

Subject: The Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy Update

Report to: Environment Committee

Report of: Executive Director of Secretariat

Date: 3 March 2015

This report will be considered in public

1 Summary

- 1.1 This paper sets out background information for a discussion with officers from the Mayor's environment team and other invited guests about the Draft Update to the Mayor's 2002 Biodiversity Strategy. The discussion may also cover other matters as they relate to the protection of wildlife habitats and biodiversity management in London.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 **That the Committee notes the report as background to putting questions to invited guests on the Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy update, and notes the subsequent discussion.**

3 Background

- 3.1 Despite being one of the largest urban areas in Europe, almost two thirds of London is made up of green spaces and more than 1,300 sites are recognised as being of value to wildlife. In light of that, the Environment Committee conducted an investigation into London's biodiversity in 2013.¹
- 3.2 Following its review, the Committee wrote to the Mayor² in November 2013, urging him to take a strategic lead and act as an essential catalyst on issues relating to biodiversity conservation in London, and to update the Mayoral Biodiversity Strategy to reflect changes in policy and thinking since it was published 11 years earlier. The letter also set out a number of actions it wanted the Mayor to consider, including raising awareness on how to protect and encourage wildlife in green spaces and giving support to relevant organisations and volunteers. It also highlighted how, with the increase in decking and paving on private gardens, there was a need to increase public awareness of the value of gardens in maintaining biodiversity in the capital.

¹ www.london.gov.uk/mayor-assembly/london-assembly/publications/biodiversity-and-green-infrastructure-in-london

² www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Biodiversity%20letter.pdf

- 3.3 The Mayor responded to that letter in January 2014³ agreeing with the Committee that it would be appropriate to produce an update or supplement to the Biodiversity Strategy, which would set out what the Strategy has achieved to date and where it needs to focus in the future in order to support the collective endeavour of those organisations working to protect and manage London’s natural environment.
- 3.4 London’s most important wildlife sites are recognised by the Mayor and London borough councils as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). In total, over 1,400 SINCs have been identified. These cover nearly 20 per cent of London. A London Wildlife Sites Board (LWSB), which meets three times a year, was set up in 2013 to offer help and guidance on the selection of SINCs.
- 3.5 The All London Green Grid (ALGG) is a policy framework to promote the design and delivery of green infrastructure across London. It has been developed to support London Plan policies on green infrastructure and urban greening, and those relating to open spaces, biodiversity, trees and woodland, and river corridors. More recently, the Mayor has established the Green Infrastructure Task Force⁴ to bring together a wide range of interests and expertise to identify how to encourage a more strategic and long-term approach to investment in and delivery of green infrastructure.

4 Issues for Consideration

- 4.1 This meeting now provides an opportunity for the Committee to discuss a working draft of the Mayor’s Biodiversity Strategy Update and also hear about current issues around biodiversity in London with invited experts. A copy of the working draft document is attached at **Appendix 1**. At this meeting, Members and guests may discuss the contents of the Update, examine implementation progress, and hear about future priorities.
- 4.2 This meeting provides an opportunity to hear from key stakeholders on the status of London’s wildlife and its protected habitats, and discuss the impact of Mayoral guidance and policy.
- 4.3 The Committee’s 2013 review found that there is no clear mechanism for monitoring the consideration of biodiversity in the planning process or for monitoring the effectiveness of projects, mitigation outcomes, species populations or habitat improvements. Stakeholders suggested to the Committee that an update to the Biodiversity Strategy should encourage a strategic approach to monitoring these.⁵ Any review of the Strategy should also include a review of what has been achieved since 2002 and evaluate the progress made on the suite of 72 proposals contained in the Strategy.⁶ Members may wish to explore progress on this with guests.
- 4.4 The Committee’s 2014 investigation heard that there needs to be a clearer reference to the link between the Strategy and the All London Green Grid SPG and improved monitoring of the progress of implementing the green grid.⁷ This meeting could discuss how this can be achieved and examine

³ www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/13%2001%2014%20Mayor%20to%20Chair%20re%20Biodiversity_0.pdf

⁴ See Appendix 2 for details

⁵ Written submissions from the London Borough of Southwark and Greenspace Information in Greater London (GiGL)

⁶ Written submissions from the Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, London Borough of Camden, and London Borough of Southwark

⁷ Written submission from the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) London

the role and influence of the Green Infrastructure Task Force.

- 4.5 The Committee will discuss with guests these and other relevant matters. Invited guests include:
- Pete Massini, Principal Policy & Programme Officer, GLA;
 - Mathew Frith, Director of Policy and Planning, London Wildlife Trust; and
 - John Archer, Vice Chair, London Boroughs Biodiversity Forum.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Committee has the power to do what is recommended in the report.

6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications to the Greater London Authority arising from this report.

List of appendices to this report:

Appendix 1 - Draft Biodiversity Strategy Update

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
List of Background Papers: None
Contact Officer: Alexandra Beer, Assistant Scrutiny Manager
Telephone: 020 7983 4947
Email: scrutiny@london.gov.uk