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MAYOR OF LONDON

REWILDING LONDON

FINAL REPORT OF THE LONDON REWILDING TASKFORCE

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JOINT STATEMENT: PRINCIPLES FOR REWILDING IN LONDON

Rewilding people; Rewilding places.

Rewilding as a concept is about allowing natural processes to operate as best as possible to restore natural ecosystems and assist in nature's recovery. In doing so, rewilding can provide richer and better functioning habitats for wildlife and associated benefits for people.

Rewilding can help people to reconnect with nature while simultaneously providing one of the pathways to a more sustainable future by combatting the linked climate and ecological emergencies. Adopting rewilding will require working and living in nature-positive ways that benefit wider society.

We recognise that 'rewilding' is now widely used to describe a spectrum of nature conservation projects, initiatives, and activities at every scale from wildlife gardening through to light-touch nature reserve management and ecological restoration at the landscape scale.

This is welcomed as rewilding is a term that inspires and engages a broad range of people and can form a key step in the path towards nature recovery.

However, we also acknowledge that the original philosophy of rewilding as applied to large-scale ecological restoration projects has a particular meaning that guides their design and delivery and that these large-scale rewilding approaches should have a set of principles relevant to the London's urban context.

Principles for Rewilding in London

1. LET NATURE LEAD.

Rewilding projects seek to reinstate, as far as is possible, natural processes such as habitat succession and ecological disturbance, i.e. natural events or forces that bring about changes in the spatial pattern and structure of habitats or species distribution. This could, for example, include re-establishing or reintroducing animal species like beavers or native rare breeds, or removing artificial river channels to kickstart natural processes. While rewilding projects are not geared to reach any human-defined end state, instead going where nature takes them, rewilding in the urban context will inevitably be heavily influenced by the built environment and cultural attitudes, and will require appropriate levels of human management and intervention.

2. WORK AT AN APPROPRIATE SCALE FOR THE URBAN CONTEXT.

Rewilding focuses on restoring ecosystems with enough space and time to allow nature to drive the changes and to shape the living systems on which we all depend. Scale may come from rewilding a large single landholding or several contiguous landholdings, which particularly in an urban context, could involve connecting natural habitats via a significant ecological corridor, such as floodplain grasslands within a river valley or along railway embankments.

3. CREATE RESILIENT LANDSCAPES BY CONSIDERING THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE.

Ancient habitats and some of the species that existed within them will guide rewilding projects, providing inspiration for what might be possible. However, rewilding recognises that we can never recover the past – conditions have irrevocably changed and nature, itself, is constantly evolving. Rewilding is about understanding how dynamic natural processes in the past generated biodiversity; and then using that knowledge and working with the tools we have at our disposal today to kickstart dynamic ecosystems again, where nature is allowed to respond and evolve, while also taking into account climate change and population growth.

Rewilded landscapes provide natural resilience to climate change, giving trees, plants and wildlife a greater chance of survival by increasing population exchange, genetic diversity, and the ability to move and adapt in response to climate change, pollution and other pressures. Schemes will need to be sensitive to how valued existing habitats and species might respond to rewilding approaches and ensure that they are not inadvertently negatively

impacted. Rewilding can be driven by large eco-engineer species but could also be configured to accommodate the natural colonisation and, if appropriate, introduction of smaller species (such as invertebrates, small mammals, reptiles, plants) to facilitate their population resilience in and around London.

4. ENSURE REWILDING CAN BE EXPERIENCED BY ALL.

Whilst nature recovery through natural processes is the driving force of rewilding, a significant additional benefit of rewilding projects is the provision of nature-rich experiences for a large and diverse urban population, recognising the significant mental and physical health and well-being benefits these are likely to bring. Planning for access for as many people as is tenable from the very beginning of the design and development process is essential. This should not encourage increased journeys by car, except for those with impaired mobility. Rewilding at an appropriate scale can help achieve a balance between public access and recovering nature, acknowledging that there will usually need to be parts of rewilding sites protected from disturbance by people.

5. RECOGNISE OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT LOCAL ECONOMIES.

Rewilding can support opportunities for nature-based economies based around leisure, education, and recreation. It can help to rebuild and deliver essential ecosystem services such as flood management, air purification, water quality improvements, carbon storage, wildlife recovery, heat regulation, soil restoration, and nature-friendly food production. As well as nature recovery, rewilding provides an opportunity to enhance livelihoods, including through the development of sustainable business opportunities.

With the above guiding principles leading our investigation, we are setting out through our recommendations what we believe needs to happen next to move the concept of rewilding forward in London. This includes how rewilding can be incorporated into London's forthcoming Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), through the parameters required to identify appropriate rewilding zones, and teasing out some of the complexities involved in implementing rewilding projects beyond site identification.

These complexities are around governance, partnerships, funding and policy - and our recommendations include how the Mayor can use his powers and influence; the role that partners and stakeholders must play; and the need to push for a strategic direction at the national level to enable urban rewilding through funding and policy. In our recommendations, we aim to focus on tangible areas of investment and programmes for future exploration, as well as making clear the added value that the concept of rewilding brings above and beyond existing nature conservation practice and activities already taking place in London.

Public engagement in rewilding should galvanise support for large-scale rewilding projects, creating long-term community support and fostering a sense of ownership and stewardship. For those not living near these projects, engagement should also be targeted with a view to reaching Londoners lacking access to nature and reducing inequalities by introducing smaller nature recovery actions that can take place closer to their doorsteps, in gardens, verges and other green and blue spaces. If attitudes to nature are to change for all, so that as one urban community we can create and secure a greener future for London, a special focus must be paid to those most disconnected from nature (both physically and psychologically) and extra support and resources must be concentrated on these communities, so that they can become empowered custodians of the nature on their doorstep, and citizens who are wholly engaged in nature's recovery. The power of the term 'rewilding' provides the opportunity for everyone to play a part.

Joint Statement of Members of the London Rewilding Taskforce in March 2023:

- Shirley Rodrigues, GLA, Deputy Mayor for Environment and Energy (Chair)
- Nicky Gavron, London Recovery Board, Board Member – Environment (Vice Chair)
- Ben Goldsmith, Menhaden Capital Management LLP, CEO; Defra, Former Non-Executive Board Member; Children's Investment Fund Foundation, Trustee (Vice Chair)
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Thank you to all those who submitted written evidence and participated in the Talk London discussion group and survey.

This report presents the insights and recommendations of the London Rewilding Taskforce. The report is intentionally concise. Rather than repeat previous studies, it focusses the Taskforce's work into clear recommendations.

The report was completed in January 2023.

FOREWORD FROM THE MAYOR

Nature sustains life on earth, but it's under threat as never before. One million species face extinction. Rivers are being destroyed and forests are disappearing.

The damage being done to our planet is unsustainable. We all stand to pay a price, which means we all have a part to play in averting this crisis. This is especially true for global cities, like London, which can be key actors in reversing loss and destruction.

London's historical development has relied on its natural environment and resources. All aspects of life, from the food we eat to the water we drink, to the health and well-being benefits gained from visiting green spaces, rely on healthy and thriving nature around us. Even in the most densely built parts of the city, London's natural history is reflected in our street names and the hidden rivers below our feet.

We are now facing dual climate and ecological emergencies worldwide, which further threaten our ability to survive on our planet. Despite the harm inflicted on the natural world, we have the power to make amends, and I am committed to ensuring that London is at the vanguard of efforts to reverse the trends of declining biodiversity and the destruction of nature.

Rewilding is an exciting way to create healthier ecosystems and allow humans and wildlife to live together more harmoniously. Rewilding allows nature to take the lead so that it can provide a wide range of benefits and sustain life on earth. This approach is new in dense cities such as London – but done correctly, it can reconnect people and nature to benefit both.

The need to do more to address biodiversity loss and restore natural ecosystems was recognised globally at last December's COP15 UN Biodiversity Summit. As part of COP15 and alongside other cities, I signed the Montreal Pledge on Cities United in Action for Biodiversity, which includes 15 actions that cities, including London, will take for biodiversity. C40 Cities, which I chair, has also gathered case studies of rewilding examples around the world. In London and globally, cities are taking the lead where governments are delaying action.

London has a long tradition of setting aside land for nature and people, as exemplified by our iconic parks, woodlands, nature reserves and wetlands. London is one of the greenest cities in the world. We already have 1,600 sites protected because of their importance for wildlife, covering nearly 20 per cent of our city. Our Rewild London Fund is helping to improve these sites.

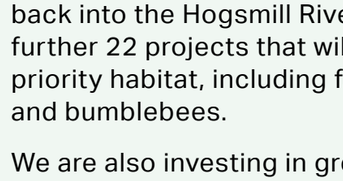
We are already supporting 19 projects to restore and create over 250 hectares of wildlife habitats across the capital, including reintroducing 101 water voles back into the Hogsmill River. In partnership with others, we are supporting a further 22 projects that will restore and create an additional 116 hectares of priority habitat, including for bats, kingfishers, reptiles, beavers and bumblebees.

We are also investing in green and natural solutions that help keep London cool and reduce the risk of flooding. And our nature network, and the ecosystems they contain, provide homes for wildlife while bringing nature closer to our communities for Londoners to enjoy.

But the scale of the challenge demands bigger and bolder action. The London Rewilding Taskforce is exploring further opportunities for rewilding, ranging from smaller-scale urban greening to 'stepping stone' projects with a rewilding ethos and large-scale habitat restoration with species reintroduction where appropriate.

The Taskforce members have brought a wealth of experience and expertise from public, private, and third sectors, including youth and environmental news media representation. They reflect my commitment to building a better London for everyone – a city that is greener and more prosperous for all our communities. The Taskforce has made ambitious recommendations on how we can work with boroughs, partners, and local communities to deliver the benefits of nature recovery in our city, and I look forward to working with them to take these forward.

The simple fact is humanity can't afford any more missed opportunities. This is a moment that demands real change. A moment to renew our relationship with nature. And a moment to build a sustainable future for all.



SADIQ KHAN
MAYOR OF LONDON

Mathew Frith/London Wildlife Trust

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The planet is in the midst of interlinked climate and ecological emergencies. These trends reinforce one another, whereby climate change can only be addressed if biodiversity loss is halted, but the world's diverse species are being impacted as the climate changes. In December 2022, a historic moment was reached when a new Global Biodiversity Framework was adopted at the 15th Conference of Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, which sets global targets for addressing the decline in biodiversity and restoring nature. The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. London can lead the way with bold action not only to halt and reverse the decline of biodiversity, but also to bring nature closer to people.

The concept of rewilding is increasingly capturing public imagination in the UK and around the world. It provides a useful narrative to help city dwellers rethink their relationship and connection with nature. Rewilding can help people see the benefits of diverse, abundant, and well-functioning nature around them, and the potential of nature-based rather than engineered solutions. If implemented properly, rewilding can help reduce economic and social costs associated with extreme weather events (e.g. damage to properties and infrastructure through flood alleviation, air purification, urban heat reduction, improvements to water quality), while bringing additional health and well-being benefits to Londoners.

The recommendations from the London Rewilding Taskforce acknowledge that rewilding can apply to urban areas, too. In the urban context, the Taskforce agreed a definition of a spectrum of rewilding opportunities, with larger scale rewilding projects towards one side, and smaller scale activities bringing more nature and biodiversity closer to people at the other, all linking to nature recovery. The Taskforce developed a set of principles to guide rewilding and specific parameters to define large-scale rewilding activities in an urban context. And lastly, they have made recommendations for London to take action on large-scale rewilding, as well as, through smaller-scale stepping stone rewilding and engagement initiatives. The latter, is considered critical to fostering understanding and acceptance of the importance of nature recovery, and to engage communities in taking ownership and stewardship, to ensure longevity of impact.

Mathew Frith/London Wildlife Trust

The recommendations are split into three parts:

1

Part 1 of the recommendations discusses the opportunity to identify, deliver and promote large-scale rewilding projects in London as part of the development of London's Local Nature Recovery Strategy. It covers both the geo-spatial and relevant characteristics for identifying appropriate rewilding areas, as well as the other key considerations to deliver rewilding projects, including governance, partnership, funding and policy. Based on the parameters, potential rewilding opportunity zones in London have been identified as a starting point for further discussion and investigation.

2

Part 2 of the recommendations discusses the need for smaller-scale and stepping stone rewilding actions, much of which has already been taking place in London for many years. These are projects in London's Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and other green and blue spaces with ecological restoration at their heart that can implement some of the rewilding principles as appropriate. Stepping stone projects are essential to increase connectivity between any rewilding opportunity zones and also to make London's wider ecological network more resilient.

3

Part 3 of the recommendations discusses public engagement opportunities across the spectrum and the importance of localised activities to support understanding and acceptance of urban rewilding, and the development of nature recovery initiatives. Engagement also supports the longevity of potential rewilding projects, given that rewilding is inherently a long-term and on-going process requiring long-term support. It discusses possible engagement activities for the Mayor and partners to support, building upon existing nature-focussed activities that are being carried out by the GLA and partners, and with a specific aim of improving access to nature amongst groups who are least able to access nature at present.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LONDON REWILDING TASKFORCE

Part 1: Enabling Large-Scale Rewilding

RECOMMENDATION 1. Enable development of large-scale rewilding projects in London to support nature recovery and greater resilience of biodiversity

RECOMMENDATION 1.1: The Mayor should include the large-scale rewilding opportunity zones identified by the Taskforce as strategic areas in London's Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

RECOMMENDATION 1.2: Establish and resource a London Rewilding Action Group to develop a pilot large-scale rewilding project in London and catalyse delivery alongside delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

RECOMMENDATION 1.3: Improve and identify new funding opportunities for rewilding projects by:

a. advocate for new and existing government and other funding streams to be able to support rewilding in urban areas.
b. the London Rewilding Action Group (see Recommendation 1.2) should capture learnings from project development related to funding and financing to share for future projects.
c. with the London Rewilding Action Group, the Mayor should commission further work on identifying options for sustainable financing for rewilding projects in London, including investigating opportunities to leverage private investment in biodiversity and other ecosystem services.

RECOMMENDATION 1.4: The Mayor should use his position to advocate to Government to:

a. explore opportunities for improving national planning policy and guidance to enable high quality rewilding in the green belt.
b. retain and improve national policies that protect nature and incentivise enhancement of the quality of natural spaces.

Part 2: Rewilding 'Stepping Stones' and Small-Scale Projects

RECOMMENDATION 2: Support positive long-term management and monitoring of key stepping stone sites so that their role in London's nature network and connections between large-scale rewilding sites is maximised.

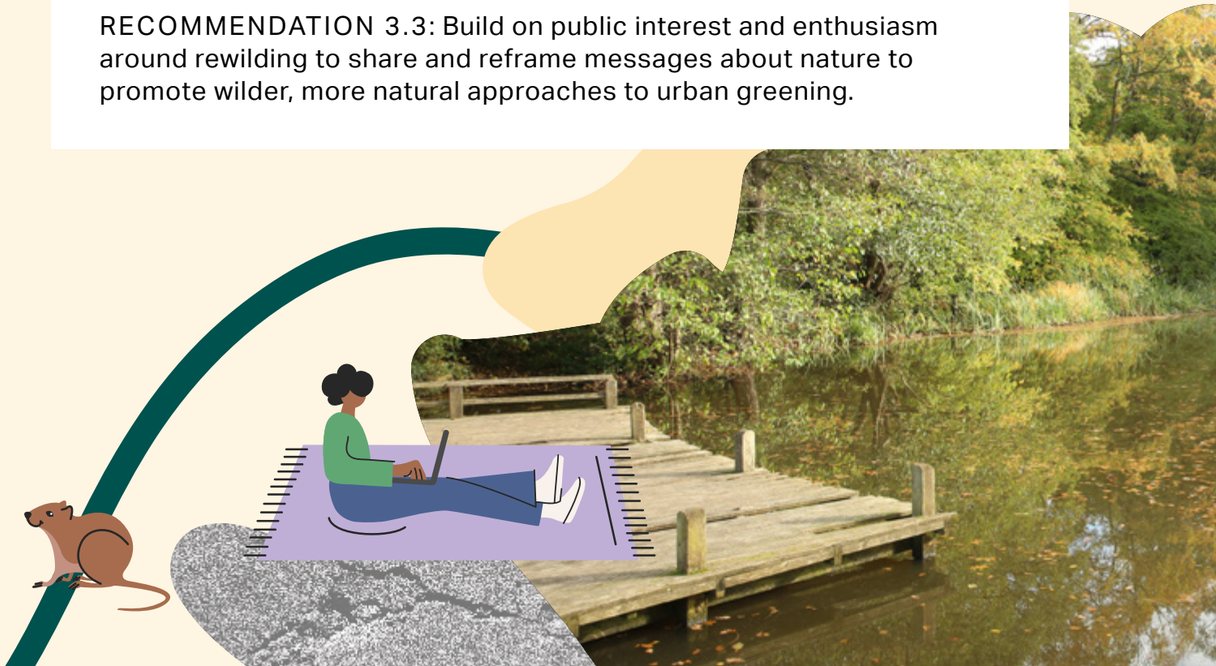
Part 3: Public Engagement with Rewilding

RECOMMENDATION 3: Promote opportunities for Londoners to engage with rewilding and the capital's nature to the benefit of people and wildlife.

RECOMMENDATION 3.1: Engage local communities and young people from early stages of project development within identified rewilding opportunity zones (linked to Recommendation 1.2).

RECOMMENDATION 3.2: Support activities linked to rewilding 'stepping stone' projects that build on existing GLA and partners' initiatives and that provide meaningful opportunities for Londoners to enhance biodiversity (linked to Recommendation 2).

RECOMMENDATION 3.3: Build on public interest and enthusiasm around rewilding to share and reframe messages about nature to promote wilder, more natural approaches to urban greening.



INTRODUCTION

Rewilding is the latest, and potentially most significant paradigm for protecting, conserving, and enhancing the nature of London. The city has an innovative track record going back decades, putting into place the first ‘wildlife site system’ of any urban area in the 1980s and embedding policies and practices to identify, protect and conserve these Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), now numbering over 1,600 and covering about 20 per cent of the Greater London area.

Over the past 40 years, programmes of activity undertaken by local authorities, NGOs, community groups, and individuals have made significant advances in habitat restoration and creating new opportunities for wildlife and for people to appreciate nature close to hand. The trajectory of these ambitions is reflected in the Mayor’s London Environment Strategy, borough Biodiversity Action Plans and the growing adoption of nature-based solutions in the design and management of the city (See Appendix 2).

Since 2016, the Mayor of London has invested more than £28m in creating new and improved green spaces, planting trees and supporting London’s nature. Through grant programmes, planning policy, partnership working and policy influencing, London is becoming greener and healthier. But more can be done to improve the quality of London’s green infrastructure, for people and for wildlife.

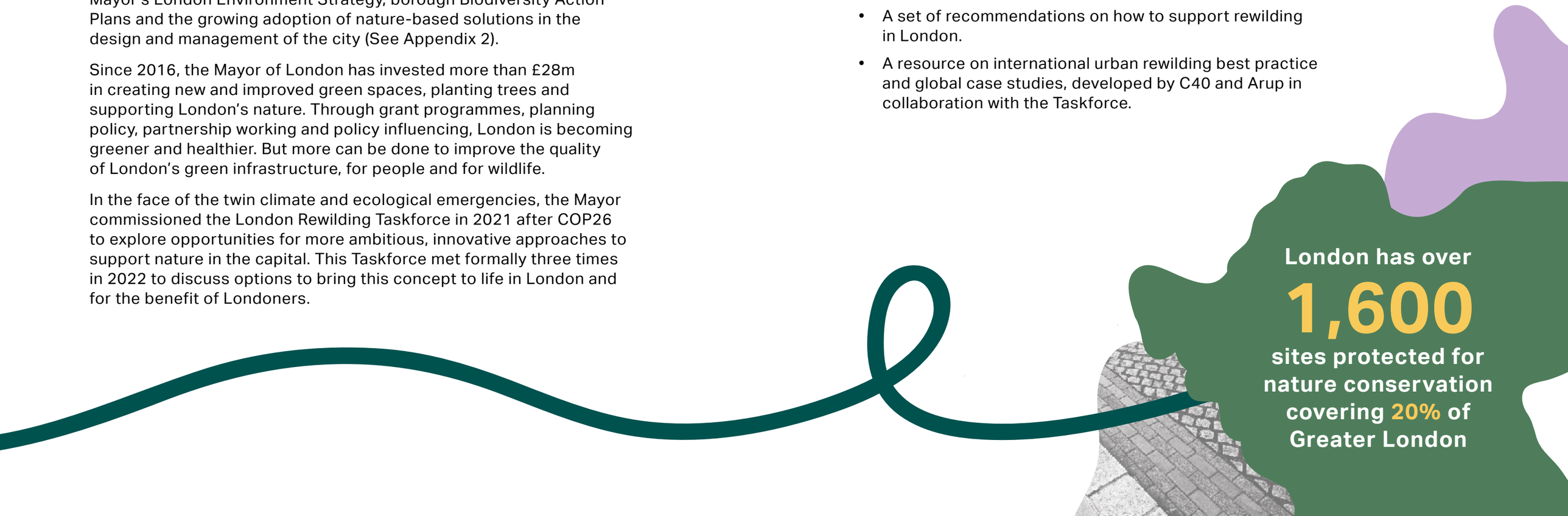
In the face of the twin climate and ecological emergencies, the Mayor commissioned the London Rewilding Taskforce in 2021 after COP26 to explore opportunities for more ambitious, innovative approaches to support nature in the capital. This Taskforce met formally three times in 2022 to discuss options to bring this concept to life in London and for the benefit of Londoners.

The key aims of this Taskforce were to:

- Consider how rewilding practices could inform conservation land management in London to support recovery of nature across the capital and how this could be funded.
- Build consensus on what rewilding means in London, where practical opportunities might exist, and how rewilding might be incorporated into the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for London.
- Communicate what rewilding means in London to a broader public audience.

The full Terms of Reference for the Taskforce can be found in Appendix 1. The Taskforce met formally three times in 2022 to discuss options for London. This work resulted in:

- A definition for a spectrum of urban rewilding, including a set of principles to guide rewilding activities and case studies across the UK.
- A set of parameters to define large-scale rewilding in an urban context, which was used to develop a map of potential rewilding opportunity zones.
- A set of recommendations on how to support rewilding in London.
- A resource on international urban rewilding best practice and global case studies, developed by C40 and Arup in collaboration with the Taskforce.



URBAN REWILDING SPECTRUM IN LONDON

Rewilding is a journey, where change happens at nature's pace and unfolds over years, decades and even centuries. It exists on a spectrum, where people are starting to make changes that will benefit nature at one end, and large-scale functioning ecosystems — a flourishing of wild nature on its own terms — sits at the other. (Rewilding Britain)[1]

Rewilding is an activity that seeks to reinstate natural processes and, where appropriate, missing species, allowing nature to provide wider benefits for wildlife and people. In the urban context, it has recently come to encompass any action that results in some benefits for nature, however small; and it is also closely associated with the notion of connecting people to nature, bringing shared benefits for humans, wildlife and the environment. The Taskforce has identified a set of principles that can guide rewilding initiatives in London (see Joint Statement).[2]

The term rewilding has come to be used to describe a wide range of nature conservation and greening initiatives and interventions, many of which have been developed and implemented over decades. Rewilding provides an easily understood term and narrative that engages a wide range of partners and stakeholders in conserving and restoring wildlife and supporting nature-based solutions for some of the environmental challenges we face.

1 Rewilding Britain, https://www.rewildingbritain.org.uk/explore-rewilding/what-is-rewilding/examples-of-rewilding

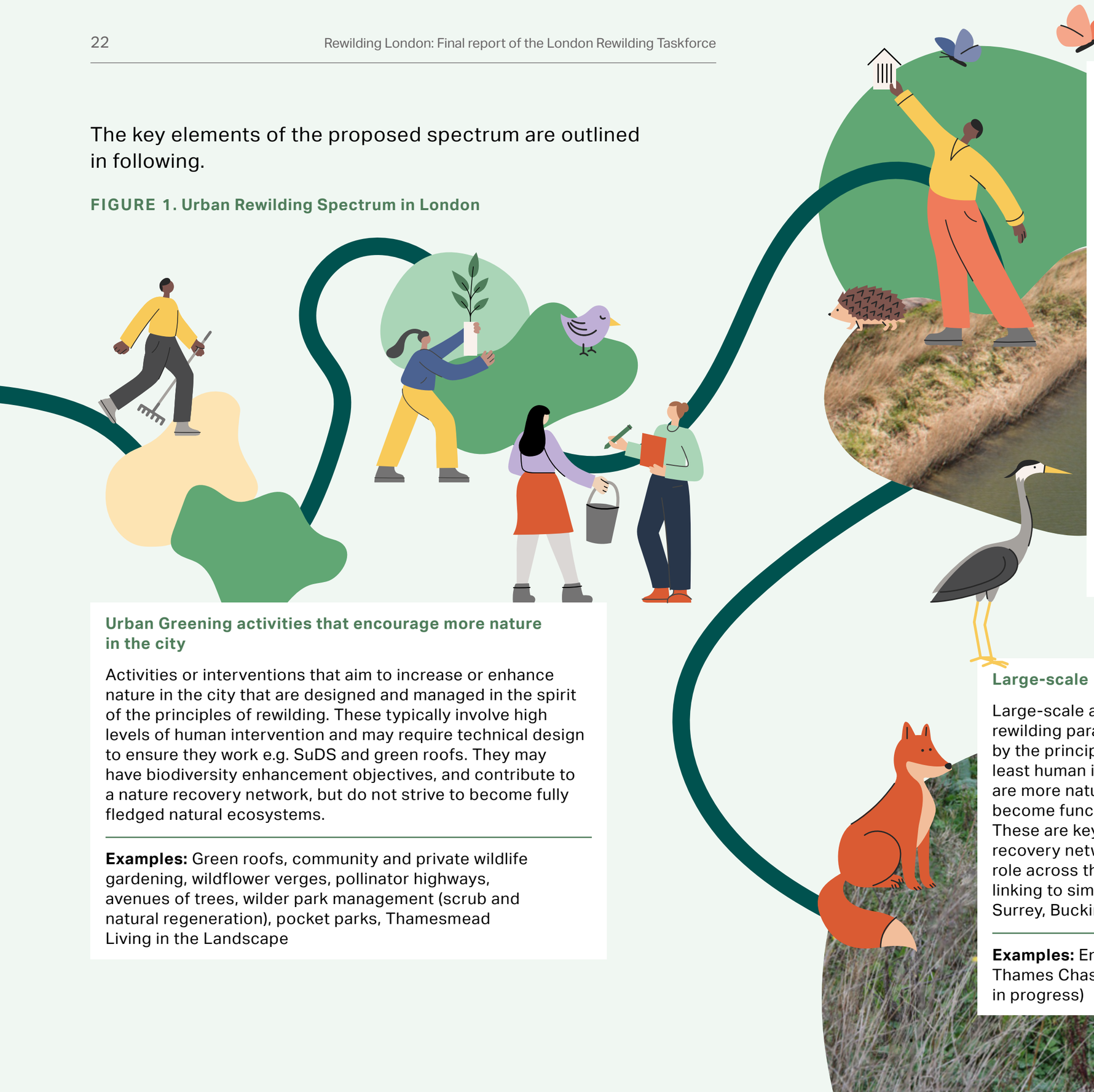
2 The definition, principles and spectrum of rewilding proposed by the Taskforce are aligned with the definition, principles and typologies of urban rewilding set out by C40 in their international rewilding best practice and case study resource. The Taskforce and C40 work was delivered in parallel and developed collaboratively. More information on the C40 resource can be found in Appendix 5.

However, to understand the potential role of rewilding as one of the tools in the nature conservation toolkit in London, it must be considered alongside other commonly used terms and as part of a continuum that varies in relation to scale, ecosystem function and the degree of human intervention.

Therefore, to capture the full range of understanding of urban rewilding, a spectrum is proposed that provides the framework for the Taskforce recommendations (Figure 1). It ranges from activities that result in some benefit for nature, however small; to large-scale rewilding in sites where this is feasible in the highly urbanised context of London (following a set of parameters identified by the Taskforce in the Large-Scale Rewilding section below). All parts of the spectrum aim to connect people with nature - raising awareness of their relationship with the natural environment around them and bringing benefits to health and wellbeing.

The key elements of the proposed spectrum are outlined in following.

FIGURE 1. Urban Rewilding Spectrum in London



Urban Greening activities that encourage more nature in the city

Activities or interventions that aim to increase or enhance nature in the city that are designed and managed in the spirit of the principles of rewilding. These typically involve high levels of human intervention and may require technical design to ensure they work e.g. SuDS and green roofs. They may have biodiversity enhancement objectives, and contribute to a nature recovery network, but do not strive to become fully fledged natural ecosystems.

Examples: Green roofs, community and private wildlife gardening, wildflower verges, pollinator highways, avenues of trees, wilder park management (scrub and natural regeneration), pocket parks, Thamesmead Living in the Landscape

Rewilding Nodes and Stepping Stones

Smaller scale projects that do not qualify as rewilding per the large-scale rewilding parameters (see page 25), but where their aims share some of the overarching principles of rewilding (see Joint Statement) and include specific actions to protect or enhance nature and support biodiversity. They require moderate and regular human intervention, often to maintain habitats in a particular state and/or to mimic natural processes. Project areas may be individual sites or corridors that may or may not have some elements of fully functional ecosystems. They form an important part of London's nature recovery network either at the local scale e.g. parks enhanced for nature, or at a borough or regional scale e.g. river corridors or higher grade SINCs.

Examples: Restoration of London's Rivers; Rewild London Fund projects – e.g. Biodiversity improvements in King George's Park, Spider Park Wildlife Corridor, Walthamstow and Woodberry Wetlands; Brilliant Butterfly chalk grasslands; Great North Wood Living Landscape

Large-scale Rewilding

Large-scale areas that meet all or most of the rewilding parameters, in addition to being led by the principles of rewilding. These require the least human intervention once established and are more nature-led with highest potential to become functional and biodiverse ecosystems. These are key nodes in London's nature recovery network, and are likely to play a similar role across the county boundaries, ecologically linking to similar areas within Essex, Kent, Surrey, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire.

Examples: Enfield Chase (currently in progress), Thames Chase Community Forest (currently in progress)

Large-scale Rewilding

It is widely acknowledged that the full ecological and biodiversity benefits of rewilding are more likely to be realised when nature is given the opportunity and time to flourish across continuous, large-scale areas of land. Therefore, large-scale rewilding around London sits towards one side of the spectrum predominantly led by natural processes rather than human-driven outcomes. Large-scale rewilding is a novel approach for London, but is gaining much interest and support, particularly in peri-urban areas where there is the potential to deliver projects of this scale.

Aligning with the guiding principles for rewilding (see Joint Statement), the Taskforce has developed a list of six parameters for identifying a shortlist of suitable large-scale rewilding sites in London for further investigation. The Taskforce recognises that due to the complexity of land ownership and diversity of land uses and infrastructure assets in London, these should not be an overly prescriptive set of parameters. However, they can be used to determine a list of potential opportunity zones for rewilding within and across London's borders. Opportunities across borders will also require working with neighbouring local authorities. As future opportunities to consider rewilding as a land management approach emerge (e.g., changes in land ownership or national policy), the following can also be used as a checklist for assessing potential new rewilding sites.

Parameters for large-scale rewilding projects in London

1. MINIMUM SIZE OF 100 HECTARES.

Rewilding is likely to work better in larger contiguous areas of at least 100 hectares, although smaller areas can provide important opportunities and should not be overlooked, especially where they function as part of a wider local network or are sited within an important ecological corridor. Rewilding does not necessarily require single blocks of land, but component sites should be capable of being connected by corridors. These corridors should be as wide as possible, aiming for at least 100 meters wide where practical.

2. MINIMAL PHYSICAL CONSTRAINTS WITH 50-HECTARE CORE ZONES.

Major roads, railway infrastructure, or other immutable built features that segment the landscape could constrain a rewilding project by blocking the flow and interchange of wildlife. Some constraints that should be considered include motorways, A-roads or railway lines that sever the landscape, although these may not be barriers in all cases. Ideally, landholdings on either side of these types of barriers should be at least 50 hectares in extent with safe and adequate pedestrian/cycle, wildlife and livestock access across these physical barriers where needed.

3. LANDOWNERS MUST BE WILLING TO TRY A REWILDING APPROACH

Rewilding requires a relaxed approach to management with minimal physical and land-management interventions and boundaries. Projects will likely require significant up-front intervention that will reduce over time. The make-up and willingness of landowners should be investigated, with a higher preference given to sites where some of the land is owned by a public body, a trust or an NGO who can lead and drive a long-term landowner partnership, and invest time and resource to connect with and sustain ongoing engagement with/involvement from local communities.

4. PRIORITISE AND MAXIMISE POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES.

Rewilding projects should be set up to achieve multiple environmental benefits where possible. They should not seek to trade-off competing environmental objectives or assets unless there is a compelling reason to do so that is agreed by the majority of interested parties. As examples, these might include existing environmental or heritage designations that would be compromised by a less prescriptive form of land-management or existing high-quality habitats that require traditional forms of conservation management.

5. PRIORITISE AREAS WITH POTENTIAL FOR RECOLONISATION BY AND REINTRODUCTIONS OF ECOLOGICALLY BENEFICIAL SPECIES.[3]

Rewilding at a larger scale will create important opportunities for the recolonisation of mobile species to an area. Sites should be prioritised where they are well connected or buffered in the landscape, or where there are opportunities to achieve this, to enable natural recolonisation to happen. Rewilding sites may need to include the reinstatement of animals (preferably wild, or domestic analogues like Herdwick sheep, goats, English longhorn, Sussex cattle and Exmoor ponies currently used for conservation in London) that function as ecological engineers that can affect the landscape in a more natural way by grazing, browsing, tunnelling, or as in the case of beavers, by re-naturalising waterways and wetlands. It may also include the introduction of other species that serve important ecosystem functions, such as invertebrates and small mammals. However, where these species are re-introduced, there must be scope for these animals to expand their range (within limits) and establish more natural patterns of behaviours. This may also require the capability to control the population of these species if necessary to mimic natural predation (i.e., deer management in new woodland).

6. MUST SECURE BENEFITS FOR THE LONG TERM.

Site selection and prioritisation should consider the longevity of a potential project, recognising that rewilding is a long-term process, that may not be easily planned out and where sites must be able to function or adapt within the context of a changing climate. Rewilding should aim to leave a positive legacy for future generations from the outset. Engaging communities, including young people, early in the vision for a project can help support the longevity of a project.

3 **Recolonisation** is when a species returns to an area by its own means, usually in response to improved habitat quality and extent of that habitat. **Reintroduction** is when people put wildlife back into an area, and tends to be less 'natural' as animals are usually subject to strict licensing and other measures to help sustain their survival.

Rewilding Stepping Stones

In the context of the rewilding spectrum proposed for London, rewilding stepping stones are projects or interventions that are at a smaller scale (therefore not meeting the parameters for large-scale rewilding), but that share some of the principles of rewilding and have ecological enhancement and nature recovery as key objectives. Examples could include projects to create or restore habitats at a larger scale in formal parks or to increase the resilience of Sites of Importance to Nature Conservation (SINCs) by improving or buffering sites. These projects will be key to delivering London's nature recovery network and may serve as corridors between large-scale rewilding sites as well as strengthening the city's wider ecological network. While these projects may still place increasing the heterogeneity of habitats and reinstating natural ecological processes as leading objectives, which could include using random interventions or alternating passive and active management approaches, they will usually still require significant human intervention and resources to maintain their nature conservation value and resilience.

Urban greening activities

Urban greening activities in the context of the rewilding spectrum are smaller interventions that people can make to increase or enhance nature and greening in the city, including both green and blue (i.e. streams, rivers and water bodies) spaces. These actions require the most human intervention and can be taken anywhere in London. While on their own they do not constitute rewilding as a nature conservation approach, they can contribute to London's overall green infrastructure network when considered as a whole. Urban greening projects can also be of high local importance for some species populations (e.g. green roofs, log piles), particularly where they are delivered with these wildlife needs in mind.

Urban greening activities provide the first steps towards increasing space for nature in the built environment and fostering better relationships between people and nature. Interaction with nature can particularly have positive impacts on mental health and well-being. This type of project also has the potential to bring wider benefits to people and wildlife by cleaning air and reducing flood risk and overheating. In many cases, these other outcomes will often be the primary driver for urban greening activities, with benefits for nature and biodiversity enhancement designed in alongside. The lens of rewilding can help to provide a captivating hook to encourage and promote wilder, more ecologically inspired forms of urban greening action.

Rewilding stepping stones and urban greening activities have long been taking place in London already as part of broader nature recovery and conservation efforts, underscoring the importance of considering rewilding as an approach that should add value above and beyond existing activity and initiatives. Large-scale rewilding is an approach with fewer precedents in urban areas, and therefore is granted more attention in the recommendations in following.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The London Rewilding Taskforce sets out the following recommendations to support rewilding activities in London. The recommendations are specifically targeted at the Mayor and the Greater London Authority to enable accountability, however the activities to deliver rewilding require action by a much wider set of actors, including local authorities, developers, major landowners, NGOs, the landscape and building community, national government, local community groups, naturalists, academics, and Londoners.

The Mayor cannot deliver these all on his own. Working closely with partners will be essential to put these recommendations into action with the focus and ambition needed. It is important for the Mayor to work closely with partners, principally through the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) process, including throughout its development and implementation in following.

The recommendations from the London Rewilding Taskforce acknowledge that in the urban context there exists a spectrum of rewilding opportunities, with large spatial scale rewilding projects towards one side, and smaller scale activities that collectively contribute to nature recovery across the city towards the other side. Across all these activities, public engagement is critical to foster understanding and acceptance of the importance of nature recovery, and to engage communities in taking ownership and stewardship to ensure longevity of actions taken.

The recommendations are split into three parts:

1

Part 1 of the recommendations discusses the opportunity to identify, promote and deliver large-scale rewilding projects in London as part of the development of London's LNRS. It covers both the geo-spatial and relevant characteristics for identifying appropriate rewilding areas, as well as the other key considerations to deliver rewilding projects, including governance, partnership, funding and policy. It also identifies potential rewilding opportunity zones as a starting point for further investigation based on a set of parameters for large-scale rewilding defined by the Taskforce.

2

Part 2 of the recommendations discusses stepping stone rewilding actions. These are projects in Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and other green and blue spaces with ecological restoration at their heart that implement some of the rewilding principles as appropriate. Stepping stone projects are also essential as part of the development of London's LNRS to increase connectivity between any rewilding opportunity zones and also to make London's wider ecological network more resilient.

3

Part 3 of the recommendations discusses public engagement opportunities across the spectrum and the importance of localised activities to support understanding and acceptance of urban rewilding. Engagement also supports the longevity of potential rewilding projects, given that rewilding is inherently a long-term and on-going process requiring long-term support. It discusses possible engagement activities for the Mayor and partners to support, building upon existing nature-focussed activities that are being carried out by the GLA and partners, and with a specific aim of improving access to nature amongst groups who are least able or likely to access it at present.

Across all recommendations, the Mayor and partners should support activities that remove barriers to accessing nature, promote environmental justice and reach Londoners who are underrepresented in the nature conservation sector. The GLA's own research has shown that lower income and BAME groups continue to be the worst affected by environmental impacts, as well as being disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and the current cost-of-living crisis. While the Mayor is supporting many initiatives to address inequalities and improve quality of life for all Londoners, including through the London Recovery Programme, more can be done through engagement efforts to reach wider audiences including:

- Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups
- Lower-income Londoners (especially those affected by fuel poverty and the cost-of-living crisis)
- Those from areas of London with the greatest need for environmental enhancement (e.g. with the worst air quality, or in areas with little accessible natural green space)
- Young Londoners who will suffer the worst effects of climate change in the future, and will require training to fulfil the various skills and job needed to manage natural spaces
- Deaf and disabled people

FIGURE 2. Alignment of Rewilding Taskforce Recommendations with Spectrum of Urban Rewilding

Urban Greening activities that encourage more nature in the city
Promote opportunities for Londoners to engage with nature activities across London that bring benefits to people and wildlife Build on public enthusiasm around rewilding to share and reframe messaging about nature to promote wilder, more natural approaches to urban greening. Link to the London National Park City Initiative and other groups such as the London Friends Forum and other groups and initiatives with a grassroot base for community participation and green infrastructure.
Rewilding Nodes and Stepping Stones
Support long-term management of stepping stone sites to maximise their role in London's nature network and build connections between rewilding sites Build on public enthusiasm around rewilding to share and reframe messaging about nature to promote wilder, more natural approaches to parks and commons, secure broader engagement with SINC management, and targeted approaches to broaden audiences, including outdoor learning, training for skills, entry into employment, etc. Work with landowners and local authorities to integrate the rewilding nodes and stepping stones in local plans and green infrastructure strategies.
Large-scale Rewilding
Enable development of large-scale rewilding projects in London to support local nature recovery and biodiversity **1.1.** Identify potential rewilding opportunity zones to include in LNRS based on agreed principles and parameters **1.2.** London Rewilding Action Group to develop pilot rewilding project **1.3.** Improve existing funding sources and identify new funding opportunities for rewilding projects **1.4.** Advocate for further policies to protect and improve the quality of green spaces incl. through rewilding where applicable **1.5.** Engage local communities and young people from early stages of project development within rewilding opportunity zones (linked to Recommendation 1.2)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Part 1: Enabling Large-Scale Rewilding

RECOMMENDATION 1. Enable development of large-scale rewilding projects in London to support nature recovery and greater resilience of biodiversity.

Rewilding as an approach to ecological restoration is more likely to achieve its full potential in large, continuous areas of land. It is at this large scale that rewilding can demonstrate its full range of benefits for people and wildlife. The Taskforce considers supporting the development of large-scale rewilding projects in London, and particularly at the peri-urban boundaries of the Greater London Authority administrative area, key to driving the concept forward and delivering the forthcoming Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Rewilding in urban and peri-urban areas is an emerging approach without a ready resource of existing projects that we can learn from for London. Any new approach taken must also add value to the range of nature conservation activity already happening in London, some of which are working at a large scale already. It is in this context that the Taskforce has prepared its recommendations, considering the characteristics that can support in identifying potential sites and the key implementation considerations that must be in place to add value through this new approach, including partnership and governance structures to develop projects, enabling policies that the Mayor can advocate for, and financial opportunities to explore to resource these projects.

RECOMMENDATION 1.1: The Mayor should include the large-scale rewilding opportunity zones identified by the Taskforce as strategic areas in London's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

To identify potential opportunity zones for large-scale rewilding to consider for inclusion in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, the large-scale rewilding parameters were applied (as described in the previous section on the **Urban Rewilding Spectrum in London**). These are:

1. Minimum size of 100ha.
2. Minimal physical constraints with 50ha core zones.
3. Landowners must be willing to try a rewilding approach, with preference for ownership held by public bodies, trusts, or NGOs.
4. Prioritise and maximise positive environmental outcomes.
5. Prioritise areas with potential for recolonisation by and reintroductions of ecologically beneficial species.
6. Must secure benefits for the long term.

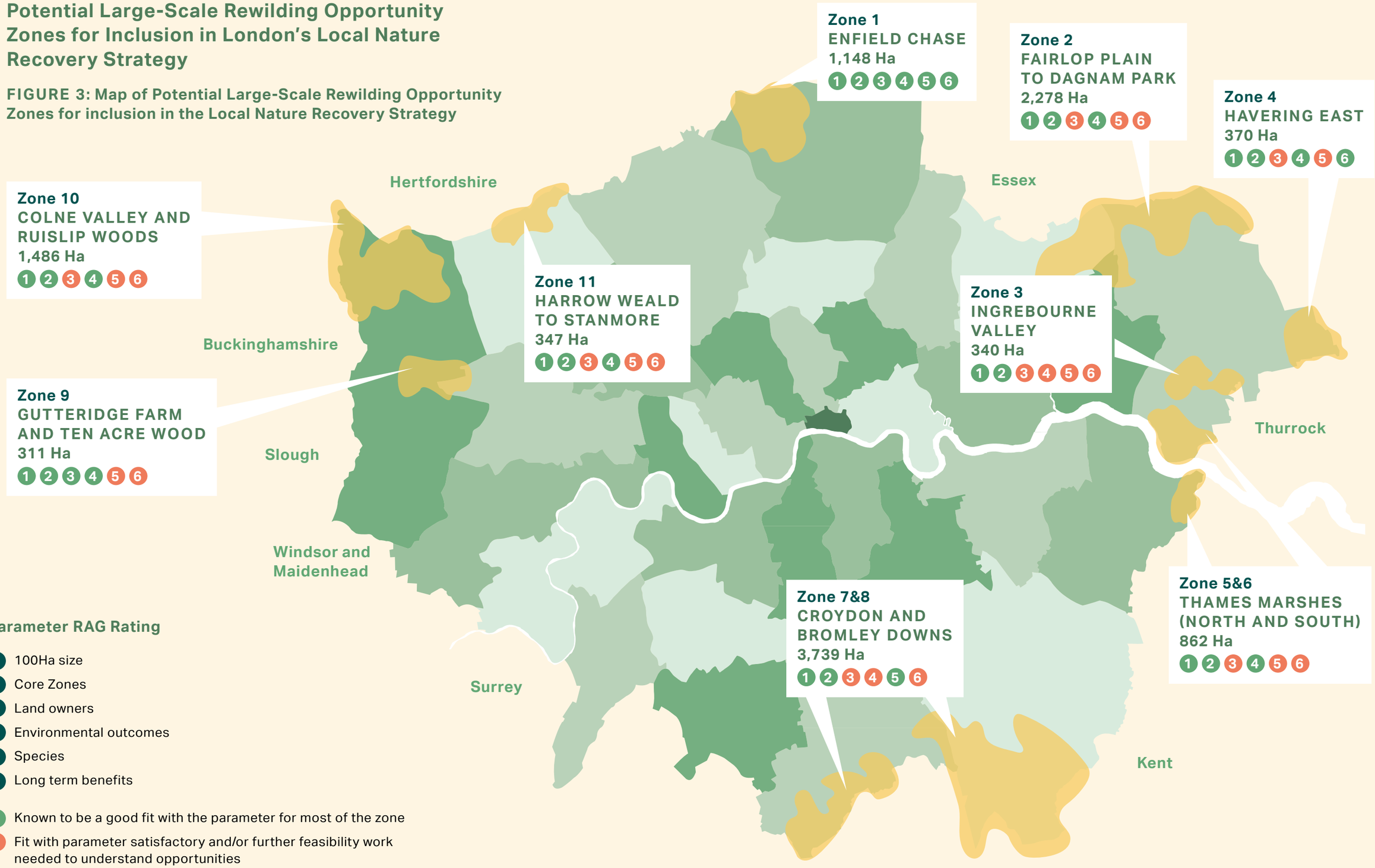
These parameters have been used to identify the following rewilding opportunity zones as a starting point for further investigation. This list includes areas that broadly align with the parameters and are where the Taskforce consider there to be the greatest opportunity for large-scale rewilding in London. The Taskforce recommends that these zones inform the development of London's Local Nature Recovery Strategy.[4]

The boundaries of these zones are kept intentionally vague. They are not intended as a land use allocation or to direct how individual areas of land are managed. Nor has the Taskforce set out what species could be reintroduced in these locations, as this will require detailed feasibility studies. Instead, they have been identified as indicative locations to inspire conversations about new opportunities to rewild the landscapes where the Taskforce has assessed there will be the greatest opportunity for nature, climate and for people.

4 The Secretary of State for Defra is expected to appoint the Mayor of London as the Responsible Authority to prepare a London-wide Local Nature Recovery Strategy in 2023.

Potential Large-Scale Rewilding Opportunity Zones for Inclusion in London's Local Nature Recovery Strategy

FIGURE 3: Map of Potential Large-Scale Rewilding Opportunity Zones for inclusion in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy



Parameter RAG Rating

1. 100Ha size
2. Core Zones
3. Land owners
4. Environmental outcomes
5. Species
6. Long term benefits

- Known to be a good fit with the parameter for most of the zone
- Fit with parameter satisfactory and/or further feasibility work needed to understand opportunities

				Parameter RAG Rating					
Number	**Zone**	**Borough**	**Approximate Size (Ha)**	**1 – 100Ha size**	**2 – Core Zones**	**3 – Land owners**	**4 – Environmental outcomes**	**5 - Species**	**6 – Long term benefits**
1	Enfield Chase	Enfield	1,148	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
2	Fairlop Plain to Dagnam Park	Havering and Redbridge	2,278	Green	Green	Amber	Green	Amber	Amber
3	Ingrebourne Valley	Havering	340	Green	Green	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber
4	Havering East	Havering	370	Green	Green	Amber	Green	Amber	Green
5 & 6	Thames Marshes (North and South)	Havering and Bexley	862	Green	Green	Amber	Green	Amber	Amber
7 & 8	London Downlands (Croydon and Bromley Downs)	Bromley and Croydon	3,739	Green	Green	Amber	Amber	Green	Amber
9	Gutteridge Farm and Ten Acre Wood	Hillingdon and Ealing	311	Green	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Amber
10	Colne Valley and Ruislip Woods	Hillingdon	1,486	Green	Green	Amber	Green	Amber	Amber
11	Harrow Weald to Stanmore	Harrow	347	Green	Green	Amber	Green	Amber	Amber

(Note: the zones above are not listed in order by priority)

Green – known to be a good fit with the parameter for most of the zone
Amber – fit with parameter satisfactory and/or further feasibility work needed to understand opportunities

The analysis of suitable areas has identified zones in outer London boroughs only. This is because it is these areas of London that have suitable land areas that are large or contiguous enough, and do not have other interest or uses which would be incompatible with the parameters. The recommendations in Part 2 and 3 of this report do apply across London however.

The Taskforce recognise that the list may not be fully exhaustive and other landowners may choose to develop a rewilding project using the principles and parameters in this report as a framework; this is welcomed and encouraged.

Further details on the zones is available in Appendix 3.

Mathew Frith
/London Wildlife Trust

RECOMMENDATION 1.2: Establish and resource a London Rewilding Action Group to develop a pilot large-scale rewilding project in London and catalyse delivery alongside delivery of the LNRS.

The Mayor should support, through his convening power and by providing resources where appropriate, the development of a 'London Rewilding Action Group' (e.g. led by an organisation or partnership of organisations) to lead on and progress delivery of a pilot London rewilding project in one of the rewilding opportunity zones. This should develop alongside and contribute to the LNRS development and implementation process.

The group should hold responsibility for the following under the framework of the LNRS:

- Provide further validation of the rewilding opportunity zones identified by the Rewilding Taskforce to be included in the LNRS, including the vision for the areas and specific rewilding activities to support these.
- Liaise with neighbouring authorities immediately outside the Greater London boundary to identify priorities for large-scale rewilding of mutual benefit. This recognises that the GLA's remit ends at the Greater London boundary, but nature's recovery will require cross boundary approaches to be scoped, designed, and delivered on a case-by-case basis.
- Coordinate landowners and stakeholders, including local communities (see Recommendation 3.1), for potential rewilding opportunity zones to help develop shared visions and put in place the governance and resourcing required to initiate, sustain and monitor projects.
- Apply for and coordinate funding streams and support project development and delivery for large-scale rewilding projects in rewilding opportunity zones. Document and share learnings around funding (linked with Recommendation 1.3b).
- Support projects with the development of long-term management plans that will deliver the principles of rewilding. This includes plans to identify and mitigate any potential ecological risks arising overtime, and monitoring and evaluation. Develop best practice and further recommendations on governance, funding and policy to enable further large-scale rewilding projects. Share learnings and knowledge with interested parties across London.

- Liaise and work closely with the GLA as the responsible authority for developing the LNRS to ensure rewilding is fully integrated in the suite of nature recovery approaches for London and is included in LNRS monitoring.
- Publicise and promote rewilding activities and benefits in London to public audiences.

Given the long-standing and active community of organisations interested in nature conservation in London, the Taskforce recommends that this Action Group should be led by an entity with significant experience, established connections, and influence within the sector, such as a charity, research institution, or other non-profit organisation.

RECOMMENDATION 1.3: Improve and identify new funding opportunities for rewilding projects by:

a. advocate for new and existing government and other funding streams to be able to support rewilding in urban areas.

b. the London Rewilding Action Group (see Recommendation 1.2) should capture learnings from project development related to funding and financing to share for future projects.

c. With the London Rewilding Action Group, the Mayor should commission further work on identifying options for sustainable financing for rewilding projects in London, including investigating opportunities to leverage private investment in biodiversity and other ecosystem services.

Rewilding projects require large up-front capital and long-term revenue funding. However, over time, rewilding theoretically requires lower revenue cost inputs. It is intended to require far less intervention than traditional nature conservation because it is not trying to maintain a fixed state or meet specific habitat or species targets.

Existing funding streams are not fit-for-purpose to support rewilding in urban areas, including from Government and philanthropic sources, which comprise the primary sources of funding for nature recovery more generally (Box 1). This is because these streams typically:

- Require a minimum size threshold that is not generally feasible in London. For example, funding sources from Government including the Landscape Recovery strand of the Environmental Land Management scheme (ELM) and the Nature-based Solutions for Climate programme (now closed) have minimum thresholds of 500 hectares, whereas the threshold for London is recommended at 100 hectares.
- Are overly siloed in their objectives depending on the source of funding. For instance, presentations and evidence submitted to the Taskforce have indicated that funding for river restoration projects in London has required relevant organisations to apply to and piece together various separate funding sources focused separately on flood risk management, wildlife, social/community development, amongst other objectives.

- Require projects to meet specific habitat or species targets, meaning rewilding projects may not qualify, as by their very nature, these aim for no fixed state and cannot necessarily guarantee to meet such conditions.
- Are focused on short-term project implementation and delivery, i.e. changes on the ground, rather than for early-stage project development or long-term revenue funding for maintenance and monitoring.
- Require partnerships, land ownership or other governance mechanisms to already be in place.

The Mayor and partners should advocate to Government for further funding that focuses on multiple, synergistic objectives, and that supports early-stage project initiation, development and ongoing maintenance and monitoring. Public funding should also better take into consideration nature recovery approaches unique to urban settings, and which will have different opportunities and requirements to rural areas.

Other funding streams for rewilding identified by the Taskforce and indicated below may be worth exploring, which will require initial investment in research and validation. The work of the London Rewilding Action Group will be instrumental in capturing and sharing learnings when pulling together funding for the pilot rewilding project (linked to Recommendation 1.2). Lessons learnt from this process should help to inform further research to be commissioned by the Mayor and partners. This may include exploring the feasibility of market-based mechanisms that may be able to vastly scale up the amount of money available for nature recovery, but which will require more robust regulatory frameworks to be in place, for instance, a mechanism, bank or broker role for carbon or biodiversity offsets, or payments for ecosystems services for rewilding projects.

BOX 1. EXAMPLES OF FUNDING MECHANISMS FOR NATURE RECOVERY:

Existing:

- Environmental Land Management scheme (ELM) (Defra) – ELM is a UK Government scheme that awards funding for environmental land management, consisting of three components: sustainable farming incentive, local nature recovery, and landscape recovery, with the latter two being most relevant for rewilding. However, current eligibility criteria for the Landscape Recovery strand includes a minimum threshold of 500 hectares, significantly higher than the minimum threshold being recommended for large-scale rewilding projects in London. Consequently, whilst Landscape Recovery might be an option for a small number of projects in London, it is unlikely to be a mainstay of future rewilding project funding in London. The proposed Local Nature Recovery component is likely not to be taken forward, which means the loss of potential funding for smaller scale rewilding.
- National Lottery Heritage and Community Funds – The National Lottery Heritage Fund[5] distributes £300 million each year to support a range of heritage projects across the United Kingdom, including projects to improve and connect people with landscapes, parks, and nature. The National Lottery Community Fund[6] is a non-departmental public body with an annual income of roughly £600 million per year that provides grants to improve communities. Income for these funds is from the National Lottery.
- People's Postcode Lottery – The People's Postcode Lottery[7] manages lotteries for 20 Postcode Trusts, with specific Trusts funding organisations working to improve UK's environment. This has funded several relevant wildlife-focussed projects including Brilliant Butterflies[8] (London Wildlife Trust/Natural History Museum/Butterfly Conservation) and a bison pilot introduction at Blean Woods[9] (Kent Wildlife Trust/Wildwood Trust).

5 National Lottery Heritage Fund, https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/our-work
6 National Lottery Community Fund, https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/
7 People's Postcode Lottery, https://www.postcodelottery.co.uk/good-causes
8 London Wildlife Trust, https://www.wildlondon.org.uk/brilliant-butterflies
9 Kent Wildlife Trust, https://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/wilderblean

- Nature for Climate Fund – The Nature for Climate Fund is a UK Government investment of £750m to support significant increases in tree planting, woodland creation and management, and peatland restoration by 2025.
- Endangered Landscapes Programme (ELP)[10] – The Endangered Landscapes Programme is a partnership between the Cambridge Conservation Initiative and Arcadia, a charitable fund. The ELP provides funding for the implementation of large-scale restoration initiatives across Europe that restore and harness ecosystem processes, bring nature back to degraded landscapes, and revitalise local economies. Grants are available of up to $100,000 USD (approx. £82,000 GBP at time of report publishing).
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – The Community Infrastructure Levy is a charge that local authorities can set on new development to raise funds for infrastructure, facilities, and services. There are precedents where CIL has been used for nature restoration and improving communities' access to nature, for instance in the South Downs National Park[11].
- England Woodland Creation Offer (Forestry Commission) – The Forestry Commission offers grants to landowners, land managers and public bodies for tree planting, paying per hectare of new woodland created, including through natural colonisation. Through this scheme, grants are provided for woodland creation areas as small as one hectare.[12]

10 Endangered Landscapes Programme, https://www.endangeredlandscapes.org/about/funding-opportunities/
11 South Downs National Park Authority, https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/community-infrastructure-levy/
12 Forestry Commission, https://www.gov.uk/guidance/england-woodland-creation-offer

In development / for further exploration:

- Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) – Biodiversity net gain aims to deliver measurable improvements for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats in association with development. BNG can be achieved on-site, off-site or through a combination of on-site and off-site measures. There is already a requirement to deliver BNG in the London Plan and a national mandatory requirement for a measurable 10% BNG will come into effect in late 2023. Most new developments in London do not cause extensive loss of existing wildlife habitat and future developments therefore are unlikely to trigger the need for offsite compensation under the mandatory requirement (although there will be exceptions). More importantly, the current government guidelines and metric used to measure BNG mean that the approach is unlikely to facilitate rewilding, as it will be a legal requirement for BNG schemes to guarantee delivery of specific habitats and targets for their condition.
- Big Nature Impact Fund (Defra) – A proposed public-private blended finance vehicle that will invest in restoring nature, with a focus on carbon-rich habitats, including native woodlands and restored peatlands. The fund will be seeded with £30m in public investment and aim to raise at least £500m in private finance to support nature recovery each year in England by 2027, rising to £1 billion by 2030.
- Payments for Ecosystem Services – A market-based mechanism that incentivises farmers or landowners by providing payments to take actions to manage their land in a manner that provides ecological services. Payments are made by direct beneficiaries, e.g. resource users or utility companies or by Government on behalf of the public as indirect beneficiaries.
- Carbon offsetting/credits – Carbon offsetting allows (typically private sector) entities to compensate for emissions by funding an equivalent reduction in carbon dioxide. Carbon credits are certificates/permits that are purchased to enable an entity to emit a set amount of carbon. Both carbon offsets and credits can be bought and sold on a carbon market, but the purchase of offsets tends to be part of a voluntary market whereas credits are part of a regulated, mandated market.

- Biodiversity offsetting/credits – Biodiversity offsets are defined as “conservation activities designed to give biodiversity gain to compensate for residual loss” typically used in the context of development.[13] Biodiversity credits can also be purchased by entities with an interest in supporting conservation or fulfilling sustainability mandates. The units comprising biodiversity credits are more complex to define or measure, compared to carbon credits which are quantified against emissions.
- Nutrient offsetting – Nutrient neutrality is an emerging requirement for developers to demonstrate that developments are not releasing excess nutrient pollution (e.g. nitrates and phosphates) into waterways. Nutrient offsetting allows developers to purchase nitrate credits to offset excess nutrient outputs where they are unavoidable. These credits in turn fund nutrient mitigation activities, typically in the areas where the development is occurring.

There is widespread recognition that public and philanthropic funding will not cover the investment gap required for the UK to meet its environmental targets, estimated to be £5.6 billion annually to 2032.[14] New models for valuing the economic benefits of rewilding and translating these into investible propositions are being explored by several of Defra’s Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund (NEIRF) projects, which could inform the development of a sustainable financing structure for rewilding projects in London (Box 2). Economic benefits of urban biodiversity, risk reduction, and natural capital uplift - and how these can draw in investment - are areas that need further exploration. Other areas for further potential exploration include crowdfunding and nature-based enterprises (e.g. eco-tourism).

13 Defra and Natura England, https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/biodiversity-offsetting#:~:text=Biodiversity%20offsets%20are%20conservation%20activities,nature%20sites%20will%20be%20created.

14 Financing Nature Recovery UK, https://irp.cdn-website.com/82b242bb/files/uploaded/FINAL%20Financing%20UK%20Nature%20Recovery%20Final%20Report%20ONLINE%20VERSION.pdf

BOX 2. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT INVESTMENT READINESS FUND PROJECTS[15]

Several projects have received funding from Defra's Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund (NEIRF) to explore similar issues with respect to securing investment and revenue funding for urban nature recovery projects. These include:

- 8 Hills - Stacking Access and Ecosystem Services on the Urban Fringe (led by the National Trust) - Build a new model of a regional park based on the 8 Hills Regional Park at the fringes of Birmingham and Solihull through new investment streams. Work with landowners to build attractive investment proposals that can be replicated in other urban areas. Write a financial model and draw up the legal framework to make it work.
- Greater Manchester Biodiversity Net Gain Investment Facility (led by Lancashire Wildlife Trust) - Build a habitat bank facility for Biodiversity Net Gain delivery in the Greater Manchester area based on nine sites. Create a one stop shop for investors, buyers and sellers of BNG units, providing verification, site registration and fund management.
- A scalable protocol to measure, unitise and trade carbon for terrestrial rewilding and nature recovery projects (led by The Knepp Estate) - Use carbon capture data from the rewilding of the Knepp Estate, near Horsham, to inform the development of a novel approach to carbon storage accounting. Use this new approach to create a business case for a new 617ha rewilding project in Lincolnshire. Use the new carbon-capture data to make existing Carbon Codes more attractive to landowners.
- Building a blueprint for scaling conservation finance for urban river restoration (led by Zoological Society of London on behalf of the Crane Valley Partnership in West London) - Develop a business case for river restoration at a catchment scale in urban areas. Biodiversity units for sale and reduced water treatment costs will result. Flood risk management benefits will be modelled.

15 Defra, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/50-projects-receive-up-to-100000-each-to-boost-investment-in-nature

RECOMMENDATION 1.4: The Mayor should use his position to advocate to Government to:

a. explore opportunities for improving national planning policy and guidance to enable high quality rewilding in the green belt.

b. retain and improve national policies that protect nature and incentivise enhancement of the quality of natural spaces.

The Mayor has made clear his commitment to protecting London's Green Belt as a key part of London's broader ecological network and his aim for its quality to be improved through actions including rewilding and woodland planting, which improve the environment and provide valuable ecosystem services to Londoners. Assuring that the planning policy framework encourages rewilding as a positive use of the green belt is essential to ensure rewilding opportunities are identified in local plan making, as any large-scale rewilding project in peri-urban London needs to be consistent with planning policy on Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land.

The National Planning Policy Framework policy on Green Belts states that "local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land." London Plan policy states that "the enhancement of the Green Belt to provide appropriate multi-functional beneficial uses for Londoners should be supported." The Taskforce recommends that the Mayor explore opportunities for advocating for national planning policy guidance to enable high quality rewilding in the Green Belt as a beneficial use.

The Mayor should also advocate for wider national policies to be retained and improved that protect nature and incentivise enhancement of the quality of natural spaces. This is crucial in light of the Retained EU Law Bill and the potential removal of laws preventing air and water pollution. National policies, guidance and funding should also support the delivery of Local Nature Recovery Strategies once developed, including through links to the planning process.

The Mayor should also continue to identify new ways to protect and enhance nature, including in the London Plan and through other mechanisms in his power, such as London Plan Guidance on green infrastructure and any update to the All London Green Grid. This includes encouraging planning authorities in London to protect known rewilding sites from development as far as possible e.g. through their designation as SINCs (or potential SINCs). This should apply not only to large-scale (>100 Ha) sites but also to stepping stones and smaller scale sites that contribute to London's nature recovery network.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Part 2: Rewilding 'Stepping Stones' and Small-Scale Projects

RECOMMENDATION 2: Support positive long-term management and monitoring of key stepping stone sites so that their role in London's nature network and connections between large-scale rewilding sites is maximised.

Mechanisms and funding sources exist to create new sites for rewilding nodes and stepping stones, including several programmes funded by the Mayor. Improvement, long-term management and monitoring of existing and new sites is necessary to ensure that their role as part of the wider nature network is maximised. While not responsible for the management of land in London, the Mayor does have an important strategic role in supporting those who are to implement good site management and smaller-scale rewilding, such as local authorities and other major landowners. This is essential if the potential benefits of rewilding for London that the Taskforce have identified are to be fully realised. Support should be focused on managers of key sites in the city's ecological network i.e., SINCs, as well as other large green and blue spaces where ecological restoration at a relevant scale to reinstate some natural process could take place.

Alongside this, the Mayor should also work with partners to help tackle some of the long-standing skills and capacity gaps that act as barriers to good site management for biodiversity. This could be achieved through the expansion of existing mechanisms or partnerships such as the London River Restoration Group, Rewild London Fund or Centre for Excellence for parks in London, or through the development of new collaborations to make advice and resources available.

Some of London's SINCs have existing intrinsic nature conservation value that means they would not be compatible with or a priority for rewilding at the moment. However, there will be opportunities at many other SINCs, for example like at Tolworth Court Farm (see case study below), to greatly increase their resilience and role in the city's ecological network by introducing rewilding principles into their management, for example by taking a more relaxed approach to grazing and scrub management or reinstating some hydrological processes; randomising management interventions; or adopting a passive-active-passive approach to management where appropriate. The Mayor should provide advice to site managers on how this can be achieved through the LNRS for London and the GLA's role as Chair of the London Wildlife Sites Board, which oversees the selection of SINC sites. The Mayor should also ensure key stepping stone sites for increasing landscape connectivity between rewilding opportunity zones are identified during the preparation of the LNRS, both within London and beyond its boundaries.

CASE STUDY
TOLWORTH COURT FARM, KINGSTON UPON THAMES

Pamela Abbott/Citizen Zoo

Situated within the Hogsmill Valley wildlife corridor in South West London, Tolworth Court Farm (TCF) at 42 ha is Kingston's largest nature reserve and a borough SINC.

The site has the potential to be a pioneer for demonstrating how rewilding principles can be applied to a peri-urban context. Currently, however, TCF is far from reaching its potential, but Wild Tolworth is an ambitious project that is determined to rejuvenate the site, embracing community led conservation and ecological processes. Throughout 2022, Citizen Zoo, Kingston Council, and The Community Brain, with support from the GLA, have been working with members of the local community to co-create a vision for TCF.

Through community events, presentations and nature walks, as well as comprehensive ecological surveys, including six that involved over 100 local people taking part, the project team have gathered vital data on the site to create a vision and management plan to achieve their goal. In 2023, they will look to put this into action, adopting rewilding principles, including a mixed grazing regime, wetland creation and looking into the feasibility of species reintroductions including white storks and glow worms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Part 3: Public Engagement with Rewilding

RECOMMENDATION 3: Promote opportunities for Londoners to engage with rewilding and the capital's nature to the benefit of people and wildlife.

The key aims of the public engagement recommendation are to:

a. **galvanise support for large-scale rewilding efforts**
b. **harness the potential of the concept of rewilding to inspire, engage and empower Londoners to act for nature locally.**

The first aim relates particularly to communities neighbouring or reasonably well-connected to existing and future large-scale rewilding projects. This engagement should make clear why a rewilding approach to land management has been selected (including addressing potential negative perceptions of rewilding as being unsafe, untidy, or uncontrolled), why the location is appropriate for a rewilding approach, and inviting engagement on rewilding efforts by those less likely to be engaged. It could include opportunities to involve people in species reintroduction and planting activities, including inviting people who may not regularly be involved in nature projects.

The second aim recognises the reality that while large-scale rewilding projects should aim to be accessible to as many people as possible, there will be individuals and groups who will not be able to visit them regularly, whether due to physical proximity, cost of travel, inability to make time, or other day-to-day barriers. Therefore, several of the recommendations are related to making the concept of rewilding relatable at the local level, bringing small-scale nature closer to where people are, and inspiring local action to create wilder spaces across London. This would build on the approach the Mayor has taken to improving, enhancing and creating new urban greening since 2016.

RECOMMENDATION 3.1: Engage local communities and young people from early stages of project development within identified rewilding opportunity zones (linked to Recommendation 1.2).

Members of the public and particularly those living in proximity to potential rewilding areas in London should be considered as key stakeholders from very early stages of large-scale rewilding project development. Local community members can provide unique insights about local needs and priorities, which can then enable the benefits of rewilding to be aligned with their wishes. This engagement should take place in various formats to reach the broadest audiences possible, including those less likely to already be engaged in nature-related projects. It will also be valuable to identify and gain the buy-in of champions in the community who can relay messages and build up local support for the projects.

Youth engagement is particularly important for ensuring the longevity of rewilding projects, as young people can be strong advocates and will take over stewardship of these areas into the future. Involving local youth communities/members in rewilding projects and initiatives, including opportunities to become involved in governance and operations of these projects, should be encouraged. Such initiatives should also target groups that are under-represented in nature conservation and land management as part of coordinated action to diversify the sector and fill critical skills gaps. This approach can help give young people early exposure to the conservation sector and build a pipeline of talent to help ensure longevity of rewilding initiatives.[16],[17] It can further open other opportunities to for youth to connect with jobs and the natural environment.

16 London Wildlife Trust, https://www.wildlondon.org.uk/keeping-it-wild#:~:text=Keeping%20it%20Wild%20Trainees%20spend,paid%20via%20a%20tax%2Dfreebursary

17 London Wildlife Trust, https://www.wildlondon.org.uk/youth-board-and-young-advisors

CASE STUDY
ALLESTREE PARK,
DERBY URBAN REWILDING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust

Allestree Park, a 130-hectare site located at a former golf course in Derby, is on track to become the UK's largest urban rewilding site.

The project to rewild the park is being led by the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust working in partnership with Derby City Council and the University of Derby. During early 2022, they ran a 12-week public consultation that presented ideas for rewilding to form a 'Vision for Community Rewilding at Allestree Park'.[18] Through a website survey and in-person events, they were able to gather views from over 2,000 residents. By consulting with the community early on in project development, they have been able to foster community support for the project and better understand the community's top priorities for the space, including supporting nature recovery in the region, provision for a natural health service, increasing the city's carbon storage and sequestering capacity, and contributing to the local economy.[19]

18 Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, https://www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/news/next-steps-rewilding-allestree-park

19 Derbyshire Wildlife Trust & Derby City Council bit.ly/3L1aCwC

RECOMMENDATION 3.2: Support activities linked to rewilding 'stepping stone' projects that build on existing GLA and partners' initiatives and that provide meaningful opportunities for Londoners to enhance biodiversity (linked to Recommendation 2).

The Mayor and partners, including the London Rewilding Action Group, should support ongoing activities and initiatives that aim to educate, engage and inspire the public around the importance of nature, wildlife and biodiversity in cities to combat the pressing climate and ecological crises. A programme of opportunities should be employed/deployed to increase the depth of engagement with the concept of rewilding for both those already interested and for targeted groups of Londoners, including groups underrepresented in nature conservation. Key opportunities include centrally or locally-led community and citizen science initiatives that support biodiversity and environmental monitoring, and the mapping of potential areas to consider for rewilding. Other opportunities include educational projects with schools to raise young people's awareness of and participation in rewilding. There is growing research evidence that direct involvement within nature-focused community and citizen science programmes can build young people's agency and confidence to act.

Citizen/community science programmes engage members of the public to conduct and contribute to scientific research. In the case of rewilding, they can be valuable by scaling up and spreading out efforts to monitor the quality of habitats and waterways, or to track biodiversity. Various citizen and community science initiatives exist in London already including through Thames21[20], the Natural History Museum[21], Zoological Society of London, London Wildlife Trust[22], Citizen Zoo, the capital's many universities and academic institutions, and community groups like Pollinating London Together[23]. There is also a role for local community-led and managed initiatives to be developed and supported. Data that is submitted to and managed by Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL, London's environmental record centre) helps to track habitat and species information for London, and should inform the design and delivery of rewilding projects.[24]

20 Thames21, https://www.thames21.org.uk/become-a-citizen-scientist/

21 Natural History Museum, https://www.nhm.ac.uk/take-part/citizen-science.html

22 London Wildlife Trust, https://www.wildlondon.org.uk/campaign/record-your-sightings

23 Pollinating London Together, https://www.pollinatinglondontogether.com/

24 Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL), https://www.gigl.org.uk/our-data-holdings/

CASE STUDY
ENGAGEMENT IN CITIZEN SCIENCE THROUGH THE CATCHMENT SYSTEMS THINKING COOPERATIVE

The Ofwat-funded Catchment Systems Thinking Cooperative (CaSTCo) is a partnership which is seeking to implement a national framework for a catchment monitoring cooperative, using citizen science and standardised approaches to data collection and management.

The partnership is led by The Rivers Trust and United Utilities in partnership with more than 20 other organisations spanning water and sewerage companies, academia, and environmental charities. In London, Thames21 has been involved to help improve knowledge and understanding of the river health of catchment of the Salmon and Dollis Brooks in North London, with the aim of gaining the evidence through trained citizen scientists to restore the brooks to a healthy state.

Community mapping involves members of the public collaborating on the collection of spatial data. While there could be some element of this under existing citizen science initiatives, a specific programme could be developed to support boroughs with advocacy around, development of and implementation of London's Local Nature Recovery Strategy. People could be asked to identify spaces in their local neighbourhoods and areas that could form part of the London's nature recovery network, which in turn could support the GLA and boroughs with identifying and prioritising specific sites for nature recovery. This may involve working with an academic partner who could manage the mapping platform and synthesise inputs and an outreach partner who could work to get people involved in inputting both on the ground and digitally. Consideration would need to be made whether to target certain areas to get better engagement or leave this open for pan-London input.

CASE STUDY
QUEEN MARY UNIVERSITY'S BLUEGREEN E17 PROJECT

Environmental science and urban geography researchers at Queen Mary University of London are using the concept of rewilding to engage community members in the E17 postcode area of Walthamstow to help build a map of green and blue spaces.[25]

Starting from July 2022, community members have been asked to submit photographs of local nature spots they feel connected to and share their ideas for a wilder Walthamstow. The photos and input are being collated on a map, with the researchers hoping "to better understand connections with and between existing green and blue spaces, and to help create a vision for how they might be enhanced in the future".[26] The researchers are aiming to demonstrate how this type of community mapping exercise can be translated through to local environmental policy – with rewilding as a key angle to draw interest.

25 BlueGreenE17 Project, https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/824fde8e238946cb8cde2d3c8b60658e

26 Queen Mary University of London, https://www.qmul.ac.uk/geog/news/2022/items/researchers-call-for-east-london-communities-to-map-nature-spots.html

Schools and educational programmes, including training and mentoring, such as outdoor learning, forest schools, and nature-friendly schools, can support children and youth to connect with nature as part of their education, while also bringing benefits for their mental and physical health and wellbeing. Environmental organisations in London, such as the London Wildlife Trust, already provide lessons in nature that are directly linked with the National Curriculum.[27] The forthcoming Natural History GCSE and other nature, sustainability and climate change-focussed educational opportunities should embed rewilding and include opportunities for students to learn from London's green and natural spaces. Further support is also needed for training and mentoring to ensure that rewilding sites can be monitored and maintained in the long-term.

Paul Upward Photography

27 London Wildlife Trust, https://www.wildlondon.org.uk/outdoor-learning-homepage

RECOMMENDATION 3.3: Build on public interest and enthusiasm around rewilding to share and reframe messages about nature to promote wilder, more natural approaches to urban greening.

There are many smaller scale actions that can enhance biodiversity across London, particularly in the most heavily urbanised areas of the city, including green roofs; high quality planting for nature in private and communal gardens, churchyards and cemeteries; wildflower verges; pollinator highways; and stopping the use of pesticides and herbicides, amongst others. While these do not strictly fit the definition of a rewilding project and may not result in the type of self-sustaining ecosystem that rewilding strives for, collectively such actions can scale up massively. They are critical activities that can provide highly positive outcomes for nature, people and the environment across London. The Mayor, through his platforms, and with partners, such as local authorities, NGOs and charities, local organisations and others with platforms, should promote actions Londoners can take to support nature locally and create wilder spaces across the city.

The Mayor and partners should develop and promote messages that can be shared with broader audiences concerning the benefits of establishing and experiencing wilder and more natural spaces across London. This should seek to incorporate the concept of rewilding as a hook to engage a wider set of people in broader discussions of nature, wildlife, climate change and the relationship between humans and nature, with the aim of inspiring local greening actions. Rewilding messaging should be embedded in other greening, climate and environment communications and programmes to take advantage of the excitement around rewilding. There is an opportunity to further spread this messaging through existing trusted community representatives to reach those who may not already be engaged in environmental topics.

Further, for urban greening and ecological enhancement projects and programmes funded by the Mayor or partners, there is an opportunity to embed biodiversity enhancement as a core objective through the lens of rewilding alongside other aims. Those delivering projects should be asked to demonstrate that they have considered how their greening elements can be designed to be more natural and wilder, with more heterogeneity and more natural processes built in to make the city wilder. These messages can be amplified through Mayoral programmes and through the work of partners supported by the Mayor.

CONCLUSION

Rewilding undertaken in London presents the opportunity to add value above and beyond existing nature conservation efforts both from ecological and engagement perspectives. The concept of rewilding and the underlying notion of reframing people's relationship with nature is central to its ability to inspire people to act. The Taskforce sees opportunities for further action and engagement across the full spectrum of rewilding activities.

There is an exciting opportunity to pilot large-scale rewilding in London in ways that will bring tangible benefits for people and wildlife, but this must be enabled by bold leadership and actively championed. Rewilding projects will require strong, collaborative leadership to convene and connect multiple bodies and stakeholders across boundaries and maintain momentum in the long term. Delivering rewilding will require working with landowners and surrounding counties, for example by contributing to the development of their Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

Public engagement in rewilding should galvanise support for large-scale rewilding projects, creating long-term community support and fostering a sense of ownership and stewardship. For those not living near these projects, engagement should also be targeted with a view to reaching Londoners with deficient access to nature and reducing inequalities by introducing smaller nature recovery actions that can take place closer to their doorsteps, in gardens, verges and other green and blue spaces, whether existing or newly created.

Following the publication of this report, the Mayor should set out how he proposes to respond to the recommendations, particularly through the Local Nature Recovery Strategy development process. As the LNRS development work is set to begin shortly, these recommendations should be incorporated into that strategy and the delivery of the strategy that follows. Opportunities to act should not all wait until the LNRS is developed, but also be taken in parallel, such as recommendations to pilot a large-scale rewilding project and to reframe engagement through a rewilding lens.

APPENDICES

Mathew Frith
/London Wildlife Trust

APPENDIX 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE

The London Rewilding Taskforce (LRT) is a time-limited advisory group of experts convened by the Mayor of London.

Definition of Rewilding[28]

For the purposes of the group, rewilding is defined as an activity that seeks to reinstate natural processes and, where appropriate, missing species allowing nature to shape the landscape to provide wider benefits for wildlife and people.

i. AIM

The key aims of the Taskforce are to:

- Consider how rewilding practices could inform conservation land management in London to support recovery of nature across the capital and how this could be funded.
- Build consensus on what rewilding means in London, where practical opportunities might exist, and how rewilding might be incorporated into the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for London.
- Communicate what rewilding means in London to a broader public audience.

ii. OBJECTIVES

To achieve this aim, the group will:

- Identify and review successful rewilding projects and programmes carried out in the UK and globally and examine the suitability of these approaches for supporting the recovery of nature in London.
- Provide expert advice on the opportunities for rewilding in London it considers are practical and sustainable and would contribute to the conservation and enhancement of nature and/or increase ecosystem services.
- Look at new sources of funding to support London's nature recovery networking including opportunities for rewilding (e.g. private, and charitable sources).

28 The definition of rewilding was proposed in the Terms of Reference for the Taskforce but was subject to and subsequently adjusted based on discussion by Taskforce members.

- Highlight any relevant opportunities to support rewilding in London, either through existing programmes or future changes to land management funding or policy that the work of the LRT could inform.
- Build consensus on the value of rewilding in London, communicate the opportunities it provides to enhance the capital's nature recovery network, and engage Londoners, especially hard-to-reach and unrepresented groups, in wider action on the environment.

iii. OUTPUTS

The group will deliver the following outputs within its term of operation (3 meetings in Spring-to-Autumn 2022):

- **A joint statement on the feasibility and value of rewilding in London (including the challenges and opportunities, supported by case studies).**

– To reach a common understanding amongst key influential stakeholders about what rewilding is in the urban context and how this could increase the resilience of London's ecological network, including preparing guiding principles to inform future investigations. (Any investigation into the reintroduction and/or the management of specific species would be undertaken following the publication of this statement)

- **Published recommendations on potential opportunities for rewilding to inform the preparation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for London.**

– Recommendations will provide a framework for rewilding in London – e.g. proposing technical/geographic areas for further investigation.

– The Taskforce will:

  – Consider approaches to habitat management and species reintroduction that could be sustained in an urban environment using rewilding practices by landowners and managers.

  – Identify the resourcing and investment needed to support London's nature recovery, including opportunities for rewilding.

  – Identify a shortlist of potential rewilding projects for further investigation by relevant organisations.

  – Identify potential opportunities to engage Londoners in action to rewild the capital.

- **Resource on International Urban Rewilding Best Practices and Case Studies.**

– Working with the C40 undertake a review of best practice and case studies of urban rewilding globally, creating a resource that can be used by London and other C40 cities (funded by C40 linked to the Mayor's role as C40 Chair).

iv. GOVERNANCE

- The LRT will be time-limited to a term not exceeding 6 months from its first meeting with the aim of reporting prior to COP15.
- The LRT is an advisory not a decision-making body. The LRT will propose opportunities suitable for the conservation of nature in London for landowners and managers to consider but does not have decision-making powers.
- The LRT will focus its advice on the opportunities for rewilding in London on those it considers to be practical and sustainable, and which would make a tangible contribution to the recovery of nature in London in the context of existing policies and programmes.
- The LRT reports to the Mayor of London, through the Deputy Mayor for Environment and Energy who will chair the Taskforce.

v. OPERATION

The London Rewilding Taskforce:

- Will be serviced by a secretariat staffed by officers from the Greater London Authority.
- Will meet three times over the course of its term.
- May establish smaller working groups to address specific issues or elements of the work programme.
- May commission external contractors to conduct research or provide consultancy services to achieve the objectives of the LRT.
- Will work with key stakeholders including key landowners and managers.
- May be supported by advice from other specific experts who can be called to give evidence and/or participate in specific meetings to ensure that LRT members have access to a full range of information and expertise.
- Should be informed by previous and existing relevant work.
- Membership of the LRT is a non-remunerated, advisory position.

APPENDIX 2: LONDON'S NATURE RECOVERY: CONTEXT

Background: Nature Recovery Policy in London

Relatively wild areas of land have been set aside in what is now Greater London ever since Charles I established Richmond Park as a hunting park in 1637. However, the preservation of natural heritage as public policy did not come about until measures such as the Epping Forest Act 1878 ensured that tracts of semi-natural habitat were set aside, preserved and managed "for the recreation and enjoyment of the public".

As far-reaching as these important decisions were to set aside land for nature, nature conservation per se was not a major concern for city planners as London grew rapidly before and after the Second World War. Former estates and parklands were incorporated into the urban landscape and converted into more formal public parks and open spaces. However, the preservationist tradition continued, and a combination of policy and legislation ensured that commons (such as Wimbledon Common) and woodlands (such as Perivale Wood) were spared from encroaching urbanisation.

It was not until the publication of the Abercrombie post-Second World War Plan for development that the notion of a 'park system', plus a mechanism (the Green Belt) to prevent continued urban sprawl become a cornerstone of the city's land-use policy. The Open Space map and policies of the County of London Plan envisaged a network of protected land to provide 'a flow of open space from garden to park, from park to parkway, from parkway to green wedge and from green wedge to Green Belt'.

In the early part of this century, growing concerns about the impacts of climate change on London resulted in a shift in policy focus that explored how 'nature' could be integrated into the urban environment to deliver benefits such as flood mitigation, urban cooling, and cleaner air. This led to a broader suite of land-use planning policies within the London Plan – the spatial development plan for Greater London.

BOX 3. LONDON'S GREEN BELT AND METROPOLITAN OPEN LAND

The Green Belt is a well-known designation applied to undeveloped land around cities to prevent the spread of urbanisation, encourage re-use of previously developed sites and maintain the distinct nature of towns and cities. London's Green Belt spans over 35,000 ha of land, with more than 90% being contained in just 10 London boroughs.[29]

Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) is a designation specific to London that protects open land within the city, as opposed to around the edge. MOL is afforded the same level as London's Green Belt land as areas of landscape, recreation, nature conservation, or scientific interest and strategic importance.

The Plan is part of the statutory development plan for London, meaning that its policies should inform decisions on planning applications across the capital. Boroughs' Local Plans must be in 'general conformity' with the London Plan, ensuring that the planning system for London operates in a joined-up way and reflects the overall strategy for how London can develop sustainably, which the London Plan sets out. The key policies relevant to nature recovery include G1 on Green Infrastructure, G2 on London's Green Belt, G6 on Biodiversity and access to nature, and G7 on Trees and woodlands.[30] The planning policies in the London Plan and the environmental ambitions and programmes of the Mayor are consolidated in the London Environment Strategy. This includes a suite of objectives and proposals for green infrastructure and the natural environment.

29 CPRE, https://www.cprelondon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2022/02/CPRE-GiGL-Report-FINAL.pdf

30 London Plan 2021, https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/planning/london-plan/new-london-plan/london-plan-2021

London's most valuable and special places for wildlife are recognised by the Mayor and London borough councils as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) through the Local Plan making process. SINCs receive a high level of protection from development in the Mayor's London Plan. Most are managed by boroughs or other public bodies. A comprehensive patchwork of SINCs stretches across London, covering a breadth of important wildlife habitats, to public parks, cemeteries and rail-side land. Nearly all areas of priority habitats for conservation and many sites with important populations of priority or legally protected species are selected as SINCs.[31]

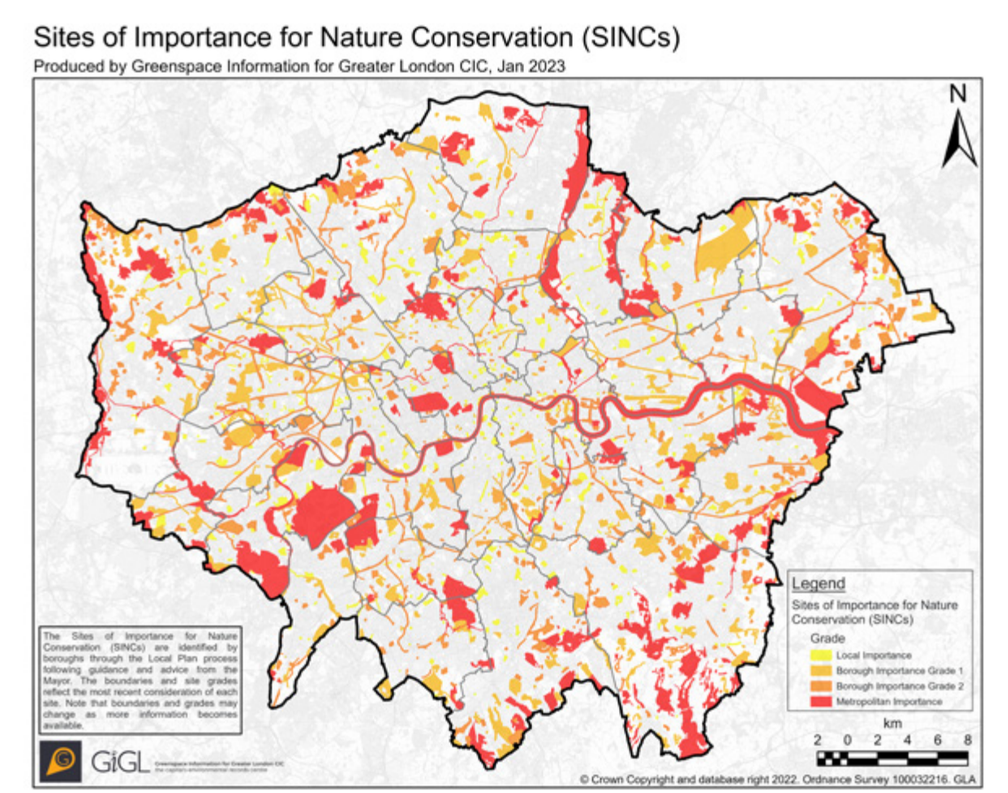
The policies and programmes to protect and conserve London's wildlife and natural habitats and integrate nature into the urban environment have paid dividends. The SINC network covers about 30,000 hectares or 20 per cent of Greater London's land area, and the total area of protected green space (including the Green Belt but excluding private gardens) in London is approximately 55,000 hectares or 35 per cent of Greater London's land area. Furthermore, urban greening is now standard practice in new developments.

Nevertheless, the identification of land as a SINC does not require the landowner (often boroughs) to manage the land for wildlife. Although many are managed as nature reserves or are covered by statutory designations, which ensures their nature conservation interest is protected, the majority are essentially parks and green spaces with nature conservation assets and features within them. Very few, apart from a few notable exceptions such as Rainham Marshes, the South London Downs National Nature Reserve, Richmond Park and parts of Epping Forest, for example, are managed as relatively large landscapes with grazing animals.

In addition, the protection of open space through Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land policies does not in and of itself encourage nature-friendly management, and the greening of new development, although welcome and beneficial, is not on a sufficient scale at the site level to make a major contribution to ecological connectivity at the landscape level.

31 Spaces Wild, London Wildlife Trust, 2015, http://live-twt-d8-london.pantheonsite.io/sites/default/files/2019-05/spaces-wild-london-wildlife-trust-oct2015.pdf

FIGURE 4: London's Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation



Consequently, much of London's wildlife, in common with national trends, continues to decline or is contained and isolated within fragmented areas of land managed for nature. This is despite efforts by the Mayor, GLA and the boroughs who have invested in a range of projects to improve the ecology of a large number of parks and green spaces, and through the promotion of ecological improvements to new development through features such as green roofs and sustainable drainage systems. Of particular success have been funding programmes run by the Mayor such as his Greener Capital Fund and the Green and Resilient Spaces Fund[32]. These grant schemes have funded large scale projects such as the restoration of Beckenham Place Park (a former golf course) and major woodland tree-planting projects at Enfield Chase and Hainault Forest.

The Mayor has also created a Rewild London Fund to protect and enhance SINCs, creating more natural habitats for plants and animals to thrive. At the time of publication, the first round awarded £600,000 to 19 projects that will enhance and connect 54 SINCs and winners of a second round are being announced in early 2023.

32 The Green Capital Grants were part of the Mayor's £12m programme of funds for urban greening in his first term focused on large green space projects. More information can be found here: https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-and-strategies/environment-and-climate-change/parks-green-spaces-and-biodiversity/greener-city-fund/green-capital-grants. The Green and Resilient Spaces Fund is one of the Mayor's current funding programmes to create and improve large-scale green space projects. More information, including open rounds of funding, can be found here: https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/environment-and-climate-change/parks-green-spaces-and-biodiversity/green-space-funding/green-and-resilient-spaces-fund-round-two.

BOX 4. EXAMPLE PROJECTS FROM REWILD LONDON FUND ROUND 1

Enfield Conservation Grazing (Led by: London Borough of Enfield)

This project will improve the management of grassland at three country parks in the London Borough of Enfield by reintroducing grazing cattle. The project will be delivered in partnership with Capel Manor College who run Forty Hall Farm. Restoring natural processes by reintroducing large grazing animals aims to enhance these SINCs as well as strengthening the spaces between them, ensuring they are bigger, better managed and better connected.

Get InVOLEd - Hogsmill River Water Vole Reintroduction (Led by: Citizen Zoo)

This project is supporting the reintroduction of water voles to the Hogsmill River in Kingston. This project will focus on a 2.45km stretch of river comprised of two separate SINC sites along the Hogsmill Valley SINC. Permission for Citizen Zoo to proceed with the water vole reintroduction in this area was granted in 2021. With the Rewild London Fund's support, Citizen Zoo plans to restore habitats to better connect the site and expand their monitoring network with latrine rafts, camera traps, and state of the art bioacoustic recording devices.

The Chase Local Nature Reserve River, Wetland & Meadow Restoration and Creation (Led by: London Borough of Barking & Dagenham)

The Chase Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is a biodiversity haven in an otherwise urban location. The Slack Bird Sanctuary, which is the heart of The Chase LNR and a leading reason it was designated a Site of Metropolitan Importance, is in danger of being lost. Through a four-phase plan, the project will restore the Slack and create a new biodiverse area of wetland floodplain adjacent to the River Rom.

The Mayor of London has a legal duty to set out policies and proposals in relation to the natural environment and biodiversity in the London Environment Strategy and the Greater London Authority is subject to the 'biodiversity duty', which requires all public bodies to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of their policy development, decision making and operational activities.

However, as the GLA is not a major landowner and local operations are the responsibility of local authorities, the Mayor does not have responsibility for the day-to-day management of parks and green spaces in London. Therefore, working with and through partners and boroughs is key for the delivery of his green infrastructure and natural environment policy and actions, including through ensuring that:

- green infrastructure policies are included in relevant Mayoral strategies, such as the London Plan and the Mayor's Transport Strategy
- key departments within the GLA, such as those responsible for housing and land, and regeneration, take due regard of national policy and the Mayor's policies and aims
- Mayoral bodies such as TfL, the London Legacy Development Corporation, and Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation implement Mayoral policies

The Mayor also has a significant leadership role and can act as a powerful advocate to highlight issues that require a pan-London approach to stimulate effective and coordinated action.

National Biodiversity Policy and Local Nature Recovery Strategies

The publication of the Lawton Review[33] in 2010 highlighted that England's wildlife sites, despite their diversity, did not comprise a coherent and resilient ecological network and many would not be capable of coping with the challenge of climate change and other pressures. To address this, it was concluded that a step change was needed in nature conservation policy and practice.

An approach that considered whole landscapes is needed to reverse the effects of fragmentation and environmental degradation. The Lawton review recommended establishing ecological networks, based around large scale areas of natural habitat, with connections between them enabling species and to move and habitats to respond to the effects of climate change. The National Planning Policy Framework[34] (2021) requires local authorities to take a strategic approach to biodiversity. Local Plan policies should "plan for biodiversity at a landscape-scale across local authority boundaries; identify and map components of the local ecological networks…planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity." Furthermore, local plans have historically been charged with promoting the preservation, restoration, and re-creation of priority habitats, and the protection and recovery of priority species populations.

As a consequence of these recommendations, government in its Environment Act 2021 committed to establishing a National Nature Recovery Network[35] - a network of connected wildlife-rich places; supported by Local Nature Recovery Strategies - a system of spatial strategies (based at the county and metropolitan level) that will establish priorities and map proposals for specific actions to drive nature's recovery and provide wider environmental benefits.

The Greater London Authority will be designated as the responsible authority for producing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for London by Defra. The strategy will aim to: (1) agree priorities for nature's recovery; (2) map the most valuable existing areas for nature; (3) map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals. In this context, rewilding in London must be considered as one strategy from a spectrum of possible nature recovery approaches. Any rewilding approach being incorporated into the Local Nature Recovery Strategy will also require close collaboration and buy-in from responsible authorities for neighbouring local nature recovery strategy areas.

33 Defra, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/making-space-for-nature-a-review-of-englands-wildlife-sites-published-today

34 DLUHC, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2

35 Defra and Natural England, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nature-recovery-network/nature-recovery-network

Nature-related Activities and Rewilding in London

Much has been taking place across London related to nature recovery, underscoring the importance of considering rewilding as an approach that should add value above and beyond existing activity and initiatives.

Examples include landscape approaches, such as London Wildlife Trust's Great North Wood Living Landscape, focusing on 13 core woodland sites in the Norwood-Dulwich-Forest Hill area, but also on areas adjacent to them, working with community groups to raise awareness of the value of this once wooded landscape and help them with skills to manage these sites.[36] Similarly, Brilliant Butterflies (led by the Trust in partnership with Natural History Museum and Butterfly Conservation) took a landscape approach to enhancing and creating chalk grassland habitats between Biggin Hill and Coulsdon, including eDNA surveying & analysis, training and raising awareness with neighbouring communities of this internationally important habitat. [37]

New nature reserves have been created and other important sites enhanced, such as at Woodberry Wetlands, Walthamstow Wetlands (both London Wildlife Trust), Lesnes Abbey Wood (LB Bexley)[38], Hainault Country Park (LB Redbridge) and Beckenham Place Park (LB Lewisham), to name a few.

36 Great North Wood, https://www.wildlondon.org.uk/great-north-wood

37 Brilliant Butterflies, https://www.wildlondon.org.uk/brilliant-butterflies

38 Lesnes Abbey Wood https://www.lesnesabbeywoods.org/news/

APPENDIX 3: REWILDING OPPORTUNITY ZONES DESCRIPTIONS

Number	Zone	Description
1	Enfield Chase	Enfield Chase is a former royal hunting ground which is now largely agricultural land owned by the London Borough of Enfield and leased to tenant farmers. The local authority has been developing a rewilding vision for the site and has embarked on an initial programme of tree planting and wetland creation, partly with support from the Mayor, and in early 2022 undertook London's first beaver re-introduction. The council have recently been awarded funding via Defra's Landscape Recovery Fund to undertake detailed feasibility studies and planning for an ambitious rewilding project across 1000Ha of what is now mainly farmland. Robust governance arrangements and funding streams for long-term management will need to be identified to enable the delivery of a project that will take several decades to realise in full, but the project could provide a template for similar projects.
2	Fairlop Plain to Dagnam Park	Fairlop Plain comprises Fairlop Water Country Park and a large area of tenanted agricultural land owned by the Crown Estate lying to the south of Hainault Forest and Hainault Forest Country Park, which are owned and managed by Woodland Trust and London Borough of Redbridge. The land to the east in Havering is mainly privately owned agricultural land interspersed by land owned by Havering Council, culminating in Dagnam Park at the furthest point. While there is not an overarching vision in place at this scale, some activity to link wildlife sites and explore rewilding is underway that could be built on with adequate resourcing to establish partnerships, a vision and governance to deliver large-scale rewilding. A new woodland, supported by the Mayor, was planted between 2020-2022 to begin delivering a long-held aspiration to link Hainault Forest through to Bedfords Park to the east, and London Borough of Havering are undertaking feasibility work for options to rewild Dagnam Park. Restoration of gravel workings in Redbridge will also bring opportunities to create new wetlands and open habitats. Rewilding projects in this area have significant scope to improve access to nature for a large population, including for areas of higher social depravation.

Number	Zone	Description
3	Ingrebourne Valley	A large zone with mixed land-use and ownership with Hornchurch Country Park to the west and the Ingrebourne Valley SSSI at the centre. It is located within the Thames Chase Community Forest area, one of the 12 community forests originally established in 1990 to regenerate and enhance the natural environment. The central part of the zone includes Berwick Woods, a restored quarry owned by Tarmac Southern Ltd that has public access, as well as private land with a wide range of existing uses including private fisheries and airfields and agricultural land. While the mix of ownership and uses make the site complicated, the community forest partnership provides a ready framework to evaluate opportunities for a change of management of these areas to develop a vision for a large-scale rewilding project.
4	Havering East	Over 350Ha of lower grade farmland that also sits within the wider Thames Chase Community Forest area. London Borough of Havering are currently exploring options to build a data centre and open up public access to a new ecology park of c.120Ha in the southern half of the zone. This blank canvas could be an exciting opportunity to create a publicly accessible rewilding project with a strong educational element. The land to the north of the zone could be included as part of a wider project subject to landowner willingness. This would be one of a few privately owned areas to be delivered as part of the Thames Chase Community Forest vision and could initiate new conversations about future land-use in the Community Forest area.

Number	Zone	Description
5&6	Thames Marshes (North and South)	The All London Green Grid Supplementary Planning Guidance identified the potential for a new regional park encompassing the last remaining extensive grazing marshes either side of the River Thames in East London - Rainham Marshes on the north bank of the Thames and Crayford Marshes on the south bank. Rainham Marshes is a 411ha site currently managed by the RSPB as a nature reserve. It is a national stronghold for water vole and an important site for both breeding and overwintering birds in the Thames estuary. An opportunity was identified for Rainham Marshes to be managed alongside the restored Rainham landfill site to the south to create the Wildspace Conservation Park. The landfill site is due to cease operations by 2024, with restoration completed by 2026. Longer-term plans for the management and governance of the site alongside the RSPB nature reserve is yet to be decided and has potential to include a rewilding project across part of the area. Crayford Marshes and Dartford Marshes to the south of the river are areas of protected Green Belt but which suffer from lack of coherent planning and management due to multiple land ownerships and the sites straddling the London/Kent administrative boundary. They have also been considered as potential managed retreat areas as part of the long-term Thames Estuary 2100 strategy for London's tidal flood defences and flood management. Taking forward a rewilding project in the southern marshes area would require significant resource to coordinate the many landowners and identify long-term revenue for management, nevertheless, as has been proposed in the past (e.g. Managing the Marshes, 2006), they have similar potential for a significant wildlife recovery project as the northern marshes and connect to areas of the Thames gateway in Kent that are likely to be part of the county's LNRS.

Number	Zone	Description
7&8	London Downlands (Croydon and Bromley Downs)	A ribbon of London's countryside where chalk downs, woodlands, hedgerows and farmland define the landscape of the North Downs. Although this is already one of the most wildlife rich areas of the capital, there are significant opportunities, particularly in the Bromley section, to rewild large areas of farmland to reduce the isolation of existing wildlife sites and to support the recolonisation and reintroductions of species. The Zone incorporates the South Downs NNR area in Croydon, which is all public land, plus private landholdings in between the NNR sites that could be rewilded to improve connectivity. The Selsdon Estate is a large private landholding which has recently changed ownership and could be suitable, subject to landowner willingness. Within Bromley the zone is predominately privately owned farmland, but also includes High Elms and Saltbox Hill SSSIs and a large area of Bromley owned land to the north. Challenges in this zone will include coordinating the large number of landowners to test interest in and deliver rewilding, as well as balancing the existing high-value ecological and cultural interest of the landscape, strongly associated with Charles Darwin, with a rewilding approach.
9	Gutteridge and Ten Acre Wood	One of the most urban zones identified, this is a complex of ancient and semi-natural woodland, damp meadows and farmland which the Yeading Brook, a tributary of the River Crane, passes through. Part is owned by London Borough of Hillingdon, Ten Acre and Gutteridge Woods nature reserves in the zone are managed by London Wildlife Trust, with private land ownership of the farmland and golf courses to the east and old shooting grounds to the south-east.. The brook is heavily modified in this stretch and there is significant opportunity through re-naturalisation of the waterway and the introduction of large grazing animals to reinstate natural processes that would benefit nature, improve access and also reduce flood risk in the surrounding residential areas. Detailed feasibility work is required to explore options for the site and to identify long-term revenue streams to cover the full costs associated with management of an urban fringe site of this type. [you may be aware that we have already applied for funds to carry out this feasibility work]

Number	Zone	Description
10	Colne Valley and Ruislip Woods	The Colne Valley is a regional park on the western fringe of London. Unlike the Lea Valley Regional Park, it has no statutory basis and is reliant on collaboration between a number of local authorities and other interested bodies. [e.g. two Wildlife Trusts, Canal & River Trust]. It is a diverse and complex landscape with considerable amount of urban infrastructure throughout much of the park, including motorways, the route of HS2 and Heathrow Airport. However, within this there are very large contiguous areas of land, including a more open landscape around the Ruislip Woods NNR complex, which provides substantial areas that could form the basis of a large-scale rewilding project. Much of this land is in public ownership but with private agricultural leaseholders.
11	Harrow Weald to Stanmore	A mixed landscape of heath, grassland, woodland and farmland, which includes Bentley Priory SSSI, Stanmore Common and Old Redding Complex Sites of Metropolitan Importance, as well as a number of other SINCs that could be expanded, connected and improved through a large-scale rewilding project. Ownership is a mix of public and private, but includes significant areas owned by Harrow council, as well as land that has been purchased by the local community in order to secure its long-term status as open space. Although the main sites are dissected by A-roads, the core areas are all large enough to meet the parameters and also connect to open space across the Greater London border into Hertfordshire.

APPENDIX 4: SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE RECEIVED

Call for Written Evidence

Overview

A call for evidence was issued to stakeholders with interest in rewilding in London from May – June 2022. The call was framed by questions under five key themes covering: rewilding and existing nature recovery practice in London; the role of rewilding in cities; rewilding opportunities in London; funding and policies; and species reintroductions as a part of rewilding (see Box X). 41 submissions were made to the call for evidence representing views from 38 organisations.

Mathew Frith/London Wildlife Trust

BOX 5. CALL FOR EVIDENCE QUESTIONS

1. Rewilding and Existing Nature Recovery Practice in London - How can rewilding be best used to improve and enhance London's ecological network, adding value to the work already being undertaken to help conserve and enhance nature in the capital? What does or could rewilding add to existing nature conservation best practice in London, e.g., would it provide a more successful approach to managing certain sites to restore nature within the greater London area? Or does it provide a more helpful term to describe nature recovery for wider appeal?
2. Role of Rewilding in Cities - What are the main benefits and challenges of adopting the rewilding approach in an urban context such as London's? Are there examples of rewilding approaches in urban/peri-urban areas that the Taskforce can draw from that are relevant to London?
3. Rewilding Opportunities in London - Are there any specific rewilding opportunities within GLA boundaries, or areas that cross the GLA boundary, that the Taskforce should explore? Are there potential negative consequences of rewilding in London that should inform the Taskforce's work?
4. Funding and Policies - What resources or support are currently available or should be provided by Government, local institutions, the private sector and other actors to support rewilding projects? Is the current policy framework sufficient to accelerate rewilding in London?
5. Species Reintroductions as part of Rewilding - Can keystone species that exert landscape scale effects be accommodated in rewilding initiatives in London? Are there species that are iconic and/or inspire engagement with nature that are suitable or appropriate to reintroduce in London?

Summary of Responses

Key points from the call for evidence to be considered by the Taskforce are summarised by question.

1. REWILDING AND EXISTING NATURE RECOVERY PRACTICE IN LONDON

- There is wide acknowledgement that rewilding is different from (but must be complementary to) conservation and restoration practices, and could provide a more successful approach to managing certain sites to enhance nature.
- To add most value to restoring ecosystems and biodiversity, rewilding should not supersede existing conservation practices and must be considered as a subsection of a nature recovery approach. With careful spatial planning at landscape scale, rewilding could be implemented to help improve ecological connectivity for target species, thereby adding value to the work already being undertaken to conserve and enhance nature in the capital.
- Rewilding could, with least risk, be applied to natural areas and green space that are not existing priority habitats, or buffer existing priority habitats, to test what occurs as natural processes are restored.
- Rewilding needs to be understood in context of climate change and recognise that species/habitats may change with a changing climate, including new invasive species.
- For the term "rewilding" to be of most benefit, the Taskforce needs to clarify the definition of rewilding, and how this would apply to the urban, peri urban and greenbelt.
- Rewilding is an effective term to capture public imagination around biodiversity and address a cultural attachment to manicuring and tidying nature. The term introduces the idea that healthy, naturally functioning systems are often messy ('wild') and not manicured (something that requires a realisation on a national level).
- Rewilding is likely to work best when it is integrated into the Local Plans and strategies of boroughs. To achieve this, the benefits to management costs, biodiversity, recreation, and health & wellbeing must be made clear to boroughs.

2. ROLE OF REWILDING IN CITIES

- Many respondents acknowledge that true rewilding is not achievable in cities due to scarcity of large areas of land, but components/principles of rewilding can be applied for "naturalisation" of cities. There should be a spectrum of approaches contributing to "wilding" of urban spaces.
- Nature recovery was seen as a truer reflection of what is possible in cities and could be the headline/umbrella term under which rewilding sits.
- Ongoing increased fragmentation and reduced connectivity prevail in urban environments, therefore a key objective for rewilding is to address this through applying the principles of bigger, better, and well connected (Lawton Review).
- There is a perception that rewilding is a more flexible, low-cost and hands off approach, but there is a risk that this will be equated with 'abandonment' and 'neglect'. Therefore, need to promote rewilding in the urban context as active and appropriately-scaled actions. If incorporating rewilding into existing parks and green spaces, it will be critical to build community understanding and support.
- Individual schemes such as de-paving, hedgehog corridors, leaving wild areas in parks and citizen engagement in nature recovery on balconies and gardens may not individually qualify as rewilding, but with the increased recognition of the term, significant numbers of citizen-led actions could be enabled.

3. REWILDING OPPORTUNITIES IN LONDON

- Larger-scale rewilding could be applied sensitively and effectively in the Green Belt. Key opportunities include natural woodland regeneration and wetland restoration, including rivers and their floodplains. Rivers and wetlands are an important component of London's ecological network, with potentially strong links between river restoration and rewilding. Rewilding provides the opportunity to create a framework for improved integration between land management and water management linking public and privately owned land at a landscape / catchment scale.
- A realistic/pragmatic approach to rewilding needs to go hand-in-hand with building public awareness, participation and engagement. Many responses mention smaller interventions like less mowing, de-paving, allowing long grass habitat, connecting private gardens, reducing use of pesticides/ chemicals, reducing use of artificial turf. Public perception could be an issue if there is not an effective communication strategy put in place so that the public can clearly understand what is hoping to be achieved, why it is being done and what they can expect to see going forward.

- Specific rewilding opportunities mentioned (NB these sites have not been verified and not all of these sites will be suitable for rewilding):
  - London's Canals and Waterways – River Roding in Barking and Newham; River Ingrebourne; Regent's Canal
  - Colne Valley Regional Park
  - East London Waterworks Park
  - South London Downs National Nature Reserve
  - Lee Valley Waterworks Meadow
  - Kingston, Epsom, Ewell – Cross Boundary new National Nature Reserve
  - National Trust sites
  - Existing nature reserves and cemeteries
  - Railway embankments
  - Royal Parks/Royal Palaces
- Specific challenges of rewilding in London mentioned:
  - Disruption to existing conservation initiatives and funding
  - Potential loss of culturally important landscapes and the species they support through a more 'hands off' approach
  - Negative impacts to existing species or proliferation of unwanted, invasive species
  - Pushback from the public due to undesirable aesthetics and perception of rewilding taking away from other green space uses
  - Health and safety concerns
  - Lack of training and expertise to plan and deliver rewilding projects
  - Lack of capacity for on-going maintenance and management leading to risk of failure of rewilding projects

4. FUNDING AND POLICIES

- Existing levels, length, and scope of funding are not well suited for rewilding initiatives. Specific challenges noted related to existing funding:
  - Funding is too often siloed within the environment sector, with separate funding sources allocated towards nature conservation, flooding, air pollution, water quality, etc. These problems are highly interconnected and have localised nature-based solutions that can provide multiple benefits across all these areas. Siloed funding does not account for this. Instead, funding pots should be pooled to allow multiple issues to be tackled by larger scale, landscape scale, single projects.
  - Some funding opportunities are dependent on the quantity of inputs as opposed to the quality of outputs. i.e. Woodland creation is based on the number of trees planted yet similar results can be achieved with fewer trees planted and more space for natural regeneration. Funding could be calculated on the area offered for rewilding and additional funds offered for each element of the project (woodland, SuDS, river restoration).
  - The project-based nature of funding streams does not consider requirements for on-going maintenance of schemes. This promotes a cycle of project conception, design, fund and then failure down the line because of a lack of maintenance budget.
- Local authorities manage significant areas of natural greenspace but have no statutory duty to do this and have suffered wholesale budget reductions over the last 14 years. Strategic and co-ordinated deployment of government support through Environmental Land Managements Schemes, BNG and corporate/philanthropic financing mechanisms is necessary to support nature recovery. However, these are typically not a good fit for urban areas.
- New funding and policy mechanisms are being tested, for instance through Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund – but more research and innovation is required. Funding should be available for organisations to implement large-scale rewilding projects, as well as individuals and communities to take action. The private and philanthropic sector could be further engaged in rewilding funding, for instance through CSR initiatives.
- A main barrier identified is that local authorities are missing the necessary expertise and skill sets to plan, deliver and monitor rewilding projects, as well as, to access funding (e.g. preparing often complex grant applications). Managers of re-wilded landscapes, for instance, need to be highly trained to notice and judge when intervention is necessary.
- Challenges exist in policy/planning related to the Green Belt due to development pressures and shifting responses from national and local government.

5. SPECIES REINTRODUCTION AS PART OF REWILDING

- There is a mix of responses between those viewing species reintroductions as a fundamental aspect of rewilding and others indicating that rewilding does not necessitate species reintroductions.
- Many note that the focus of rewilding should not necessarily be on species but on protecting, improving, and restoring habitats, and reducing fragmentation between habitat areas. Improving water quality and river health, for instance, would lead to more rewilding benefits than specific species introductions.
- Many species were mentioned in responses, including many with established populations in the capital, but few submissions explained why their reintroduction would be beneficial. Species mentioned: beavers (London Beaver Group); water vole; otters; white stork; glow worm; common lizard; analogue grazers; European eels.

Talk London Discussion and Survey

Talk London is City Hall's online community. Between 20 June to 21 August 2022, Talk London members were invited to contribute views on rewilding via an online discussion group and survey.[39] Over 10,000 people visited the Talk London page, with more than 13,000 completing the survey and 190 comments in the discussion group.

The key findings from this engagement are summarised below:

Awareness of rewilding was high. Most felt confident in their knowledge of rewilding, with almost 2 in 5 (38%) saying that they felt very confident on the subject. When asked to define rewilding, respondents said that it was making use of unmanaged spaces to allow wildlife to thrive (88%) as well as creating woodland and spaces for wildlife (84%) and reintroducing wildlife (77%). Overall, respondents consider rewilding to be important (92%). Only 1% of respondents felt that rewilding isn't important at all.

Desired outcomes

Many respondents want more unmanaged spaces rewilded (76%) as well as more woodland and spaces for wildlife (71%). About half of respondents (53%) would like to reintroduce wildlife and animals into London.

Respondents are most likely to consider vacant land as a suitable location for rewilding (81%) followed by local parks (72%). The least popular location for rewilding is the high street – although 41% of respondents still considered it an option.

39 Talk London Rewilding Hub, https://www.london.gov.uk/talk-london/rewilding-london

Issues with rewilding

Respondents' biggest issue with rewilding London is that there might be insufficient locations in the capital to rewild (35%). Respondents were also worried that rewilded areas would be inaccessible to visit (15%) and that rewilding might restrict activity in existing green spaces (14%).

Benefits of rewilding

Most respondents appreciate the benefits of spending time in green spaces on their mental health (72%) and physical health and wellbeing (66%). Spending their free time in nature also helps respondents to feel more productive at work (61%).

Environmental issues, such as declining wildlife, are a big concern for many of the respondents. Respondents feel very worried about insects and birds disappearing (76%) and varieties of animals declining (69%).

Getting involved

40% of respondents are very interested in getting involved with rewilding London.

When asked what rewilding activities respondents would like to get involved in, 45% of respondents would be interested in attending in-person events, followed by the 2 in 5 of respondents (41%) who would like to get involved in awareness-raising and educational activities.

The data and findings in this section should be considered as representative of Talk London members rather than Londoners more broadly. Talk London members tend to be highly informed about environmental issues and activities being undertaken by the Mayor and the GLA. Around 85% of Talk London members identify as white (compared to about 60% of Londoners who do) and only about 11% of Talk London members identify as being from a BAME ethnicity group (compared to over 35% of Londoners). Talk London members also tend to skew towards older age groups than is representative of Londoners as a whole. Fewer younger Londoners (less than 34 years old) participate in Talk London.

APPENDIX 5: C40 RESOURCE ON INTERNATIONAL URBAN REWILDING

In his role as the Chair of C40, the Mayor is keen that the work of the London Rewilding Taskforce inspires other cities to consider urban rewilding as an approach to nature recovery and supporting climate action. The Taskforce has worked with C40 Cities and Arup to develop a resource on global urban rewilding best practice and case studies to be shared with cities in the C40 network and beyond. This resource was developed by C40 and Arup in parallel to the activities of the London Rewilding Taskforce, being both informed by the Taskforce's expertise and informing the Taskforce's discussions.

Access the full report here.

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/London Wildlife Trust

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