog homes in appropriate places in parks, housing estates, schools and community gardens in parts of the borough where Hedgehogs still occur. **[No specific target]**

### 3.2.3 Otter

Otters are not currently resident in Tower Hamlets, but they occur further up the River Lea and the population is expanding, so they could easily colonise in future. There has been one recent record in Tower Hamlets. Otter conservation is largely a matter of improving river habitats and water quality. In heavily-modified watercourses such as we have in Tower Hamlets, lack of suitable breeding sites could be a limiting factor for Otters, so the provision of artificial holts in suitable waterside



<sup>20</sup> [Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora](#)

locations could assist colonisation. The Otter is strictly protected under the European Union Habitats Directive<sup>21</sup> and is a priority species for England and London.

#### Objectives for Otter

- To ensure that the possible presence of Otters is considered in the assessment of planning applications adjacent to watercourses.
- To install artificial holts in appropriate waterside locations, including in new developments. **[Target: 2 sites]**

#### **3.2.4 Black Redstart**

The Black Redstart is a nationally scarce breeding bird, associated with industrial and brownfield sites. A few pairs nest in Tower Hamlets each year, mostly in the south and east of the borough, but numbers and sites vary from year to year. In some years, up to 10% of the UK population might nest in the borough. Conservation of Black Redstarts is linked to the provision of open mosaic habitats, including on green roofs, for which the species is a flagship in London. Specific interventions involve providing nest sites in suitable places. The Black Redstart is strictly protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981<sup>22</sup>, and is a priority species in London.



#### Objectives for Black Redstart

- To ensure that the possible presence of Black Redstarts is considered in the assessment of planning applications.
- To provide suitable nest sites for Black Redstarts in areas where open mosaic habitats are created or retained. **[Target: 5 sites]**

#### **3.2.5 Common Tern**

A few pairs of Common Terns nest in Tower Hamlets, all on rafts provided for them in the docks. There is plenty of good feeding habitat along rivers, canals, and in the docks, but as a breeding species in the borough, Common Terns are wholly reliant on the provision of artificial floating nest sites, ideally shingle-covered rafts. In 2012 and 2013, nesting took place at East India Dock Basin, Blackwall Basin and Shadwell Basin.



#### Objectives for Common Tern

- To ensure that, where new developments reduce the value of an existing breeding site for Common Terns, this is compensated for by the provision of rafts in suitable places nearby.
- To increase the available nesting habitat for Common Terns through the provision of additional rafts on suitable water bodies. **[Target: 10 additional rafts]**

<sup>21</sup> [Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora](#)

<sup>22</sup> [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 \(as amended\)](#)

### 3.2.6 House Martin

The House Martin has declined markedly as a breeding bird in Tower Hamlets in recent years, as it has across London and nationally. The main reason for the decline is probably a decrease in flying insects, perhaps coupled with changes on its migration routes or wintering grounds. This is best addressed through general improvements to wildlife habitats of all types. As it nests on buildings, nest sites are not a limiting factor. However, as a communal breeder, House Martins can be encouraged to nest by leaving old nests or installing artificial House Martin nests on walls.



#### Objectives for House Martin

- To encourage new House Martin colonies by installing artificial nests on suitable buildings. **[Target: 5 sites]**

### 3.2.7 House Sparrow

The House Sparrow, often regarded as a symbol of London (the “cockney sparrer”), has declined hugely across London in the last 20 or so years, disappearing from large areas. Its current distribution in Tower Hamlets is patchy, but it remains common in some parts of the borough. The reasons for the decline remain unknown despite extensive research, but may include habitat loss, pollution, predation and possibly disease. There is some evidence that the decline has halted, and that sparrows are returning to some places where they had disappeared. Because the reasons for the decline are not understood, it is not clear how best to help sparrow conservation. Nevertheless, general habitat improvements in gardens and parks, which increase the availability of seeds and insects for food, and cover for nesting, might help and will certainly help other birds. Specific interventions for House Sparrows involve creating suitable nest sites, either through erecting nest boxes or providing dense climbing plants growing up walls. The House Sparrow is a priority species for England and London.



#### Objectives for House Sparrow

- To increase the availability of nest sites for House Sparrows by installing sparrow terrace nest boxes or growing dense climbers on walls. **[Target: 20 sites]**

### 3.2.8 Kingfisher

The Kingfisher is a winter visitor to Tower Hamlets' waterways and docks, but does not currently breed in the borough. A lack of suitable nest sites is probably the main factor preventing Kingfishers from nesting here. Providing artificial nesting banks for Kingfishers in undisturbed waterside locations, including within new waterside developments, would encourage nesting. The Kingfisher is strictly protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981<sup>23</sup>.



<sup>23</sup> [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 \(as amended\)](#)



#### Objectives for Kingfisher

- To increase the availability of nest sites for Kingfishers by providing artificial nesting banks in appropriate waterside locations. **[Target: 3 sites]**

#### **3.2.9 Peregrine**

The Peregrine, the fastest animal in the world, has successfully colonised London over the last 15 years, nesting on tall buildings. Up to three pairs nest in Tower Hamlets, which is probably the maximum number of territories the area will support. Breeding success has not always been good, due to disturbance or poor nest sites. The provision of nest boxes in undisturbed parts of roofs on existing or new tall buildings could significantly increase the success of Peregrines in the borough. The Peregrine is strictly protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981<sup>24</sup> and is a priority species in London.



#### Objectives for Peregrine

- To increase the availability of nest sites for Peregrines by providing nest boxes on tall buildings. **[Target: 5 sites]**

#### **3.2.10 Sand Martin**

A few pairs of Sand Martins nest in drainage holes in the walls of canals and docks across the borough. Sand Martins respond well to the provision of artificial nesting banks in suitable places, especially near water. The provision of artificial banks could significantly increase the population of Sand Martins in the borough. The Sand Martin is a London priority species.



#### Objectives for Sand Martin

- To increase the availability of nest sites for Sand Martins by providing artificial nesting banks in suitable locations. **[Target: 3 sites]**

#### **3.2.11 Swift**

Swifts have declined across Britain in recent years, and one of the reasons is probably a lack of suitable nest sites in modern buildings. Nest boxes for Swifts can easily be installed on buildings, or incorporated into the design of new buildings. Being colonial nesters, Swifts can be encouraged to use nest boxes by playing recordings of their calls from the buildings where the boxes are sited.



#### Objectives for Swift

- To increase the availability of nest sites for Swifts by providing nest boxes on suitable buildings, including in new developments. **[Target: 15 sites]**

<sup>24</sup> [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 \(as amended\)](#)

### 3.2.13 Amphibians

Four species of native amphibians occur in Tower Hamlets. The Common Frog and Smooth Newt are fairly common and widespread, the Common Toad occurs in a few places, and there is one population of Great Crested Newts resulting from a deliberate introduction in the Spitalfields area. Amphibians breed in ponds, but spend much of the rest of their lives on land. Conserving our existing ponds and creating new ones will help amphibians, but it is crucial that ponds are surrounded by suitable terrestrial habitat which provides cover and food.



The Great Crested Newt is strictly protected under the European Union Habitats Directive<sup>25</sup> and is a priority species in England and London. The Common Toad is a priority species in England.

#### Objectives for amphibians

- To ensure that existing and new ponds are connected with suitable terrestrial habitat for amphibians. **[No specific target]**

### 3.2.14 European Eel

The Eel has declined hugely in Britain in recent years. It has a complex life history, breeding in the sea and spending most of its life in freshwater. One of the likely reasons for its decline is an increase in structures which block migration along waterways. Actions which enhance habitat and water quality in our rivers and canals will benefit Eels. Specific action is required to maintain and improve the ability of Eels to migrate. Old Ford Lock is the one known barrier in Tower Hamlets which would benefit from an Eel pass. The European Eel is a priority species for England and London.



#### Objectives for Eel

- To ensure Eel migration is considered when assessing any new structures in watercourses.
- To assist Eel migration by installing Eel passes to existing barriers to migration. **[Target: 1 site]**

### 3.2.15 Brimstone butterfly

The Brimstone is a fairly common and widespread butterfly in Tower Hamlets, but its caterpillar food plants, Common Buckthorn and Alder Buckthorn, are quite rare, except in Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, where both buckthorns have been extensively planted, and where the butterfly consequently has a high population. Common (or Purging) Buckthorn is a sizeable shrub which likes fairly dry conditions, while Alder Buckthorn is a smaller shrub which likes damp soils. As adult Brimstones range over a wide area, they are quick to take advantage of buckthorns wherever



<sup>25</sup> [Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora](#)

they are planted. Purging Buckthorn is a good plant for a mixed hedge. Brimstone early stages are on it between April and July. The shrub can be trimmed at any other time. Sea Buckthorn, sometimes used in landscaping, is not a Brimstone caterpillar food plant.

#### Objectives for Brimstone

- To increase the resource of food plants for caterpillars of the Brimstone butterfly by planting Common Buckthorn and Alder Buckthorn in suitable places. **[Target: 25 sites]**

#### **3.2.16 Common Blue butterfly**

The Common Blue is found in several places in Tower Hamlets, and is a good indicator of comparatively species-rich grassland. Its distribution is probably limited by the availability of its preferred caterpillar food plant, Birdsfoot Trefoil. Ensuring that Birdsfoot Trefoil is included in new meadows, and planting it into existing grassland where it is absent, will benefit Common Blues.



#### Objectives for Common Blue

- To increase the resource of food plants for caterpillars of the Common Blue butterfly by planting Birdsfoot Trefoil in grasslands and on green roofs. **[Target: 10 sites]**

#### **3.2.17 Bumblebees**

Bumblebees are in serious decline throughout Britain, and indeed all over the world, due largely to habitat loss and pesticides. Bumblebees are vitally important as pollinators of food crops. Bumblebees have been chosen as priority species in Tower Hamlets as a proxy for all pollinating insects, which include other bees, flies, butterflies and beetles. Action for bumblebees will benefit other pollinators, too. Several species of bumblebee are still common and widespread in Tower Hamlets. These generalist species will take nectar from a wide range of flowers wherever they can find it. The best way to help them is to plant more nectar-rich flowers in parks, gardens and the built environment. The Brown-banded Carder Bee is a rare bumblebee associated with brownfield sites, which occurs in a few places in Tower Hamlets. It will benefit from actions to increase open mosaic habitats. The Brown-banded Carder Bee is a priority species for England and London.



#### Objectives for bumblebees

- To increase the food resource for bumblebees and other pollinators by planting nectar-rich flowers in parks, gardens and the built environment, including growing ivy on suitable structures in sunny places. **[Target: 50 sites]**
- To increase nesting sites for bumblebees by installing bee boxes or insect hotels in suitable places. **[Target: 20 sites]**

#### **3.2.18 Stag Beetle**

The Stag Beetle is Britain's largest beetle. It has declined across Europe, and London is now a major stronghold for the species, which relies on dead wood.





It is common in south-east London and also in Epping Forest. It has a long life-cycle, the larvae spending several years inside dead wood before the adults emerge. Surprisingly, there are no recent records from Tower Hamlets, though it may just be under-recorded. Action for Stag Beetles involves increasing the amount of buried or partly-buried dead wood, usually by building loggeries. These will benefit other deadwood invertebrates and fungi, even if no Stag Beetles are present in the area, so the Stag Beetle is to some extent a proxy for deadwood invertebrates in general.

#### Objectives for Stag Beetle

- To increase the available habitat for Stag Beetles and other deadwood invertebrates by creating loggeries in parks, housing estates and community gardens. **[Target: 15 sites]**

### **3.2.19 Streaked Bombardier Beetle**

The Streaked Bombardier Beetle is extremely rare in Britain. It has been found on only four sites in recent years, all of them in East London, and is thought to survive on only one of these. It was found in Mile End Park in 2010, but may have been lost because the site became too overgrown. This site has recently been restored. The beetle is associated with brownfield sites, favouring sparse vegetation with plenty of bare, stony ground. It will benefit from actions which increase open mosaic habitats. Specific targeted actions are to maintain the former site in Mile End Park in a suitable state for the beetle, and to create areas of bare ground with stones and rocks as part of open mosaic habitats.



#### Objectives for Streaked Bombardier Beetle

- To ensure that the redevelopment of sites which contain suitable habitat for the Streaked Bombardier Beetle takes account of the possible presence of this rare species.
- To maintain the former site for the Streaked Bombardier Beetle in Mile End Park to provide suitable habitat for the beetle.

### **3.2.20 Black Poplar**

The Black Poplar is Britain's rarest native timber tree. It has an historical association with Tower Hamlets, as it is the origin of the place name Poplar. There are now very few mature Black Poplars remaining in the borough. For a number of reasons, Black Poplars no longer reproduce naturally in Britain, and the conservation of the species therefore depends on planting. The vast majority of Black Poplars in Britain belong to a fairly small number of genetically identical clones, each clone having originated as cuttings from a single tree. Planting the rarer clones to preserve genetic diversity is particularly important. The Black Poplar is a large tree which is best planted well away from buildings.



#### Objectives for Black Poplar

- To protect and manage our existing Black Poplars to maximise their lifespan.
- To plant Black Poplars, especially those belonging to rare clones, in suitable places in parks and housing amenity land. **[Target: 25 trees]**



### 3.2.21 Jersey Cudweed

Jersey Cudweed is a rare plant in Britain and is protected under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981<sup>26</sup>. It grows in dry, open places. It has been found in recent years on bare ground and in paving cracks in several places around the docks, including Poplar Dock Marina, Millwall Inner Dock and St Katharine's Dock. Although these populations are highly unlikely to be of native origin, the protection still applies.



#### Objectives for Jersey Cudweed

- To ensure the known populations of Jersey Cudweed in the borough are protected or, where this is not possible, their loss is appropriately mitigated.
- To ensure that development sites in Docklands with suitable habitat are surveyed for Jersey Cudweed so that it can be properly considered in assessing planning applications.

### References

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[Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services](#) (DEFRA 2011)

[Canary Wharf Group Biodiversity Action Plan 2008-2013](#) (Canary Wharf Group 2008)

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[Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora](#)

[Habitats and Species of Principal Importance in England](#) (Secretary of State for Environment, Farming & Rural Affairs 2010)

[Lee Valley Park Biodiversity Action Plan](#) (LVRPA 2000)

[London's BAP priority habitats](#) (London Biodiversity Partnership)

[London's BAP priority species](#) (London Biodiversity Partnership)

[Managing Development Document Development Plan Document](#) (LB Tower Hamlets 2013)

[Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006](#)

[The London Plan – Spatial Development Strategy for London July 2011](#) (Mayor of London)

Tower Habitats website [www.towerhabitats.org](http://www.towerhabitats.org)

[Tower Hamlets Green Grid Strategy](#) (LB Tower Hamlets 2010)

[Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 \(as amended\)](#)

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<sup>26</sup> [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 \(as amended\)](#)

## 4 The action plans

### Built Environment Action Plan

#### Introduction

Tower Hamlets is a densely built-up borough, and over one third of its area is occupied by buildings, streets and car parks. The built environment can be surprisingly rich in wildlife. Buildings provide roosts for bats, and nest sites for birds which more traditionally nest on cliffs. These include the spectacular Peregrine Falcon and the rare Black Redstart. There is also an increasing population of Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, the former a species of conservation concern in England as it is in serious decline in its traditional coastal haunts.

We can enhance the built environment for wildlife in many ways. Green roofs are the easiest place to replace our disappearing brownfield (open mosaic) habitats. Buildings can be enhanced for bats and birds by providing custom-designed nesting and roosting sites, either built into the fabric of new buildings or retrofitted to existing ones. Climbers and other forms of green walls can provide nectar for bees and nesting sites for our declining House Sparrows. And streets can be greened with trees, hedges and planters full of nectar-rich flowers.



Biodiverse green roof on the Soanes Centre, Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park

## **Priority habitats**

Open mosaic habitats

## **Priority species**

Bats

Black Redstart

House Martin

House Sparrow

Peregrine

Swift

Brimstone butterfly

Common Blue butterfly

Bumblebees including Brown-banded Carder Bee

Streaked Bombardier Beetle

Jersey Cudweed

## **How we will achieve the objectives and targets for these habitats and species**

### Tower Hamlets Council will:

Ensure that potential harm to these species and habitats is given due consideration in the assessment of planning applications;

Seek biodiversity enhancements which contribute to these objectives and targets in new developments through the planning process;

Work with Tower Hamlets Homes and social housing providers to identify suitable buildings for retrofitting biodiverse green roofs and identify funding sources to implement these;

Create sustainable urban drainage schemes in streets and include planting which contributes to these targets;

Ensure that Green Grid projects in the built environment contribute to these targets wherever possible.

### Tower Hamlets Homes and other social housing providers can:

Include biodiverse green roofs which meet the definition of open mosaic habitats in all new build and estate regeneration schemes;

Retrofit biodiverse green roofs which meet the definition of open mosaic habitats on existing buildings;

Grow ivy and other nectar-rich climbers up suitable walls;

Install planters with nectar-rich flowers and/or plant nectar-rich flowers in existing neglected planters;

Install bat boxes, bumblebee boxes and nest boxes for Peregrines, Swifts, House Sparrows, House Martins and other birds in appropriate places on buildings;

Avoid removing old House Martin nests from buildings.

### Developers can:

Include biodiverse green roofs which meet the definition of open mosaic habitats on all new development;

Include living walls with nectar-rich climbers in new development;

Provide planters with nectar-rich flowers in new development;

Incorporate roost sites for bats and nest sites for Swifts within the design of new buildings;  
Install nest boxes for Peregrines, House Sparrows, House Martins and Black Redstarts in appropriate places on new buildings.

Residents can:

Grow nectar-rich flowers in window boxes;

Avoid removing old House Martin nests from buildings;

Install bat boxes, bumblebee boxes and nest boxes for House Sparrows and other birds in appropriate places on buildings;

Grow nectar-rich climbers such as ivy, honeysuckle and jasmine up walls.

**How we will raise awareness of biodiversity in the built environment**

Tower Hamlets Council will:

Provide news and information on design for biodiversity on the Tower Habitats website;

Organise at least one visit a year to examples of best practice for planners, developers and other professionals.



## Gardens & Grounds Action Plan

### Introduction

Almost 40% of the area of Tower Hamlets is occupied by gardens and the landscaped areas around housing estates, schools, businesses and other premises. By far the majority of this is housing amenity land. In the last few years, social housing providers and residents in Tower Hamlets have created some excellent wildlife habitats, such as meadows, copses, hedges, orchards and nectar-rich community gardens, around housing estates. The Mayor has pledged to increase the number of planting projects on estates.

Many schools have also created wildlife gardens, which are wonderful educational resources. Private gardens, too, can be havens for wildlife, supporting a wealth of birds and insects, as well as amphibians if there is a pond nearby. Private gardens may also be the last refuge for our disappearing population of Hedgehogs.

Landscaping around industrial premises may not need to look too “tidy” all the time, and often doesn’t have a recreational function. This offers an opportunity to retain or create at ground level the open mosaic habitats which are disappearing as brownfield sites are developed, and are increasingly being restricted to green roofs.



Winterton House Organic Garden has lots of nectar-rich flowers for bees

**Priority habitats**

Neutral grassland  
Calcareous grassland  
Open mosaic habitats  
Native broadleaved woodland  
Orchards  
Mixed native hedgerows  
Ponds

**Priority species**

Bats  
Hedgehog  
House Sparrow  
Amphibians  
Brimstone butterfly  
Common Blue butterfly  
Bumblebees including Brown-banded Carder Bee  
Stag Beetle  
Black Poplar

**How we will achieve the objectives and targets for these habitats and species**Tower Hamlets Council will:

Seek biodiversity enhancements which contribute to these targets in the landscaping of all new developments;

Provide free wildflower seeds to residents, schools and community groups;

Ensure that community gardens created or enhanced through its Community Volunteering scheme include features which contribute to the objectives and targets in the LBAP;

Work with Tower Hamlets Homes and social housing providers to advise on managing their land for biodiversity, identify enhancement projects and help to find funding sources to implement these.

Schools can:

Create meadows, orchards, ponds and hedges within their grounds;

Install bat boxes and nest boxes for birds and bumblebees;

Plant common or alder buckthorns, Birdsfoot Trefoil and other food plants for butterfly caterpillars;

Plant nectar-rich flowers to provide food for bumblebees and other insects;

Create loggeries and insect hotels.

Tower Hamlets Homes will:

Provide grants to schools and community groups for enhancements to school grounds and community gardens which contribute towards objectives and targets in the LBAP.

Tower Hamlets Homes and other social housing providers (and groups of residents managing community gardens) can:

Note: all of these can be included within estate regeneration schemes, but most of them can also be done in existing amenity space and community gardens.

Create wildlife habitats such as meadows, small areas of woodland, orchards, and hedges within the landscaping around estates, and enhance any existing habitats;

Install bat boxes, nest boxes for birds, bumblebee boxes and hedgehog homes in suitable places on estates;

Create loggeries and insect hotels;

Plant common or alder buckthorns, Birdsfoot Trefoil and other food plants for butterfly caterpillars;

Plant nectar-rich flowers to provide food for bumblebees and other insects;

Plant Black Poplars in suitable sites away from buildings and paths.

Developers can:

Create wildlife habitats such as meadows, small areas of woodland, orchards and mixed native hedges within the landscaping around developments;

Create open mosaic habitat within the landscaping around industrial developments;

Install bat boxes, nest boxes for birds, bumblebee boxes and hedgehog homes in suitable places within the landscaping around developments;

Ensure that lighting of new development (during construction and operation) does not adversely impact on foraging bats;

Create loggeries and insect hotels within the landscaping around developments;

Plant common or alder buckthorns, Birdsfoot Trefoil and other food plants for butterfly caterpillars within the landscaping around developments;

Plant nectar-rich flowers to provide food for bumblebees and other insects, within the landscaping around developments.

Thames21 will:

Create rain gardens in schools through its Fixing Broken Rivers project, including features which contribute to LBAP objectives and targets where possible.

Residents can:

Create wildlife ponds and small meadows in their gardens;

Plant mixed native hedges including common or alder buckthorns;

Plant flowering shrubs, annuals and perennials in gardens to provide a year-round nectar source for bees and other insects;

Install bird and bat boxes, hedgehog homes, bumblebee boxes, insect hotels, loggeries and other habitat features in gardens;

Ensure garden fences have gaps or holes which allow hedgehogs to pass between gardens.

## **How we will raise awareness of biodiversity in gardens**

### Tower Hamlets Council will:

Provide news and information on wildlife gardening and landscaping for wildlife on the Tower Habitats website;

Seek to facilitate the creation of training programmes which will provide opportunities for people, including residents, staff of local landlords and others, to better understand how gardens and grounds can be developed and managed to promote biodiversity.

### Tower Hamlets Homes and other social housing providers can:

Encourage residents to get involved in improving their estates for wildlife with events such as community planting days;

Provide information about local wildlife and events in newsletters and on noticeboards.



## Rivers & Standing Water Action Plan

### Introduction

Almost 15% of Tower Hamlets is covered by water, almost certainly the highest proportion of any London borough. This is a result of a very long Thames frontage around the south of the borough, and the large open water spaces of the docks. There is also a section of the tidal Lea, over 8 kilometres of canal and numerous small water bodies. The rivers and canals have rather little marginal vegetation, and suffer at times from poor water quality and invasive non-native species. They nevertheless support fish, aquatic birds and invertebrates, with a few scarce plants in the canals. The docks have limited habitats, but can hold large numbers of waterfowl in hard weather when most fresh waters are frozen. The ponds are important for amphibians, including a small introduced population of the protected Great Crested Newt in Spitalfields.

Water quality can be enhanced through getting rid of sewer misconnections, and through sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) reducing surface water runoff into rivers. The priorities for biodiversity action are to diversify the habitats in the waterways and docks, control invasive species, and increase the number of ponds.



East India Dock Basin Nature Reserve is one of the best wetlands in the borough

## **Priority habitats**

Rivers  
Standing open water (Canals & docks)  
Ponds  
Reed beds

## **Priority species**

Bats  
Otter  
Common Tern  
Kingfisher  
Sand Martin  
Amphibians  
European Eel

## **How we will achieve the objectives and targets for these habitats and species**

### Tower Hamlets Council will:

Seek enhancements to canals, rivers and docks which contribute to these targets through new development on adjacent sites;

Work with the Canal & River Trust and other stakeholders to seek funding for enhancements to waterways and docks which contribute to these targets;

Create new ponds in parks where appropriate;

Install a Kingfisher bank in Victoria Park.

### Schools can:

Create wildlife ponds in their school grounds.

### The Environment Agency can:

Co-ordinate efforts to control and eradicate invasive non-native species in the borough's waterways.

### Thames21 will:

Manage existing reed beds in the Lea Navigation to maintain and enhance their biodiversity value;

Seek funding for and create new reed beds in the Lea Navigation.

### The Canal & River Trust will:

Control and seek to eradicate invasive plant species in canals;

Enhance canals and docks by fitting vegetated gabion baskets to walls;

Identify suitable locations in the docks for vegetated gabion baskets, floating vegetated islands and tern rafts, and seek funding to facilitate these.

### Lee Valley Park will:

Seek to enhance habitats at East India Dock Basin, including de-silting of the basin to provide increased open water.

### Developers can:

Create ponds with wildlife value (as opposed to purely ornamental water features) within landscape schemes for housing or commercial developments;

Fit vegetated gabion baskets to walls of rivers, canals or docks within or adjacent to their development sites;

Install vegetated rafts in docks within or adjacent to their development sites;

Install tern rafts in docks within or adjacent to their development sites;

Eradicate invasive plants from water bodies within or adjacent to their development sites.

**How we will raise awareness of biodiversity in rivers and docks**

Tower Hamlets Council will:

Provide news and information on wildlife and events along waterways on the Tower Habitats website.

Thames21 will:

Run the Fixing Broken Rivers project with local schools about the urban water cycle, sustainable drainage and threats to water quality in rivers.

The Canal & River Trust will:

Seek funding for an educational floating garden on the Lea Navigation near Bow Locks.

## **Parks, Squares & Burial Grounds Action Plan**

### **Introduction**

About 13% of the borough is made up of parks and other public open space. These include sizeable areas of high quality wildlife habitats in Mudchute, Tower Hamlets Cemetery and Mile End Parks, all of which are Sites of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation. Many other parks also contain valuable habitats, but there is plenty of scope for further habitat creation and enhancement.

There are plenty of parks where new meadows and hedges can be created, as well as increasing the amount of nectar-rich flowers. Suitable locations for new woodland, orchards, open mosaic habitats and ponds are more limited, but opportunities may be found to create these habitats. Parks also represent the best opportunity to increase the borough's population of Black Poplars.

The Mayor has pledged to protect Parks and spending on parks.



A guided walk in Mile End Park



### **Priority habitats**

Neutral grassland  
Calcareous grassland  
Open mosaic habitats  
Native broadleaved woodland  
Orchards  
Mixed native hedgerows  
Ponds

### **Priority species**

Bats  
Hedgehog  
House Sparrow  
Amphibians  
Black Poplar  
Brimstone butterfly  
Common Blue butterfly  
Bumblebees including Brown-banded Carder Bee  
Stag Beetle  
Streaked Bombardier Beetle

### **How we will achieve the objectives and targets for these habitats and species**

#### Tower Hamlets Council will:

Manage existing wildlife habitats in parks to maintain and, where appropriate, enhance their biodiversity value;

Identify appropriate locations to create and enhance priority habitats in its parks;

Seek funding from a variety of sources to implement the enhancements identified;

Collaborate on fund-raising with third sector groups managing public open spaces;

Ensure biodiversity is considered in all capital schemes in parks, and biodiversity enhancements which contribute to these targets are included where possible;

Continue to monitor spiders and beetles in Victoria and Mile End Parks to assess the effectiveness of habitat management.

#### The Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park will:

Manage existing wildlife habitats in Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park to maintain and, where appropriate, enhance their biodiversity value;

Monitor bumblebee populations in Cemetery Park thoroughly from spring 2015 and substantially increase populations of flowers pollinated by bumblebees, in woodland and meadow habitats, from November 2014;

Develop by 2015, a comprehensive, long-term Biodiversity Management and Development Plan for the Local Nature Reserve which will replace the present brief outline plan;

Continue to monitor spiders, beetles and butterflies in Cemetery Park, and extend the monitoring to other groups of plants and animals if capacity allows.

#### The Mudchute Association will:

Manage existing wildlife habitats at Mudchute to maintain and, where appropriate, enhance their biodiversity value;

Seek opportunities to restore flower-rich grassland, including calcareous grassland, at Mudchute where this habitat has been invaded in recent years by coarse vegetation, bramble and scrub.

Residents can:

Volunteer for conservation work at Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, Mudchute, Victoria Park or Mile End Park.

**How we will raise awareness of biodiversity in parks**

Tower Hamlets Council will:

Run a programme of wildlife-related events in parks;

Provide news and information on wildlife and events in parks on the Tower Habitats website;

Seek to facilitate the creation of training programmes which will enable parks staff, and others, to learn new skills relevant to managing and developing for biodiversity in public open spaces.

The Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park will:

Run a programme of wildlife-related events at Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park;

Take a proactive role in the provision of biodiversity training;

Continue to support the schools environmental education programmes in the Soanes Centre and develop other initiatives such as Forest Schools.

The Mudchute Association will:

Run wildlife-related events at Mudchute;

Maintain regular features on Mudchute's wildlife on the website and blog;

Work with schools to provide opportunities for environmental education at Mudchute.

Residents can:

Monitor wildlife in their local park and report sightings to the Biodiversity Officer.