Lambeth Pollinator Action Plan 2026

A commitment from Lambeth Council

Lambeth

February 2026

DOCUMENT HISTORY

Version	Date	Sections/Comments
01	10/12/2020	First edition of action plan published
02	15/09/2025	All sections of first edition reviewed and updated to take account of changes in national and local policy
03	21/11/2025	Working draft of second edition released for comments and further revisions
04	10/02/2026	Final draft including comments from key stakeholders

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Introduction to the Lambeth Pollinator Action Plan

A commitment from Lambeth Council

Lambeth Council is committed to helping to conserve the UK's pollinators by ensuring it considers the needs of pollinators in delivering of all its duties and responsibilities, both statutory and voluntarily. Lambeth as a borough will seek to protect and enhance the distribution, amount and quality of pollinator habitat and manage our green and other open spaces to provide greater benefits and opportunities for pollinators.

We will ensure our residents and other stakeholders are provided with opportunities and the support to make Lambeth more pollinator friendly, including actively supporting Buglife's B-Lines project as it applies both nationally and in Greater London.

Lambeth declared a climate and ecological emergency in 2019 and this Pollinator Action Plan forms one aspect of Lambeth's ongoing response to addressing the current global ecological crisis and making the borough more resilient to climate and ecological change.

Our vision

Lambeth's environment will contain abundant pollen and nectar-rich habitats, as well as feeding/nesting ones, which are managed to help support sustainable pollinator populations and in doing so making our borough more attractive for people to live and work in, and for our nature to thrive.

Figure 1: Common Blue on vetch (Simon Saville, Butterfly Conservation)

Our aims

The Council will work with partners, including our residents, to:

1. Develop plans, policy, and guidance that include the needs of pollinators.
2. Protect, increase, and enhance the amount of pollinator habitat in Lambeth.
3. Improve our knowledge and understanding of pollinators in our local area.
4. Increase awareness of pollinators and their habitat needs among residents, businesses, and other landowners or land managers.
5. Increase the contribution to pollinator conservation of land managed or maintained by Lambeth Council.

Timescale and review of the Pollinator Action Plan

The Lambeth Pollinator Action Plan was released in its first edition in December 2020 and ran from January 2021 to January 2026.

Due to changes in national and local policy regarding the protection and promotion of pollinators, as well as biodiversity in general, the first iteration of the plan required changes to reflect how an updated version of the plan would reflect these changes. In addition, various actions in the plan had been delivered or had changed, and an updated version of the plan, with an updated action table was necessary.

This latest version of the Lambeth Pollinator Action Plan will run from January 2026 and will be reviewed bi- or tri-annually subject to any emerging or recent changes in national or local policy, or to provide an updated and accurate action table.

Figure 2: Red-tailed Bumblebee on Greater Knapweed (Rory Dimond)

Background to the Pollinator Action Plan

The importance of pollinators

There are over 4,000 species of insect in the UK that carry out pollination of our native wild plants and food crops. Insect pollination is extremely important to the UK economy, with an estimated value of £691m annually. Our native pollinators include bumblebees and other bees, butterflies and moths, flies, beetles, and wasps.

Without pollinators we would struggle to grow many vegetables, fruits, and other crops, including apples, pears, strawberries, beans, and peas. 90 per cent of crop species are insect pollinated and wild pollinators account for 80 per cent of pollination. 62 per cent of wildflower populations are already constrained by the lack of pollinators and we are missing £5 Million of Gala apples in the UK because there are no longer enough pollinators.

Pollinators play a critical role in the creation and survival of many of the wildlife habitats and landscape features around us and which we value for their amenity, recreational, cultural and heritage contribution to our lives and our physical and mental wellbeing.

Many of the wild plants, shrubs, and trees that we have in our gardens and schools, on housing estates, in our parks, commons and other open spaces would not be there or prosper without pollinators. Many other kinds of wildlife that we value would not be there either if it were not for the role pollinators play in ensuring a sustainable supply of fruits, seeds, and nuts, and as a source of food themselves for other wildlife.

What kind of pollinators do we have in the UK and Lambeth?

It is worth at this stage providing some background to the types of pollinator species we can find in Lambeth, so we better understand what they need in terms of protection and conservation, and what actions are appropriate for them.

Bumblebees. There are twenty-four species of bumblebee in the UK. Most of them are social, and make nests, collect pollen, and have female workers. Others are parasites, taking over existing bee nests; they are therefore known as ‘cuckoo’ bumblebees and do not have workers, instead just males and queens who lay eggs in host nests.

Honeybees. When the public think of pollinators, it is usually the domesticated honeybee that comes to mind. However, although beneficial as pollinators, honeybees are not the only bee in the UK that matters – more on this later. They are usually managed in colonies to produce honey and wax using artificially built hives, although other colonies of honeybee can be feral or ‘wild’ and create their hives in crevices in buildings and trees.

Solitary Bees. Ninety percent of the bee species in the UK are solitary bees, and over 250 individual species recorded they are important pollinators. They are so called because they do not live in hierarchical groups in hives or nests like honeybees and bumblebees. Instead, they make individual nests for their young. However, they can be social; tawny mining bees for example make communal nest tunnels in areas of loose bare soils.

Butterflies and Moths. With over sixty species of butterfly and a staggering 2,500 species of moth in the UK, they are extremely important pollinators. Although most of us recognise the importance of butterflies as pollinators, given their profile and visibility on flowers during daylight hours moths, due to their mainly cryptic and often low-profile nature get unfairly overlooked. In fact, studies by organisations including Butterfly Conservation have shown that moths are more efficient pollinators than bees.

Wasps and Hornets. Most people are not fans of wasps or hornets, but they are still key pollinators. This is because most wasps in the UK, of which there are over 9,000 separate species, are not aggressive stingers or nuisances around the picnic table but are docile, small, or innocuous. In the way they forage to find food or prey they are generalist pollinators, often encountering or entering flowers and exchange pollen between plants in the process. Due to their sheer numbers and their diversity of behaviours or lifestyles, they provide backup services in areas where other pollinators like bees are struggling or absent.

Hoverflies. There are over 280 species of hoverfly in the UK, and as their name suggests, these pollinators hover in the air often in front of flowers rather than buzzing like bees. Marmalade hoverflies and bee-flies are a couple of the most recognisable species.

Figure 3: Pied Hoverfly (Liam Olds)

Other Flies. Apart from hoverflies, there are well over 6,000 other species of fly (Diptera) in the UK of many varied lifestyles and feeding habits. It is estimated that around 20% of these are pollinators, and after bees, scientific research has shown that flies are some of the most important pollinators, visiting over 70% of our food crops.

Beetles. Almost 25% of native UK beetles are pollinators, feeding on both pollen and nectar, and with over 4,000 beetle species known in this country, this makes them of considerable significance. When they eat or forage, pollen sticks to their hard outer shells which is spread to other flowers as the beetle travels between other plants. As with flies and wasps, the sheer number of beetles found in the country, along with their incredible diversity in lifestyles and distances travelled between places and plants, makes them invaluable pollinators.

Pollinators under threat

Our UK pollinators are in trouble, and unless we act then the situation is going to get worse. As to the current predicament of pollinators, the UK Government's advisory body on nature conservation, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), produced a report in 2024 with some worrying statistics indicating the challenges they face. This report, titled UK Biodiversity Indicators - Pollinating Insects, provides some key results as follows:

- There was an overall decrease in the distribution of pollinators from 1987 onwards. In 2022, the indicator showed a decrease of 24 per cent compared to its value in 1980. The long-term trend was assessed as deteriorating (Figure 4). The indicator includes 394 species (158 wild bee and 236 hoverfly species); the number of species can vary between years.
- Between 2017 and 2022, the indicator showed little or no change.
- Over the long term, 19 per cent of pollinator species became more widespread (8 per cent exhibiting a strong increase), and 42 per cent of pollinator species became less widespread (21 per cent exhibiting a strong decline) (Figure 5). This bar chart shows the percentage of species within the indicator that have increased, decreased or shown minor change in occupancy, based on thresholds of change.
- Over the short term, 39 per cent of pollinator species became more widespread (23 per cent exhibiting a strong increase), and 36 per cent of pollinator species became less widespread (24 per cent exhibiting a strong decline) (Figure 5).
- As individual pollinator species become more or less widespread, the communities in any given area become more or less diverse. This may have implications for pollination as more diverse communities are, in broad terms, more effective in pollinating a wider range of crops and wildflowers.
- Despite the inter-annual variation, the overall trend for pollinators remains downward.

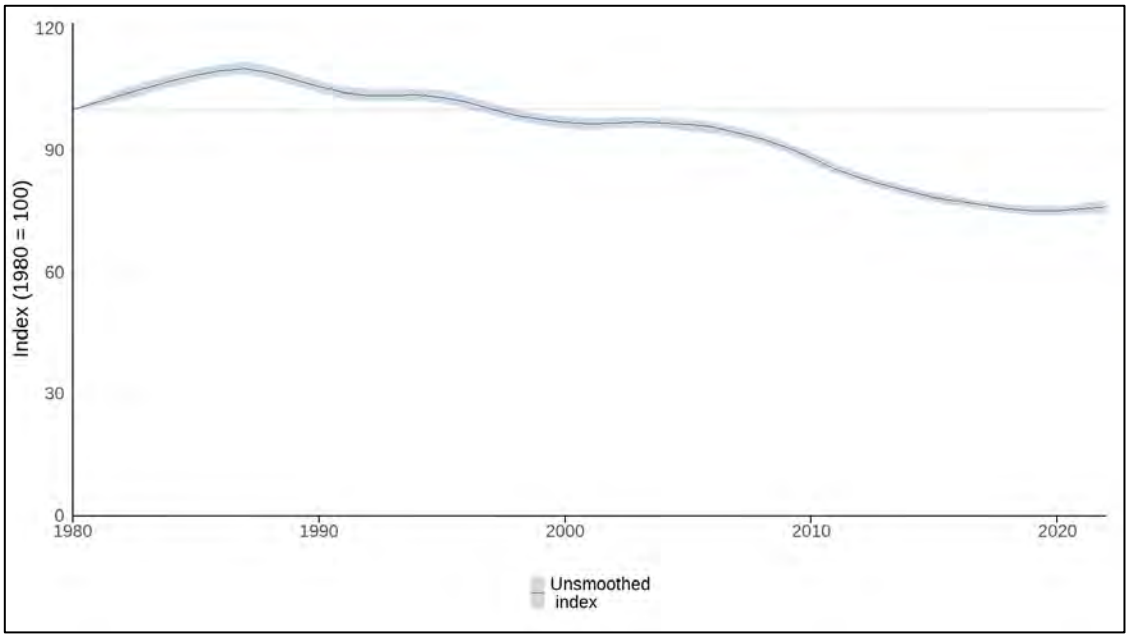

Figure 4: Change in the distribution of 394 UK pollinators, 1980 to 2022 (JNCC: UK Biodiversity Indicators - Pollinating Insects 2024)

Source: Bees, Wasps & Ants Recording Society; Biological Records Centre (supported by the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and Joint Nature Conservation Committee); Hoverfly Recording Scheme.

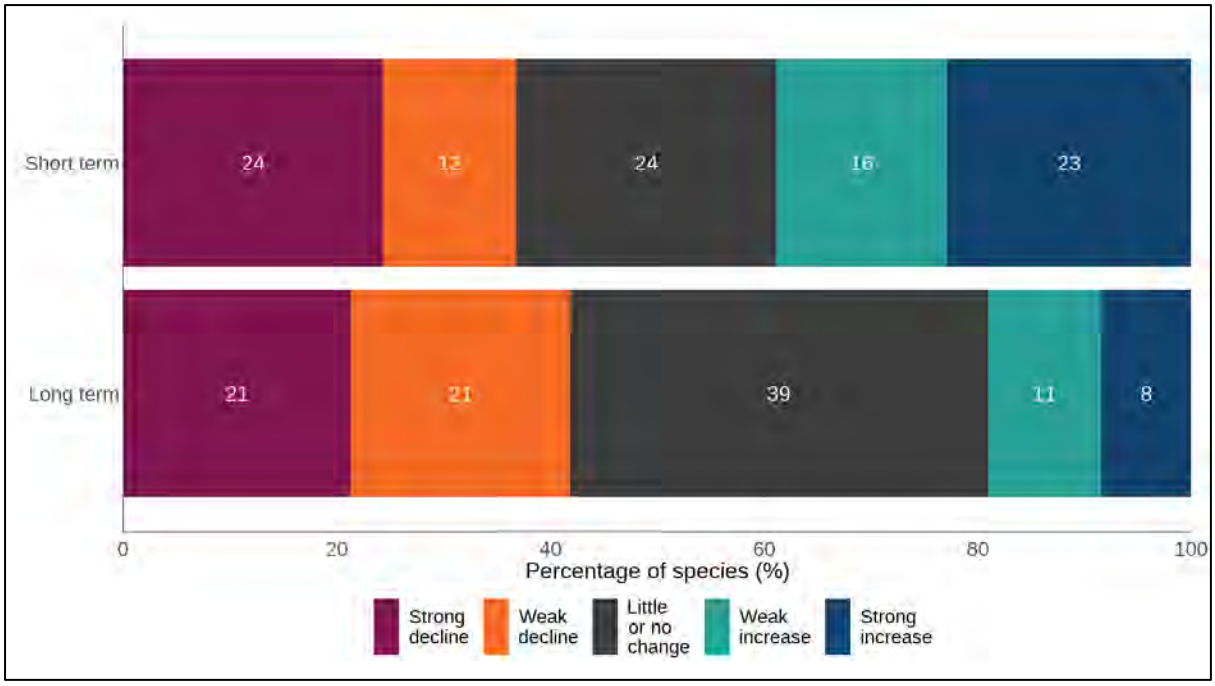

Figure 5: Long-term and short-term changes in individual species trends for 394 pollinators in the UK, 1980 to 2022 (JNCC: UK Biodiversity Indicators - Pollinating Insects 2024)

Source: Bees, Wasps & Ants Recording Society; Biological Records Centre (supported by the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and Joint Nature Conservation Committee); Hoverfly Recording Scheme

Even respected public-facing organisations, which many Lambeth residents are members or supporters of, recognise these concerns. This includes the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) which highlights the risks to gardeners and growers about pollinator threats and their decline in numbers, as do nature conservation bodies like the London Wildlife Trust (LWT), which highlights the harm that could be done to London, and Lambeth's wildlife, unless action is taken to protect and help our pollinators.

What is causing the decline in pollinators?

There are many factors behind the decline in the UK's pollinator numbers, and in both Greater London and Lambeth, as with other boroughs. Organisations including Butterfly Conservation and Bumblebee Conservation, and the RHS website provide more detail and examples on these, but the most significant ones include the following.

1. **Habitat loss** – The most significant cause of decline is the loss and degradation of habitats which provide food, shelter, and nesting sites for pollinators.

The loss of wildflower-rich grasslands is one of the most critical issues. Over three million hectares of these habitats have been lost in England alone since the 1930s because of intensive farming and urban/industrial development.[1]

[1] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/0006320787901212

Habitat loss for pollinators is not just confined to parks and public open spaces, including nature reserves. It is also happening at an alarming rate on private land, including residential or communal estate gardens, where the management of the land has been increasingly about minimising maintenance costs or simplifying or 'tidying up.'

The increased loss of front and back gardens to park cars and vans on paving, or adding conservatories and extensions to rear gardens, is not helping either. This leads to the loss of habitats essential for many pollinators, including use of non-native or ornamental plants that are poor sources of pollen and nectar, or do not produce it when pollinators need it the most.

Figure 6: Speckled Wood, Streatham Common (Hope Whittaker)

2. **Pests and diseases** – Bacterial infections and parasitic mites can result in the death of any invertebrates and bees, but especially colonial species, including the domesticated honeybee.

However, increased pressures from other factors such as prolonged drought or wet weather, and competition from other species for limited supplies of food including nectar, can exacerbate a pollinator species' vulnerability to pests and diseases.

3. **Pesticides** – There is unequivocal evidence that the widespread or indiscriminate use of pesticides has resulted in harmful effects on pollinators including honeybees, wild bees, moths, and butterflies.

Wider effects throughout ecosystems are also of concern and pesticides have been implicated in other declines such as farmland birds and soil organisms. The use of neonicotinoids (neonics) is of particular concern. These are systemic pesticides which can be applied as a seed dressing (the preferred delivery mechanism) or spray and have a high toxicity to insects.

The use of neonics as a preventative measure against insect infestation is, however, contrary to the long-established principles of integrated pest management where a variety of non-chemical controls may be utilised to reduce the potential for infestation such as biological control, habitat manipulation, modification of agricultural practices and the use of resistant plant varieties along with minimal use of pesticides.

The UK government's advisory body on pesticides says scientific evidence now suggests the environmental risks posed by neonicotinoids – particularly to our bees and pollinators – are greater than previously understood, supporting the case for further restrictions.

Figure 7: European Drone Fly, Clapham Common (Czech Conroy)

4. **Climate Change** – Long term changes can deprive pollinators of food supplies at times when they need them, increase their exposure to parasites and diseases, or change habitats so that they are no longer suitable. There may be gains as well as losses but a resilient network of good pollinator habitat across the area is needed for them to be able to adapt and take advantage of changes.

In London, with the added impact of the heat island effect, the growing season is longer than in the countryside and is extending. This heightens the need for food sources both earlier and later in the season. Longer and drier periods of weather can result in flowering plants becoming desiccated, dying, or not flowering at all, which then results in significantly reduced pollen and nectar production.

Although there is widespread agreement that at a national level climate there needs to be a drive to reduce the use of fossil fuels and reduce energy consumption to help mitigate for climate change, as much needs to be done at the local level, including by local authorities as well as individual to adapt to a warmer climate.

This means managing sites and other assets, including homes and gardens as well as parks and public spaces, so they are much more climate adopted, and can provide pollinators and other wildlife with sufficient resources and for longer throughout the year. This includes prioritising the use of plant species that are better adapted to increased episodes of drought, heat, desiccation, or waterlogged soils, as well as introducing or modifying landscapes and landforms to capture and retain surface and groundwaters for longer.

5. **Pollution, including light** – As mentioned previously, many pollinators across the UK, Lambeth included, are night-active species, especially moths and beetles.

Light pollution severely harms nocturnal pollinators by disrupting their navigation, feeding, and reproduction, leading to fewer flower visits and reduced plant fruit/seed production.

Artificial lights lure insects away from their essential foraging grounds, disrupting their natural rhythms and leading to exhaustion. They interfere with how pollinators see crucial visual cues (like UV patterns) on flowers, hindering their ability to find sufficient sources of nectar. Recent studies show significant drops (up to 62%) in nocturnal pollinator visits to flowers under artificial lighting, directly reducing plant reproduction,

Air pollution, whether due to particulates or gases like nitrogen oxides, harms pollinators by degrading floral scents, making flowers harder to find, and directly affecting insect navigation. Pollutants like ozone and nitrogen oxides are thought to disrupt floral scent plumes and insect learning, again leading to fewer flower visits, reduced pollination, and potential losses in crop yields.

Figure 8: Latticed Heath moth (Patrick Clement)

The National Pollinator Strategy

The UK Government's National Pollinator Strategy for England was first produced in 2014 and set out a 10-year plan to help pollinating insects survive and thrive across England. It is a critical document which Lambeth needs to consider and embed into all its actions and polices, given the importance we place on arresting pollinator decline in our borough.

The Strategy outlines actions to support and protect the many pollinating insects which contribute to our food production and broader biodiversity. It is a shared plan of action which looks to everyone to work together and ensure pollinators' needs are addressed as an integral part of land and habitat management. In particular, the Strategy asks local authorities to take a lead across many of their work areas and duties, including their role in local planning and as managers of public and amenity spaces, brownfield sites, schools, car parks, roadside verges, and roundabouts.

The Strategy includes the following outcomes:

1. More, bigger, better, joined-up, diverse and high-quality flower-rich habitats (including nesting places and shelter) supporting our pollinators across the country.
2. Healthy bees and other pollinators, which are more resilient to climate change and severe weather events.
3. No further extinctions of known threatened pollinator species.
4. Enhanced awareness across a wide range of businesses, other organisations, and the public of the essential needs of pollinators.
5. Evidence of actions taken to support pollinators.

The Strategy asks local authorities to take a lead across many of their work areas and duties, including their role in local planning and as managers of public and amenity spaces, brownfield sites, schools, car parks, roadside verges, and roundabouts.

The UK Pollinator Action Plan

Developing from the 2014 National Pollinator Strategy, the UK Government produced an updated Pollinator Action Plan 2021 to 2024. Key goals from the Action Plan include supporting pollinators on farms through agri-environmental schemes like Countryside Stewardship, creating more flower-rich habitats in towns and cities, and continuing to raise public awareness through initiatives like the 'Bees' Needs' campaign.

Furthermore, pesticide regulations are a major focus, with an increasing focus on refusing applications for emergency pesticide use unless there are significant overriding grounds for this being justified.

Ongoing goals from both the Pollinator Action Plan, and the Strategy, and which Lambeth is already dully committed to delivering on the ground, include:

- Increase the amount and quality of flower-rich habitats across the country.
- Support healthy, resilient pollinator populations resilient to climate change.
- Prevent further extinction of threatened pollinator species.
- Enhance awareness and support for pollinators among businesses and the public.
- Track progress and gather evidence of actions taken to support pollinators.

Pollinators in Lambeth

This plan has been developed to raise awareness of the plight of pollinators and to ensure the Council and its residents, businesses and landowners are provided with information to help us all protect and increase our pollinator populations. This plan is designed to ensure the needs of pollinators are enshrined across the breadth of Council work and to increase awareness and understanding of pollinators across our local community.

Contributing to our Borough Plan: "Lambeth 2030 – Our Future, Our Lambeth"

Lambeth 2030 – Our Future, Our Lambeth is the current Borough Plan for Lambeth and sets out the borough's aspirations to make it a fair and equitable borough for all its residents. One of the main ambitions in Lambeth 2030 is "Making Lambeth's neighbourhoods fit for the future – by 2030, Lambeth will be a clean, vibrant and climate resilient borough where people can lead healthier, happier lives."

This ambition includes making our neighbourhoods and town centres safe, attractive, and welcoming, maintaining, and improving our award-winning parks and open spaces, and investing in green spaces to support people's health and wellbeing, as well as reducing our environmental impact upon them. This includes minimising the harm caused to pollinators and the plants and trees that they depend on, both as sources of food and shelter.

Extensive research has demonstrated the numerous benefits that flowers, and the plants and trees that produce them, and access to nature bring to our residents and visitors to the borough people. This means good management of all our planted and other horticultural features to attract pollinators and creating, and then maintaining and improving them, will support this and all the other goals in Lambeth 2030.

Figure 9: Marbled White, Streatham Common (Streatham Common Cooperative)

Working with our partners and other initiatives

As part of this plan and through various other activities, Lambeth will actively seek to join partnerships and support projects or other initiatives designed to take action to protect and promote pollinators throughout the borough. It will also participate in other local, regional, or national pollinator programmes or projects. Such partners include or are likely to include Friends of the Earth, London Wildlife Trust, TCV, Buglife, Plantlife, Froglife, Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Natural England, Butterfly Conservation, London Beekeepers' Association, Incredible Edible Lambeth, Open Orchard, park-based Friends groups, schools, and Tenant & Resident Associations.

However, ongoing as well as new collaborations within the community and other groups to promote and protect pollinators is both anticipated and supported. This is because joined-up collaborative action for pollinators is critical to help ensure a future for them, as well as the habitats they occupy and benefit from. Key initiatives include Buglife's *B-Lines* programme which aims to create a network of connected wildflower-rich areas across the UK, Plantlife's *campaign to protect wildflowers and nature on roadside verges*, and Bumblebee Conservation Trust's *Bee the Change* scheme to make places more bee-friendly.

Doing the right things for all pollinators – not just honeybees

In terms of 'bees' it must be noted that the Action Plan focuses on supporting wild bee populations and on wild pollinators in general – it is not just about and for honeybees. Domesticated honeybees, those kept in hives and managed by beekeepers, are generally agreed not to be in decline. In fact, the number of colonies in London has been increasing rapidly to the extent that colony density is unsustainable in some areas and may be impacting negatively on wild populations, probably due to competition for pollen and nectar and the increased risk of transmission of diseases.

One answer to these concerns over honeybees is to provide more and better foraging habitat in London so that all pollinators, including honeybees, have sufficient sources of food – and close to where they live - to help reduce competition. The other and slightly more contentious one is to consider having fewer honeybees and hive colonies, particularly in some areas of the city where opportunities to create more foraging habitat are limited and competition is as a result felt to be too high. However, this latter approach would need detailed discussion with and the support of London's beekeeping communities, as well as owners of land on where hives are kept, for it to be effectively implemented.

More information on honeybees and their relationship to and impacts on other pollinators can be found in a position statement from the Bumblebee Conservation Trust and in a recent article in the Guardian on "Why saving the honeybee could be bad news for other bees".

Our actions are more than just planting wildflowers!

Doing the right thing for Lambeth's pollinators is not simply about planting (or sowing) plants that produce plenty of pollen and nectar, although of course this is very important if we are losing such species in the borough to other factors like climate change and habitat removal.

Organisations such as Butterfly Conservation, Bumblebee Conservation and Buglife emphasise that it is essential for landowners and managers, including local authorities with public open spaces and residents with private gardens, to consider more than just providing flowering plants when deciding on actions to benefit pollinators. Lambeth will apply these recommendations when developing projects and delivering activities as part of this plan and expect its partners and other stakeholders to also apply them.

These ‘just four things’ are:

1. Provide sufficient food for adult insect pollinators, which means ample sources of nectar and pollen sources and throughout a longer flowering season (“food for Mum and Dad”).
2. Sufficient food for the immature stages of insect pollinators, e.g. when they are still caterpillars or larvae, in the form of those plant species that adults prefer to lay their eggs on, and their offspring will then eat and pupate on (“food for the kids”).
3. Sufficient and suitable places where both adult and larval pollinators can shelter, nest or even hibernate (“a safe and secure home”); this is more than just plants but also includes features like logpiles, nest or ‘bug’ boxes, sheds and even spaces within our own homes.
4. Stop using insecticides, herbicides, and fertilisers (“no chemicals”) wherever possible, and use alternative methods to manage or remove pests and unwanted plants.

In addition to these widespread actions, Lambeth will introduce and apply pollinator-friendly management practices wherever possible in the maintenance of the land it owns. This includes transitioning from constant and aggressive cutting of all the grassed areas in our parks and on housing estates to a more wildlife and pollinator-friendly approach.

This includes both leaving areas uncut until the autumn months, along with introducing a rotational cutting regime, where parts of a site are left as long or meadow grassland in one year whilst the other parts are kept short, and then ‘swapping’ them over in each successive year or years, etc. This is coupled with introducing nectar and pollen-rich, climate-change resilient flowering plants (including trees) and grasses to each area to increase their species diversity and help extend the normal flowering period. This has significant benefits for pollinators by providing them with not only sources of food, both at adult and immature stages, but also plenty of shelter and protection, and for as long as possible in each year.

In the previous list of recommendations that benefit all pollinators, Action 2 – “food for the kids” – is of particular importance to those working throughout Lambeth to conserve and promote not only pollinators but invertebrates in general. We need to ensure that we are providing, by protecting existing and planting new, plants which provide food and shelter for insect pollinators, as part of as many external soft (green) landscaping schemes as possible, and don’t try and ‘over tidy’ sites which could result in the loss of critical food plant species, just because some people might view these areas as unkempt or neglected.

Figure 10: Larvae (caterpillars) of Rusty Tussock-moth in Brockwell Park and Lime Hawkmoth in Brixton (Czech Conroy and Saskia Walzel)

Lambeth will actively advocate for and promote the need to provide larval food plants not only on land it owns and manages but also with its residents and other landowners in the borough. This includes promoting various websites or guidance on choosing plants that act as larval food sources and shelter for eggs and pupae as well as larvae, such found on the UK Butterflies Larval Foodplants website.

Alongside every project or scheme to benefit our pollinators, we take educating and informing the public and other site users seriously, so they know what is happening and why we are doing it. This includes colourful and impactful signage, both temporary and permanent, of course, but also engagement with local communities, especially on housing estates and through schools, so that those who will gain a tangible physical as well as a social benefit from actions to protect and promote pollinators feel they are involved in all stages and can help with ongoing management and improvement of any project sites.

The need to engage with and involve Lambeth's residents in delivering the plan and securing benefits for our pollinators is especially important regarding individual or communal private gardens. These account for a sizeable proportion of the available green space in Lambeth and offer considerable opportunities for creating new or improving habitats for many pollinator species. Whilst a local authority like Lambeth Council has limited powers to directly intervene and undertake works in them, we can and will work with residents and those maintaining private gardens to try and influence what happens in them to benefit pollinators. This includes the targeted use of effective communications, events, and activities in their locality that they can attend and acquire appropriate knowledge and skills.

Figure 11: Comma (Mark Searle)

The B-Lines Project

B-Lines is a programme coordinated by the UK charity Buglife and constitutes what is effectively a series of wide 'insect highways' covering the entire country (Figure 13). The aim is to both restore and create a network of interconnected wildflower-rich habitats along the entire B-Lines network, which will act as 'stepping stones' to allow pollinators, and other wild invertebrates, to move around and colonise new areas, helping arrest and prevent their decline. More information on the B-Lines project can be found on the Buglife website at Buglife - B-Lines, and the UK B-Lines map is shown below.

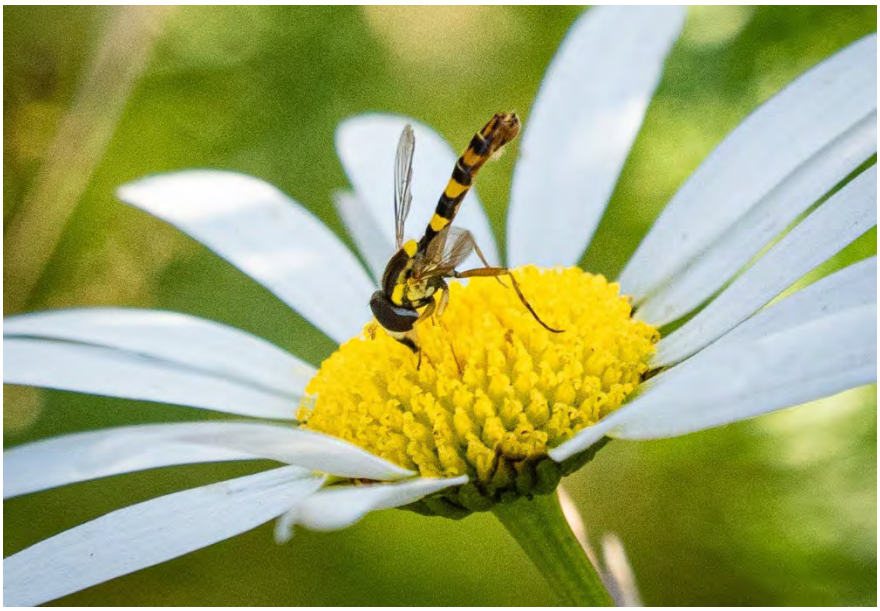

Figure 12: Common Twist-tail on Ox-eye Daisy, Brockwell Park (Czech Conroy)

B-Lines in London

There is considerable evidence that urban habitats with their mosaics of gardens, allotments, transport corridors, waterways, parks, and amenity spaces can be just as important for pollinators as the wider countryside. Consequently, London, with its high percentage of public and other green spaces provides enormous opportunities to benefit pollinators, through the provision of new or enhanced habitat.

London's parks, gardens, and wildlife sites all play a key role in helping pollinators and other wildlife, along with other areas such as brownfield sites, school grounds, road verges, allotments, and railway embankments. There are already many pollinators in London, including both common and rare species. In fact, over four hundred insect species have been recorded in Greater London which are important at a national or local level.

This highlights the importance of ensuring London contains at least one B-Line and led to the formation of a Making a B-Line for London partnership to secure it. This included organisations such as Bee Collective, Buglife, Forestry Commission, Greater London Authority, Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL), London Wildlife Trust, Natural England, and the RSPB. It played a key role in securing the first B-Line across London, with the aim to increase the diversity and abundance of pollinating insects across green spaces, gardens, and the public realm. The partnership also raised awareness of the benefits of pollinators and encourage everyone to play their part in conserving these important insects.

Figure 13: Map of the Buglife B-Lines in the United Kingdom (Buglife).

The Making a B-Line for London partnership identified a London B-Line which ran roughly north to south from Enfield to Croydon and passed right through Lambeth. This included numerous pollinator hotspots and aimed to create new habitats which linked and supported these existing areas. The partnership worked the managers and owners of parks, gardens, allotments, and green spaces to propose, support seek changes to management of existing flower-rich areas and create new areas to link these together. It also developed an online toolkit to enable Londoners to identify and create their own local B-Lines, with the longer-term aim to generate a grid of B-Lines developed across the whole of London.

Prior to 2022, and through the work of the partnership, there was only one north to south B-Line in Greater London, and it ran through a sizeable proportion of Lambeth, covering most parts of Waterloo, Vauxhall, Brixton, Herne Hill, and West Norwood. However, it included less than 50 per cent of the borough, which meant a sizeable number of sites that could potentially contribute to, and benefit from, the B-Lines programme was excluded.

However, in 2022 a reassessment was undertaken by GiGL on behalf of Buglife to identify a new west to east B-Line through London. This was partly because a single north-south London B-Line was thought incompatible with the project's original principles and strategy which recommended at least two lines for each relevant 'county,' one going north to south, and east to west. The additional line would also help capture more areas and sites within the city to protect and promote pollinators – see London's New B-Line and Figure 14 below.

This resulted in a new line that ran from the west of the city to the eastern side, intersecting with and reinforcing the original north to south one. This was a positive outcome for Lambeth, in that the new line included sections of Clapham, Balham and Streatham. Consequently, around 70 per cent of the borough is now within the boundaries of these B-Lines, as seen in Figure 15.

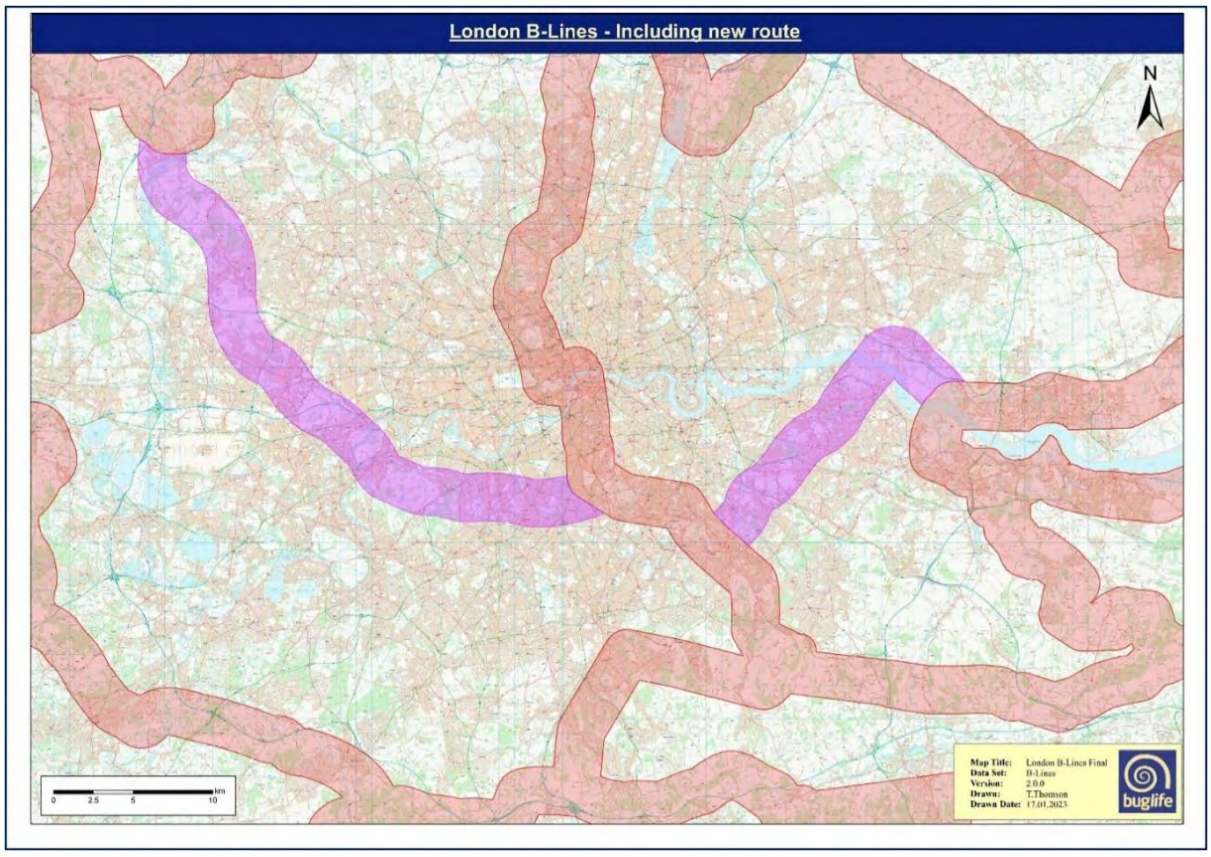

Figure 14: Map of the Buglife B-Lines in Greater London (Buglife).

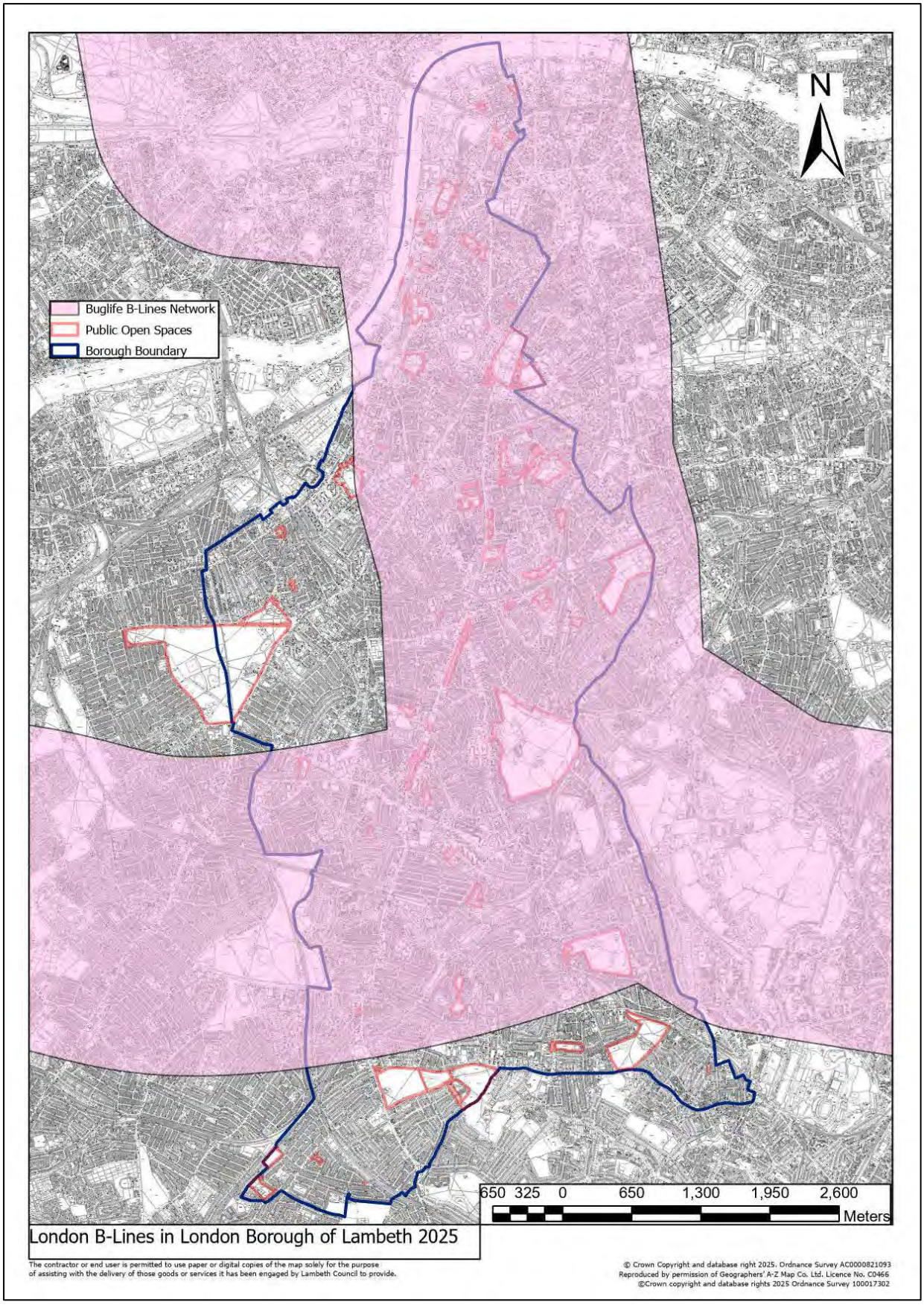

Figure 15: Map of the Buglife B-Line in Lambeth (LB Lambeth and Buglife). B-Lines in Lambeth

The two current B-Lines running through Lambeth include many of our key public parks and other open spaces. This includes Agnes Riley Gardens, Archbishop's Park, Bernie Spain Gardens, Brockwell Park, Emma Cons Gardens, Hatfields Green, Hillside Gardens Park, Holmewood Gardens, Jubilee Gardens, Kennington Park, Lambeth Walk Open Space, Lambeth Palace Gardens, Larkhall Park, Loughborough Park, Max Roach Park, Myatt's Fields Park, Old Paradise Gardens, Palace Road Nature Garden, Peabody Hill, Pedlars Park, Rosendale Road Sports Ground, Rush Common, Ruskin Park, St John's Churchyard, Slade Gardens, Ufford Street Gardens, Unigate Wood, Vauxhall Park, Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens, Waterloo Millennium Green, West Norwood Cemetery, Windmill Gardens, Woodfield Recreation Ground and Wyck Gardens.

However, some portions of Lambeth remain outside of the updated London B-Line network, and means some key sites are omitted, such as Clapham Common, Streatham Common and Norwood Park. This was due to a need to create a new line that worked for many different boroughs and areas of London and connected efficiently with the original line.

Figure 16: Poplar Hawkmoths, Eden Nature Garden, Clapham, and Elephant Hawkmoth, West Norwood (Benny Hawksbee and Ann Kingsbury)

However, this does not mean these areas outside the B-Lines will be ignored when it comes to supporting pollinators in Lambeth, as they are all close to the boundaries of the B-Lines, and projects and activities on them will have as many benefits for both pollinators and people as would any within the lines. These areas are also relatively deficient in accessible public open space, so delivering pollinator projects in any available open spaces, including private as well as public, will have mutual benefits in terms of improving people's access to nature as well as providing them with better spaces for many different recreational uses.

By supporting pollinator-beneficial projects on these sites, the aim is to also try and 'widen' each B-Line so it in time encompasses them, or other additional B-Lines can be created consequently, with the long-term aim to have the whole of the borough within B-Lines.

Following on from the original, and then the new additional, B-Line, and the work of the Making a B-Line for London partnership, many different organisations and councils across London are actively acting for pollinators and a series of initiatives were or are still being undertaken to deliver on these actions, which include those located within Lambeth.

A key initiative of which Lambeth is an active supporter and contributor is Buglife's Get London Buzzing. This creates opportunities for people living and working in London to help pollinating insects in their local area and restore green space throughout the capital, through an array of events and activities working with community groups, corporate groups, and school children. It provides access to a wide range of materials, information sheets, and ideas to help Londoners and organisations like Lambeth Council support pollinators.

A report called "London's Pollinators: Creating a Buzz in the Capital" drew together policy and practice from national and London levels, to explore how we can ensure pollinators can thrive in London. It looks at how we can manage and improve land use in the capital to address issues as diverse as health, conservation, pollution, and environmental management; and how these could contribute to helping to create a more colourful city in which both people and pollinators can thrive.

A more recent initiative, called Pollinating London Together or PLT, and of which Lambeth Council is a supporting member, is engaging in a variety of activities across London to raise awareness, educate, and influence action that will help pollinators and their habitats thrive. Example activities include a green space habitat review programme, events to raise awareness about pollinators and the importance of biodiversity and providing a resource library to take pollinator-friendly action.

Finally, between 2022 and 2024 Lambeth received over £440,000 of funding secured from the Mayor of London's Green and Resilient Spaces fund, with additional funds from Lambeth Council, for delivery of the Lambeth Bee Roads programme in partnership with local community groups. This created over fifty individual locations, including wildflower-rich roadside verges and other wildlife-friendly spaces on housing estates and in public parks, across the borough to provide food, shelter, and habitat for wildlife.

These 'Bee Road' sites act as a network of interconnected 'launch pads' and 'green corridors' for wild plants and animals, including pollinators, to move around and colonise new locations, inspiring others to create their own pollinator-friendly schemes, as well as adding colour, amenity, and biodiversity to the places where our residents live and work.

Pollinator Positives in Lambeth – Recent and Ongoing Projects

Since the adoption of the original Lambeth Pollinator Action Plan in 2019, numerous projects have been launched, completed or are still ongoing to not only support pollinators and other wildlife in Lambeth, but also to further secure the impact and benefits of the London B-Lines within and outside of the borough.

These include examples on the following pages: more information on each project, and on many others that benefit Lambeth's pollinators, is available by contacting Lambeth Parks on parks@lambeth.gov.uk

Brockwell Park – a network of pollinator-friendly meadows

Over 35% of Brockwell Parkis now managed specifically for biodiversity, and this includes the creation of extensive areas of species rich, pollinator-friendly wildflower meadows. Examples include a perennial meadow created on a former Redgra (cinder) football pitch, and a new sustainable urban drainage (SuDS) scheme in the northern part of the park, which includes a series of swales and bunds, providing a diversity of soil types which are developing into a rich mosaic of dry and wet meadows.

Clapham Common – rewilding the common for pollinators.

A partnership of Wild Clapham, Clapham Common Management Advisory Committee and Lambeth Council have been gradually converting areas of poor-quality amenity grassland into species-rich wildflower meadows to improve the common's biodiversity and improve people's access to nature. Each meadow is designed to maximise its value for a wide diversity of pollinators. A new wetland, surrounded by a series of wildflower-rich bunds, has also been created on the eastern side of the common alongside Eagle Pond.

Lambeth Bee Roads – local places for pollinators

Two examples of the borough-wide network of ‘Lambeth Bee Roads’ – one on the Myatt’s Fields South Estate on Cowley Road in Brixton, and the other on Durning Road in West Norwood. One of over fifty former areas of amenity or poor-quality grassland, including roadside verges, which have been changed in order to provide food, shelter, and habitat for wildlife, including pollinators.

Pollinators in Lambeth Walk Doorstep Green & Roots and Shoots

Lambeth Council has worked with the educational and environmental charity Roots and Shoots for over ten years on creating pollinator-friendly areas of wildflower meadow in Lambeth Walk Doorstep Green in Vauxhall. This includes on the main Green itself, as part of the Lambeth Bee Roads project, but also within Roots and Shoots own gardens and on that part of the Green that they directly manage.

St. John’s Churchyard Waterloo – pollinator-friendly planting

The grounds of St. John’s Church Waterloo, one of the four historic ‘Waterloo Churches’ in Lambeth, have been transformed from what was a drab and uninspiring space into a pollinator paradise. The St. John’s Church Gardeners have progressively changed and added to the churchyard, with the emphasis on using climate change-adapted plant species that also provide food and shelter for all kinds and all stages of pollinator species.

Pollinator Action Plan table - our commitments to delivering for our pollinators.

The table below lists the specific delivery commitments Lambeth is making through the Pollinator Action Plan. The Plan will be subject to an annual review which will be published and will detail progress against these commitments. Most of these actions will be led on by Lambeth Parks and Open Spaces, but where another team or organisation is the lead, this has been noted.

Aim	Key Delivery Commitments 2026 to 2030	Timescales
1. Develop plans, policy, and guidance to include the needs of pollinators	[1.1] Lambeth's Biodiversity Action Plan makes specific reference to habitats crucial for pollinators such as meadow grassland and orchards. We will monitor implementation and delivery against the plan through annual reports	Reports produced annually each year and made public; includes through the statutory biodiversity duty reporting we must make under the Environment Act 2021
	[1.2] Maintain and update an Integrated Weed Management Policy to demonstrate pollinator-friendly approaches to dealing with problem species of plants and animals	Policy for dealing with weeds is complete and is the public domain. A policy for animal pests will be completed by 2027
	[1.3] Ensure the Grounds Maintenance Specification for parks and open spaces includes pollinator-friendly approaches to management	This is reviewed annually and is in the public domain. The current Specification includes pollinator-friendly proscriptions
	[1.4] Ensure reviews of the Lambeth Green Infrastructure Strategy include specific reference to actions which will support pollinators. **Lead**: Planning	Parks officers will provide appropriate input to any reviews of the LGIS, including through revisions of the Local Plan
	[1.5] Ensure the Parks and Open Spaces Development Plan contains specific high-level references to supporting pollinators	The document will include a commitment to support delivery of the Pollinator Action Plan
	[1.6] Ensure that the Lambeth Local Plan and any Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to protect and support pollinators. **Lead**: Planning	Parks officers will contribute to discussions with Planning as to revisions to and adoption of any relevant policies and SPGs
	[1.7] Ensure the Lambeth Urban Forest Strategy 2023-2030 (Tree Strategy) makes specific reference to supporting pollinators through appropriate species selection	The Strategy, adopted 2023, makes appropriate references and this is regularly reviewed
	[1.8] All new Park Management Plans will include specific reference to opportunities for implementing pollinator-friendly actions; as well as linking to the Biodiversity Action Plan	This is an ongoing process as individual site management plans are created or reviewed
	[1.9] Seek the inclusion of pollinator-friendly actions or commitments in relevant new contracts and Service Level Agreements. **Lead:** Sustainability	The Sustainability team will consider this as part of their remit to comment on key decision reports and is monitored by representatives on the corporate Procurement Board

Aim	Key Delivery Commitments 2026 to 2030	Timescales
	[1.10] Minimise and aim to eliminate the use of pesticides across the entire public realm. **Leads:** Parks & Leisure Services, Environmental Services and Housing	Pesticides are not used within Parks, Housing and Highways except in exceptional and highly targeted circumstances (e.g. Japanese Knotweed treatment). Any pesticide use is carefully monitored and reported on
	[1.11] Support the London Beekeepers Association (LBKA) approach of '*Bees and Flowers Go Together*' maintaining an awareness among officers and stakeholders of sustainability issues relating to honeybee colonies	All requests for siting new or expanding existing apiaries will be discussed with the LBKA and relevant council staff before a decision is made
2. Protect, increase, and enhance the amount of pollinator habitat in Lambeth	[2.1] Include information on the needs of pollinators within advice provided to owners or managers of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) not managed by Lambeth	This will be undertaken on an ongoing basis
	[2.2] Encourage community growing schemes and council allotments, including new orchards, to include pollinator-friendly plants and foraging/nesting habitats, such as ponds, hedges, and trees, via licences and engagement	A specific clause will be added to all new community garden licences that they must abide by the plan as part of their licence terms and conditions
	[2.3] Work with a range of partners to support successful B-Line implementation, including other landowners and land managers	Links will be established and then maintained as part of the plan's delivery process
3. Improve our knowledge and understanding of pollinators in our local area	[3.1] Support and encourage ongoing monitoring by Butterfly Conservation and other bodies, including communities, across land within the public realm	This will be managed through ongoing relationships, including on how to supply records to GiGL and land managers
	[3.2] Work proactively with wildlife organisations and other bodies to support existing, and encourage new, monitoring and recording of pollinators within parks and open spaces, for example moth-trapping sessions or ID training	Opportunities will be pursued throughout the duration of the plan as they arise, including training for new recorders and use of ID/recording tools
4. Increase awareness of pollinators and their habitat needs among residents, businesses, and other landowners	[4.1] Promote national and regional schemes and guidance which provide information about the importance of pollinators and how to support them	Information added to Lambeth's website as required. We will work with our Communications team to publicise schemes through a range of media
	[4.2] Encourage Lambeth schools to participate in local or national pollinator award schemes, pollinator surveys, or creating pollinator habitats, and adding these to the London B-Lines map	We will work with partners and our schools' team on an ongoing basis to implement this action
	[4.3] Include specific reference to the B-Lines project and other pollinator-friendly actions within the annual reviews of Lambeth's Biodiversity Action Plan	This will first be included within each end of year report

Aim	Key Delivery Commitments 2026 to 2030	Timescales
5. Increase the contribution to pollinator conservation on land managed by Lambeth	[5.1] Ensure the needs of pollinators are accounted for within the management and improvement of all Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SNCIs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) managed by Lambeth	This will be an ongoing consideration within current management plans and new initiatives, including securing additional grants or funding
	[5.2] Continue retention and management of sites included in the 'Lambeth Bee Roads' programme, including highway verges and estate grounds, for their pollinator benefits. This includes supporting residents and other groups to maintain Lambeth Bee Roads sites, and securing additional funding, including external grants, to create new or sustain/improve existing project sites	Most of the Lambeth Bee Roads programme was completed in April 2024, with some ongoing small site projects as well as monitoring and management of all sites
	[5.3] Ensure all new herbaceous, boundary or ground cover and tree planting schemes created within the public realm contain a minimum of 70 per cent 'pollinator-friendly' species as defined by the RHS, London Beekeepers Association or other appropriate organisations	Ongoing, with annual reviews and assessments of all included sites or schemes
	[5.4] As funding and resources allow, convert existing planting schemes with the aim of changing them to meet the 70 per cent pollinator-friendly composition target	Ongoing, with annual reviews and assessments of all included sites or schemes
	[5.5] Ensure all new herbaceous planting schemes within the public realm are designed to have an extended flowering season, with early spring and autumn nectar sources to maximise nectar availability through the year	Ongoing, with annual reviews and assessments of all included sites or schemes
	[5.6] Promote and implement the retention of existing, and planting of new, plants which provide food and shelter for all immature stages of insect pollinators, including those promoted by UK Butterflies - Larval Foodplants	Ongoing, with annual reviews and assessments of all included sites or schemes; disseminate to all other landowners and community stakeholders
	[5.6] Wherever possible create pollinator-beneficial conservation areas within all parks and open spaces, simplifying and/or minimising the management regime	This is an ongoing activity, already achieved in most parks, but additional opportunities will be secured in each year
	[5.7] Encourage the inclusion of night-flowering plants, shrubs and trees in all landscaping schemes to support key pollinators including moths, beetles and flies, as well as for bats	Ongoing, with annual reviews and assessments of all included sites or schemes
	[5.8] Encourage Lambeth schools and colleges to develop 'bee-friendly' gardens or planted areas within their grounds, and to then add them to the London B-Lines map	Engaging with schools/colleges throughout the duration of the plan, including providing advice and links to funding sources

Aim	Key Delivery Commitments 2026 to 2030	Timescales
	[5.9] Support TRAs and residents with creation and management of wildflower areas, orchards, and other pollinator friendly habitats across Lambeth Housing land	Support initiatives proposed to officers for consideration for suitable areas. Where Housing approves, make changes to adapt the maintenance regime. Officers supported, including training/mentoring, to promote creation of pollinator-friendly habitats and schemes and promote them with residents
	[5.10] Provide advice to and support Registered Social Landlords (RSL) and their residents with creation and management of wildflower areas, orchards and other pollinator friendly habitats across their estates and other landholdings	Support RSLs and their staff with training and guidance on creating and maintaining such areas where opportunities exist
	[5.11] Identify opportunities to install biodiverse or 'living' green roofs with pollinator-friendly species and/or nesting sites on council buildings or built structures within parks and open spaces	We will review/survey buildings and keep all opportunities under review and seek funding for new schemes on an ongoing basis
	[5.12] Identify and created pollinator-positive 'habitat banks' or projects which can receive funding secured through offsite Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) credits, or Urban Greening Factor (UGF) and Open Space Deficiency shortfall contributions for developments within Lambeth, and which are then maintained through financial contributions or appropriate agreements.	A draft portfolio of habitat bank projects is being developed, and officers will promote these with other relevant teams across the authority
	[5.13] Apiaries within parks and open spaces run through a licensing scheme which considers the needs of wild pollinators and availability of sufficient foraging habitat. No new hives will be approved where wild pollinators will be impacted by insufficient foraging habitat or capacity	All apiaries have licences issued during which are regularly monitored and reviewed. All new proposals are reviewed with stakeholders before any new licences are issued
	[5.14] Where practical, felled wood left within open spaces as habitat, either as large trunks or stacked habitat piles, especially within or proximity to other habitats suitable for pollinators	This practice is in place and will continue on an ongoing basis
	[5.15] At least 33 per cent of available land within Lambeth's parks and open spaces is managed primarily for wildlife, and seek to increase this to 40 per cent by 2030	The 33 per cent target achieved during 2024/25. Work to scope out additional opportunities will take place annually to achieve or surpass the 2030 target
	[5.16] Seek to minimise and reduce light pollution within parks and open spaces during the night, to reduce disturbance to moths and other night-flying species, as well as bats, especially in those areas where pollinator foraging/nesting habitat suitability is optimal	Maintain the existing position of only locating or operating light columns on rights of way or major thoroughfares, whilst also providing and protecting species-rich 'dark spaces' where these are appropriate

References

- Buglife - B-Lines
- Buglife - Get London Buzzing
- Butterfly Conservation - Surrey & SW London Vice County 17 - Maps & Statistics
- National Pollinator Strategy for England
- Sustain - London's Pollinators: Creating a Buzz in the Capital
- UK Butterflies - Guide to Larval Foodplants
- UK Biodiversity Indicators - Pollinating Insects
- UK Pollinator Action Plan 2021 to 2024

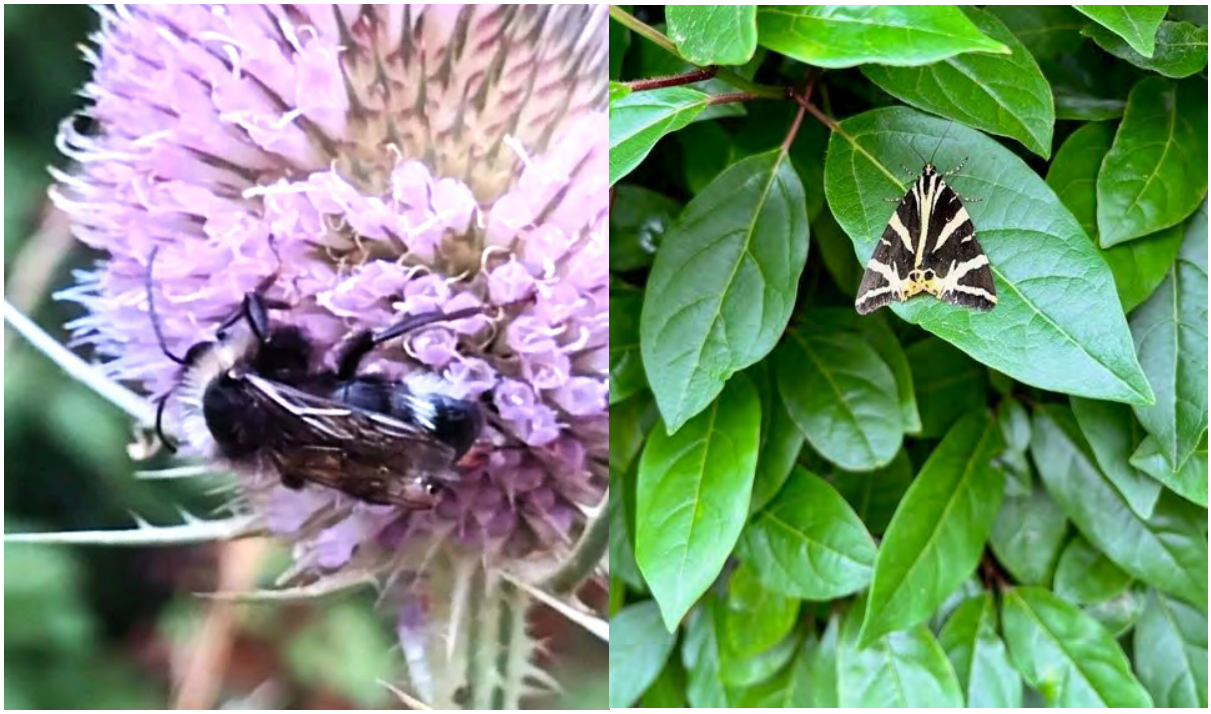

Figure 17: Ashy Mining Bee on Teasel in Unigate Wood, Streatham, and Jersey Tiger Moth in Sunnyhill Nature Garden, Streatham (Victoria Brown)