

A More Natural Capital

An agenda for the Mayor of London

A joint manifesto for action to improve London for people and nature
prepared by a coalition of leading environmental organisations

London is one of the world's **greenest** cities but it could be so much **greener**.

There has been significant progress in improving the environment of our capital city over the past 20 years since the first directly elected Mayor took office. During this time Londoners have seen:

- the restoration and enhancement of some significant parks and landscapes, such as Walthamstow Wetlands, Beckenham Place Park, Rainham Marshes, and Crane Park;
- the introduction of the congestion charge and Ultra Low Emission Zone, with a commitment to expand it to the north and south circular roads;



- the creation of over 3,000 new community food growing spaces providing access to affordable food and green spaces, as well as habitats for pollinators and other wildlife;
- improvements for walkers and cyclists with low traffic neighbourhoods, strategic walking routes for leisure and more space for cycling;
- the declaration of London as the world's first National Park City with a commitment to make more than half of London physically green or blue; and
- a Green New Deal which aims to support recovery from the pandemic by doubling the size of London's green economy and improving access to green spaces.

These are all great achievements – and many of us have benefitted from them during the recent coronavirus pandemic – but there is so much more to do if London is to lead in tackling the climate and nature emergencies, addressing social justice, and improving public health including by getting more people walking and cycling.





A healthier environment for all

London's most disadvantaged communities tend to live in the poorest environments – an issue highlighted by the pandemic with the unequal impact of the virus on different groups.

The capital's poor air quality is recognised as a major threat to public health and has been linked to susceptibility to coronavirus. Our streets remain dominated by motor vehicles, making active travel unattractive for many.

Our rivers, canals and lakes are polluted by plastic, litter, chemicals and sewage. Green spaces, including the Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land, continue to be lost to development unnecessarily. The quality of many parks and open spaces has also suffered from inadequate management primarily due to pressures on public funding.

Too many Londoners live in areas deficient in accessible, high quality, nature-rich green space, and less than half regularly visit green spaces. The ability to access nature close to home has been vital during the lockdown yet a little more than a third of Londoners say they live within a 10 minute walk of public green space. People are increasingly disconnected from nature and deprived of the benefits to their mental and physical health of being outdoors.

Access to affordable, high quality, fresh food remains too difficult for many communities. Noise and air pollution from motor vehicles and aircraft, and light pollution, damages health and reduces enjoyment of public space.

It is essential that London's economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic goes hand in hand with environmental improvement and social justice. More than three quarters of Londoners believe that nature should contribute to the recovery and nearly two thirds say that protection and enhancement of green space should be a higher priority following the pandemic.

By rebuilding the economy to be more resilient, environmentally sustainable, and socially just, we can secure a better future for Londoners.



Climate and nature emergencies

Above all, we face climate and nature emergencies which cannot be tackled separately. London has a leading role to play in providing solutions which reduce carbon emissions, help the city adapt to the changing climate, and reverse the decline in biodiversity. We also need to reduce London's environmental impact beyond its immediate footprint, including in relation to food consumption.

To act effectively, it is vital that we have planning and other policies which secure higher environmental standards, based on robust evidence to inform decisions and monitor change.



People want action!

Growing public support for the environment – evident before the pandemic but even stronger since – indicates this is an increasingly important issue for voters.

Each organisation involved in developing this manifesto has its own distinct agenda, but as charities and voluntary organisations with a broad mandate and support from, and engagement with, hundreds of thousands of Londoners we have collectively identified the following priorities for the next Mayor of London.

There are four broad, interconnected, areas in which we want to see action to achieve a green recovery:



Reduce pollution and waste



Secure nature's recovery



Mitigate and increase resilience to climate change



Improve health and wellbeing for all

Reduce pollution and waste



We need tougher action to tackle all forms of pollution, reduce wasteful use of land, and secure major improvements in the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste. While there have been encouraging moves to improve air quality and promote active and sustainable travel – walking, cycling and public transport, waste reduction and recycling rates remain generally poor.

We are also failing significantly to reduce water, noise and light pollution. We need a step change in ambition to match the scale of the challenge.



ACTIONS and TARGETS to drive progress to 2024:

- **Extend the ‘Streetspace’ programme to encourage more walking and cycling.** Fund the creation of 200 new low traffic neighbourhoods across London, and support the ‘Healthy Streets Borough Scorecard’ to encourage best practice to reduce car use.
- **Showcase at least ten major development schemes** involving the GLA group to demonstrate better use of ‘greyspace’ – land previously devoted to car use – and other developed land not of high environmental value.
- **Deliver the expanded Ultra Low Emission Zone** by October 2021 to reduce pollution while further incentivising moves to cleaner, more sustainable transport options, including by developing an integrated road user charging strategy.
- **Support a ‘Zero Waste Borough Scorecard’** approach to waste reduction and recycling to encourage best practice and develop a plan to achieve food waste reduction targets.
- **Reduce water pollution and leakage** by working with Thames Water, Boroughs and the Environment Agency to rectify pipe failures and misconnections, and coordinate action to reduce road run-off.
- **Develop best practice guidance for lighting design in London** to reduce light pollution, and to safeguard and extend dark sky areas.



Secure nature's recovery

We face a nature emergency with over 2,000 species at risk of extinction in the UK, and serious loss and degradation of natural habitats. During lockdown we have seen how much people value nature and green, open spaces, as well as the pressures they face. We have been pleased to see widespread public and cross-party political support for the National Park City, Tree and Park Charters, and an intention to strengthen protection of and enhance London's 1,600 wildlife sites and the Green Belt.



But for successful emergence from the pandemic, we need more ambition to work with local communities and others to secure and expand accessible, nature-rich green and blue spaces by restoring natural habitats, protecting soil, reducing pesticide use, supporting sustainable food production, and ensuring all new development is in harmony with nature.



ACTIONS and TARGETS to drive progress to 2024:

- **Develop an ecologically coherent 'nature recovery network'** with targets to restore and enhance species and habitats, requiring new development to deliver net biodiversity gain, and enabling more multi-functional land use such as community farms and rewilding in the Green Belt.
- **Oppose all development proposals that would result in the loss of Green Belt** or Metropolitan Open Land, high-quality farmland or land with the potential to be used for nature-friendly farming with public access.
- **Fund and support the maintenance of 150 new community orchards** and increase the area of land used for nature-friendly farming and community food growing.
- **Endorse the Parks Charter and the Charter for Open Spaces**, including calling for adequate Government funding for parks and supporting the dedication of green spaces as town or village greens, and develop a green space improvement programme to increase the number of parks receiving a Green Flag Award.
- **Create ten new district parks** to reduce deficiency in access to green space, and fund borough partnerships to coordinate delivery of green space networks across three 'regional park' areas such as the Wandle Valley, Brent River Park, and a Quaggy River Park.
- **Oppose development that would damage ancient woodlands and veteran trees**, reduce the heritage significance of designed landscapes, or result in unacceptable loss of sunlight from green spaces.



Mitigate and increase resilience to climate change



The climate emergency demands that we accelerate action to achieve net zero carbon emissions as soon as possible. This presents a major challenge the response to which must engage public, private, and community sectors.

Each requires commitments to deliver a significant reduction in emissions from transport and buildings, a major increase in renewable energy capacity, and a range of nature-based solutions, including increasing tree cover in suitable locations outside designed landscapes to reduce urban heat stress, and wider use of sustainable drainage schemes to cope with heavy rainfall and reduce surface water flooding.



ACTIONS and TARGETS to drive progress to 2024:

- **Form a Climate Emergency Alliance** to help develop and adopt an ambitious, detailed, timetabled and costed plan to deliver net zero by 2030 or sooner, based on a green jobs and business strategy to ensure post pandemic economic activity delivers on climate targets.
- **Commit to a zero-carbon transport sector by 2030** through a presumption against new roads as solution to travel challenges, including electrification of buses and taxis, opposing expansion of Heathrow and London City airports, creating zero-carbon delivery zones, and abandoning the proposed Silvertown Tunnel.
- **Develop an action plan to deliver 1GW of solar power** in the London area by 2030 through planning policy, support for community projects, loan finance, and convening commercial players.
- **Incorporate 'de-paving' into all major development** by the GLA group, and promote sustainable drainage and urban cooling measures, including rain gardens, for all new development as part of a vision for adapting to inevitable climate change.
- **Increase tree canopy cover** sensitively and sustainably by at least 20% by 2050, including through large scale woodland creation in the Green Belt and 100 new street tree schemes where they are needed most for shading.
- **Lobby Government to ensure all new homes are built to zero carbon standards** by 2023 and fund an ambitious programme to retrofit and sensitively adapt existing housing stock.

Improve health and wellbeing for all



Action to address the climate and nature emergencies should complement measure to improve public health for all to secure a fairer, more inclusive society. Reducing air, light and noise pollution will also deliver significant health benefits. We should enable greener lifestyles for all Londoners by promoting active travel – walking and cycling, improving access to high quality, nature-rich green and blue space, and fresh, healthy, local food, and giving more support for wider community, especially children's, involvement with the use and care of green space.



ACTIONS and TARGETS to drive progress to 2024:

- **Establish a London-wide 'green living'** social prescribing programme to connect people with local green and blue spaces, improve public health, and reduce health inequalities between London's diverse communities.
- **Fund the creation of 100 'tranquil areas'** in new and existing green spaces for rest and relaxation, including by landscape enhancement schemes and removing through-traffic from parks.
- **Continue to improve the Central London Footways Network** and roll it out more widely to secure attractive, safe, low pollution streets connecting iconic destinations and public spaces.

- **Develop a strategic plan to expand and improve the Walk London network** with at least six new, high quality green walking routes, to improve connectivity, link green spaces, create greener streets, and help bring nature closer to people.
- **Support the preparation of food strategies and plans** in every Borough that incorporate good food retail and procurement policies to improve access to fresh food and champion healthier, plant-based diets and less low welfare meat consumption.
- **Double the funding currently available through the Greener City Fund** for community green space projects, with specific programmes for disadvantaged communities and schools to connect children with nature, and review other funding streams to ensure they deliver beneficial and inclusive climate, nature and health outcomes.

Working together

We are ready to work with the new Mayor to develop ambitious programmes of action in each of these areas.

This would go a long way towards delivering the change that is needed for London's existing population and so that future generations can inherit a healthier, greener, fairer and more liveable London.



Get involved

We believe this agenda is a powerful and positive vision for a greener, healthier and more resilient London.

It's a vision we are committed to see translated into action. And we need your help to make it happen.

Here are three ways you can take action:

- 1. ASK** your candidates for Mayor of London and the London Assembly to support our policy proposals.
- 2. SHARE** this agenda with your family and friends and ask them to support it too.
- 3. JOIN** one or more of our organisations and help us continue to campaign to make London *A More Natural Capital*.





Wildlife and Countryside



This is a joint publication on behalf of the above group of environmental NGOs who share a common vision for a greener London. Individual policy proposals are not necessarily the policy of each individual organisation.

It also has the support of: Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, A Rocha UK, Badger Trust, Born Free Foundation, British Mountaineering Council, Institute of Fisheries Management, Four Paws UK, Tranquil City, and the Wildlife Gardening Forum.

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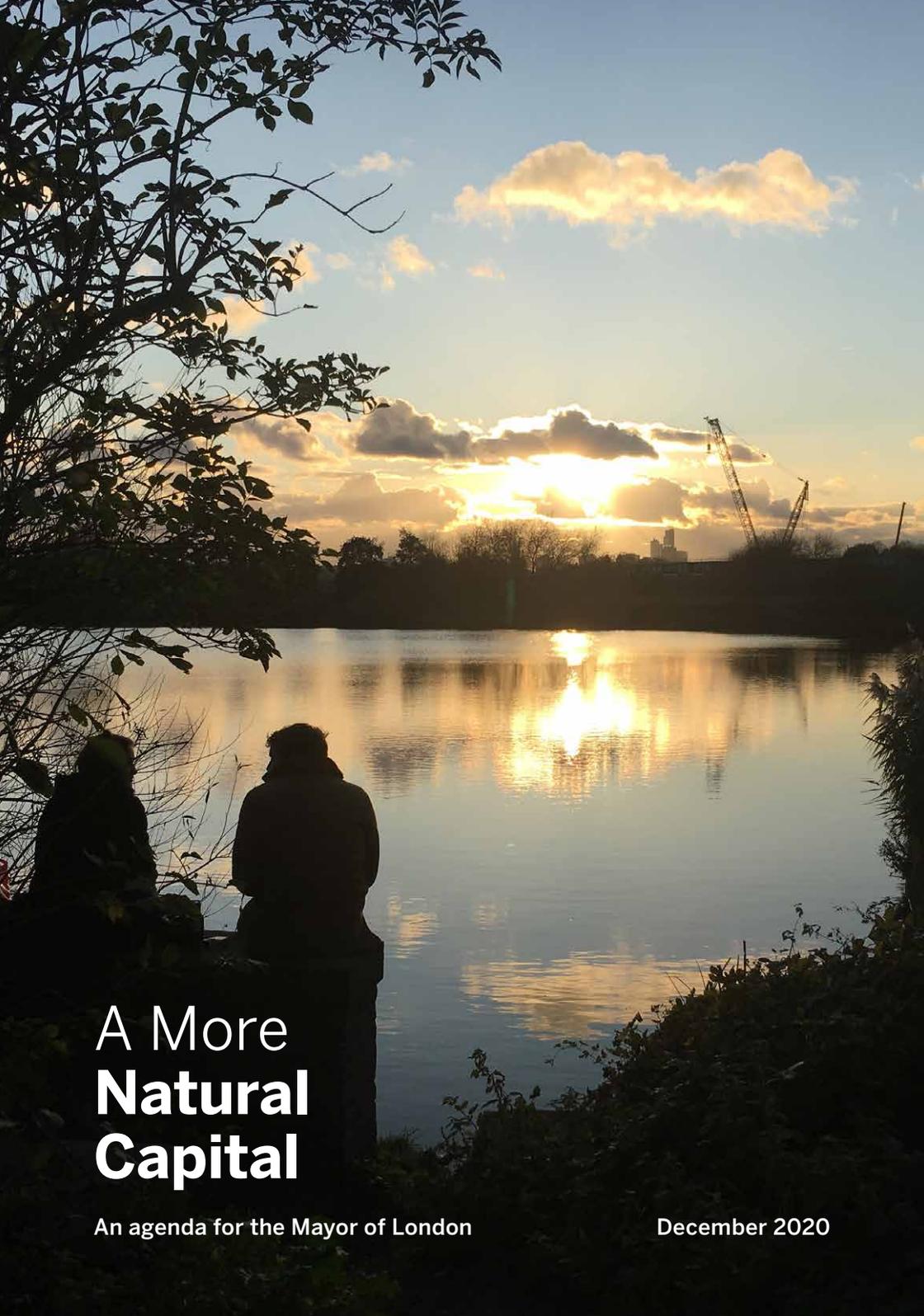
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