

PROPOSED ACTIONS TO BE INCLUDED IN CAMDEN COUNCIL'S BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The world is facing a biodiversity crisis. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services recently concluded that the world faces the loss of one million species (IPBES's Global Biodiversity Assessment, 2019: <https://www.ipbes.net/news/ipbes-global-assessment-preview>)

This mass extinction is driven in significant part by climate breakdown, but is worsened by unsustainable practices in agriculture, construction, unplanned urbanisation, consumption and pollution. Environmental destruction is embedded in the international supply chains that feed our choice of consumer goods, from the massive loss of carbon-absorbing rainforests to grow palm, to wasting food and replacing household goods and personal items before it is necessary.

Here in Camden, we can address global biodiversity. The renewal of Camden's Biodiversity Plan is an opportunity to highlight the threat to global biodiversity and the implications for residents. Just as the Climate Action Plan shows people how to modify their consumption habits to reduce carbon emissions, so Camden's Biodiversity Plan must highlight the direct impact that individual and corporate purchases have on ecologies globally.

As Camden owns all the trees and vegetation in our streets, council estates and squares, only Camden can address biodiversity issues in these areas. Here, Camden can enrich local biodiversity with intelligent, well-planned action underpinned by adequate budget, creating more areas for wildlife, making existing areas bigger and joining them up to allow wildlife to move around safely. Focusing on trees, Camden can protect veteran and mature specimens from destruction and over-pollarding and plant many more new trees, ensuring that they thrive after planting.

1 A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

- Commit Camden to adhere to Government procurement guidelines which ensure supply chains do not involve deforestation.
- Launch a public information campaign to explain actions individuals can take to limit the impact of their own consumption on ecologies globally and why each of these is important:
 - **Avoid palm oil** in foodstuffs and cosmetics unless sustainably produced: it may be grown on land recently grabbed from tropical forests

- **Avoid peat** in garden composts and potting soils: all peat is a non-renewable carbon store; peat sold in the UK is either excavated from our own wildlife rich peatlands or imported from as far away as Canada.
- Minimize consumption of raw materials and fossil fuel: **Reuse, Repair and Recycle** instead of buying new electronic gadgets, clothes and imported consumer goods

2 MORE, AND MORE HEALTHY TREES IN CAMDEN

- Develop a carbon strategy for the management of trees in Camden (reference CEC's document dated 23.08.20)
- Protect Camden's existing tree stock: Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Camden should report annually on tree cover/ number of trees in the Borough, and the loss of significant mature trees, including those in private gardens
- Place and enforce Tree Preservation Orders on all veteran and most mature trees: this will avoid significant carbon emissions and protect biodiversity. Where felling is deemed unavoidable, written permission to be required from the Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Camden
- Extend protection to younger native trees in addition to mature ones: to safeguard Camden's future canopy cover and biodiversity. They should not be considered expendable
- Reform Camden's current practice of harsh and frequent tree pollarding: to protect and enhance tree canopies which provide valuable ecological and environmental services (reference the work by BARA/ Canopy Coalition)
- Install protection around street trees against damage by dogs: and launch a public information campaign to explain to dog owners how they can help protect the trees.
- Increase the number of trees planted in Camden annually: with local organisations and private landowners, develop a tree planting programme for a radical increase of trees in public spaces
- Engage people in a 'co-design' process for the whole borough on a much larger scale than currently proposed, and include the planting of thousands of trees, not hundreds
- Involve residents in designing and planting orchards for local use
- Follow expert advice on tree species to be planted: prioritize each tree's potential contribution to biodiversity, its chances of healthy growth in the chosen location, its ability to help improve air quality and to enhance Camden residents' enjoyment and wellbeing
- Ensure newly planted saplings are adequately protected and watered until they are established, paying particular attention to their needs in times of drought and when ambient temperature exceeds 28°C
- Improve Camden's long-term planning for trees planted in public spaces to ensure they can grow to maturity.

3 BIODIVERSITY IN CAMDEN

- End Camden's use of Highly Hazardous Pesticides: become a pesticide-free borough by eliminating use of chemicals which can be harmful to people as well as wildlife
- Re-wilding: let at least 20% of Camden's open spaces grow without intervention so that wild plants can thrive, including nettles, thistles and other vegetation valuable to wildlife
- Change the Council's mowing regimes: leave more areas unmown and mow less frequently on all estates and parks
- Encourage the use of volunteers: actively enable local groups to be established and extend Nature Conservation Volunteer programmes to support with the maintenance of existing and new green space
- Stop using petrol-powered leaf blowers: they cause noise and fume pollution and are hazardous to frequent users. Use electric or hand powered leaf blowers or sweepers instead. Remove leaves by hand in sensitive areas (volunteers can help with this work)
- Discontinue the use of any imported soils containing peat: take additional steps to prevent spread of plant diseases and alien species
- Launch an information campaign about what people can do for wildlife in gardens and on balconies
 - Make your balcony/garden into your own pesticide-free zone: avoid using herbicides, insecticides and fungicides
 - Avoid putting artificial lighting into your garden: light pollution confuses insects, bats and birds and is harmful to them
 - Grow insect-friendly plants to provide nectar for butterflies, bees and other insects from January to December; native wildflowers are particularly valuable
 - Put up an insect hotel for over-wintering ladybirds and other insects
 - Maintain a permanent pond, however small, for birds, amphibians, insects and invertebrates
 - Keep hedgehog holes in your fence or hedge to allow passage in and out
 - Use permeable hoggins (self-binding gravel) rather than concrete slabs for paths and patios to minimize water run-off
 - Maintain dense hedging or thickets as shelter for birds, mammals and insects
 - Allow piles of dead leaves, brushwood and logs to rot in your garden: they are valuable habitat for invertebrates which, in turn, provide food for birds
 - Let your plants be a bit untidy: leave seed heads on your flowers for birds to eat, and leaves to rot under shrubs
- The biodiversity plan must make clear the actions that Camden itself will take, the schedule or timing of these actions, their cost and how they are going to be funded
- Incentivise removal and de-paving of front garden parking areas and pavement cross-overs
- By 2022, create a 'parklets' programme that enables residents to transform parking spaces into mini parks. Enable people to plant space within public pavements and make pavements wide enough for this to happen with due regard for wheelchairs, pushchairs and social distancing

- Create allotments and orchards on all the Council's housing estates
- Support healthy ecosystems, by planting native trees and other plants wherever possible
- Identify areas with scope to radically improve the opportunities for flora and fauna to flourish (see Biodiverse Development above)
- Planning: By 2021, introduce planning policy to require all major developments to improve the biodiversity value of their sites, including green roofs and living walls and retention of public open spaces.

4 BIODIVERSE DEVELOPMENT

- Create a biodiversity overlay for Camden to show developers where habitats different species should be encouraged, where there are planned water features and where wildlife corridors are being developed.
- Developers of any site with outdoor space, both private and the Council's own schemes, should:
 - show how the scheme will preserve, regenerate and enhance wildlife against an agreed biodiversity baseline
 - re-wilding: let at least 20% of open space grow without intervention so that wild plants can thrive, including nettles, thistles and other vegetation valuable to wildlife
 - preserve and enhance links to adjacent wildlife corridors which allow insects, birds and mammals to move safely from site to site
 - drainage: open up buried rivers to daylight and create water features such as permanently damp swales, ditches and ponds to provide habitat for aquatic and semi aquatic plants, invertebrates, amphibians, insects and birds
 - mark boundaries between contiguous plots with dense hedging: use mixed native species and make hedgehog holes so they are permeable by wildlife
 - preserve any existing trees, shrubs, hedging, wildflowers and/or other vegetation which have a high biodiversity value
 - use only minimal outdoor lighting as light pollution damages habitat for insects, birds and bats
 - Make paths and hard surfaces out of permeable materials such as hoggin (self-binding gravel)
 - respect the mycorrhizal value of the undisturbed soil beneath and around veteran and mature native trees which may also be a rich habitat for invertebrates and insects
 - encourage and increase the range and population of insects, birds, mammals and invertebrates which may live in or visit the site
 - show how the scheme will involve residents in designing gardens and allotments for local use
 - plant new trees, shrubs, hedging, wildflowers and/or other vegetation with a high biodiversity value where formerly absent from the site
 - Retain public open spaces and enhance them with planting and enhance planting in for the enjoyment of Camden residents

- demonstrate the development's achievement of biodiversity gain after 3 years: the Council must enforce remedial work if plants have not established/ trees have died/ habitats have not formed.
- Buildings and retrofits
 - stop the permitted development of garden studios at the end of gardens where there are mature trees and established habitat
 - integrate habitat creation in buildings such as 'swift bricks', 'insect hotels' and crevices suitable for roosting bats
 - incorporate biodiverse living walls and green roofs which are built, planted and maintained following best practice (see <http://www.livingroofs.org>)

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climateemergencycamden.org