



Natural Environment



Culture,
Heritage &
Learning
Strategy



Introduction and context

The Corporation of London manages over 11,000 acres of stunning open spaces including 58,000 ancient trees, six Sites of Special Scientific Interest and three National Nature Reserves. These open spaces deliver a wide range of 'ecosystem services' such as timber, food, biodiversity, carbon capture and storage, flood mitigation, air purification, and health and wellbeing benefits. The total economic value of these benefits is estimated to be £30-£40 million per year. The sites capture thousands of tonnes of carbon and attract an estimated 25 million visitors annually.

The Natural Environment Division forms part of the City of London Corporation's Environment Department. We manage nine Charities, through which our open spaces are governed and whose objects reflect our vision. Our management of open spaces and assets supports the role of London as a world-class city. We work with local authorities, statutory and Government agencies, special interest groups, schools, businesses, community groups, residents and people who are not typically represented. By reaching out to these wider communities, we seek to ensure our long-term relevance.

The Natural Environment Strategies set out the City of London Corporation's strategic approach to our managed open spaces, assets and activities. They build upon over 150 years of stewardship of open spaces across London and the South-East. They explain the importance of the natural environment to the achievement of economic, societal and environmental outcomes described in our Corporate Plan 2024-29. They describe why we all need to act now and our proposed approach during the next five years. The Strategies describe our objectives for the natural environment and the measures by which we will assess our performance against those objectives. The Strategies will inform our business plans and management plans and set out how our activities will align with corporate and regional priorities and policies.

Purpose

The culture, heritage and learning offer within the Natural Environment Division will develop the participation, confidence, connection, opportunity and well-being of, and support from, our priority audiences. We will take care of our assets and ensure that our work is environmentally sustainable.

Learning

At a time of increasing disconnection from nature, a need to tackle the climate crisis, and a drive to tackle inequalities and enrich people's lives, our open spaces provide a unique opportunity to enhance peoples' wellbeing, connect them to nature, develop pro-environmental values, and inspire learning.

The Natural Environment Learning Programme develops communities of interest who support our work by providing the following:

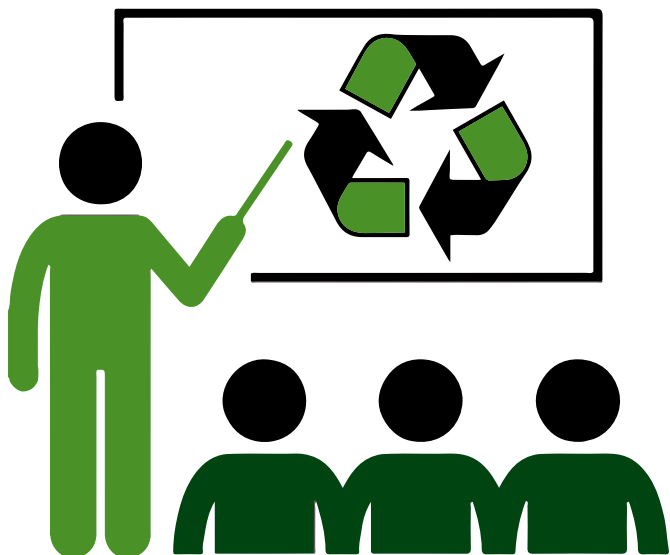
- Opportunities to learn within unique and inspiring open spaces which are accessible to people across and beyond London
- Staff expertise in learning and engagement, with a passion for nature
- A programme of activities which deliver wide-ranging benefits for people including wellbeing, nature connection, confidence, understanding and involvement.

Culture and Heritage

The care, management and promotion of our cultural and heritage offer, including sites, buildings and attractions, requires specific expertise and attention to ensure we fully meet our statutory and legal obligations and follow best practice. In a natural environment setting, this best practice approach needs to be balanced with environmental and ecological best practice.

Many people care deeply about the environment, culture and heritage. We want to utilise this passion through growing opportunities for volunteering, employment and participation in nature, culture and heritage programmes and through visits to our sites and attractions.

We will create a consistent approach to the care, management and promotion of this offer. We will strengthen our communities of interest and support the financial sustainability of our respective Charities and assets.



Key Themes

The themes of this Strategy are:

1. Developing nature connection and pro-environmental behaviours
2. Developing well-being through spending time in nature or through our heritage
3. Providing more opportunities through education and employment
4. Developing greater engagement, confidence and enjoyment
5. Ensuring the effective care, management and promotion of our offer.

Links to Corporate Plan

The Culture, Heritage and Learning Strategy supports 5 of the 6 outcomes in the Corporate Plan 2024-29 (Draft). These are:

- Outcome 1: The City of London **is a vibrant destination that attracts international and domestic visitors. Our world leading culture offer** means people want to spend time here.
- Outcome 2: People are proud of their city and feel like they belong. **Our communities are involved in co-creating fair and innovative outcomes** and we show our appreciation for their contributions.
- Outcome 3: People receive good services, live in good quality housing, **can live independent and healthy lives, and can access outstanding education, life-long learning and jobs.**
- Outcome 4: The City of London Corporation is a leader in driving the success of London as a whole, through our stewardship of public goods, through our major capital investment into the capital's civic fabric, **and through our protection and enhancement of 11,000 acres of amazing open spaces and our unique and iconic assets.**
- Outcome 5: People and businesses understand and follow our example **as leaders in striving for equity, focusing on economic, social, and environmental issues** in our operations, **and protecting our environment for future generations.**



Key themes

Theme 1: Nature connection and pro-environmental behaviours

Research has shown that the first step in building pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours is to develop nature connection. This connection is developed through participation in memorable experiences outdoors. The implementation of this new strategy will enable us to expand our 'nature connection' activities and reach at a time of increasing concern over climate change and biodiversity loss, develop expertise in climate education, and create new opportunities for people to get involved and make a difference.

Theme 1, Objective 1

Deliver learning activities which incorporate the 'pathways to nature connection' and which facilitate an increase in participants' feelings of nature connection.

Theme 1, Objective 2

Develop synergies between NE Learning, CoL Environmental Resilience and CoL Climate Action, and provide opportunities for children and young people to get involved and make a positive contribution to biodiversity and environmental resilience.

Theme 1, Objective 3

Collaborate with educators and researchers to develop an evidence-informed model of best practice in climate education and apply best practice to the NE learning programme.

Theme 1, Objective 4

Adopt sustainable practices, including an aim to achieve net zero, in accordance with Corporation policy and strategies e.g. the Climate Action Strategy.

Measures

Measure 1: Percentage of participants' feeling connected to nature after taking part in a learning session.

Measure 2: Number of environmental resilience projects for children/young people delivered each year

Measure 3: Number of climate education themes integrated in NE Learning Programmes per year

Measure 4: Percentage of our assets and programmes that have an up-to-date audit of their scope 1 and scope 2 emissions



Key themes

Theme 2: Wellbeing

Spending time in nature is beneficial to health and wellbeing, however, there are concerns over inequalities as people in deprived areas face more barriers to accessing nature and heritage. Also, opportunities for children to play in nature are becoming limited, impacting on child development and wellbeing.

Theme 2, Objective 1

Engage participants in activities which increase feelings of wellbeing.

Theme 2, Objective 2

Provide more opportunities for children to engage in outdoor play.

Theme 2, Objective 3

Provide opportunities for adult volunteering as a means to increase wellbeing.

Measures

Measure 1: Percentage of participants feel happy or very happy after taking part in our activities

Measure 2: Number of children and young people taking part in our play programme.

Measure 3: Percentage of our volunteers who rate their experience as positive or very positive



Key themes

Theme 3: Opportunities in education and employment

There is an increasing attainment gap between disadvantaged school students and their peers. Adversely affected groups include children living in poverty, children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), young carers and young refugees.

Theme 3, Objective 1

Engage participants from London boroughs with high levels of deprivation and child poverty.

Theme 3, Objective 2

Provide bespoke learning opportunities for young people struggling with education, employment or mental health.

Theme 3, Objective 3

Provide bespoke learning sessions for children and young people with additional needs.

Theme 3, Objective 4

Provide opportunities for apprenticeships and traineeships leading to skills and career development.

Measures

Measure 1: Number of learning programme participants from the 15 London boroughs rated highest for child poverty.

Measure 2: Number of participants taking part in bespoke learning programmes for young people struggling with education, employment or mental health

Measure 3: Number of bespoke programmes for children and young people with additional needs each year.

Measure 4: Percentage of our culture, heritage and learning workforce who are apprentices or trainees.



Key themes

Theme 4: Engagement, confidence and enjoyment

Many of our sites, attractions and programmes can only be delivered in partnership with others. Partnerships also improve our outcomes and help develop our communities of interest. Through engaging people in our activities which build confidence through supported challenges in a safe environment, we can help participants feel confident to explore and enjoy our spaces.

Theme 4, Objective 1

Engage participants in our learning, heritage and cultural activities which provide opportunities to explore, enjoy and feel safe in our spaces.

Theme 4, Objective 2

Provide activities which enable participants to build confidence to explore green spaces.

Theme 4, Objective 3

Develop strategic partnerships with organisations that help to deliver our culture, heritage and learning offer.

Theme 4, Objective 4

Ensure that our programming to build participants' fusion skills and confidence is informed by our communities of interest.

Theme 4, Objective 5

Develop our communities of interest that participate in, advocate for, and support, our natural environment and heritage charities and assets.

Measures

Measure 1: Number of people who participate in our programmes.

Measure 2: Percentage of participants who feel confident or very confident to explore our spaces and sites after taking part.

Measure 3: Number of annual programmes delivered in partnership with others.

Measure 4: Number of annual programmes co-created with the community with a focus on skills development/ Adherence to community engagement toolkit.

Measure 5: Percentage of our heritage assets with an active social media account, website and supporter list.



Key themes

Theme 5: Care, management and promotion

We are responsible for the stewardship of our heritage buildings and attractions, landscape heritage and archaeological assets and will create a consistent approach to the care, management and promotion of these assets.

Theme 5, Objective 1

Conserve and enhance our heritage assets in accordance with statutory requirements, sector guidance and best practice.

Theme 5, Objective 2

Ensure a consistent approach to the management and promotion of our heritage assets.

Theme 5, Objective 3

Ensure our cultural programming is both informed by, and representative of, our diverse communities of interest.

Measures

Measure 1: Percentage of our heritage assets with an up-to-date inspection regime and management plan in place.

Measure 2: Percentage of our heritage assets with a business and marketing plan in place.

Measure 3: Number of annual programmes with a focus on engaging under-represented communities/ adherence to community engagement toolkit.

A photograph of a person with red hair, wearing a dark blue hoodie and dark pants, walking away from the camera on a dirt path. They are holding a leash for a large, shaggy brown and white dog. The path is surrounded by tall green grass and numerous small purple flowers. In the background, there are dense green trees and bushes. The lighting suggests it's late afternoon or early morning, with long shadows and warm tones.

How will the strategy be implemented?

Through business and activity plans, marketing plans, conservation management plans and associated programmes of work.

Cross-cutting themes

Across the Natural Environment Strategies: Community engagement, nature resilience, access and recreation, culture, heritage and learning.

Within this Culture, Heritage and Learning Strategy: Nature connection and pro-environmental behaviour, wellbeing, opportunities in education and employment, engagement, confidence and enjoyment, care, management and promotion.