

Kingston's Biodiversity Action Plan



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KINGSTON
UPON THAMES

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Foreword by Councillor Ian Manders

*Portfolio Holder for Climate Action and
Sustainable Transport*



I am pleased to be introducing our Biodiversity Action Plan Executive Summary for the borough of Kingston.

In the plan, we will set out our ambitions and priorities for meeting the challenge of the current biodiversity crisis, which has been made more serious by climate change. The Biodiversity Action Plan is part of our climate action and pledge to reach net zero for carbon emissions by 2030 as a council, and 2038 as a borough.

Our borough has so many fantastic green spaces along with over two thousand species that call it "home". We want to take a lead in protecting and enhancing natural heritage. We have already taken great steps to improve our local environment by planting 2,555 trees since June 2019, enhancing the value of our parks and restoring pond habitats. The council is also providing opportunities for nature in the public realm with our WildWays Strategy and developing interventions with ecological monitoring so we can monitor our hedgehog population.

However, we need to continue our hard work and challenge the unprecedented climate and ecological crisis. These crises have far reaching consequences not only locally, but across the world, as ecosystems decline and are no longer able to support the vast array of life on Earth.

Our Biodiversity Action Plan will benefit the community by protecting and enhancing our local habitats and the species they contain, thereby improving the natural environment.

We need everyone to play their part in making the borough more biodiverse. That's why we are creating a Biodiversity Partnership to work together and harness the skills, knowledge and action of our whole community.

I hope you will join the council in meeting our goals to challenge the climate and biodiversity crises. Whether you volunteer in one of our local parks, look after our animals or plant a tree, you are helping Kingston's natural environment thrive.

What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity means the abundance and variety of all life on earth. This includes all animals, plants, the habitats they live in and the ecosystems they are part of. The relationships between species,

habitats and ecosystems and their processes are key to sustaining a healthy, functioning planet and creating essential environmental, social and economic benefits for people.



What does biodiversity mean to Kingston Council?



Kingston is determined to be a leading borough that takes a prominent role in protecting the environment. We want to showcase 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.

As an outer London borough, Kingston supports a diverse range of habitats which can be found in important wildlife sites across the borough - from ancient woodlands to our internationally rare chalk stream; the Hogsmill, which flows through the heart of the borough providing an essential wildlife corridor. There is also a mosaic of other habitats including hedgerow, ponds and grasslands, as well as more urban and formalised areas which can all provide opportunities for wildlife.



Kingston is home to true marvels of the natural world; from peregrine falcons nesting on our buildings to enigmatic stag beetles battling on a warm summer's day. It is vital that this Biodiversity Action Plan recognises, communicates and protects the biodiversity which calls Kingston home.

What is a Biodiversity Action Plan?

The Biodiversity Action Plan sets out in detail the type of habitats and species which are of priority within Kingston and how they will be protected and enhanced. It is a published plan for all to view. The vision of the plan is:

1

To conserve and enhance habitats that create better, and more interconnected places for wildlife across Kingston.

2

To increase awareness of biodiversity and encourage more people to connect with nature and by doing so take positive actions that benefit biodiversity in Kingston.

3

The Biodiversity Action Plan outlines the current status and future priorities for habitats and species. The Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) and Species Action Plans (SAPs) provide 'best practice' and other tips and guidance for various audiences.

* Urban rewilding & functional ecology

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.

* Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are set out in the Environment Act 2021 and will be led by the Greater London Authority. This plan will work to embrace and support delivery of the LNRS, both in borough by working to identify and maximise strategic wildlife corridors, while also working with neighbouring authorities and other stakeholders to ensure we work at a landscape level to restore nature.

* Community engagement & empowerment

This 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.

What are the themes of the Biodiversity Action Plan?

* Nature-based solutions to climate breakdown

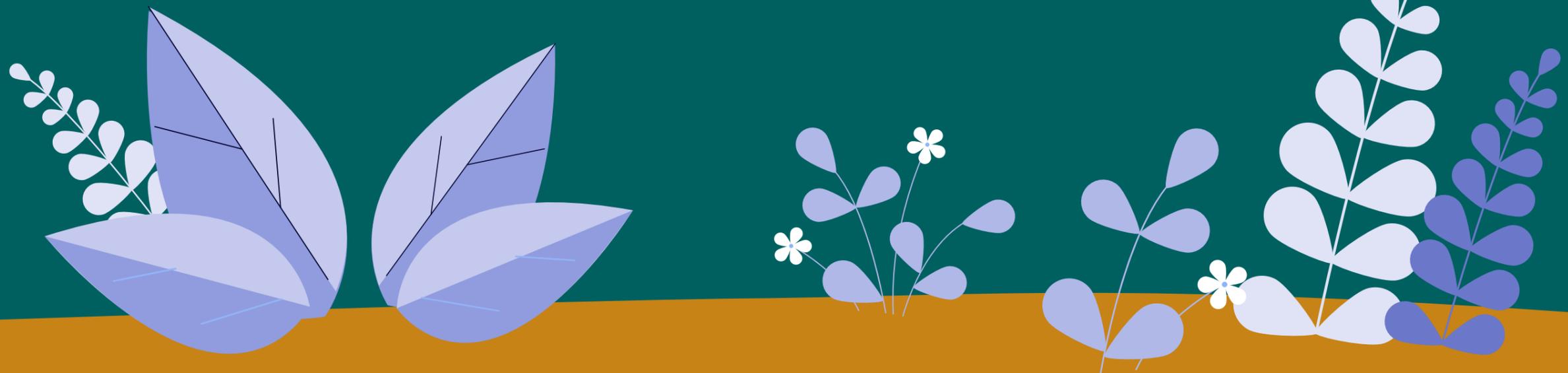
Climate breakdown represents one of the greatest challenges facing Kingston in the coming years. This plan is aligned with the borough's Climate Action Plan, in which the natural environment theme encourages the adoption of nature based solutions to combat, mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate breakdown.

* Evidence-based action and scientific monitoring

This Biodiversity Action Plan will encourage work with universities, conservationists, organisations and local communities, to help guide and assess our conservation efforts.

* Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

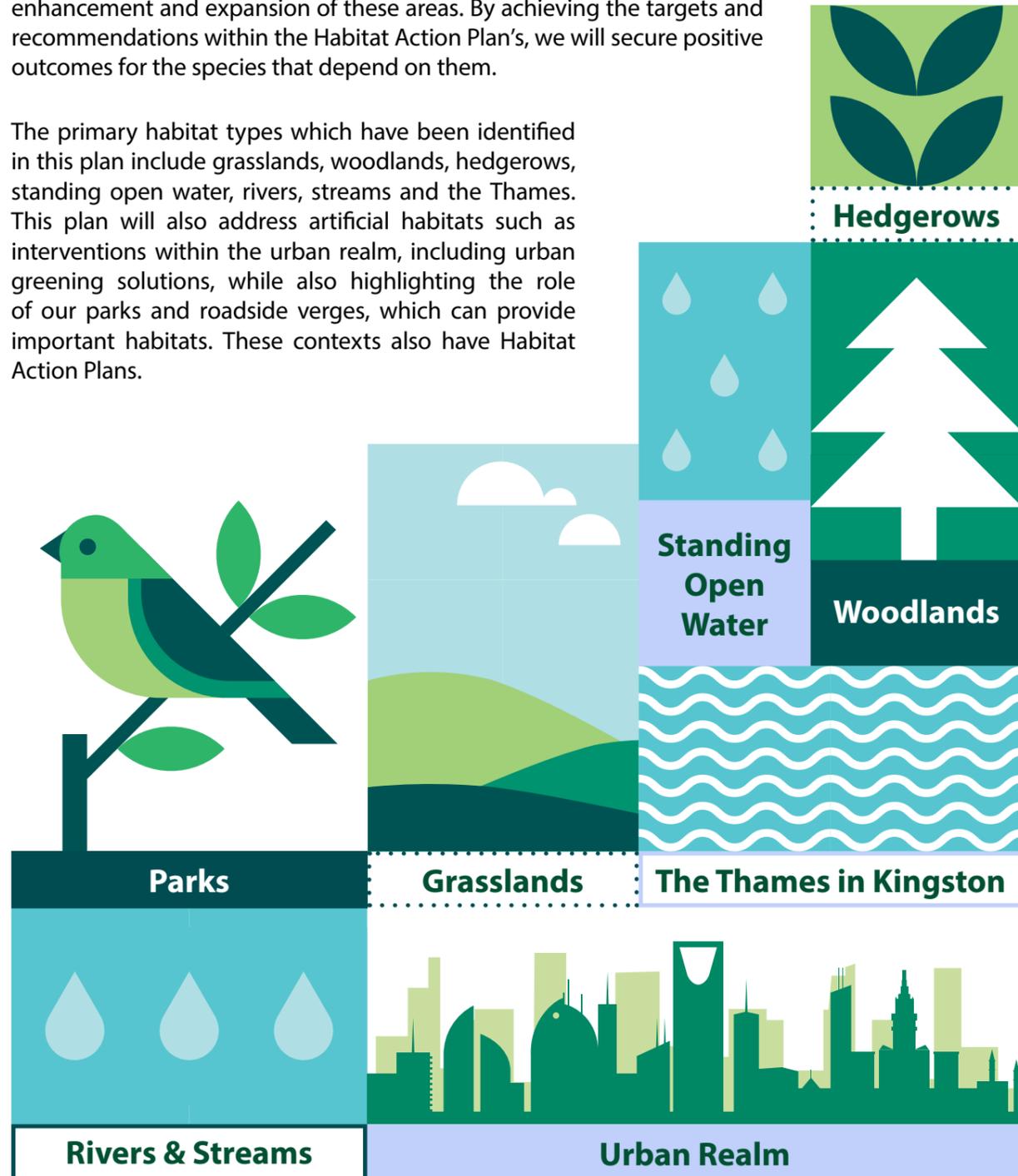
Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) has become mandatory in the statutory authority planning process through the Environment Act 2021 (coming into effect from November 2023). The Biodiversity Action Plan will aim to support the process along with other key planning principles such as the Mitigation Hierarchy.



What is a Habitat Action Plan?

Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) focus on the dominant habitat types found within the borough. These plans promote the conservation, enhancement and expansion of these areas. By achieving the targets and recommendations within the Habitat Action Plan's, we will secure positive outcomes for the species that depend on them.

The primary habitat types which have been identified in this plan include grasslands, woodlands, hedgerows, standing open water, rivers, streams and the Thames. 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.



What is a Species Habitat Action Plan?

Amphibians



Badgers



Water Voles



Stag Beetles



Swifts



Reptiles



Hedgehogs



Bats



The Biodiversity Action Plan also has a number of flagship Species Action Plans. These plans will promote conservation and protection of specific species within the borough. We will use these species as ambassadors for nature, helping to raise awareness amongst council officers and the general public about the incredible species that can be found in Kingston. They will also serve as "umbrella species", and the conservation measures adopted to protect them will also support the conservation of a host of other creatures.

Key Actions and Targets of Kingston's Biodiversity Action Plan



1

Assist policy makers in making environmentally conscious decisions



4

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

Guide land managers to create appropriate and effective management plans for parks, nature reserves and urban spaces



2

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



5



3

Create a Kingston Biodiversity Partnership



6

Empower our residents 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.

If you have difficulty reading this document or would like it in a different format, please call our helpline on 020 8547 5000 or ask someone to call on your behalf.

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