

MAYOR OF LONDON

Léonie Cooper AM

Chair of the London Assembly Environment
Committee

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Date: 10 November 2025

Dear Léonie,

Thank you to you and the London Assembly Environment Committee for your letter setting out your key reflections following the Environment Committee's meeting held on 12 June 2025.

The investigations, scrutiny, and insights from invited guests are welcomed and will make an important contribution to the development of the next London Plan.

As you are aware, the strategic review of the Green Belt is underway, and the policy proposals you highlight with respect to the Green Belt and green infrastructure are still under consideration – so your input is helpful to inform this.

In terms of the wider context regarding the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Biodiversity Net Gain, my officers have prepared responses to the recommendations in the Annex below.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sadiq Khan', with a small '2' written below the name.

Sir Sadiq Khan

Mayor of London

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Annex

Mayor of London's response to the recommendations of the London Assembly Environment Committee's letter on 20 June 2025 relating to London's Plan for Nature

Recommendation 1

The Mayor should clarify the source of analysis that measures the proportion of land that is currently accessible in the Green Belt and ensure that any figures used are fully referenced.

The source of the figure is a 2015 BusinessLDN (then London First) report, *The Green Belt: A place for Londoners?* rather than work that was undertaken by the Greater London Authority (GLA). This is just one estimate. The nature of London's green belt, which includes significant privately owned farmland, means that there are differing methods and challenges in calculating the proportion that is publicly accessible. There may therefore be other figures – but the key point is that the majority of London's green belt is not accessible for Londoners. The work on the evidence base for the next London Plan, such as the London-wide Green Belt Review, will provide further information.

Recommendation 2

The Mayor should provide detailed guidance and tools so that robust assessments can be made to ensure that the principles of brownfield-first development and proximity to sustainable transport can be implemented.

This recommendation will be considered as part of the development of the next London Plan.

Recommendation 3

The Mayor should ensure that the full range of green infrastructure benefits of golf courses and other green spaces – such as water management and urban cooling – are considered in any spatial planning decisions, and such sites are given protection. If open spaces have Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) or Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) status, this must be fully respected

This recommendation will be considered as part of the development of the next London Plan.

Recommendation 4

As part of the implementation of the London Local Nature Recovery Strategy, the Mayor should make funding available to support ecological surveys and site designations to protect new areas of environmental value and designation of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

While the GLA (like other Responsible Authorities) received funding from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) to support preparation of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), and the Government indicated continued support for LNRSs in the English Devolution White Paper (section 3.7), any implementation funding (along with associated requirements, timing and expectations) is still to be confirmed by Defra.

Support to London Planning Authorities for site surveys and designations (part of their core planning function) is not something for the GLA to fund specifically. However, the Mayor has now launched the Green Roots Fund, and it is possible that some related activities might be eligible under the 'enabling' strand, depending on their fit with the Fund's priorities (noting the Green

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Roots Fund will not support statutory functions). The fund makes £12 million available over three years for projects that will make London greener, healthier and more climate resilient.

Recommendation 5

The Mayor should set requirements in the London Plan to ensure any offsite gains from Biodiversity Net Gain lead to improvements within London, and ideally in areas with strong connections to the original site.

This recommendation will be considered as part of the development of the next London Plan.

Recommendation 6

The Mayor should continue to lobby the Government around proposed changes to Biodiversity Net Gain for small sites and the Environmental Delivery Plans to ensure these do not lead to a reduction in environmental protection and overall biodiversity within London.

Officers have been liaising with Natural England to understand how Environmental Delivery Plans and the associated Nature Restoration Levy are expected to be implemented in practice and the likely impact (if any) they might have in London. To date, little additional information is available, and the Planning and Infrastructure Bill has yet to proceed through the final stages of its passage, and many details will be subject to secondary legislation.

The GLA Group has responded to the consultation on changes to Biodiversity Net Gain for small sites, and we will continue to assess the impact of relevant legislative and policy changes to nature recovery in London.

Recommendation 7

The London Plan should have a focus on extending green infrastructure across a range of scales, including small sites, gardens and linear connections, such as green corridors alongside roads and railways.

This recommendation will be considered as part of the development of the next London Plan.