



Islington Biodiversity Action Plan – Consultation Feedback Report

What was the consultation about?

The Council has consulted on a new Biodiversity Action Plan for Islington. The plan consists of a strategy document followed by four Action Plans. The aim of the BAP is to outline how Islington will protect and enhance biodiversity in the borough over the next five years.

Who did we consult with and how?

The consultation ran from 1st April and to 31st July. Due to the Covid 19 lockdown, it was not possible to run any consultation meetings or to deliver any paper based materials. The consultation was therefore completely online based. In order to tell people that the consultation was happening, the Council put out a press release and messages on twitter. Emails were sent to all interested parties that we had existing contact details for, e.g. Friends of Parks Groups and partner organisations.

The online consultation was a questionnaire divided into two sections. Section 1 was aimed at people who did not necessarily wish to read a Council strategy document but who wanted to engage with the process. This section also gave us the opportunity to capture people's views on wildlife and nature generally. Section 2 went into more detail about the BAP priorities and actions and asked for people's specific comments on these areas.

In total we received 175 responses to the BAP consultation. 164 of these were received via the online survey and 11 were sent in by email.

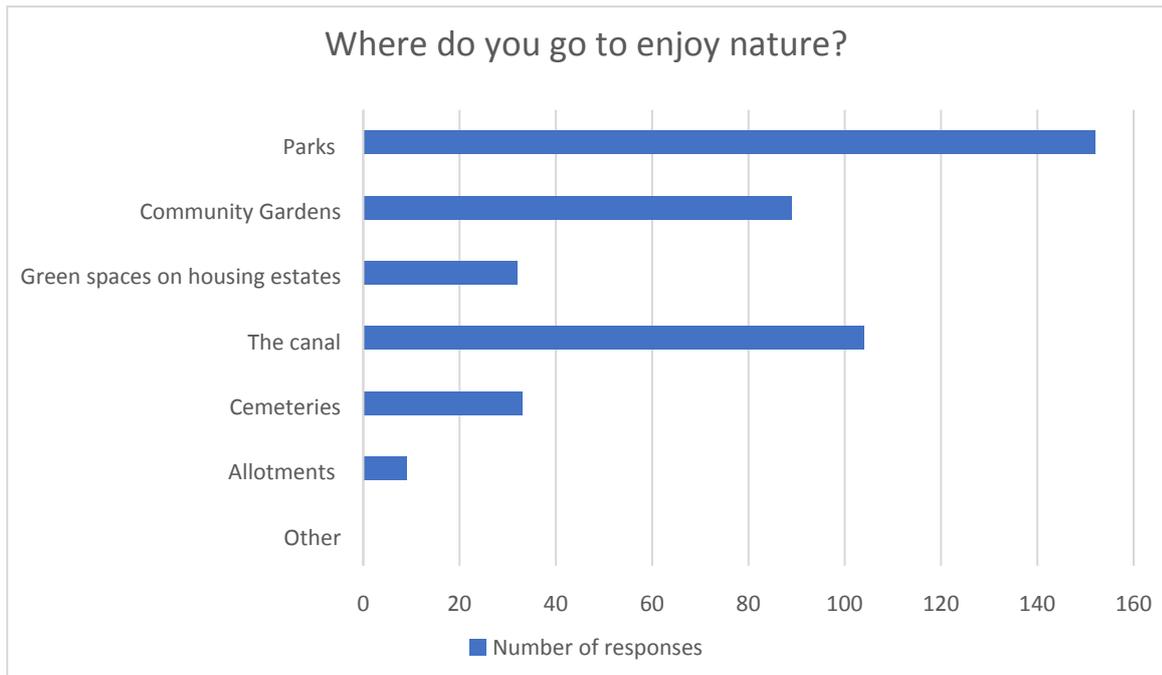
Results of the consultation:

Section 1: You and Your Views

1. Do you live or work in Islington?

97% of the online participants said yes to this.

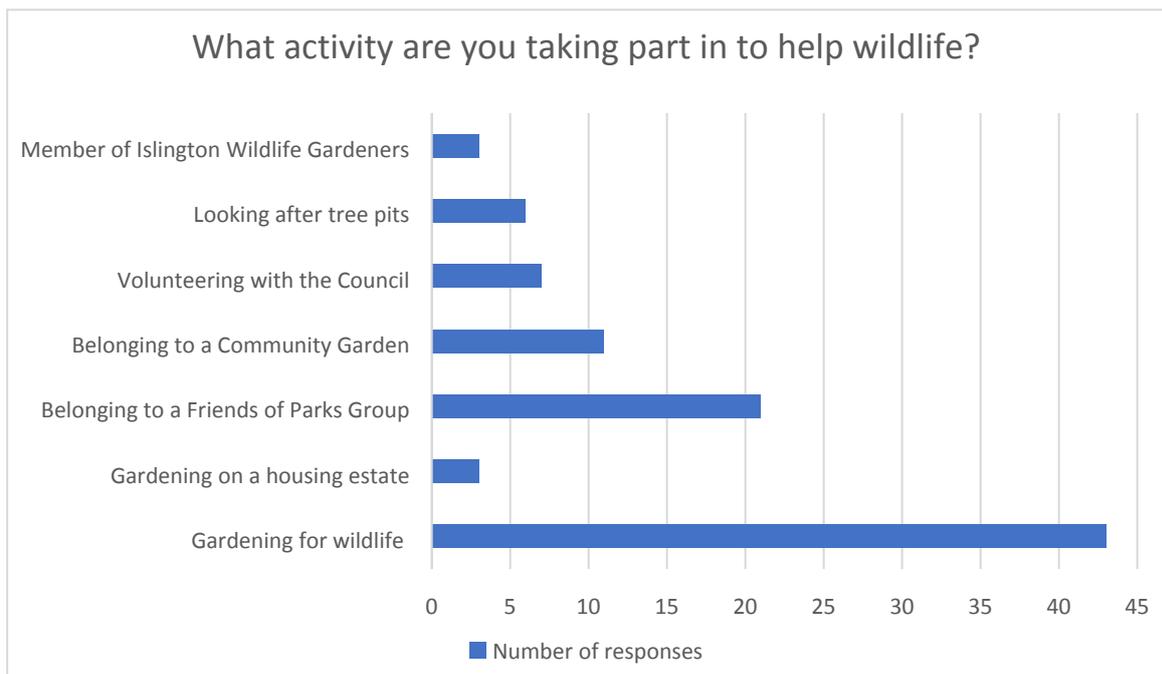
2. Where do you go in Islington to enjoy/access nature? People were asked to tick all that apply.



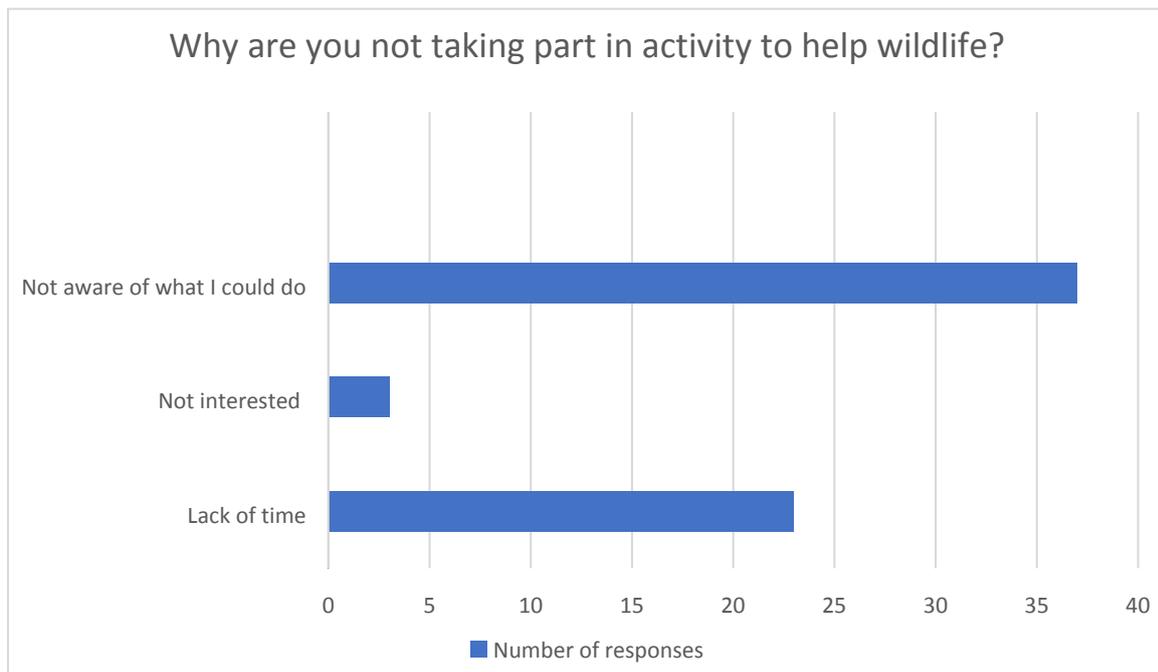
3. Are you taking part in any activity to help wildlife in Islington, for example in your garden, local park or school?

101 participants said yes to this.

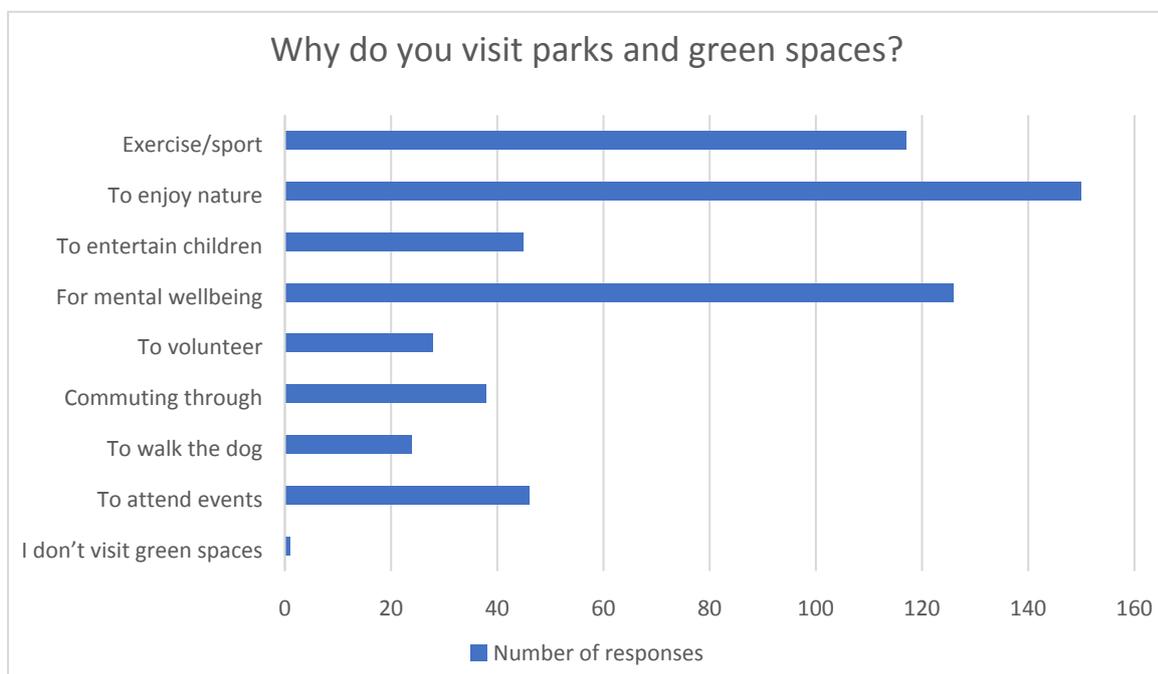
The questionnaire asked people to describe what activity they were taking part in to help wildlife. The bar chart below shows how many people mentioned the following categories in their answers. Some people listed more than one activity.



If people said they were not taking part in any activity, they were asked to say why:



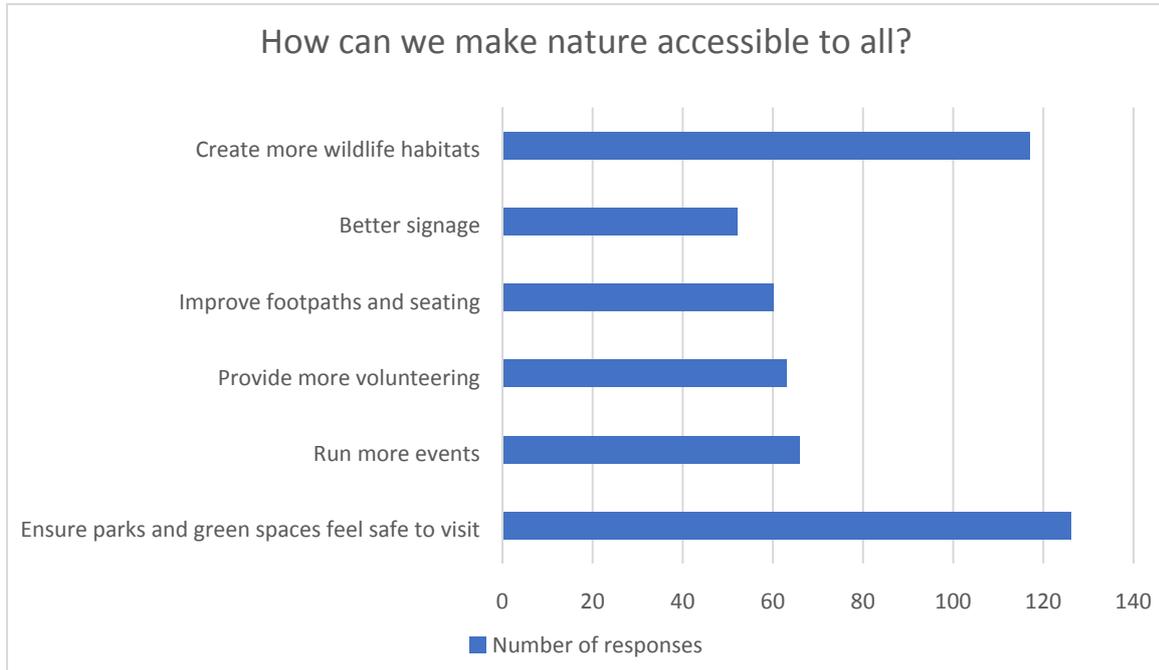
4. Why do you visit parks and green spaces? People were asked to tick all that apply.



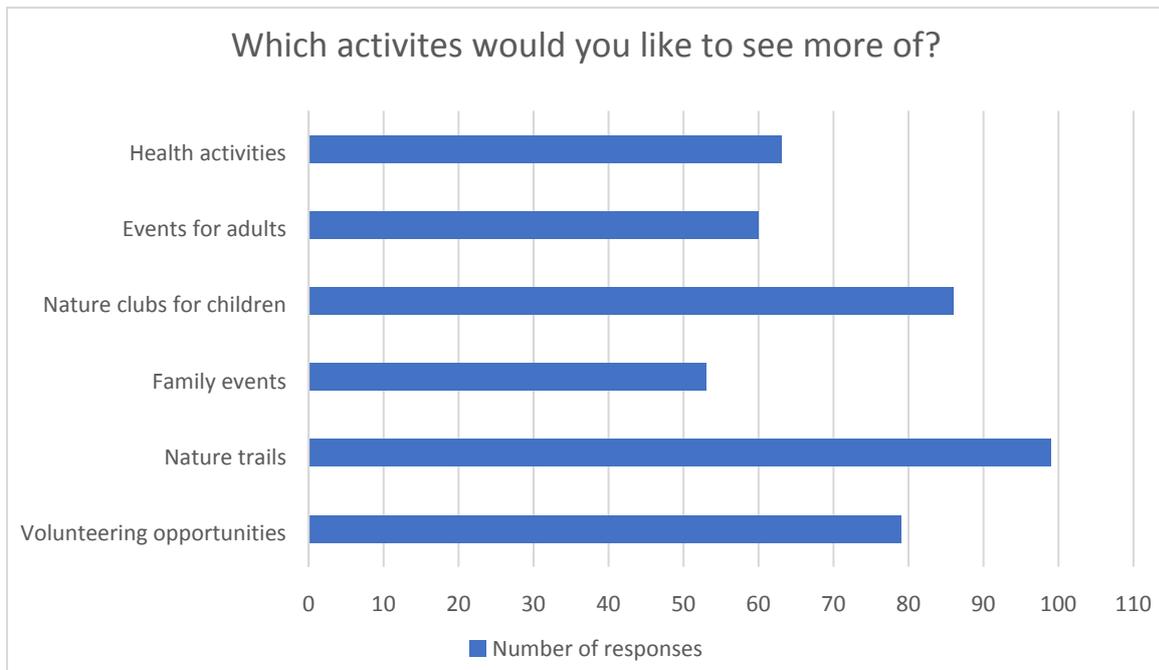
5. Did you know that Islington has an Ecology Centre and a nature reserve at Gillespie Park?

111 people (68%) said that they knew about the Ecology Centre and 93 of them had visited. 48 people said they didn't know about it.

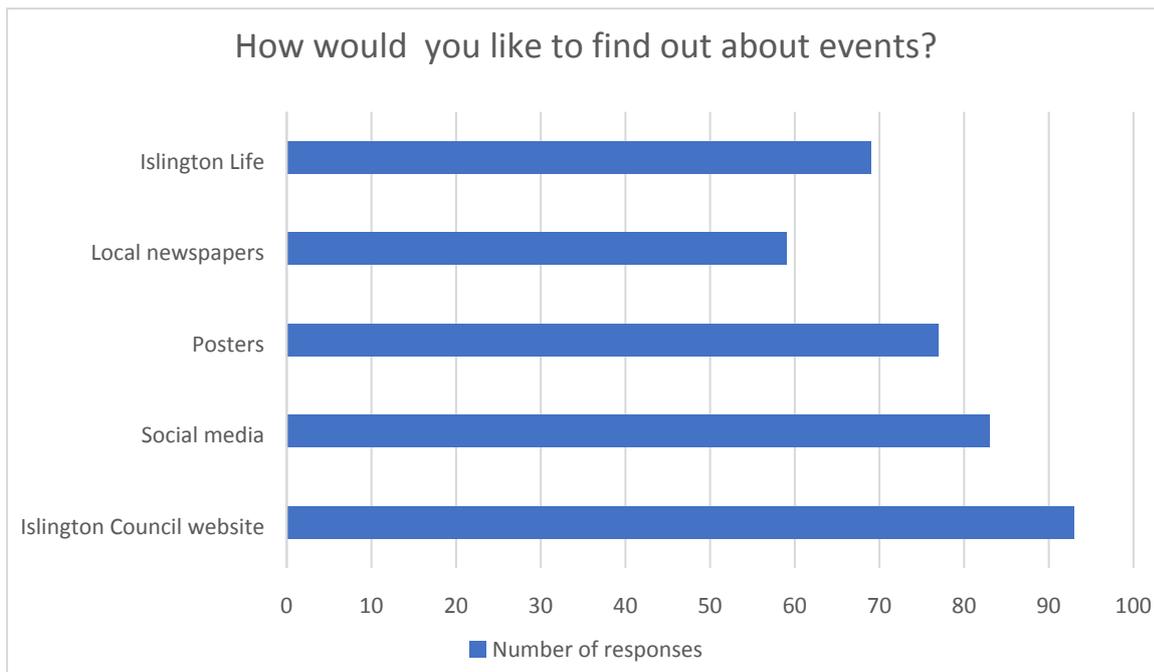
6. One of the key aims in the draft BAP is to make nature accessible to all. What do you think the Council could do to achieve this? People were asked to tick all that apply



7. The draft BAP outlines some ways in which people can engage more with nature in Islington. Which activities, if any, would you like to see more of in parks and green spaces? People were asked to tick all that apply.

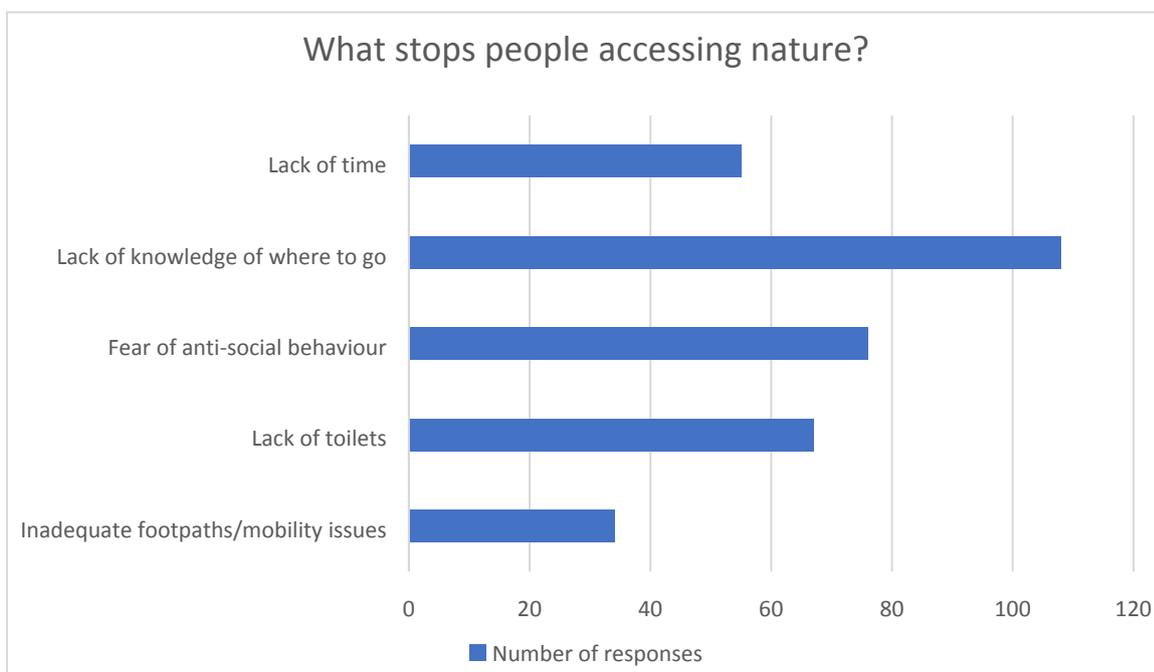


8. How would you like to find out about future events and activities?



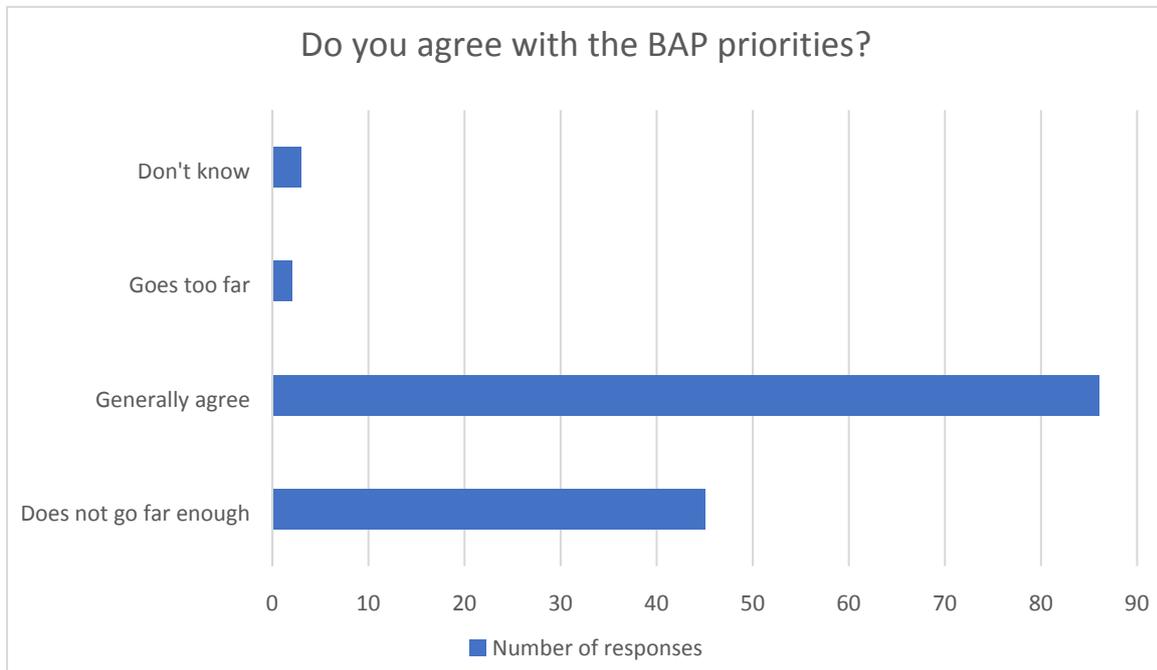
People listed a variety of other ways in which they would like to get information. The most popular suggestions were via email and partner organisations.

9. What do you think stops people from accessing nature in the borough? People were asked to tick all that apply.

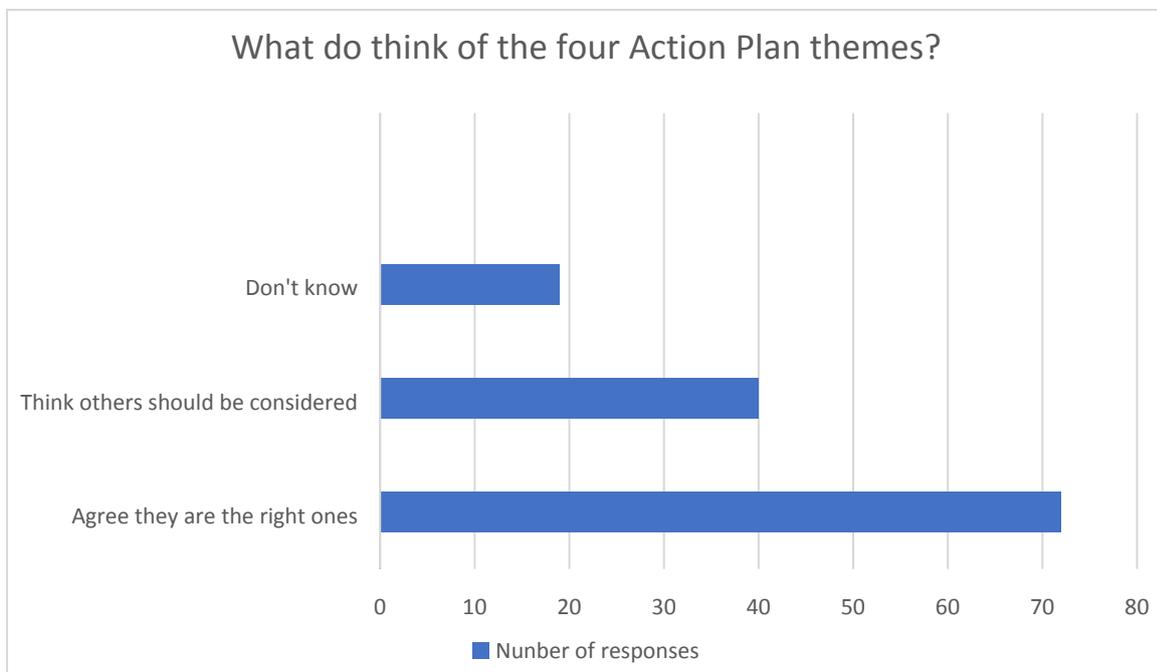


Section 2: Our Strategy

People were asked whether they agreed with the key headline priorities identified in the BAP:



People were asked what they thought of the four BAP Action Plan themes:



Additional themes that people wanted to see included were:

- Private gardens
- Schools
- Allotments

- Climate change
- Streetscape environment

For each of the four Action Plans, the key actions were listed and people were asked what they thought of them:

	Built Environment	Parks and Urban Green Spaces	Designated Sites	Access to Nature
Does not go far enough	45	37	16	28
Generally agree	83	92	93	98
Goes too far	2	1	3	7
Don't know	3	2	18	2

For each Action Plan, as well as for the BAP as a whole, people were invited to make further comments. The comments are too numerous to include here but they are available to view in a full report of the raw data. There were several common themes into which many of the comments fell:

- Concerns about there being too much new development and a desire to see the Council go further in putting pressure on developers to do more for biodiversity and sustainability.
- Concern about wider sustainability issues and climate change, e.g. food miles, peat usage, pesticide usage, water usage, littering, renewable energy and car usage.
- Calls for the Council to do more to protect trees and to plant more street trees.
- A desire to see more green space, particularly more allotments, created in Islington.
- The importance of small spaces, parks and street features (e.g. tree pits) to wildlife and people and the need to recognise the value of these.
- Calls for the BAP to have more specific actions with more ambitious targets and more funding available for implementation.
- A desire to see greater links with schools and to encourage both adults and children in learning about biodiversity.
- A desire to see the BAP put into action and concerns about capacity to deliver.
- A desire to see the BAP have more power to control actions by organisations such as TFL and Network Rail.
- Requests to improve the Council's website.
- Suggestions to put more emphasis on biodiversity in the Islington in Bloom competition.
- A desire to see more projects on housing estates and better use of these areas.
- Support for more food growing projects.
- Calls for more encouragement for individuals to take action, particularly in regards to private gardens.
- Suggestion to link the BAP with the London National Park City campaign.
- Positive comments of support and appreciation.

Summary and Officer Recommendations

People responding to the consultation showed a high level of interest and commitment to biodiversity in the borough. Parks and community gardens were particularly important to

people's enjoyment of wildlife. A high number of people responding already make a positive contribution to biodiversity, principally through wildlife gardening and participation in Friends of Parks Groups. In terms of offering people increased opportunities to engage with nature, respondents showed a lot of support for activities for children, nature trails and the creation of more wildlife habitats in parks. There was concern that people were prevented from accessing nature through a lack of knowledge of where to go and a feeling of not being safe.

137 out of 164 online participants completed Section 2 as well as Section 1 of the questionnaire. There was overall support for the BAP priorities and actions, with 62% of respondents agreeing with the key priorities and only two people feeling that they went too far. 32% felt that the BAP priorities did not go far enough and between 11% and 33% felt that the actions in the Action Plans did not go far enough.

Some of the key reasons for this arose from dissatisfaction with the existing legislation and policy frameworks which protect biodiversity, for example through the planning system. It is the Council's intention to ensure that the BAP is implemented to maximise protection and enhancement for biodiversity as far as existing policies, both national and local allow. However the Council cannot commit to actions which are not currently possible within existing legislation.

It is also important to note that the BAP is a five year strategy, and the actions it outlines must be achievable within current levels of capacity and funding. However, it is hoped that the principles laid out in the BAP will help to bring in further funding and will lead to additional actions being undertaken to benefit wildlife, both by the Council and other organisations.

Some respondents felt concerned that wider sustainability issues were not included in the BAP. These issues are all closely linked to biodiversity and the overall state of the environment. However, the BAP is not intended to be an all encompassing sustainability strategy and its remit is limited specifically to biodiversity. The Council is following national guidance in this in terms of what is an accepted BAP template. The Council has set out its efforts to tackle a number of other environmental issues through other complementary action plans, e.g. Vision 2030: Creating a Net Zero Carbon Islington by 2030, the Islington Transport Strategy and the Islington Air Quality Strategy.

With regards to suggestions to strengthen involvement from schools and housing estates and to encourage more action from individuals; the Council accepts that these are positive ideas and the BAP does lay out a framework for action to be taken in these areas. However in order to do more, the Council would need access to resources (for example staff) that are not currently available.

As a result of the consultation response as well as feedback from internal stakeholders, a number of additions have been made to the BAP:

- The links were strengthened between the Vision 2030 Carbon Zero Strategy and the BAP detailing the role the BAP will play in helping the borough achieve this vision. Actions in the BAP that support carbon reduction were clearly identified.
- A reference has been added to the London National Park City initiative and Islington's desire to engage with it, for example in organising events during National Park City Week.
- A reference has been added to the Community Food Growing Strategy that Octopus has been commissioned to produce.

- A reference has been added to planning policy which encourages the temporary use of development sites for nature conservation, including the creation of pocket parks and the use of parking spaces as parklets.
- More emphasis has been placed on the opportunities for enhancing biodiversity on housing estates.
- An explanation of the successful action we are already taking and the resources that we currently put into this work (e.g. volunteer and staff resources) has been added.
- More information has been included about the ecological value of the cemeteries we manage and the actions that we can take to enhance them.

In conclusion, support for the BAP was strong with the percentage of respondents agreeing to the priorities and actions varying between 62% and 71%. Most people who did not agree felt that the actions did not go far enough or they did not express an opinion. Very few people felt that the actions of the BAP were going too far. As a result of the consultation feedback, the Council recommends adopting the BAP.