

## **HAVERING NATURE CONSERVATION AND BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 Havering's natural environment is formed by its soils types, the waterways and rivers that flow through and around it, and the species of plant, insect and animal which these conditions foster.
- 1.2 Havering's Local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), adopted in 2003 sought to take a strategic approach to the delivery of nature conservation objectives in the borough. This new Nature Conservation and Biodiversity Strategy seeks to provide a renewed framework for the Council and its partners to work within, to ensure a co-ordinated approach to nature conservation and biodiversity work in the borough. In so doing this new strategy provides an update on the existing strategy, which is now 10 years old and takes account of new ideas that have emerged since then.
- 1.3 One of the themes of this strategy is to identify actions that will better connect Havering's town centres to their surrounding green spaces and countryside this will benefit both the wildlife that need "green corridors" to move about and thrive and give people better opportunities to access, enjoy and protect the natural environment they live in.
- 1.4 This new strategy takes account of the significant progress that has been made in promoting, protecting and enhancing biodiversity in the borough in the last decade, as well as considering the new challenges facing those involved in the delivery of the nature conservation agenda.



(Deer in Bedfords Park)

## 2. The natural environment in Havering.

- 2.1 The Council has taken opportunities to increase the size of parks and green spaces over the years, recently adding approximately 80 hectares to Dagnam Park in 2013; confirming 55 hectares as Rainham Wildspace in 2012; identifying 23 acres to be managed by the Council as a new nature reserve (adjoining Wildspace; adopting Hornchurch Country Park in 1980; adopting Havering Country Park in 1986 and enhancing the nature conservation value of spaces in town centres, through initiatives such as the wild flower planting next to Central Library in Romford.
- 2.2 Most of Havering belongs in the Northern Thames Basin (a National Character Areas (NCA) defined by Natural England), in a sub-area termed the London Clay lowlands. The London Clay lowlands rise from a band of low-lying marshy landscapes adjoining the Thames in the extreme south of the borough, which belong to the Greater Thames Estuary NCA.
- 2.3 The higher land across the north of the borough is capped by glacial sands and gravels, producing nutrient-poor, free-draining soils. These soils support small areas of remnant lowland heathland and acid grassland, which have a characteristic richness of flora and invertebrate fauna, such as in Bedfords and Dagnam Parks, as well as at Tylers Common.
- 2.4 The rich clay soils further south, which are extensively covered by alluvial deposits, are either heavily urbanised or devoted predominantly to arable farming, with a very varied field pattern reflecting historical activity. A number of small ancient woodlands are dotted across this landscape, typically on land regarded as too difficult (because of hydrology or topology) to develop or farm. There is an extensive network of ponds and small lakes populated by amphibians, including most importantly great crested newts.
- 2.5 Throughout its history the Thames has followed different courses across the landscape, leaving behind terraces of sand and gravel, most of which has now been extracted. Much of the land affected has since been used for landfill. The small areas of gravel that remain and some of the post-extraction sites have developed a nationally important open mosaic habitat supporting significant invertebrate populations, including nationally rare species such as shrill and brown-banded carder bees.
- 2.6 The Beam/Rom and Ingrebourne river systems drain predominantly from north to south into the Thames along courses incised into the clay. The Ingrebourne in particular supports an important population of water voles and, in the form of the Ingrebourne Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) towards its southern end, contains the largest single area of floodplain grassland and the largest continuous reed bed in Greater London.



(View of the River Ingrebourne)

- 2.7 The estuarine habitats beside the Thames, which include (in Havering, part of) the Inner Thames Marshes SSSI, are internationally important for their biodiversity interest, supporting large numbers of overwintering and breeding wetland birds, rare plant and invertebrate species, and diverse marine wildlife.
- 2.8 Havering has wildlife and wild places to be proud of. As an outer London Borough encircled by Green Belt land, Havering is custodian of countryside and wildlife that is important not only for those that live and work in the borough but for many other Londoners as well. Even among the outer London boroughs, Havering's biodiversity is notable. Its historic parks, river valleys and Thames-side marshland hold a significant proportion of London's entire resource of some priority habitats. Its private gardens are home to a national priority species, the stag beetle, and Havering is also the stronghold in London for two other national priority species: water voles and great crested newts. Within Greater London, Havering has 56% of the grazing marsh, 31% of the reed beds, 31% of the floodplain grassland, 25% of the marshland and 19% of the lakes and ponds, in all cases more than any other London borough.





(Purple Loosestrife, growing on the edge of the large pond in Bedfords Park)

- 2.9 Over 50% of Havering is in the Green Belt which, apart from the south of the borough, almost entirely surrounds the built up areas of the borough separating it from the rest of London to the west and the built up areas of Essex to the north and east. The borough itself has over 100 parks and open spaces, including the two country parks, Havering Country Park and Hornchurch Country Park.
- 2.10 The Council is committed to preserving and enhancing the Borough's biodiversity and aims to do this by protecting the most important areas of semi-natural habitat. This particularly applies to statutory sites in the Borough. The statutory sites are SSSIs and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and the non-statutory sites are the Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, which are based on a hierarchy of sites (Metropolitan including Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Borough Grade I, Borough Grade II and Local). These sites have been identified according to the criteria set out in Appendix 1 of the Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy and are set out in the GLA/Havering 'Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation' document (November 2006). Appendix 3 includes reference to these sites.

2.11 The principal designation for sites and habitats of national importance is a SSSI. These sites are designated and protected under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The Council has a duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006) to further the conservation and enhancement of such sites. The purpose of SSSI's is to safeguard sites of high natural importance for current and future generations. SSSI's within Havering are:

- Ingrebourne Marshes (TQ 538 842);
- Inner Thames Marshes (TQ 528 804);
- Hornchurch Cutting (Geological SSSI) (TQ 547 873)

2.12 Under powers given in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, local authorities have the power to acquire, declare and manage land as Local Nature Reserves (LNR's). The function of a LNR is principally to preserve features and areas of special interest and to provide opportunities for the study and enjoyment of their natural interest. The Council also has a duty under the NERC Act (2006) to further the conservation and enhancement of such sites. Havering currently has seven designated LNRs:

- The Chase (jointly managed with LBBD) (TQ 512 863);
- The Manor (TQ 550 930);
- Ingrebourne Valley (TQ 538 842);
- Cranham Brickfields (TQ 580 881);
- Cranham Marsh (TQ 565 854);
- Bedfords Park (TQ 518 923);
- Rainham Marsh (TQ 528 804).



(Kestrel nest in Bedfords Park)

2.13 In a largely suburban setting such as Havering, work is required to achieve a balance between the urban and natural environ. In respect of this a review of wildlife corridors in Havering has recently been undertaken

by the Havering Wildlife Project: the review is attached to this paper as appendix 4. Wildlife corridors often follow natural and man made linear features, such as water courses, roads and railways, through urban areas. Appropriate protection and ecological enhancement of these corridors, as outlined in the borough's Special Planning Document (SPD) on protecting and enhancing biodiversity (see appendix 4) can have the benefit of connecting significant areas of wildlife habitat and, in so doing, to moderate some of the adverse ecological effects of habitat fragmentation. There are a number of formally established Wildlife corridors in Havering, which are included in the Council's Local Development Framework and listed in Appendix 5 of this strategy.

- 2.14 The aims of protecting and enhancing wildlife corridors are:
- (a) To provide safe havens for species and to provide routes for their safe movement in a natural setting;
  - (b) To allow people to better access to areas of nature conservation value, to both the corridors themselves and the natural locations that they connect to;
  - (c) In Havering, to link the high-value natural areas to one another and to developing sites such as those recently planted within the Thames Chase Community Forest; to improve links northwards and eastwards from the Inner Thames Marshes SSSI and the Thames Corridor; to improve links to high-value sites outside the borough, including to Hainault Forest to the north-west and to the Thorndon complex to the north-east and to support existing corridors in the west of the borough, via the Beam River and the Dagenham Corridor.
- 2.15 The rivers in the borough are, in the most part, included either in wildlife corridors, SSSIs, LNRs or other sites of nature conservation interest. The London Plan stresses the importance of a valuable series of habitats known as the Blue Ribbon Network. The Council aims to protect and enhance the biodiversity of this network by implementing policy 4C.3 of the London Plan.
- 2.16 In comparison to other London boroughs Havering has a high density of ponds (2 per sq.km) that supports important key species such as great crested newts. However, there is a need to improve the management of both ponds and associated terrestrial habitats, to avoid a fragmentation of Havering's pond landscape.
- 2.17 Havering is the 6th most wooded borough in London. Trees make a valuable contribution to the quality of life in Havering. They do this in a number of ways including softening the visual impact of buildings, helping to define urban spaces and framing and consolidating views. Trees and woodlands form valuable habitats for a wide range of wildlife and they also play an increasingly important role in improving air quality and reducing the harmful effects of climate change.
- 2.18 The larger blocks of semi-natural woodland are concentrated in the north of the borough, forming part of the attractive wooded Havering Ridge,

which runs from Hainault Forest to Brentwood. Much of the woodland is concentrated around the historic landscapes of Havering Country Park, Bedfords Park, Pyrgo Park (private) and Dagnam Park. The majority of these woods are oak, hazel, ash and hornbeam. There are occasional exotic woodland areas, including a large sequoia avenue at Havering Country Park.

- 2.19 There are also a number of ancient woodlands around Upminster, Cranham, Harold Hill and Belhus Woods Country Park, all designated Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC). There are also substantial areas of scrub while on the Ingrebourne River there is the largest concentration of Willow Carr in the Greater London area at Berwick Woods (10 ha)
- 2.20 The Council have recently embarked on a new initiative to regenerate the woodlands and increase biodiversity in Havering Country Park. The woodlands had not been proactively managed over many years resulting in trees such as Sycamore and Ash thriving and becoming invasive. This has the effect of crowding the ground space and causing the trees to become straight and flimsy as they competed for light. The result is there is no under storey of shrubs, wild flowers and therefore insects. By opening up the canopy and allowing light in the Council will be encouraging lower scrub growth and wildflowers, as well as encouraging the growth of smaller native trees that can be coppiced for wood products. This gives several layers of plant growth which increases the abundance of insects such as butterflies, moths and bees, which in turn increases the food supply for birds. A similar scheme in Bedfords Park has resulted in an increase in butterflies such as the Speckled Wood, which needs dappled sunlight and woodland edges.
- 2.21 The Council has employed traditional, centuries old methods of clearing felled branches and trees from the woodland areas in Havering Country Park, which is funded from the Forestry Commission and results in far less damage to the natural environment in comparison to using vehicles.





(Traditional tree management methods in Havering Country Park)

2.22 Appendix 2 provides detailed information on the borough's biodiversity, including both important habitats and species.

### 3 What is the "natural environment" and "biodiversity"?

- 3.1 The "natural environment" could be said to encompass all living and non-living things occurring naturally on earth and includes the interaction of all living species. The concept of the "natural environment" can be distinguished by two components:
- 3.2 Complete ecological units that function as natural systems without massive human intervention, including all vegetation, micro-organisms, soil, rocks, atmosphere and natural phenomena that occur within their boundaries;
- 3.3 Natural resources and physical phenomena that lack clear-cut boundaries, such as air, water, and climate, as well as energy, radiation, electric charge and magnetism not originating from human activity.
- 3.4 The natural environment is often contrasted with the built environment, which comprises the areas and their components that are strongly influenced by humans.
- 3.5 The Convention on Biological Diversity (signed at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit) defined biodiversity as being "....all living things including plants and animals, any genetic variations, and the complex ecosystems of which they are part. It is not restricted to rare or threatened species but



includes the whole of the natural world from the commonplace to the critically endangered”.



(Funghi in Harold Wood Park)

#### 4 Progress in the last ten years

4.1 Significant progress has been made in increasing access to and protecting the natural environment. This progress includes the delivery of Landscape scale projects, the introduction of Higher Level Stewardship schemes and English Woodland Grant schemes, the building of several new visitor centres, the protection and enhancement of many wildlife corridors, the creation of grass meadows in a number of parks and open spaces and the production of a number of strategically important documents.

4.2 Landscape scale projects include:

- The designation of two Country parks: Hornchurch Country park and Havering Country park; the Ingrebourne Valley HLF Project, with a focus on the protection and enhancement of the Ingrebourne Valley for both wildlife and people, This partnership project between Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT) and Havering Council, started in 2009 and is now into its 4<sup>th</sup> year. The success of the project lies mainly in attracting a new audience to understand and appreciate the Ingrebourne Valley through a series of events and activities.

- “Wildspace” represents an area of over 640Ha comprised of Rainham, Wennington and Aveley Marshes, designated as the Inner Thames Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest, along with the adjacent landfill site which will eventually be transformed into a Country park. Havering Council along with key project partners, including the RSPB, aim to protect and enhance the remaining valuable marshland habitats. The partners have recently delivered a suite of projects designed to improve visitor access and biodiversity on the western part of “Wildspace”, at Rainham Marsh. The site has been inaccessible to the public for at least the last 100 years with historic uses including grazing marsh and as a Ministry of Defence firing range. These projects complement work already undertaken on other parts of Wildspace for example the RSPB Nature Reserve and the Rainham to Purfleet Path. The area has also been declared by the Council as a Local Nature Reserve and management of the site is now linked to a Higher Level Stewardship agreement with a focus on improving the sites nature conservation interest in line with its status as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.
- The Thames Chase Community Forest is a strategically important regeneration project that continues with the assistance of partners including the Thames Chase Trust, the Forestry Commission, Havering Council, Thurrock Council and Essex County Council. The Forest centre at Broadfields Farm (on the borders of Upminster) continues to provide a hub for activities in the east of the Borough and is managed by the newly formed Thames Chase Trust.

4.3 Since 2009 Havering Council has introduced Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) schemes in some of its parks and open spaces, including at Rainham Marshes, Ingrebourne Valley, Bedfords Park, Dagnam Park, Havering Country Park and Cranham Brickfields. HLS is essentially an agri-environment scheme administered by Natural England, the national nature conservation body. The scheme provides a framework and modest financial incentive to help landowners manage their land in a way which is more beneficial to wildlife and the landscape. For each scheme the Council worked with Natural England to create a package of HLS measures tailored to each site. The measures that can be chosen include the management of species rich grassland, the management of woodlands, the management of ponds and hedgerow maintenance. Although some of the measures outlined within the agreement are works that the Council already undertake, such as hay cutting, the HLS scheme can take this one stage further and achieve even greater benefits for wildlife.

4.4 In the last few years three new visitor centres have opened serving areas within Havering. These are the Bedfords Park visitor centre run by EWT, the RSPB visitor centre at Purfleet and the Thames Chase Visitor centre at Broadfields Farm. There are currently proposals for a new visitor centre to be located in the Ingrebourne Valley (within Hornchurch Country Park), to be completed in 2014 and subsequently managed by EWT. These visitor centres provide a hub for community activities and engagement

through environmental education and their success is partly down to the partnerships that exist between the Council and organisations including EWT, RSPB and the Thames Chase Trust.

- 4.5 The Council's Parks and Open Spaces, Streetcare and Economic Development services have been working hard in recent years to improve and promote "Green Corridors", linking town centres and urban areas to open spaces and the countryside. Greening the borough's town centres (e.g. in Romford and Hornchurch), and maintaining the street verges in a way that promotes biodiversity are important ingredients to the network that is being developed, alongside the more formal parks and open spaces, allotments, green sedum roofs, churchyards and cemeteries and, of course, residents gardens. "Green Corridors" are important for many reasons and this strategy recognises their importance and targets their development. Green Corridors are important as they;

- Improve biodiversity by improving the spread of species
- Help create an integrated, biodiverse network of species
- Provide green routes for the public to access the countryside
- Link existing green spaces
- Encourage healthy activities such as walking and cycling.



(Wildflowers on the Elm Park Library Sedum roof)

- 4.6 Havering Council has created new grass meadows in a number of the borough's parks and open spaces to create new habitats for wildlife which is beneficial for biodiversity. Butterfly gardens have been created in several parks and there has been significant investment in shrubs and wildflower meadows.





(Grass meadows in Rise Park)



(Wildflowers in Cottons Park)

4.7 Two important strategic documents have been produced in recent years:

- The Special Planning Document (SPD) on Protecting and Enhancing the Borough's Biodiversity was produced in 2009, in support of Local Development Framework (LDF) planning policies on protecting and enhancing the boroughs wildlife. See section 6.1(iii)



- New Habitat Action Plans have been developed to add to the existing local Biodiversity Action Plan. These include plans focusing on grasslands, reed beds, private gardens and rivers and streams

## 5 Why is conserving and improving the natural environment important?

### 5.1 The Government commissioned Lawton report “Making Space for Nature” (2010) includes the following point about the intrinsic value of nature:-

“England’s wildlife and landscapes have inspired and delighted through generations. There are strong moral arguments for recognising the intrinsic values of other species and for passing on the natural riches we have inherited to future generations. We have also recently begun to better understand (or perhaps remember) that our natural world is not a luxury: it is fundamental to our well-being, health and economy. The natural environment provides us with a range of benefits – ecosystem services including food, water, materials, flood defences and carbon sequestration – and biodiversity underpins most, if not all, of them”.

### 5.2 There are many research studies that have highlighted the importance of nature and access to the natural environment on peoples’ health, wellbeing and development. Conserving and improving the natural environment is important for the following reasons:

- Enriching the lives of individuals and improving the quality of life across the borough. People enjoy experiencing the natural environment: they get pleasure from seeing beautiful landscapes, watching wildlife living in their natural surroundings, learning about the natural environment and getting satisfaction from helping to conserve and improve it;
- Improving health. There are many research studies that have highlighted the positive impact that engaging with the natural world have on peoples’ mental and physical health. A recent Yahoo survey drew a response from someone who said something that many people know to be a truism: “I’ve noticed that people who spend a lot of time in the woods, meadows, mountains etc. often have a placid nature, and, if they are edgy when they set out, they quickly calm down. Being close to nature seems to have a beneficial effect”. Roger Ulrich, a United States psychologist, proved in a 1984 study that surgery patients with a view of nature suffered fewer complications, used less medication and were discharged sooner than those with a view of a brick wall”. Other research, including by the charity “Thrive” has shown that access to a garden and gardening can help people with a range of mental health problems and people with dementia. The natural world also provides endless opportunities to participate in activities that are beneficial for physical and mental health, whether it be walking, cycling, playing sport, painting or just contemplating the world about you. The natural environment can also help offset damaging health impacts, such as asthma – for example, the Journal of Epidemiology and Community

health established that “Children living in areas with more street trees had lower prevalence of asthma”.

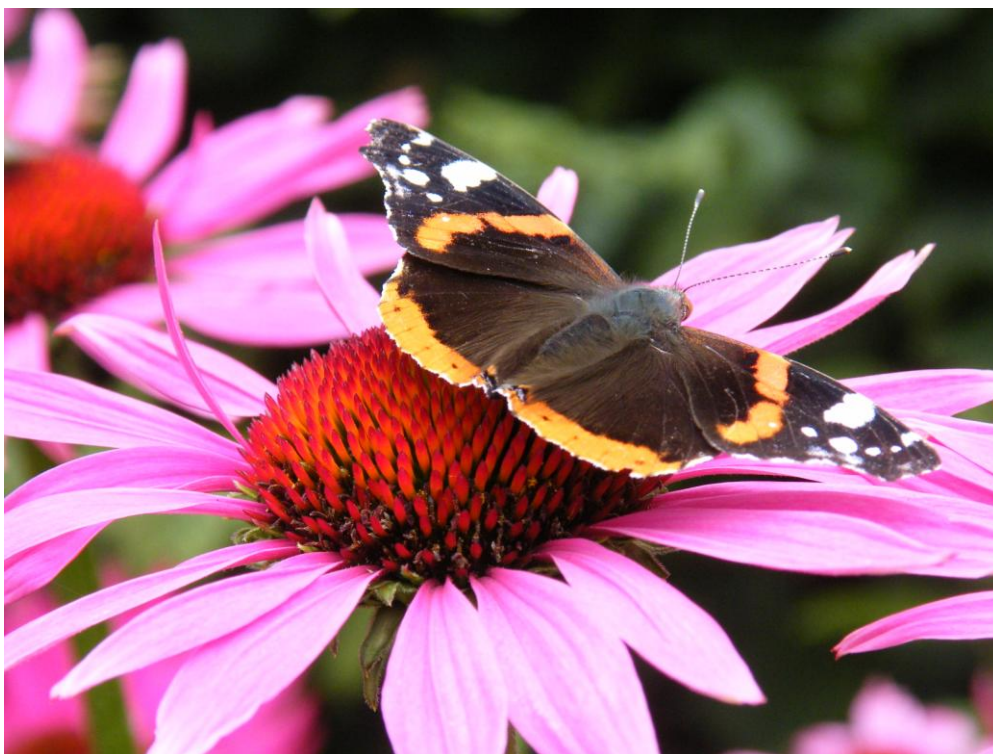
- Providing opportunities for children to play and connect to the natural world. Research has shown that Nature is important to childrens’ development in every major way – intellectually, emotionally, socially, spiritually and physically for example a report by planners in Montana, US – “Research in to how interaction with nature affects our children”. An American Journal of Public Health Studies reported a reduction in Attention-Deficit, Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) symptoms when children engaged with nature. A recent research study (October 2013) undertaken by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has concluded that only one in five children in the United Kingdom are “connected to nature”. The report highlights a growing concern about a generation of children who have little or no contact with nature. The RSPB believes this lack of contact, with the associated lack of knowledge and interest, is one of the biggest threats to nature in the future.
- Improving educational outcomes and stimulating the imagination. A US report on the Environment and Behaviour states that “Proximity to, views of and daily exposure to natural settings increases childrens’ ability to focus and enhances cognitive abilities”;
- Helping communities to understand and adapt to changes in the natural world.

5.3 There is also a growing body of evidence the benefits of nature in providing “ecosystem services”. The health and wellbeing of mankind depends upon the services provided by ecosystems and their components: water, soil, nutrients and organisms. “Ecosystem services” are the processes by which the environment produces resources utilised by humans, such as clean air, water, food and materials. Ecosystem services can be defined in various ways. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment provided the most comprehensive assessment of the state of the global environment to date; it classified “ecosystem services” as follows:

- Supporting services: The services that are necessary for the production of all other ecosystem services including soil formation, photosynthesis, primary production, nutrient cycling and water cycling.
- Provisioning services: The products obtained from ecosystems, including food, fibre, fuel, genetic resources, biochemicals, natural medicines, pharmaceuticals, ornamental resources and fresh water;
- Regulating services: The benefits obtained from the regulation of ecosystem processes, including air quality regulation, climate regulation, water regulation, erosion regulation, water purification, disease regulation, pest regulation, pollination, natural hazard regulation;

- Cultural services: The non-material benefits people obtain from ecosystems through spiritual enrichment, cognitive development, reflection, recreation and aesthetic experiences – thereby taking account of landscape values.

5.4 It is indisputable that many people care about their local environment, including the natural environment, and this is one of the main reasons why Havering Council and its partners have been working proactively to conserve and improve those aspects of the natural environment that matter to local residents. Although there is no local research available, a survey undertaken by “Natural England” (2012) revealed that 93% of the 47,000 respondents agreed that having green space close to where they live is important.



(Butterfly in Lodge Farm Park)

## 6 Havering Strategic Documents and Policy Context

6.1 Havering Council has developed a number of policies and strategic documents that help shape the way in which the natural environment in Havering is conserved and improved; including:

- The Council’s “Living Ambition” – Nature and the natural environment in Havering play a crucial role in helping the Council to achieve its Living Ambition Goals.
- The Local Development Framework (LDF). The key policies that relate to nature conservation in the Council’s LDF are DC 58 and DC 59;

- (iii) The current Supplementary Planning Policy document entitled “Protecting and Enhancing the Borough’s Biodiversity”. This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has been prepared by Havering Borough Council to provide detail on how Development Control Policies DC58 and DC59 are implemented. It draws upon regional and national planning policy and guidance relevant to biodiversity with the aim of providing advice that is relevant to the local area on how to protect and enhance existing biodiversity where opportunities arise, particularly in new development proposals. It is also used to inform local master-planning and regeneration strategies, to ensure appropriate protection, mitigation and enhancement of the natural environment through design, construction and future management.
- (iv) Havering’s Parks and Open Spaces Strategy sets out the significant health and wellbeing benefits associated with ensuring people have access to the natural environment, including reducing stress, depression, anxiety and aggression; reducing problems such as asthma and bronchitis as a result of breathing in fresh air and increasing happiness. The Strategy focuses on the importance of promoting biodiversity in Havering’s parks and open spaces: “The central plank of parks management and maintenance is built around biodiversity. The protection, conservation and enhancement of biodiversity is ‘part of the day job’ in terms of the management and development of all open spaces. We help to support biodiversity both through sensitive grounds maintenance practices and through the creation of natural habitats such as wildflower and grass meadows, reed beds, butterfly and bee borders, and bird and bat boxes. Surveys by nature conservation groups feedback from residents has recorded an increase in species of butterfly such as Small Heath Butterfly, Small Skipper Butterfly and Six Spot Burnett Moth. In addition song birds have increased particularly Goldfinch and Greenfinch in the borough, along with an increase in the variety of habitats. We now have more Cuckoo Flower, which feeds the Orange Tip Butterfly, Birdsfoot Trefoil which is the food plant for the Common Blue Butterfly and White Clover which is a favourite plant of bees in the borough”.
- (v) Neighbourhood Agreements – These are shared commitments between the Council and the local residents to work together to improve the area where they live. The agreements cover a number of important issues including keeping the neighbourhood clean and green. They explain the standard of service that will be provided by the Council and what is expected from the residents in turn. This allows partnership working with the aim to improve the quality of life for all residents.
- (vi) The Havering Local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) identifies specific work to be carried out in specific areas. It concentrates on species and habitats that are characteristic of Havering, as well as those that



are under threat regionally or nationally. For a full list of species and habitats please see table in Appendix 2.

6.2 In formulating a strategy for Havering the Council and its partners need to take account of relevant legislation, as well as national and regional policy documents. These include:

- (i) The National Park and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 laid the foundations for designating places that are special for wildlife (notably National Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest, SSSIs) and people (National Parks, Local Nature Reserves and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty). Subsequent legislation has improved first the protection, and more recently the management, of wildlife sites.
- (ii) The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 provides protection to wild birds, designated wild animals and designated wild plants, as well as seeking to prevent the introduction of detrimental non-native species and the protection and management of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).
- (iii) Local authorities, including Havering Council, have a Duty to regard the conservation of biodiversity in exercising their functions. This Duty was introduced by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act which came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2006. The Duty affects all public authorities and aims to raise the profile and visibility of biodiversity, to clarify existing commitments with regard to biodiversity and to make it a natural and integral part of policy and decision making. The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) subsequently produced guidance on how local authorities can help meet this Duty.
- (iv) In 2010 DEFRA published a new biodiversity strategy for England “Biodiversity 2020” (or “B2020”) which set out an overall aim to “halt biodiversity loss by 2020, support healthy functioning ecosystems and establish more coherent and better places for nature, for the benefit of wildlife and people”.
- (v) Since 2010 there has been a shift in the focus of delivery on nature conservation at a national level. At the heart of this is the Government’s “The Natural Choice” White Paper which sets out its intentions in relation to nature and the natural environment. The White Paper is largely a response to the Lawton Report, “Making Space for Nature”, a government commissioned report by a panel of experts on nature conservation.

The Lawton Report concluded that “England’s collection of wildlife sites, diverse as it is, does not comprise a coherent and resilient ecological network even today, let alone one that is capable of coping with the challenge of climate change and other pressures.” Although there are 24 specific recommendations from this report, the broad overall objective is to create ecological networks that are more, bigger, better and more joined up.

The theme of the White Paper is to ensure that the current generation is first to leave the natural environment of England in a better state than it inherited. To achieve this, the Government wants to ensure that the intrinsic value of nature, as well as its value in terms economic and social benefits that arise from a healthy natural environment are fully recognised. The Government intends to ensure that the value of nature is understood and mainstreamed across society, in terms of policy development and decision making, which is what this Strategy is advocating for Havering. To help achieve these aims the White Paper introduces a number of new policies and initiatives including:

“Local Nature Partnerships” (LNPs) strategic partnerships working at a regional level and encouraged to work with Local Enterprise Partnerships and Health & Wellbeing Boards to, amongst other things, contribute to local plan and decision making. The government is also committed to reforming the planning system to ensure that a strategic approach is taken to planning for Nature within and across local areas.

Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs) – Intended to work at a landscape scale to enhance and reconnect nature

Biodiversity offsetting – aimed at delivering biodiversity benefits in compensation for losses in a measurable way.

Green Infrastructure Partnership – aimed at supporting the development of green infrastructure to improve ecological networks and improve communities.

- (vi) In May 2013 25 wildlife organisations released the ground breaking “State of Nature” report which revealed that 60% of the wildlife species studied (at national level) have declined over recent decades.
- (vii) Policy 2.18 of the Mayor’s London Plan (July 2011) and the All London Green Grid Supplementary Planning Guidance promote the provision of an integrated green infrastructure network and support the extension of the “Green Grid” to the whole of London. Havering is in Area 3 of the London Green Grid, known as the “Thames Chase, Beam and Ingrebourne” area within the framework. The Area Framework strategy includes reference to a number of significant projects in Havering, which the Council is already committed to.
- (viii) The Mayor’s Biodiversity Strategy 2002 sets out how he will protect and conserve London's natural open spaces. Published in 2002 this currently remains the Mayor's biodiversity policy for London.

## 7. Stakeholders who have an interest in conserving and improving the natural environment in Havering.

- 7.1 Havering Council plays an important leadership and advocacy role in encouraging residents and a wide range of partners to conserve and improve the natural environment. The Council plays a crucial role in

managing much of the natural environment through its stewardship of parks and open spaces, street verges, woodland areas and rivers; plus it plays a crucial role in helping residents and visitors access the natural environment through promotion and publicity; maps, signage and interpretation and through the management and development of a network of roads, paths, bridleways and green corridors.

- 7.2 Schools manage large areas of open space which can provide important habitats for wildlife. Schools are increasingly improving their outdoor areas to make them more stimulating and of interest to pupils, including the provision of gardens, food growing areas and areas of importance in terms of nature conservation. School, alongside parents/carers, play an important role in stimulating the interest of children in nature, through visits to outdoor areas, the development of projects within schools and through teaching in the classroom. Nature conservation and biodiversity are not specifically included in the new statutory National Curriculum (due to come in to effect in 2014), but schools will nevertheless still be able to teach pupils about nature conservation and biodiversity, as a cross-cutting agenda, through other subjects including geography and science. Local parks and green space provide schools with a living, breathing, fully interactive and continually changing outdoor classroom; a wonderful resource with which to support curriculum activities. Access for schools is easy and free, and because they exist locally visits can be frequent allowing longer-term projects to be undertaken. For this reason, local parks have become an increasingly popular destination for study of the natural environment and life sciences.
- 7.3 A number of voluntary sector organisations in the Borough have an interest in the natural environment, including the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Essex Wildlife Trust, the Forestry Commission and Thames Chase Trust. There are a number of Friends of Parks Groups who provide an important input into the management of the Council's green spaces through practical work, monitoring wildlife and lobbying for improvements. The Friends Groups have delivered a number of important nature conservation projects over the last few years (such as the Friends of Bedfords Park's work to weed tree removal programme to preserve wild meadows and the Friends of Raphael and Lodge Farm Park's work with the environment agency to improve the lake habitat). "Clear Village" have taken on a lease for the Bedfords Park Walled Garden, with the aim of developing a food growing project, enhancing the natural environment within the garden, promoting biodiversity and restoring the walls.



(Volunteers working in Cranham Brickfields)

- 7.4 Veolia Environmental Services are responsible for the restoration of their landfill site in Rainham and the creation of a new country park. The “North Thames Veolia Trust” (formerly Veolia Havering Riverside Trust) have also funded many local projects in Havering helping to conserve and improve the natural environment, as well as encouraging further involvement by local communities.
- 7.5 The Havering Wildlife Project (HWP) is a voluntary body that is able to provide expert advice and assistance on ecological matters. The partnership has a lead role in monitoring change in biodiversity as part of the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) process. Partners in the project include the Environment Agency, Essex Wildlife Trust, Friends of the Earth, Friends of Parks Groups and Council officers from Economic Development and Culture and Leisure. The HWP play an important role in advocating the importance of nature and improving wildlife habitats, as well as recording habitats and species. A guide entitled “Havering’s Wildlife Indicators” has been produced to encourage residents to monitor the health and wellbeing for a number of “indicator species” and guidance notes have been produced to advise people how to undertake “living landscape” surveys. HWP have also substantially developed an action plan for the borough, which has been updated and is attached to this Strategy as appendix 1.
- 7.6 The Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT) play a significant role in promoting nature conservation and biodiversity in the borough through their management of the Bedfords Park visitor centre and the associated education programme and also through the development of the Ingrebourne Valley Project. In



2014 a new EWT managed visitor centre will open in the Ingrebourne Valley (Hornchurch Country park). EWT have recently expanded their role by bringing together organisations within defined geographical areas (linked to their visitor centres) to work on improving the “living landscape” in that area.



(Bedfords Park Visitor Centre)

- 7.7 The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) manages 137 acres of valuable marshland habitat, south of the A13, as well as a visitor centre located just beyond the borough boundary in Thurrock. The RSPB have recently launched their “Homes for Wildlife” project which aims to encourage people to support wildlife in their gardens.
- 7.8 The Havering branch of Friends of the Earth play an important role in highlighting the importance of nature and how the harmful effect of human activity can negatively impact on nature. A recent campaign to help protect bees, through the planting of appropriate species and by reducing the use of harmful pesticides, has recently received a lot of publicity in Havering.
- 7.9 A significant number of residents with an interest in nature conservation and biodiversity are volunteering in the borough’s parks and open spaces. These include the volunteers managing the Thames Chase Visitor Centre, the Thames Chase Conservation Volunteers (TCV), the volunteers who are members of the numerous Friends of Parks and the volunteers who lead Walking for Health groups. There are also a number of volunteers living in Havering who are experts in species recording, providing valuable information of local, county wide and even national importance.
- 7.10 Residents who own gardens and / or allotments are also playing a role in encouraging biodiversity. Such environments form part of the network of green spaces in the borough, which help encourage the movement of animals, birds, bees, insects and plants.



(Pretoria Road Allotments)

- 7.11 The Environment Agency is an arms length government agency that has responsibility for environmental protection and regulation in England and Wales, including responsibility for flood forecasting, flood warning systems and responding to flood emergencies; air quality; land quality (including waste management); water quality; water resources; fishing and navigation. The Environment Agency has a regional structure, with Havering being a part of the south east region. The EA work in partnership with the Council with a specific focus on the Ingrebourne, Rom/Beam and Rainham Marshes.
- 7.12 Natural England is a non-departmental body of the Government that is responsible for protecting and improving the natural environment, including its land, flora and fauna, fresh water and the marine environment, geology and soils. Natural England has an important role to play in helping people to enjoy, understand and access the natural environment. Natural England are promoting the concept of “Green Infrastructure” which is made up of the network of green spaces in urban and rural areas, green corridors and access links between them, such as paths and rivers. Natural England work in partnership with the Council to implement positive management of its SSSIs and administer the DEFRA HLS grant.
- 7.13 Greenspace Information for Greater London (“GiGL”) is the capital's environmental records centre. They collate, manage and make available detailed information on London's wildlife, parks, nature reserves, gardens and other open spaces. GiGL act on behalf of their partners, including Havering, in providing data on protected sites, species and habitats (Havering has an annual service agreement with GiGL). GiGL’s partners

include the GLA, Natural England, Environment Agency, the Forestry Commission, Wildlife Trust, and Local Naturalist Groups such as the London Bat Group and the London Natural History Society. A full list of GiGL partners can be found on their web site [www.gigl.org.uk](http://www.gigl.org.uk).

- 7.14 One of the Forestry Commission's twelve community forests in England, the Thames Chase Community Forest, covers a substantial part of Havering, along with other areas in east London and south Essex. The forest is managed by the Thames Chase Trust, an environmental charity that was established in 1990, to improve the landscapes within its geographical area. The Trust is responsible for 10 sites, Pages Wood, Cely Wood, Berwick Glades, Bonnetts Wood, Folkes Lane Woodland, Harold Court Woods, Ingrebourne Hill, Mardyke Woods, Thames Chase Forest Centre and Tylers Wood. The recently renovated Thames Chase Visitor Centre (and adjoining land) is located at Broadfields Farm on the edge of Upminster. The Trust are currently reviewing their 10 year strategic plan and as one of the host authorities (and one of three authorities who provide a small amount of funding), it is intended that Havering Council will make a significant contribution to this plan.
- 7.15 Since 1990, the Forestry Commission has planted approximately 100ha of new woodland in the borough within the Thames Chase Community Forest. These new woods are concentrated in areas near to Upminster at Broadfields Farm, Bush Farm and Baldwins Farm. This new woodland makes a substantial contribution to the existing 307ha of existing native woodland in Havering.
- 7.16 The Forestry Commission (London Region) also work with the Council to administer the English Woodland Grant Scheme and encourage stewardship of the Borough's woodlands.





(St Andrews Park wildflower meadow)

## 8. OBJECTIVES

The following Objectives are proposed for the next three years:

- (i) To increase the amount of natural space in the borough
- (ii) To protect and improve the management of wetland habitats;
- (iii) To improve the management of trees and woodlands;
- (iv) To improve the management of grasslands;
- (v) To restore important landscapes, ensuring nature conservation and biodiversity issues are fully taken in to account;
- (vi) To improve wildlife corridors and ecological networks;
- (vii) To encourage residents to proactively support biodiversity in the outside areas they own;
- (viii) To protect and promote Biodiversity Action Plan priority species;
- (ix) To reduce the impact of barriers to wildlife movement;
- (x) To improve water flows and drainage, in partnership with other agencies, where opportunities arise;



- (xi) To reduce the entrance of pollutants in to river systems, in partnership with other agencies, where opportunities arise;
- (xii) To encourage volunteers to take an active role in protecting and enhancing the natural environment and biodiversity;
- (xiii) To increase access to the natural environment;
- (xiv) To increase the opportunities available to learn about the natural environment and biodiversity;
- (xv) To encourage the development of local markets for natural products;
- (xvi) To publicise and promote the importance of nature conservation and biodiversity and how it can be accessed;
- (xvii) To encourage visitors to access and experience the natural environment in Havering;
- (xviii) To investigate how planning policies can enhance nature conservation and biodiversity in Havering.

## 9. ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan for this Nature Conservation and Biodiversity Strategy is focused on addressing the 18 objectives set out in section 8 above. The 18 objectives are designed to improve and protect natural habitats, given their importance and the underpinning role they play in protecting and enhancing wildlife, whether it be plants, insects and / or animals. The Action Plan is built around a plan that has already been substantially developed by Havering Wildlife Project (HWP).

The Action Plan is attached as appendix 1 to this strategy.