



Biodiversity Duty

First Annual Report

1 January 2024 to 31 January 2026

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The [Environment Act 2021](#) introduced strengthened 'biodiversity duty' requiring Local Authorities in England to enhance action around biodiversity and:
 - Consider what can be done to conserve and enhance biodiversity
 - Agree policies and specific objectives based on that consideration
 - Take action to deliver against those policies and achieve objectives
- 1.2. As a Local Authority, Gravesham Borough Council is required to publish a first annual report setting out information about our policies objectives and actions; how we have considered other strategies within our work; details of future actions and, as Local Planning Authority, action we have taken to ensure Biodiversity Net Gain obligations have been met
- 1.3. A reconsideration of these actions must then be undertaken and reported within 5 years of the first annual consideration. Details of this reporting requirement is available at [Reporting your biodiversity duty actions - GOV.UK](#)

2. Background

- 2.1. In 2018, the Government published a [25 Year Environment Plan](#) setting out a plan for strengthening biodiversity and achieving cleaner air and water, thriving plants and wildlife, reducing harm from flooding and drought, achieving more sustainable and efficient use of natural resources, and enhancing the natural environment.
- 2.2. The plan included the introduction of a mandatory system whereby developers would need to ensure the biodiversity value of developments was at least 10% higher than before the development took place. This duty was subsequently introduced in February 2024 - for further guidance, see: [BNG Steps for Developers](#)
- 2.3. The [Environmental Improvement Plan](#), published in January 2023, built upon the foundation of the 25-Year Environment Plan and set out government plans for significantly improving the natural environment by working with landowners, communities and businesses towards the joined vision. This included:

By 2023:

- Halting the decline in species abundance
- Protecting 30% of UK land

By 2042:

- Increasing species abundance by at least 10% from 2030
- Restoring or creating at least 500,000 ha of wildlife rich habitats
- Reducing the risk of species extinction
- Restoring 75% of the 1 million ha terrestrial and freshwater protected sites to favourable condition, securing their wildlife value for the long term
- protecting 30% of UK land and halting the decline in species abundance

3. Biodiversity across the Borough of Gravesham

- 3.1. Biodiversity refers to all living things such as plants, insects and animals, and the ecosystems within which they exist within. Activities such as changing land use, deforestation, pollution including increasing waste and omissions, affect this ecosystem, natural habitats and the species within them.
- 3.2. Gravesham has a wide variety of natural resources supporting a diverse range of habitats and species from internationally designated marshes along the Thames in the

north, to ancient and mixed woodlands and chalk grasslands in the central and southern areas of the Borough. The Borough is home to many protected habitats and landscape such as the Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar and Special Protection Area (SPA), the North Downs Woodlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC), the Kent Downs National Landscape, as well as six designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and seventeen Local Wildlife Sites (LWS).

- 3.3. Across Gravesham there are a number of council and external projects going on which aim to conserve and enhance the Borough biodiversity. The most significant is the partnership work currently underway through the newly established North Kent Woods and Downs National Nature Reserve where nature conservation and recovery is its primary focus.
- 3.4. Alongside this, the council is exploring opportunities to capitalise on the nature recovery and carbon benefits that offsite BNG can offer through its own land holdings. The council purchased land near Istead Rise with aim of developing and managing the land as a receptor site for off-site BNG, alongside other complimentary uses. Currently the site is being developed as a Country Park which will continue to enhance the environment, nurture and increase pride of place in open, attractive parks and green spaces and deliver against the wider borough objectives within the Climate Change Strategy.

4. Policies, objectives and actions

- 4.1. In October 2025, the Council adopted its Biodiversity Strategy [Biodiversity Strategy - Policies, strategies and open data – Gravesham Borough Council](#) which set out three areas of focus, being:
 - Enhancing Diversity of Place
 - Policy
 - People – partnerships, community & volunteers
- 4.2. The strategy recognises the Council's role as Planning Authority, Landowner, Partner and Community leader and sets out specific objectives to:
 - Safeguard Biodiversity – through planning policy, providing guidance to developers on our priorities when considering offsetting biodiversity net gain (BNG); and ensure robust monitoring and enforcement of conditions
 - Enhancing Biodiversity & Benefits – as landowner, we will be effectively and proactively managing our land, develop green spaces that protect and enhance natural habitats as well as support positive health and wellbeing; create landscapes that support offsetting BNG units; develop green corridors and opportunities for rewilding
 - Support Partnerships & opportunities – working proactively in partnership, and developing positive relationships, that help us achieve more, such as through the North Kent Woods and Downs National Nature Reserve, Natural England, The Wildlife Trust and local ecologists
 - Educate about delivery initiatives – as Community Leader we will work to support our community through the delivery of events and activities that raise awareness around the significance and benefit of open spaces and biodiversity; and the value of initiatives such as through our street champions who support activities such as litter picks.
- 4.3. To support this work, an action plan has been developed and will be the focus for delivery over the next 5 years
- 4.4. A number of other key policies and initiatives support the delivery and growth of biodiversity across the Borough. These were set out in our First Annual Consideration

Report, along with a range of actions and further considerations being taken and / or developed

Table 1 Summary of current actions and further considerations to improve biodiversity outcomes.

Work Area/objective	Current Contribution to Biodiversity Duty	Future work/ Considerations
<p>Relevant external strategies</p> <p>To ensure the council contributes to the preparation and implementation of the following relevant strategies:</p> <p>Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)</p> <p>Species Conservation Strategies/ Protected site strategies</p>	<p>Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy</p> <p>The Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) was finalised and published in November 2025. The Council was involved in its preparation as a Supporting Authority and was actively involved in setting priorities and mapping areas which could become important for biodiversity. The LNRS sets a shared vision for nature recovery in Kent and Medway. It identifies potential actions for nature recovery and associated mapping helps to identify where actions are needed and where the greatest benefits can be achieved</p> <p>Species Conservation Strategies/Protected Site Strategies</p> <p>Natural England is responsible for developing these strategies. This work is yet to commence.</p>	<p>Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) has only recently been published and as such no future actions related to the LNRS have yet been established, The Council is however exploring those areas of land within their ownership and management that is identified within the LNRS as areas that are or can become important for Biodiversity. • Species Conservation Strategies/Protected Site Strategies <p>The council will actively engage with Natural England and any partnership arrangement set up to develop these strategies and their local application.</p>
<p>Council Plans, Policies and Strategies</p> <p>The Council's Corporate Plan sets its strategic direction for the four-year period 2023-2027. The three corporate objectives that shape the work of the Council are:</p> <p>#OneBorough: Protected Environment; Progressive Place</p> <p>#OneCommunity</p>	<p>Corporate Plan -</p> <p>A key priority of the Corporate Plan is to deliver a safe, clean and attractive environment, enhanced by a sustainable and increasingly energised local economy' and includes commitments to create a borough which protects the environment and provides beautiful spaces for our residents and visitors to enjoy.</p> <p>Climate Change Strategy and Action Delivery Plan</p>	<p>Corporate Plan</p> <p>The Council will monitor progress and achievement against the Corporate Plan through its performance management regime, tracking and monitoring progress against the key objectives and priorities.</p> <p>Climate Change Strategy and Action Delivery Plan</p> <p>The council will consider the following actions:</p>

Work Area/objective	Current Contribution to Biodiversity Duty	Future work/ Considerations
<p>Sustainable Housing; Strong Community</p> <p>#OneCouncil Enterprising Authority; Ethical Governance</p>	<p>The council declared a Climate emergency in June 2019 and subsequently published a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan in December 2021. The Climate Change Strategy sets out the council's approach to tackling its own emissions as well as supporting communities to reduce their own carbon footprint.</p> <p>The accompanying Action Delivery Plan includes a range of actions relating to the conservation and protection of biodiversity that the council propose to develop and deliver.</p> <p>Procurement Strategy The council's Procurement Strategy commits to working with services communities, external partners, and supply markets to show leadership, improve standards, and enable investments which support environmental sustainability priorities and plays our part in tackling the global climate emergency.</p> <p>Biodiversity Strategy and Implementation Plan The council has adopted a Biodiversity Strategy setting out the Council's priorities for biodiversity.</p> <p>Procurement Strategy The council continues to work with services communities, external partners, and supply markets to show leadership, improve standards, and enable investments which support environmental sustainability priorities</p> <p>Adopted Gravesham Local Plan and emerging Local Plan</p>	<p>Develop and implement a Tree and Biodiversity Strategy</p> <p>Progress mulching and composting 95% of in-house green waste</p> <p>Identify opportunities to 'green' the Council's property estate, looking to find appropriate sites to deploy green infrastructure</p> <p>Undertake a series of green infrastructure pilot programmes in the borough to demonstrate the positive impact that greening has on urban landscapes</p> <p>Work with Trees for Cities to identify suitable locations on Council owned land to deliver a carbon offsetting programme to support the delivery of net zero carbon targets on our estates</p> <p>Other Strategies Policies and Procedures. The council, through internal discussions, will review its strategies, policies and procedures to identify further reasonable opportunities to protect and enhance biodiversity</p>

Work Area/objective	Current Contribution to Biodiversity Duty	Future work/ Considerations
	<p>and Site Allocations (see below) Adopted Design for Gravesham – Design Code (see below)</p>	
<p>Planning and Development including Biodiversity Net Gain</p> <p>To maximise opportunities from new development for the benefit of nature recovery, including securing a minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) from qualifying development proposals.</p>	<p>Adopted Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014)</p> <p>The adopted Local Plan Core Strategy recognises the importance of the Borough’s natural assets and embeds the objective of safeguarding and enhancing biodiversity in its ‘spatial vision and strategic objectives (SO16), as well as through a number of its policies:</p> <p>Policy CS01: Sustainable Development</p> <p>Policy CS12: Green Infrastructure</p> <p>Policy CS13: Green Space, Sport and Recreation</p> <p>Policy CS19: Development and Design Principles.</p> <p>Emerging Gravesham Local Plan The emerging Gravesham Local Plan will provide updated policies which support the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, by embedding BNG requirements, embracing the Green Infrastructure principles set out in Design for Gravesham, alongside the recommendations set out in the Green and Blue Infrastructure Study (2021) prepared to inform the emerging Local Plan.</p> <p>Preparation and implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) for the</p>	<p>Emerging Gravesham Local Plan</p> <p>The Regulation 19 Submission Draft Gravesham Local Plan has been approved by the Council for public consultation in Spring 2026, with the aim to, submit for Examination by December 2026,</p> <p>The Regulation 19 Submission Draft Local Plan is supported by a Habitats Regulations Assessment which assesses the likely significant effects of the policies and proposals in the emerging Local Plan on European designated sites and a Strategic Environmental Assessment (or Environmental Outcomes Report) which will assess the likely environmental effects of the Plan.</p> <p>A Strategic Objective of the Plan is to address the decline in biodiversity and amenity value of natural assets (including trees and water spaces) to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain across the Borough, ensuring high quality green spaces are accessible and well connected to the communities they serve.</p> <p>Draft strategic policy LP8 – Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery -forms the main basis of the Council’s approach to ensuring the protection, restoration, enhancement and maintenance of the assets of international, national and local importance that make up the Borough’s natural environment and the Councils approach biodiversity protection and enhancement for new development.</p> <p>Development Management</p>

Work Area/objective	Current Contribution to Biodiversity Duty	Future work/ Considerations
	<p>purposes of Development Management In line with the statutory framework, major and some minor developments are required to deliver a minimum of 10 % BNG to ensure that development has a positive impact on the natural environment by creating new habitats and green spaces</p> <p>The council has been actively preparing to implement biodiversity net gain through its involvement in the following actions in partnership with other Kent local authorities:</p> <p>Joint funded BNG Officer based at KCC with whom we are working with to prepare, procedure notes and guidance, and training for officers and members</p> <p>Raising awareness of online information and guidance on the preparation of the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) website</p> <p>Development of a Kent BNG Site Register to provide a marketplace for the delivery of local off-site biodiversity.</p> <p>Development and publication of Interim Strategic Significance Guidance to inform the calculation of Biodiversity units as part of the Metric calculation required to support planning applications.</p> <p>Purchased new software (Mycelia) to assist in validation, assessment and monitoring the BNG requirements through the planning process</p>	<p>The council will continue to determine planning applications in line with national and locally adopted environmental policies and professional best advice, to ensure best outcomes for biodiversity and local communities.</p> <p>Biodiversity Net Gain The council will consider developing internal processes to monitor and map BNG delivery. The council will investigate opportunities to ensure that offsite BNG from development sites in the Borough enhances local biodiversity, on registered council owned or third-party land within the Borough, in the first instance.</p>

Work Area/objective	Current Contribution to Biodiversity Duty	Future work/ Considerations
	<p>Developed processes for addressing BNG considerations through the planning process, including entering into a Service Level Agreement with the Kent County Council Ecological Service to provide advice on planning applications in relation to BNG.</p> <p>Design for Gravesham - Design Code The council has adopted a Design Code which expands upon the adopted Local Plan and seeks to maximise opportunities to conserve and enhance blue and green infrastructure by ensuring new development delivers green interventions which improves the lives of local residents while connecting into the wider green infrastructure network.</p>	
<p>Positive Management of Council land and buildings to enhance biodiversity</p> <p>The Council will manage its owned property assets and landholdings in a way that supports the development of positive biodiversity outcomes</p>	<p>Council Land The council has identified 22 potentials sites that could contribute to biodiversity enhancement and potentially generate Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) credits. These sites could support the development and implementation of a future BNG strategy, while offering potential revenue streams through credit sales to help offset habitat management costs.</p> <p>Land purchased by the Council at Istead Rise has been identified for potential long-term BNG opportunities, including offset units</p> <p>Council owned or managed buildings The Council owns a portfolio of properties covering a range of asset classes which are internally managed by the</p>	<p>The council will work to prepare management plans that are appropriately costed with delivery timeframes for the potential 22 key sites to improve their biodiversity value</p> <p>Baseline assessments, design and scoping for land management plans is currently underway. Considerations will be given to the most appropriate routes for development management under a 30-year covenant</p>

Work Area/objective	Current Contribution to Biodiversity Duty	Future work/ Considerations
	<p>Strategic Property Management team. Cyclical reviews are undertaken by the team of Estate Surveyors to identify opportunities to maximise the efficiency of the buildings through sustainability and monitoring our climate action targets.</p>	
<p>Partnerships, community, volunteers</p> <p>To work with external partners and community groups to benefit from the expertise, resources and funding opportunities that these groups can bring to improve outcomes for biodiversity.</p>	<p>Nature Conservation and Environmental Partnerships</p> <p>As part of its planning function, the council is an active member of a number of nature conservation partnerships, as follows</p> <p>Local Nature Partnerships</p> <p>The focus of the partnership is to provide the strategic coordination and leadership needed to restore nature across Kent and Medway, underpinning a thriving economy and healthy population.</p> <p>The Partnership updated the Kent Biodiversity Strategy (2019 – 2044) which identifies biodiversity opportunity areas with the greatest potential for habitats restoration and enhancement. These are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medway Gap & North Kent Downs; • Thameside Green Corridors; and • North Kent Marshes <p>The Partnership is currently supporting the Making Space for Nature Project that is developing the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Kent and Medway and the Council is actively participating in this.</p> <p>The above opportunity</p>	<p>Nature Conservation and Environmental Partnerships</p> <p>The council will continue to work with relevant partnerships and explore opportunities for further partnership working that will improve outcomes for biodiversity.</p> <p>Local Volunteering Groups</p> <p>The council will continue to support and work to create new opportunities for community involvement in nature conservation and stewardship.</p>

Work Area/objective	Current Contribution to Biodiversity Duty	Future work/ Considerations
	<p>areas will be reviewed as part of this process.</p> <p>Local Wildlife Trust. The council has a Service Level Agreement with the Kent Wildlife Trust who manages Local Wildlife Sites in the Borough and across Kent.</p> <p>Kent Downs National Landscape The Kent Downs National Landscape have produced a Management Plan which has been adopted by the council and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications within the National Landscape and its setting. The council is a Member of the Kent Downs Joint Advisory Committee (JAC).</p> <p>The North Kent Woods and Downs National Nature Reserve The council has actively participated, alongside Natural England and a range of nature conservation bodies in a partnership project working towards the declaration of a National Nature Reserve in Gravesham and Medway.</p> <p>North Kent Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Scheme (SAMMS) Board The council is a Board Member on the North Kent Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Scheme (SAMMS) Board, a partnership of local authorities, developers and environmental organisations. The partnership was set up to address the impact that additional development in</p>	

Work Area/objective	Current Contribution to Biodiversity Duty	Future work/ Considerations
	<p>North Kent will have on bird populations on the Thames, Medway and Swale Estuaries. These sites are Special protection Areas (SPA's) and Ramsar Sites that are protected by both European and international designations.</p> <p>Local Volunteering Groups The council is proud of the support, commitment and achievements it derives from the local community and, in particular, a cohort of active and passionate volunteers. Such groups include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gravesham Street Champions who are a network of residents who volunteer to improve their local environment. • A new Green/Heritage volunteer group, where volunteers will be trained to undertake specific projects that have a direct impact on improving biodiversity in the Borough. 	
<p>Education, Advice and Engagement</p> <p>To increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity and why it is important to conserve and enhance it</p>	<p>Gravesham Youth Council The Council comprises a group of young people aged between 11 and 17 from across the Borough who discuss issues that matter to them, contribute to decision making and support information dissemination to other young people through the school network. Biodiversity and the role of young people in this area is a topic of frequent discussion. The Youth Council continues to be a mechanism to support awareness and involvement</p> <p>Community Involvement & Engagement</p>	<p>The council will consider developing a programme of community engagement, environmental education and initiatives to build awareness around the biodiversity agenda</p>

Work Area/objective	Current Contribution to Biodiversity Duty	Future work/ Considerations
	<p>The Council continues to progress a series of community involvement and engagement opportunities, including work around social value where specific projects are identified for support e.g. gardening, greening of spaces</p> <p>Through the online engagement platform, the Council continues promote and engage with the community around a number of initiatives and opportunities that help raise awareness of Biodiversity</p>	

5. Local Planning Authority

- 5.1 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) aims to leave the environment in a measurably better state for biodiversity, by mandating that development must deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value post development. Since 12 February 2024, new planning applications for major developments were required to have regard to the biodiversity net gain policy. BNG has applied to small sites since 2 April 2024. Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) must have regard to the BNG policy from May 2026.
- 5.2 The Council has ensured that applications being made since 12th February 2024, where applicable, have submitted the required information such as biodiversity metric calculations, biodiversity gain plans and legal agreements in order to comply with BNG policy.
- 5.3 To meet BNG requirements, local planning authorities must ensure planning applications include key documentation: a statement on BNG conditions, a metric calculation showing biodiversity changes and scaled habitat plans. Officers also refer to national planning resources to support their approach and use specialist software (Mycelia) to validate and assess BNG metrics and whether the trading rules have been satisfied.
- 5.4 At validation stage, Officers scrutinise planning applications to consider whether they are required to provide the 10% mandatory BNG based upon the application type and any claimed exemptions. For example, if an applicant claims exemption under the de-minimus threshold, the amount of on-site habitat and on-site linear habitats (such as hedgerows) will be scrutinised to ensure the development is exempt. This analysis is further checked by ecology experts during the assessment stage of a planning application.
- 5.5 When dealing with applications for self-build and custom housebuilding, Officers ensure that only proposals which are for 9 or less dwellings, on sites of 0.5 hectares or less, and consist exclusively of dwellings that are self-build or custom housebuilding as defined in section 1(A1) of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 are eligible under the exemption.
- 5.6 Officers received training in 2023-2025 in relation to the BNG duty, with the training covering planning roles and BNG metrics. Officers have also been trained to understand BNG

exemptions, how to deal with mandatory BNG Plan condition and how and when to secure BNG within legal agreements. This training is supplemented with regular (weekly) drop-in sessions with ecological experts to address queries in relation to BNG and active planning applications.

5.7 At the time of reporting, 23 planning applications subject to mandatory biodiversity net gain (BNG) requirements have been granted, with 4 Biodiversity Gain Plans were approved. Of the 4 Biodiversity Gain Plans approved, 2 secured BNG through on site units, 1 used statutory credits and 1 used a combination of on-site units and statutory credits (see tables below).

Table 2: Eligible planning permissions granted under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requiring biodiversity net gain

Consented applications requiring net gains	Number
Total number of planning permissions granted that require biodiversity net gain in the reporting period	23
Total number of planning permissions granted in the reporting period where an exemption to the biodiversity net gain condition applies	214
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period	4
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through on-site units only	2
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through off-site units only	0
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through statutory credits only	1
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site and off-site units	0
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site units and statutory credits	1
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of off-site units and statutory credits	0
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site, off-site units and statutory credits	0

Table 3: Overall expected gains and losses across all biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period

Overall expected gains and losses	Area habitat	Hedgerow	Watercourse
Total number of pre-development biodiversity units approved on-site	1.34	0.04	0.00
Total number of post-development biodiversity units approved on-site	1.43	0.48	0.00
Total net unit change in biodiversity units, on-site	0.09	0.44	0.00
Average percentage (%) change in biodiversity units, on-site	6.49	1088.30	0.00

Total number of baseline biodiversity units approved off-site	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total number of post-intervention biodiversity units approved off-site	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total net unit change in biodiversity units, off-site	0.00	0.00	0.00
Average percentage (%) change in biodiversity units, off-site	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total number of biodiversity units offset using statutory credits	0.10	0.00	0.00
Total net unit change in biodiversity units (including any units offset using credits)	0.19	0.44	0.00
Average percentage (%) change (including statutory credits)	14.25	1088.30	0.00

5.8 The Council has not yet commenced formal monitoring activities associated with approved biodiversity gain plans, and no live enforcement cases of any breaches in which works have started on a site prior to the condition being applied for and discharged.

5.9 Further consideration is currently being given for encouraging the local delivery of biodiversity net gain, so developers have the option to purchase these credits and support local improvements in biodiversity. This could include generating opportunities for delivering offsite BNG on Council managed green spaces. The use of the mapping completed as part of the development of the LNRS will be critical in supporting any sites which are brought forward.

6. Community Engagement and Education

6.1 Gravesham Borough Council is proud to have a strong network of support from within its community, including the successful Street Champions of over 600 local residents who support initiatives such as street cleans and planting projects.

6.2 Gravesham's Green Community hub is a project aimed to set up a group of green volunteers from across Gravesham, to support regular and specific activities to enhance our parks and green spaces. In addition to this the project also aimed to collect targeted information from communities in the more urban and deprived parts of the borough to help us improve community wellbeing, health inequalities and build awareness and support for the natural environment.

6.3 Some of the project achievements and future plans for the Green Community Hub are as follows:

Planting Volunteering Activities

The project commenced in September 2024 with the first organised planting activities starting in October 2024. Working with North and West Kent Countryside Partnership regular tree planting sessions were held in Northfleet Urban Country Park which is one of our most deprived areas. The sessions attracted large numbers of volunteers including corporate volunteers, local volunteers and the neighbouring primary school St Josephs.

In December tree planting was also organised in Cobham close to the new Natural Nature Reserve site and included three classes from Cobham Primary School. The school was very enthusiastic and keen to be involved in the future care and monitoring of the trees and the site. In total approximately 350 volunteers participated in planting opportunities.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were held with the African Community Forum a group of mainly older people, and with Rethink Sahayak again older people but this time from the South Asian community. They

talked about the benefits of being outdoors in the local parks, enjoying the plants and the bird song and spending time with their grandchildren. Their use of outdoor space was very much influenced by the weather and the seasons. The Rethink group is focused on mental wellbeing and were very keen to be involved in future planting activities that allowed for their physical limitations.

In March, an outdoor session was held at the Gurdwara to talk with those in the area using the outdoor space for exercise with over 30 questionnaires completed that fed back into the general survey results.

A focus group was also held at Cobham Primary School with class representatives. Almost all were regular users of local parks and had lots of ideas for encouraging more use and how their school could be more involved and support nature within their grounds.

Training

Nature surveying classroom training sessions supported 13 people who were keen to be involved in practical sessions. Most of those attending the sessions were retired but one was a recent graduate keen to start an environmental career and another worked part time and was keen to learn some practical ideas as to how she could support nature on the land that she owned.

Surveys/ Questionnaires/ Interviews

A total of 105 responses were received to an online survey with key findings including 72% of all respondents were using the parks at least once a week with 33% using the parks daily.

The most popular activities were walking, children's play, dog walking and exercise/ sports. 48% of respondents walk to their local park.

The most popular organised activities identified to encourage use of the parks were community events, guided nature walks and fitness classes.

Word of mouth was the most used way of finding out about what was going on in parks followed by social media. Those factors that prevent more frequent use of green spaces are lack of time and poor weather.

87.6% of respondents rated the overall quality of green spaces in the brough as either average, Good or excellent.

Future Plans

We have set up a Green Volunteers section on our engagement platform to promote planting and nature opportunities, collate ideas and provide feedback. Residents can book onto sessions and receive updates and information by email.

Despite the challenges of the short time frame of the project and the autumn/ winter timing there is much to build on for developing this work.

- More scheduled planting opportunities
- Manage Green Volunteers using the engagement platform
- Organise a practical surveying session
- Developing opportunities with local schools