Ecological Impact Assessment for Clapham Common

July 2020 Update

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Identification of Ecologically Sensitive Areas of Clapham Common, London Borough of Lambeth

1.0 Background

1.1.1 A number of public events involving large numbers of people are planned for selected parks and open spaces in Lambeth over each summer period including in Clapham Common. Although these events were unfortunately cancelled in 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 Coronavirus lockdown restrictions, they will take place in 2021 and subsequent years. In order to safeguard the ecology of these particular event sites, the London Borough of Lambeth commissioned Salix Ecology to establish which areas of Brockwell Park are likely to be particularly sensitive in ecological terms and thus could be potentially adversely affected by such public events or activities associated with them.

1.1.2 A walkover ecological survey of Clapham Common was undertaken by Salix Ecology on 6th July 2018. The surveyor was Paul Losse MCIEEM, an experienced ecologist. The purpose of the survey was to identify areas / features of the park which might be particularly susceptible to public use and where a corresponding reduction in ecological value might be anticipated. Decisions regarding which areas might be particularly sensitive and the degree of impact expected, was arbitrary and heavily dependent on the experience of the surveyor.

1.1.3 The survey was repeated on 10th July 2020 to establish if there had been any gross changes to previously identified sensitive areas.

2.0 Method

2.1.1 Ecologically sensitive areas of the common were identified using a combination of a Greenspace Information for Greater London data search, aerial photography and field study. These sensitive areas generally had attributes which support / probably support breeding birds, have potential to harbour bat roosts and / or are particularly susceptible to disturbance or trampling. In the light of this, particular features and habitat types were sifted into the following categories:

- Low ecological sensitivity: little significant impact would be expected on these areas regarding the occasional large-scale public event.

- Moderate ecological sensitivity: casual park uses would have a limited impact on current biodiversity value. However large crowds should be discouraged from the area (particularly during the bird breeding season - March to August inclusive).

- High ecological sensitivity: Public should not be allowed to enter these areas which should be fenced off during events (if no fencing is currently in place). Additionally, large public crowds should not be encouraged around the periphery of these areas.

2.1.2 Other land use categories depicted in Figure 7 are buildings, hardstanding and other areas of little or negligible ecological value.

2.1.3 Areas identified as being of moderate or high ecological sensitivity were re-visited in 2020. The 2020 survey focussed on those more sensitive habitats which were most likely to have been impacted by increased visitor pressure, particularly grassland habitats. Although increased disturbance in woodland areas may have had an impact on associated species, any impacts would not be measurable in the absence of detailed faunal surveys. In addition, the surveys were carried out in July on each occasion. Although this is a suitable time for surveying grasslands, it is sub-optimal for woodlands as much of the ground flora is no longer evident.

3.0 Results

3.1 Data search

Statutory Sites and Local Nature Reserves

3.1.1 There are no statutory designated sites within the area of search.

Non- statutory designations

3.1.2 Clapham Common is a site of Borough Importance for Nature Conservation. The main habitats of note listed in the citation for the site are the ponds and associated habitats. Mount Pond within the Wandsworth part of the common supports a reasonable range of wildfowl and fish. Eagle Pond, the smallest of the three ponds on the common, was recently restored and now features a number of areas with reeds and other plants at the edges. The pond provides important areas for wildlife, which balance its alternative use for coarse fishing.

3.1.3 An area of woodland to the north of Mount Pond consists mostly of exotic trees, but has developed a reasonable structure and supports common birds.

Protected species and Species of Principle Importance for the Conservation of Biodiversity (in England)

3.1.4 The Greenspace Information for Greater London data search confirmed a number of records of rare species, protected species and Species of Principal Importance within 1km of the site. See appendix 1 for species status.

Reptiles and amphibia

3.1.5 There are no records of reptiles within 1km of the site.

3.1.6 There are records of common frog *Rana temporaria* and common toad *Bufo bufo* within the area of search. There is potential for these species to breed within the ponds on site and to use surrounding terrestrial habitat. These species are protected from selling and trade under the Wildlife and Countryside 1981(as amended). The common toad is also species of Principle Importance.

Birds

3.1.7 There are numerous bird records within the area of search. Note that all species of wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside act 1981(as amended). Rare, London Biodiversity Action Plan species and Species of Principal Importance are listed in table 2 below. A number of mostly common bird species are likely breed within mature trees at the site.

Table 1: Relevant bird records within 1km of the site

Species	Status/protection
Skylark *Alauda arvensis*	Species of Principal Importance BAP Priority London Bird – red
Kingfisher *Alcdo atthis*	Wildlife and Countryside Act Schedule 1
Lesser spotted woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*	BAP Priority London Bird – red

Species	Status/protection
Yellowhammer *Emberiza citronella*	Species of Principal Importance BAP Priority London Bird – red
Reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*	Species of Principal Importance BAP Priority London
Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*	Wildlife and Countryside Act Schedule 1
Herring Gull	BAP Priority London Bird – red
Common crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*	Wildlife and Countryside Act Schedule 1
Red kite *Milvus milvus*	Wildlife and Countryside Act Schedule 1
Yellow wagtail *Motacilla flava*	BAP Priority London Bird – red
Spotted flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*	BAP Priority London Species of Principal Importance
Wood warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*	Species of Principal Importance BAP Priority London Bird – red
Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*	Wildlife and Countryside Act Schedule 1
House sparrow *Passer domesticus*	Bird – red BAP Priority London Species of Principal Importance
Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*	Bird – red BAP Priority London
Redwing *Turdus iliacus*	Wildlife and Countryside Act Schedule 1 Bird – red
Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*	Wildlife and Countryside Act Schedule 1 Bird – red
Dunnock *Prunella modularis*	Bird – Amber BAP Priority London
Song thrush *Turdus philomelos*	Bird – Red BAP Priority London

Mammals

3.1.8 Common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, Nathusius's pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii,* soprano pipistrelle *Piistrellus pygmaeus,* Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii* and nocule *Nyctalus* noctula bats have been recorded in the area of search. All species of bat have a high level of protection under the Habitat regulations (2010) as well as the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). There are some bat roosting opportunities, particularly within mature trees at the site.

3.1.9 Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* has also been recorded within the area of search. The species is a London BAP species and a Species of Principle Importance. There is potential for hedgehogs to use the less intensively managed areas of the site, especially woodlands, woodland edge and less intensively managed areas of grassland. They may also forage within the amenity grassland areas.

Invertebrates

3.1.10 There are a number of invertebrate records within the area of search. Rare, London Biodiversity Action Plan species and Species of Principal Importance are listed in table 2 below.

Table 2: Relevant invertebrate records within 1km of the site

Species	Status/protection
Stag beetle *Lucanus cervus*	Species of Principal Importance Nationally notable B BAP Priority London
Hawthorn jewel beetle *Agrilus sinuatus*	Nationally notable A
Sepedophilus bipunctatus (a beetle)	Nationally notable B
Buff ermine *Spilosoma lutea*	Species of Principal Importance BAP Priority London
Brindled beauty *Lycia hirtaria*	Species of Principal Importance BAP Priority London
Brown ant *Lasius brunneaus*	Nationally notable A

Plants

3.1.11 Records of plant records which could be found at Clapham Common include mistletoe (London BAP priority). This species will not be affected by any events at Clapham Common.

3.2 Field survey

3.2.1 A description of each habitat is given below in one of three categories: High, Medium and low ecological sensitivity. Notes are provided for the 2018 survey as well as the 2020 survey. An ecological sensitivity map is shown in figure 7 below.

<u>High ecological sensitivity</u>

H1: Eagle Pond

3.2.2 **2018 survey:** Eagle pond is located adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site. The pond has an island supporting breeding waterfowl. There were good stands of marginal vegetation including purple loosestrife, yellow iris, soft rush, lesser pond sedge, pendulous sedge, greater willowherb, yellow loosestrife and hemlock water-dropwort. Surrounding trees include crack willow.

3.2.3 **2020 survey:** The marginal vegetation had been retained in 2020. Species recorded included lesser pond sedge, pendulous sedge, yellow iris, soft rush and greater willowherb. Rosebay willowherb was rare. Trees included ash and horse chestnut saplings and mature crack and goat willows.

Figure 1: Eagle Pond

H2: Small pond

3.2.4 **2018 survey:** This small pond lies immediately adjacent and to the west of Eagle Pond. The pond was almost dry at the time of survey, however it supported marginal soft rush, lesser pond sedge and emergent bulrush. The pond was surrounded by rough grassland and tall herbs. Surrounding vegetation included young willow, goat willow and buddleia. Grassland species included cock's-foot, wild carrot, rosebay willowherb, common knapweed and common ragwort.

3.2.5 **2020 survey:** In 2020 the small pond was partially full of water but supported little associated vegetation apart from a margin of lesser pond sedge. The area of rough grassland and tall herbs covered approximately the same area as in 2018. Here the main grasses included sterile brome, common couch, creeping bent, false oat-grass and cock's-foot. Smaller cat's-tail was rare. Frequent herbs included common knapweed, ribwort plantain, wild carrot and yarrow. Bird's-foot-trefoil, common ragwort, black medick, dandelion, creeping thistle and rosebay willowherb were occasional. Soapwort, wild onion, rough hawkbit, field scabious, broad-leaved everlasting-pea and lady's bedstraw were rare.

Figure 2: Small pond and associated vegetation

H3: Area of wildflower planting/seeding

3.2.6 **2018 survey:** An area of seeded corn field annuals located immediately to the north of Windmill drive. The area is particularly sensitive to trampling.

3.2.7 **2020 survey:** In 2020 the seeded area had been retained over approximately the same area as in 2018. Although individual species were not recorded, the area did appear to be less species rich compared to 2018.

Figure 3: Area of wildflower seeding

H4: Mount Pond

3.2.8 **2018 survey:** Mount pond is located toward the centre of the site just north of Windmill Drive in the Wandsworth side of the site. The lake had good marginal vegetation including lesser pond sedge, great willowherb, bulrush, reed canary grass, gypsywort, marsh woundwort and pendulous sedge. There were also stands

of common reed, young alder and grey willow. There was an island with mature trees with potential to support breeding birds.

3.2.9 **2020 survey:** The marginal vegetation had been retained intact. Species recorded included common reed, bulrush with frequent marsh woundwort, reed sweet-grass, greater spearwort and purple loosestrife. Gypsywort was occasional. Yellow loosestrife was rare. Trees included grey willow and crack willow.

Figure 4: Mount Pond

<u>Moderate ecological sensitivity</u>

M1: Nursery Wood

3.2.10 **2018 survey:** Nursery wood is located immediately to the north of the South Circular Road south of the common. This was a small block of dense woodland with London plane, mature hawthorn, English elm, horse chestnut, yew, ash, wild cherry, common lime, field maple and sweet chestnut. **Note:** some oaks were infested with oak processionary moth, a human health hazard.

3.2.11 Immediately adjacent to the mature woodland was an area of young plantation woodland with cherry tree, rowan and tall herbs dominated by creeping thistle with some greater willowherb, hemlock and common nettle. There was also a veteran alder with large amounts of dead wood. This tree has bat roost potential.

3.2.12 **2020 survey:** No obvious changes in the extent or structure of this woodland area were noted during the 2020 survey. The area of tall herbs had also been retained in 2020. Dominant species here were hemlock, common nettle and creeping thistle. Other herbs included yarrow and great willowherb. The most frequent species of grass were common bent and common couch. There was also a large stand of Bramble.

Figure 5: Nursery Wood

M2: **Area of shrubs and trees**

3.2.13 **2018 survey:** An area of shrubs and trees with breeding bird potential. Species included garden privet, elder, bramble and English elm.

3.2.14 **2020 Survey:** No obvious changes in the extent or structure of this woodland area were noted during the 2020 survey.

M3: Parkland with scattered trees

3.2.15 **2018 survey:** An area of parkland with scattered trees towards the centre of the site. The grassland was relatively species-poor improved grassland dominated by perennial rye-grass with yarrow, wall barley, mugwort, black horehound, white clover and creeping cinquefoil. However, the area does have value for foraging birds and invertebrates.

3.2.16 **2020 survey:** No obvious changes in the extent or structure of this parkland area were noted during the 2020 survey.

Figure 6: Parkland with scattered trees

M4: Semi-improved neutral grassland

3.2.17 **2018 survey:** An area of semi-improved irregularly mown neutral grassland with scattered mature trees on the western boundary of the site. Species included cock's-foot, abundant perennial rye-grass, ribwort plantain and creeping bent. The grassland has value for foraging birds and invertebrates.

3.2.18 **2020 survey:** The area of semi-improved neutral grassland had been retained in 2020. The main grasses included creeping bent and perennial ryegrass which were both abundant. Cock's-foot was frequent, with wall barley and smaller cat's-tail occasional. Ribwort plantain and yarrow were the most frequent forbs. Other species included lesser stitchwort, dandelion, dove's-foot-cranesbill and common cat's-ear which were occasional. Hedge bedstraw was locally frequent. Common ragwort was rare. The scattered mature trees including sycamore, horse chestnut, small-leaved lime and London plane were all still present here.

M5: Woodland

3.2.19 **2018 survey:** An area of woodland along the western boundary of the site. There was a canopy of London plane, sycamore and alder with some field maple, rowan, false-acacia, common lime and beech. The understory comprised hawthorn and hazel. The ground flora was relatively poor.

3.2.20 **2020 survey:** No obvious changes in the extent or structure of this woodland area were noted during the 2020 survey.

M6: Area of tall herbs

3.2.21 **2018 survey:** A small relatively species-rich area of tall herbs located towards the centre of the site. Species included white campion, common knapweed, musk mallow, black medick, oxeye daisy, birds-foot-trefoil and broad-leaved dock. The plants here are likely to provide an important nectar source for invertebrates.

2020 survey: This area appeared to have a greater cover of grasses than herbs compared to the 2018 survey and should be re-classified as semi-improved neutral grassland rather than an area of tall herbs. The main grasses were wall barley,

perennial ryegrass, creeping bent and cock's-foot. Forbs included frequent common knapweed, bird's-foot-trefoil, white champion, yarrow and white clover. Black medick, white campion, musk mallow, curled dock and hedge mustard were occasional. Red clover and broom were rare. Signs of trampling since 2018 survey were noted with a path through the middle of the sward.

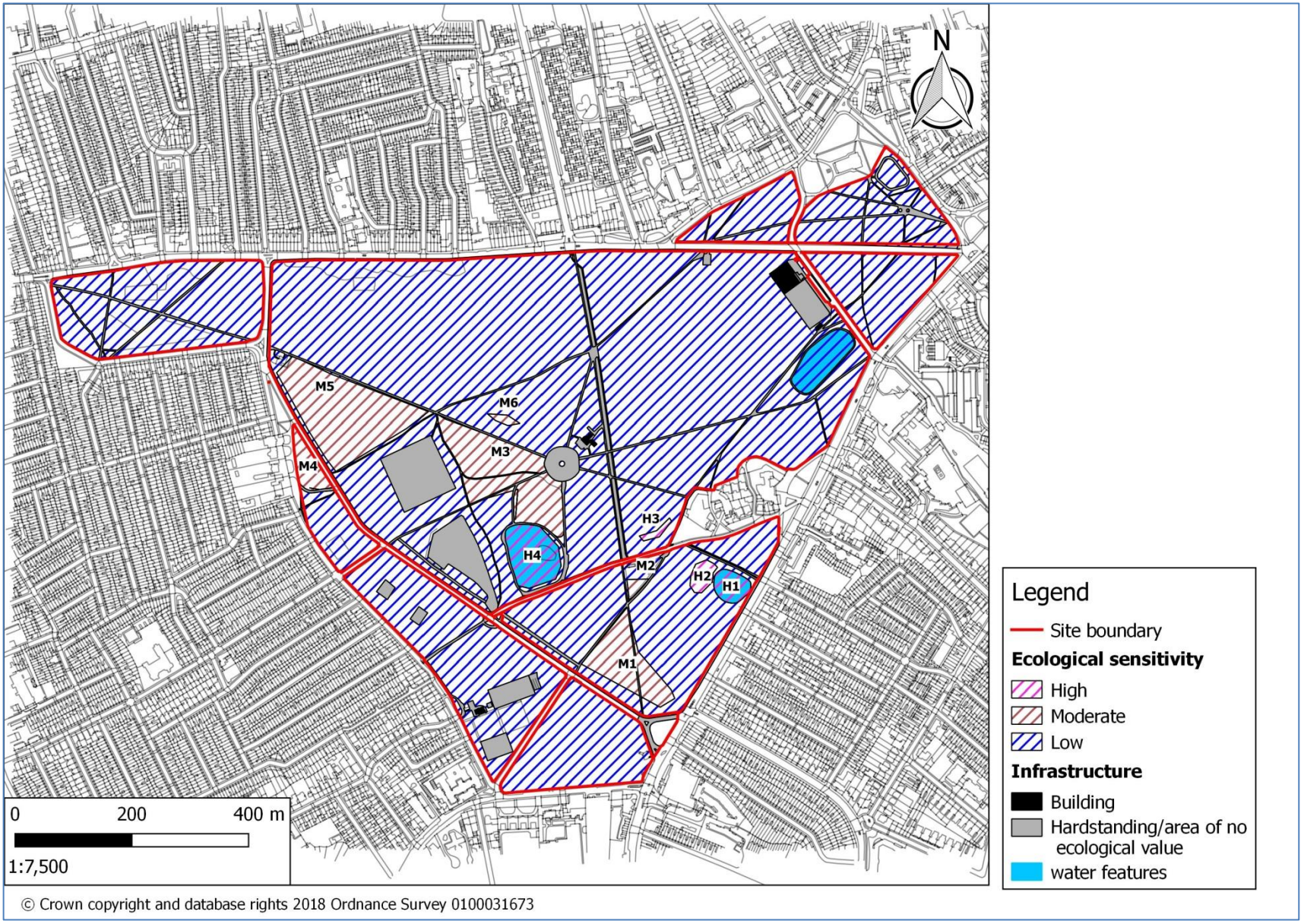

Figure 7: Ecological constraints for Clapham Common events

4.0 Discussion

4.1 Areas of high sensitivity

4.1.1 Areas H1-4 were identified in the 2018 survey as highly sensitive ecological areas which should be avoided in planning large scale public events and remain closed-off to the public or fenced off during the events.

4.1.2 No gross changes to the vegetation associated with the ponds (H1 & H4) were noted between surveys. Similarly, the habitat extent and species composition of the grassland area H2 in 2020 were similar to records from the 2018 survey.

4.1.3 The wildflower seeded area (H3) was still present in 2020, however this area appeared to be less species-rich than in 2018. These changes cannot be attributed to the holding of events on the site or visitor pressure and are more likely associated with soil conditions and/or climate. It is common for wildflower areas to decline in interest over time where soil conditions are sub-optimal.

4.2 Areas of medium sensitivity

4.2.1 Areas M 1- M6 were identified in the 2018 survey as moderately sensitive ecological areas which should be avoided in planning large scale public events unless appropriate ecological management measures are in place and present before, during and after the event, so as to avoid and/or mitigate for any potential ecological impacts.

4.2.2 No gross changes in woodland composition or extent (M1, M2, M3 or M5) were noted between surveys, however disturbance affecting fauna including breeding birds and roosting bats cannot be ruled out.

4.2.3 No clear changes were noted in the species composition of the semi-improved grassland (M4). However there appeared to be signs of trampling and greater grass cover at M6. This may be due to increased visitor numbers to this part of the site.

4.3 Areas of low ecological sensitivity

4.3.1 Areas of low ecological sensitivity are likely to be robust to the occasional large-scale public event.

5.0 Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 The walkover surveys carried out in 2018 and then again in 2020 were designed to assess the potential adverse impacts of large public events on sensitive areas of the site; they were not designed to detect specific or subtle changes in vegetation composition or habitat extent/quality over time. A different approach of survey methodology, and over an extended time period, would be required to provide the information necessary to answer these questions. In addition, these surveys were not designed to detect any potential adverse impacts of events on selected sensitive fauna using the habitats present on site. Such impacts therefore cannot be fully eliminated, and may require additional surveys, such as focusing on particular groups of fauna (e.g. bats or nesting birds), in order to fully quantify any potential effects and any appropriate mitigation strategies.

5.2 No obvious impacts resulting from the actual holding of events, or users associated with them, were detected in any of the areas of high ecological sensitivity. The only

area of medium sensitivity which appears to have declined due to visitor pressure was the small area of semi-improved grassland, M6.

5.3 It is recommended that protection of the areas highlighted as being of high and medium ecological sensitivity is continued, including before and during any large events. The small area of relatively species-rich grassland at M6 could be fenced off in the summer months to reduce trampling.

5.4 Tree root and canopy protection measures should be in place in all areas; any floodlights should be directed away from any trees, areas of shrubs or hedge lines, and only turned on during an event or when this is deemed essential for public safety or safe entry/egress – outside these times they should be turned off, especially where they are close to any of the more ecologically sensitive areas.

5.5 The above measures will minimise the risk of adverse impacts to species which are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) as well as the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010). Natural England protected species licences will therefore not be required subject to the implementation of this precautionary approach.

Appendix 1: Relevant Legislation and species status

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 - Species of Principal Importance in England

Species "of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity" covered under section 41 (England) of the NERC Act (2006) and therefore need to be taken into consideration by a public body when performing any of its functions with a view to conserving biodiversity.

National legislation afforded to species and habitats

The objective of the EU Habitats Directive is to conserve the various species of plant and animal which are considered rare across Europe. The Directive is transposed into UK law by The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and is commonly referred to as the Habitats Regulations.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is a key piece of national legislation which implements the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) and Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds (Wild Birds Directive) in Great Britain. Since the passing of the Act, various amendments have been made, details of which can be found on www.opsi.gov.uk. Key amendments have been made through the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act (2000) and Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004.

Other legislative Acts affording protection to wildlife and their habitats include:

- The Protection of Badgers Act 1992
- The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000
- Natural Environment & Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
- Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996

Herpetofauna (amphibians and reptiles)

Species of herpetofauna which have the potential to occur at Brockwell are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The common lizard and slow-worm are listed in respect to Section 9(1) & (5). For these species, it is prohibited to:

- Intentionally (or recklessly in Scotland) kill or injure these species
- Sell, offer or expose for sale, possess or transport for purpose of sale these species, or any part thereof.

The common toad and smooth newt are protected by law from sale and trade only.

Mammals

All species of bat are fully protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and have the same protection as great crested newts.
Badgers are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Protection of Badgers Act (1992). It is an offence:

- To willfully kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a badger;
- To attempt to do so; or
- To intentionally or recklessly interfere with a sett.

Birds

With certain exceptions, all birds, their nests and eggs are protected under Sections 1-8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Among other things, this makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally (or recklessly in Scotland) kill, injure or take any wild bird
- Intentionally (or recklessly in Scotland) take, damage or destroy (or, in Scotland, otherwise interfere with) the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built.
- Intentionally take or destroy an egg of any wild bird.
- Sell, offer or expose for sale, have in his possession or transport for the purpose of sale any wild bird (dead or alive) or bird egg or part thereof.

Certain species of bird, for example the barn owl, black redstart, hobby, bittern and kingfisher receive additional special protection under Schedule 1 of the Act and Annex 1 of the European Community Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC). This affords them protection against:

- Intentional or reckless disturbance while it is building a nest or is in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young.
- Intentional or reckless disturbance of dependent young of such a bird

Plants

With certain exceptions, all wild plants are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This makes it an offence for an 'unauthorised' person to intentionally (or recklessly in Scotland) uproot wild plants. An authorised person can be the owner of the land on which the action is taken, or anybody authorised by them.

Bird status

- **Red list -** High Conservation Concern. Red list species are those that meet any of the following criteria. A) Global Conservation Status. Species listed by BirdLife International as being Globally Threatened using IUCN criteria. B) Historical Decline. A severe decline in the UK between 1800 and 1995, without substantial recent recovery. C) Breeding Population Decline. Severe decline in the UK breeding population size, of more than 50%, over 25 years or the entire period used for assessments since the first BOCC review, starting in 1969 ("longer-term"). D) Non-breeding Population Decline. Severe decline in the UK non-breeding population size, of more than 50%, over 25 years or the longer term. E) Breeding Range Decline. Severe decline in the UK range, of more than 50%, as measured by number of 10 km squares occupied by breeding birds, over 25 years or the longer-term.
- **Amber -** Medium Conservation Concern. Species meet any of the following criteria, but none of the red list criteria, are amber listed: A) European Conservation status. Categorised as a Species of European Conservation Concern (SPEC 1, 2 or 3). B) Historical Decline – Recovery. Red listed for Historical Decline in a previous review but with substantial recent recovery (more than doubled in the last 25 years). C) Breeding Population Decline. As for red list criteria but with moderate decline (by more than 25% but less than 50%). D) Non-breeding Population Decline. As for red list criteria but with moderate decline (by more than 25% but less than 50%). E) Breeding Range Decline. As for red list criteria but with moderate decline (by more than 25% but less than 50%). E) UK breeding population of less than 300 pairs or nonbreeding population of less than 900 individuals. F) Localisation. At least 50% of the UK breeding or non-breeding population found in 10 or fewer sites. G) International Importance. At least 20% of the European breeding or non-breeding population found in the UK.

London BAP species

London Biodiversity Action Plan species are species which have been identified as a priority for conservation action in the capital. They include:

- Species that are globally threatened
- Species that are rapidly declining in the UK
- Nationally threatened species
- Species which are known to have undergone a decline in London