



London
Wildlife
Trust

Spaces Wild

**The backbone for London's nature recovery
Second Edition**



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London's nature network

What is this guide and who is it for?

This guide provides an overview of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) in London. It introduces what SINCs are, the threats they face, and why they matter. Aimed at green space managers, planners, policy makers, developers, and interested community members, it offers practical insights, case studies and political context to support the status, management, and recovery of London SINCs. This updated guide builds on the original edition published in 2015, reflecting new developments and approaches to best support those working to protect and manage these vital spaces.

Spaces wild: understanding London's nature network

London is a remarkably green city supporting a wide diversity of habitats and species. Around half of its area is blue and green space, and almost a fifth – covering nearly 1,700 different sites – is of high enough value to biodiversity to be identified as SINCs.

SINCs are found across London, from small inner-city gardens to chalk downlands in the capital's greenbelt. Together they form a critical network for wildlife, supporting many of London's rarest species and most valuable habitats. They provide a critical network for

people too, not only enhancing people's experience of nature but also helping to make London a more pleasant place to live.

Protecting the SINC network is vital to efforts to reverse declines in nature and to ensure Londoners continue to benefit from nature close to home as the city grows. However, protection is just one aspect of what is needed to make sure the network supports nature recovery and is resilient to pressures like climate change; it also needs to be well managed, expanded and better connected through habitat enhancement, restoration and creation.

Why do we identify SINCs?

London is home to diverse wildlife habitats, including rivers and wetlands, chalk downland, acid grassland, heaths, meadows, hedgerows, gardens and scrub. These support over 18,000 species recorded within the capital over the last 50 years; some of which are of national or even international conservation importance. Protecting these habitats from loss or damage by development pressures helps retain the overall quality of London's natural environment.

SINCs are identified and afforded protection through the planning system as a mechanism to avoid priority habitats and species for

conservation being lost to development or other incompatible land uses. Proactively, planning for nature in this way allows opportunities to improve, connect and expand the existing SINC network.

The regional development plan for London (the London Plan) identifies the need to protect biodiversity and to provide opportunities for access to nature. It directs all London Boroughs to identify and designate a suite of SINC through their own Local Plans to protect the most important areas of wildlife habitat in London and provide Londoners with opportunities for contact with the natural world. This requirement is consistent with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024; paragraphs 188 and 192).

How are SINC identified?

For a SINC to be identified, criteria are used to determine the nature conservation value of the site in question. These are set out in the GLA advice note, which can be downloaded from the [Greater London Authority Biodiversity webpage](#). The criteria act as a guide for ecologists to select the sites needed to ensure the full range of London's natural habitats are represented, protected and accessible to local communities.

Assessment of candidate sites and final selection of SINC is primarily the responsibility of individual London boroughs as part of the preparation and review of their Local Plans. For this reason, it is usual for boroughs to fully or partially reassess the sites selected as SINC in their area as part of the evidence gathering when reviewing their Local Plan. A borough

Local Biodiversity Panel bringing together local experts can help to highlight sites that should be assessed as potential SINC and to review recommendations from the evaluation of these sites against the SINC criteria. The Mayor and the Greater London Authority (GLA) have a role in selecting and confirming Sites of Metropolitan Importance in partnership with London boroughs.

A site can only become a SINC through formal recognition in a borough's Local Plan. This can mean that some sites which meet SINC status may not be formally recognised as such. This can occur if sites are enhanced between Local Plans or were not included in the scope of the borough's evidence gathering for their SINC review process.

London's SINC are designated within a hierarchy of importance:

- Sites of Metropolitan Importance are of regional (London) value, some are of national or even international importance
- Sites of Borough Importance are of value to their respective borough
- Sites of Local Importance help to redress any remaining local deficiencies in SINC provision and ensure people have access to green space close to home

Leading the Way: the London SINC system

Established in 1985, the London SINC system was the first of its kind in England and led to the creation of the Local Wildlife Sites system used nationwide today. Covering roughly 5% of the country, these sites afford levels of protection on both private and public land and provide vital habitat links, protect rare species, and benefit nature and people's wellbeing. In London, they're still known as SINC, though the term can vary elsewhere in the UK.

As of February 2026 there are 1,749 SINC's identified in Greater London. These consist of:

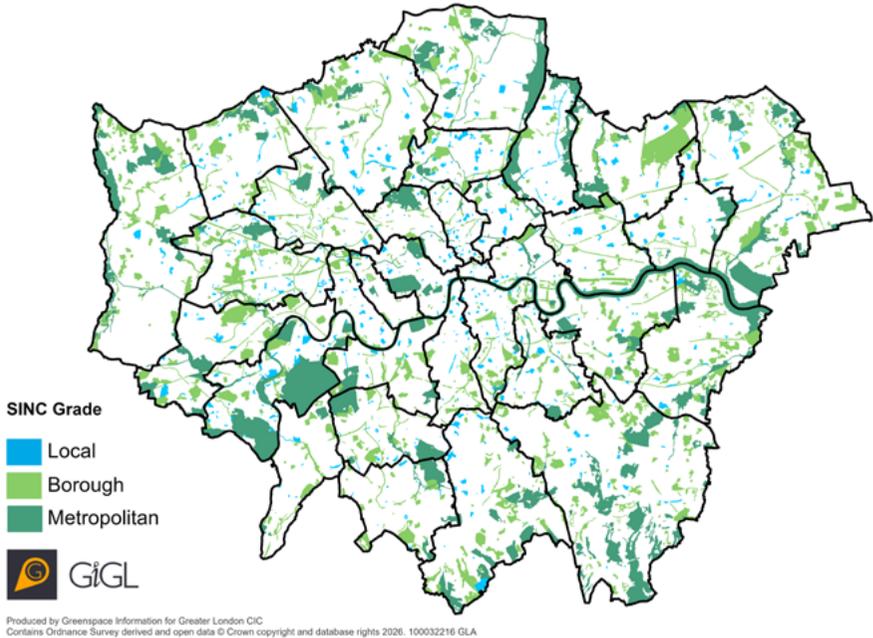
145 Sites of **Metropolitan** Importance



959 Sites of **Borough** Importance



645 Sites of **Local** Importance



London's SINC's have been identified as the result of field-based survey since 1984. All SINC designations have since been reviewed as part of the local plan cycle, some as far back as 2006. Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL) CIC now holds data and information on over 1,698 sites covering nearly 20% of London, which are illustrated in the above map (Sites of Metropolitan Importance - dark green, Borough Importance - light green, and Local Importance - blue).



Case Study: Ancient woodland restoration

Forster Memorial Park, Lewisham

The Rewild London project at Forster Memorial Park, delivered by Lewisham Council in partnership with the Friends of Forster Memorial Park, set out to restore ancient woodland and enhance biodiversity in one of Lewisham's large parks.

By combining ecological restoration with community-led stewardship and engagement, the project has created a more climate-resilient, biodiverse, and welcoming park. A woodland garden was created through volunteer and school-led planting sessions, complete with a mural featuring a nature poem and local woodland species, adding both ecological and cultural value. A boggy area was also re-imagined to manage surface water runoff and support wet woodland species, while woodland management works, such as hazel coppicing and invasive species removal, improved light levels and encouraged ground flora recovery.

The creation of loggeries and dead hedges during volunteer sessions, and the installation of QR-coded bee poles as a tree trail provided educational content and encouraged public interaction with the site's natural heritage.



[Funded by: Mayor of London's Rewild London Fund].



Understanding nature designations

Nature designations identify areas of environmental importance and can be used to guide how land is kept and protected. This section explains the different types of land use designations in London that are relevant to SINC and their different management and planning requirements.

SINCs and SSSIs; what is the difference?

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) form a representative selection of habitat types across the country, notified under a statutory process overseen by Natural England. As ‘statutory sites’ they are of national importance and receive legal protections; London has 37 SSSIs (as well as several internationally important sites).

Although there is often little difference in habitat quality between an SSSI and a

Metropolitan SINC, the protection and implications for management between an SSSI and SINCs differ. SSSIs are afforded a higher level of planning and legal protection than that for SINCs. Landowners of SSSIs receive support from Natural England to manage their site in a way that preserves the biodiversity or geological features for which they were designated. Certain activities therefore cannot be carried out on SSSIs without prior consent from Natural England.

Is a SINC a nature reserve?

Most of London’s SINCs are not nature reserves. SINCs have more than one function, so are not just maintained to provide primary benefit for wildlife. In fact parks make up more than half of the overall SINC network (London Greenspaces Commission Report, 2020).



A site can be identified as a statutory **Local Nature Reserve (LNR)** if the designating body (a local authority only) has a legal interest in the land. Nearly all 157 LNRs in London are identified as or within SINC.

National Nature Reserves (NNRs) are SSSIs that are also designated to provide special opportunities for scientific study and education, and are managed to provide public recreation that is compatible with their natural heritage interests. There are currently three NNRs within London; Richmond Park, South London Downs and Ruislip Woods, all of which are also SINC.

SINC, Green Belt and Conservation Areas

The **Metropolitan Green Belt** covers almost 22% of London, primarily on its outer fringes. Land within the Green Belt is protected from development that damages its ‘open (unbuilt) character’, and many of London’s SINC within

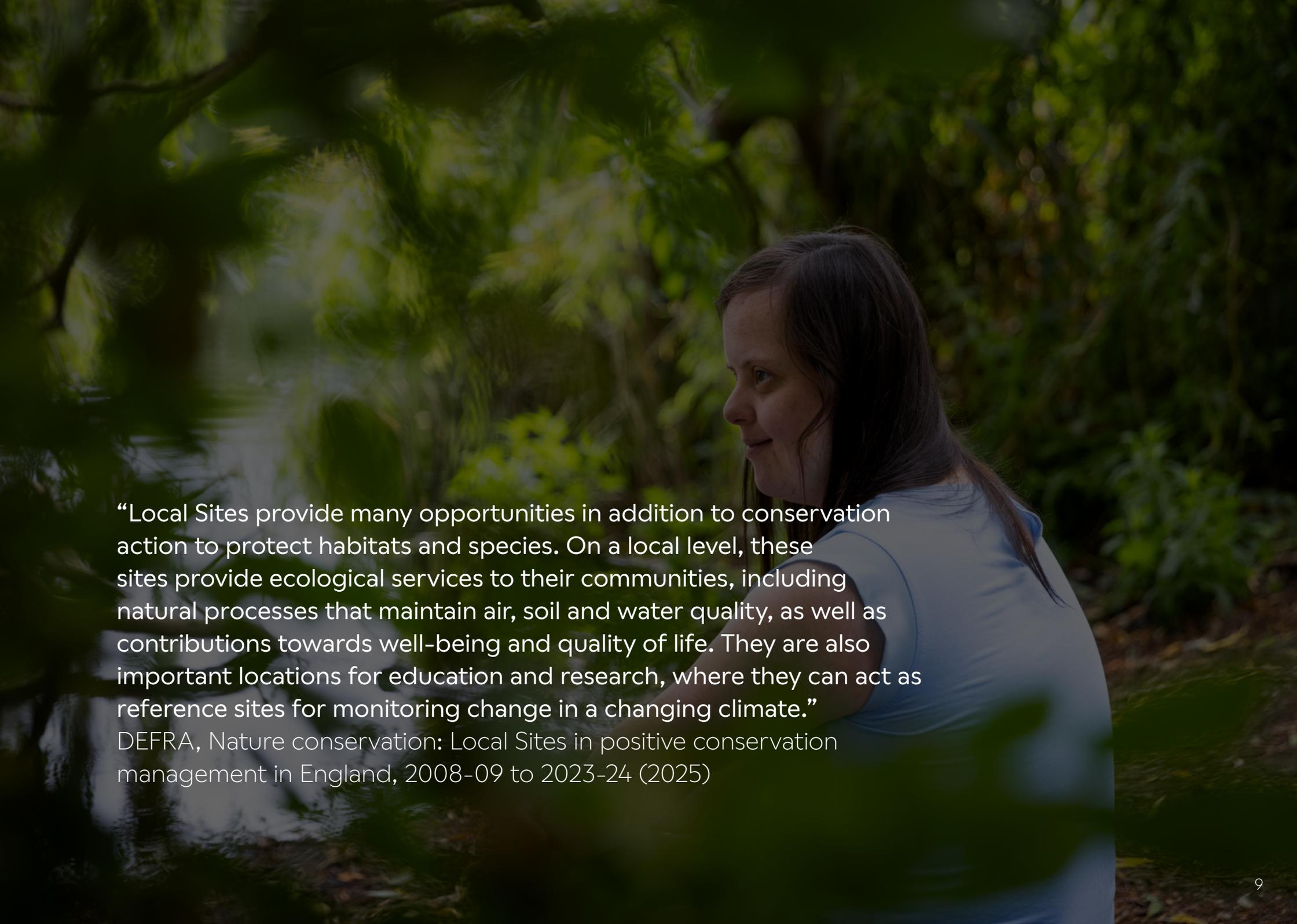
it benefit from the protection it provides. Nevertheless, some uses of the Green Belt can be damaging to wildlife (e.g. agriculture, landfill, golf courses), and other land within the Green Belt may not necessarily be of high value for nature conservation. Furthermore, GiGL has calculated that only 23.7% of the Green Belt is accessible. Changes to protective measures of Green Belt, including through the new designation of ‘Grey Belt’, may affect future opportunities for nature depending on how land is designated, restored and managed.

Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) is another strategic planning designation that protects areas of open land within inner parts of London identified as important for recreation, landscapes and/or biodiversity. MOL is currently afforded the same status and level of protection as Green Belt land. **Biodiversity Net Gain** habitat banks are beginning to be established across London,

and are intended to support the creation and long-term management of habitats to offset biodiversity loss from development. The Final Report of the London Rewilding Taskforce (2023) identified 11 potential Rewilding Opportunity Zones that could provide future BNG offsetting opportunities, alongside other priority areas identified in the recently published Local Nature Recovery Strategy for London (March 2026).

Conservation Areas (CA) are based on the architectural or historic interest of an area (not its wildlife value), and include protection of buildings, groups of trees, and views. Nevertheless, CAs often enjoy stronger planning protection than that for SINC, and some SINC also benefit from lying within or adjacent to CA boundaries, although this may impose some constraints on management (e.g. tree surgery).



A woman with long dark hair, wearing a light blue t-shirt, is shown in profile from the chest up, looking towards the left. She is standing outdoors in a lush green environment, with a river or stream visible in the background. The background is filled with dense green foliage and trees, creating a natural, serene setting. The lighting is soft, suggesting a shaded area or early morning/late afternoon. The overall mood is peaceful and connected to nature.

“Local Sites provide many opportunities in addition to conservation action to protect habitats and species. On a local level, these sites provide ecological services to their communities, including natural processes that maintain air, soil and water quality, as well as contributions towards well-being and quality of life. They are also important locations for education and research, where they can act as reference sites for monitoring change in a changing climate.”

DEFRA, Nature conservation: Local Sites in positive conservation management in England, 2008-09 to 2023-24 (2025)



Why are SINCs important?

Making space for nature

Much of London's most familiar wildlife are those species that have adapted to the urban environment and are able to thrive in the rich mosaic of habitats provided by parks, gardens and London's built environment. But some of the rare, uncommon and special species that occur in London are dependent upon particular habitats, such as chalk grasslands, ancient woodlands or heathland. These are largely remnants of once wild, natural places existing prior to urbanisation and agricultural intensification of the land surrounding the growing city.

These fragments of natural habitat and the species they support are an important constituent of London's heritage and cultural identity.

SINCs help preserve landscapes and natural features that help contribute to a sense of place and distinctiveness. Without these special places, the city's neighbourhoods could gradually lose their identity.

Wild wellbeing

There is substantial evidence demonstrating that spending time in natural green space improves our mood and physical well-being. In an urban environment such as London, where many people live in densely built neighbourhoods, this connection becomes even more vital, as revealed during the Covid lockdowns.

Programmes which encourage people to spend more time in natural spaces have been proven to provide significant improvements for mental



and physical health and deliver considerable cost-saving benefits to the NHS (A Natural Health Service, 2023). In London, benefits from green spaces have been estimated to equate to over £5 billion a year in economic and social value and avoid £950 million in health costs (Natural Capital Account, 2017). Further analysis has shown that living near ecologically rich SINCs is positively associated with life satisfaction, whereas lack of access correlates with lower well-being (Knight, 2023). Therefore protecting, enhancing and improving equitable access to SINCs in the city has the potential to provide lasting positive effects for health and public services.

Learning, play and connections with nature

Research shows that early and repeated connection with nature can have a positive

impact on attitudes towards the environment in later life (Richardson, 2025). Many SINCs provide the perfect opportunity for unstructured, exploratory play, where children can use their imagination and form meaningful personal connections with nature. By providing these rich, sensory outdoor learning experiences, SINCs play an essential role in children's long-term relationship with the natural world, enabling them to take meaningful action for nature, whilst supporting their learning and wellbeing.

Ecosystem services

Natural habitats are critical to the functioning of the city; they are an important element of London's green infrastructure. Wetlands store excess water during heavy rainfall reducing flood risk, woodlands can help with city cooling

and enhance air quality, and wild green spaces provide respite from busy streets to relax. These often undervalued ecosystem services are increasingly being recognised and evaluated as being important to people's quality of life and the city's functionality. The London Green Infrastructure Framework, published in March 2026, promotes the design and delivery of green infrastructure across the capital, and the network of SINCs provides an ecological backbone from which wildlife habitat enhancements and the benefits that they provide can grow. Protecting, extending and creating SINCs is more than just a nice to have; it is essential for strengthening climate change resilience, safeguarding biodiversity, and making London a more pleasant place to live, work and play.





Case Study: Climate resilience

Brockwell Park North Meadows, Lambeth

In 2024 over 6,000 m² of species-rich wetlands, meadows, and hedges were created in the northern part of Brockwell Park. New mounded ‘bunds’ and ‘swales’ were sown with native wildflowers and additional trees and hedges were planted. This helped address deficiencies in access to nature, and the new swales reduced surface water flooding by capturing, slowing down and dispersing surface and rainwater from higher ground.

Additional improvements of over 4,000 m² included planting native damp-tolerant plant plugs in the new wetland and meadow areas, supported by the Friends of Brockwell Park. Volunteers also helped plant over 100 metres of new native hedge to act as ‘natural windbreaks’ and eventually replace the temporary fencing protecting the meadows and swales.

The Council aims to help continue improving the biodiversity and access to nature in Brockwell Park, and upgrade from a Borough Grade SINC to a Metropolitan SINC. This will also support Lambeth’s aim to declare the park as a new Local Nature Reserve.



[Co-funded by Mayor of London’s Rewild London II grant scheme and revenue from Lambeth Parks].



Challenges for London's SINCs

London's SINC system has been remarkably successful and resilient over the last 40 years. However, with a rapidly growing London, it faces considerable pressures, as the city continues to grow and become more densely populated. If the SINC system is to function effectively, then the purpose and importance of SINCs needs to be more visible to those that have the powers to protect them, those that value them and those that may choose to exert unintentional damaging impacts upon them.

Loss of quality

The lack of appropriate management for biodiversity is increasingly identified as a key threat to the quality and protection of SINCs. The SINC status applied to a site through the land-use planning process does not require the landowner or manager to maintain a site's nature conservation interest. However, local authorities and other public bodies have a strengthened "Biodiversity Duty" to conserve and enhance biodiversity (brought in by the Environment Act, 2021) within their service delivery. One primary way of meeting this responsibility is to ensure the appropriate management of the SINCs under their control, and to help to advise other landowners within their area on how they can maintain the quality of their SINCs.

Competing interests

Most SINCs in London are multifunctional; they include public parks, cemeteries, railway line sides, school grounds and reservoirs. Consequently, they may need to be managed in ways that might limit their full ecological potential.

Recognising how different user needs can be met whilst seeking to maximise opportunities to enhance biodiversity habitats on a site is critical for maintaining and strengthening the SINC network across London. In recent years many more parks are being managed in ways that enhance their ecological value and increase the amount of quality wildlife habitats, now that the benefits and need for community access to natural greenspaces is understood.

Many visitors

Visitor pressures on London SINC are inevitably some of the highest in the country, although this is unequal across the city. St James's Park (a Metropolitan SINC) hosts over 7 million visits a year, and Brockwell Park (a Borough SINC) hosts almost 4 million annual visits, whereas some SINC on London's outer fringes may not see more than 500 people a year.

Some SINC are closed to the public or have limited access. Measures to reduce the impacts of visitors on wildlife are well understood and now generally well-embedded in site management. Nevertheless, visitor pressures can be acute and the biodiversity features of public park SINC may need to compete against multiple demands from

a broad range of other interests, and even with the right management may degrade (for example, through disturbance to birds).

Many people

The most significant competing interest for SINC is likely to be the need for housing and associated infrastructure as the capital's population grows to a projected 10 million by 2030. SINC planning policies do not provide absolute protection, as other needs (schools, housing or transport infrastructure for example) can outweigh the need to protect a SINC from loss or damage.

While some SINC have been built on, many more have had developments encroach upon them, or have been affected by the indirect

impacts of new development close to their boundaries. Planning policy requires mitigation or compensation for any damage or loss to the ecological value of a SINC. However, unless considered early in the design of the development, it can be difficult to avoid or adequately mitigate these impacts.

Increasingly, when done well, development is being used as a way to buffer, expand and connect SINC and to add to the network. Landscaping and urban greening that reflects the ecological character and important features of nearby SINC or that provides stepping stone habitats between sites can bring wildlife close to where people live, as well as strengthening the local ecological network.





Case Study: Managing access pressure

Wormwood Scrubs Meadow, Hammersmith

The recent designation of Wormwood Scrubs Meadow as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) highlights how heavily used spaces can be valued and protected for wildlife, if positively managed to balance public access with sports, recreation, and ecological protection. This new designation increases the total area of LNR on the Scrubs to 29.15ha, representing 38% of the open space. Citizen science-led habitat surveys conducted across the open space have recorded over 100 bird species and 250 species of wildflower.

In balancing the charitable objectives of ‘exercise and recreation for the inhabitants of the metropolis’ (Wormwood Scrubs Act, 1879), with the needs of our ecological inhabitants, The Wormwood Scrubs Charitable Trust, Hammersmith and Fulham Council and local partners have implemented seasonal restrictions, clear signage, and community-led boundary marking to protect sensitive habitats. Dog walkers are encouraged to keep pets on leads during nesting season, and local schools and volunteers are actively involved in habitat

restoration and education programmes. This approach has led to a recommendation in the recent SINC review to upgrade the western region of Wormwood Scrubs to a Metropolitan Grade SINC. The site’s ecological value, combined with community stewardship and strategic planning, has made it a model for urban nature management and engagement.

The partners are using funding from nearby infrastructure works to develop a masterplan that integrates biodiversity enhancement with sustainable urban drainage, improved public access, and long-term management/maintenance.





Case study: Creating new spaces

Kidbrooke Village, Greenwich

Kidbrooke Village, a major redevelopment in Greenwich, is a flagship example of how urban housing development can deliver substantial biodiversity gains where people live.

Following redevelopment in 2016, Berkely Homes partnered with London Wildlife Trust to revise low-value amenity landscaping in line with a new biodiversity strategy, which included a commitment to Biodiversity Net Gain delivery.

Working closely with HTA Landscape Architects, the team devised a new nature-enriched landscape with eleven different habitat types, including wet, neutral and calcareous grasslands, woodland understorey, native hedges, trees and aquatic habitats. A new nature-based playground was also created, featuring play swales, fallen logs and wooden climbing structures, enhancing natural play opportunities.

The new habitats improved connectivity between local SINC's and created a nature rich landscape with potential to become a future SINC in a place previously devoid of space for nature. Kidbrooke Village shows that housing development need not come at the expense of nature, and that when well-designed, regeneration can benefit both biodiversity and communities.





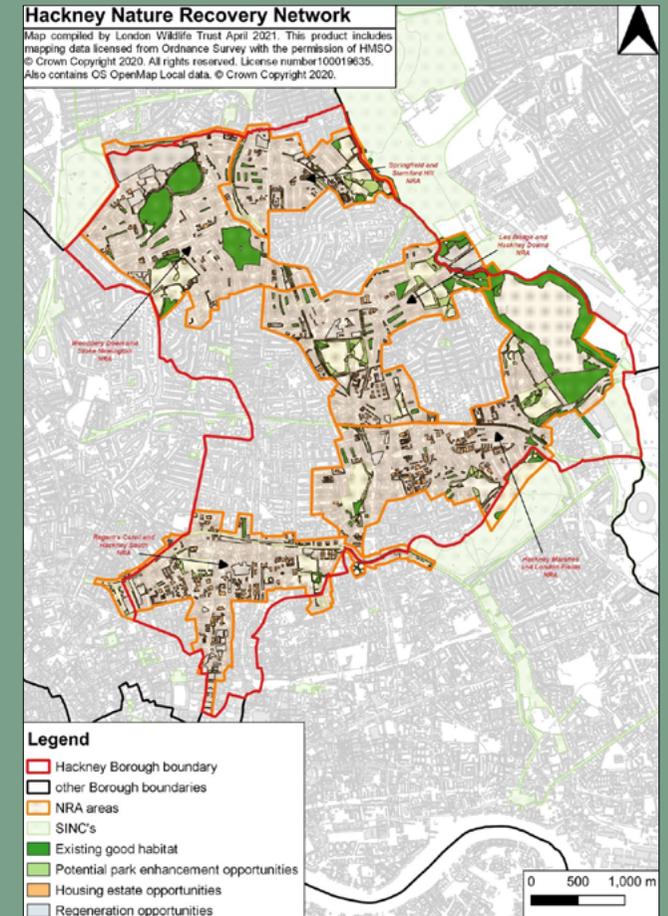
Case Study: Hackney's nature network

The Hackney Local Nature Recovery Plan (LNRP) sets out the priorities for protecting, conserving, and enhancing biodiversity in Hackney. It captures a range of interventions that when put in place will help create an ecologically resilient nature recovery network for the borough.

The Plan recognises SINC's as the foundation of the borough's local nature recovery network. It divides Hackney into five nature recovery areas, within which projects and interventions that protect, augment and connect the SINC network are mapped.

These include, for example, enhancements to parks, wildlife-friendly planting in amenity greenspaces, and urban greening in new developments. The plan also identifies a range of flagship species which require measures to conserve and protect locally important populations, or which can be indicators of local nature recovery as the plan is implemented, and they become more widespread across the borough.

The scope of the sites in the LNRP is intentionally broad, covering all land owned by Hackney Council and land over which the council has influence through its planning powers or partnership working. This approach allows a greater range of opportunities to be identified and woven together spatially to enhance biodiversity and link-up more space for nature.





Holding the evidence

Greenspace Information for Greater London

Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL) CIC, London's Local Environmental Records Centre, is the official custodian of information on London's SINC and plays a key role in the SINC review process and ongoing data management. GiGL holds information on adopted and proposed site boundaries, citations (including information on habitats, ownership and accessibility) and access points. SINC data can be accessed via GiGL for many local and national uses, including for planning purposes, and it is critical that the evidence base is used and kept up to date.

GiGL is a not-for-profit community interest company whose remit includes providing existing habitat and species information to inform new field surveys, as well as providing guidance for data collation methodologies and standards. For example, boundaries should be mapped to an appropriate basemap and citations provided using the standard citation templates. New survey information should be supplied to GiGL to ensure its ongoing use by its stakeholders, including Local Planning Authorities, developers, and community groups.

GiGL has also mapped and maintains the Areas of Deficiency (AoD) dataset, which is available for review and analysis to its partners. London boroughs should inform GiGL when SINC designations are created or altered, and if any changes to a SINC affect the alleviation of AoD. Liaison with GiGL at an early stage should aid the site designation process so that new SINC and AoD maps can be supplied and analysed.



What we can do to help

The role of local authorities

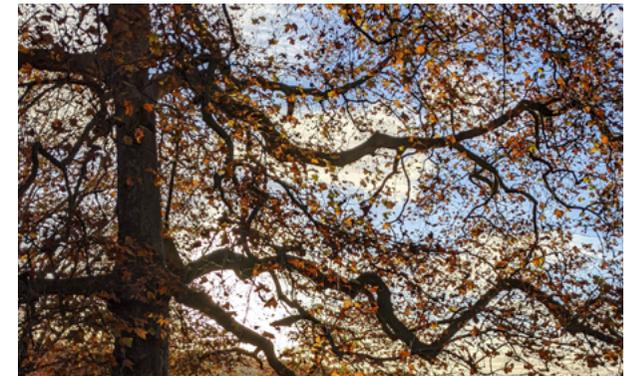
Planning powers

Borough planning authorities need to keep their evidence up to date with re-surveys to identify SINCs, and follow the London methodology. Robust forward planning policies should protect SINCs, and these need to be applied when assessing planning applications to ensure that a borough's core ecological assets are properly protected. But simply identifying and mapping the SINC network is unlikely to be sufficient in the future. Planning policy should proactively encourage connectivity between sites and improvements to the wider green space network, to increase the overall resilience of the SINC network.

Where loss or damage is unavoidable, planning policy should secure appropriate mitigation or

compensation, including through Biodiversity Net Gain or Environmental Delivery Plans where appropriate.

There are significant parts of London where people do not enjoy good access to green spaces with significant wildlife value, defined as "Areas where people have to walk more than one kilometre to reach an accessible SINC of Metropolitan or Borough Importance". In the London Plan (2021), these areas are called areas of deficiency (AoD) in access to nature and have been systematically mapped across London. The London Plan directs boroughs to "identify areas deficient in accessible wildlife sites and seek opportunities to address them" in their Local Plans.



Managing wildlife sites

Many SINCs need specific and appropriate management to maintain their ecological value. Resourcing the management of sites will be a challenge with reduced public sector budgets; new approaches and new funding sources will need to be identified. This might include transferring or devolving management to other bodies, including local communities, or linking the management objectives to the local authority's statutory duties or wider policy objectives, for example physical health, to maximise opportunities for co-funding.

Promoting the value

Promoting the multiple benefits that SINCs can provide is a means to raise their profile within

local communities and help secure local support and involvement in future management. In addition, evaluating and illustrating the costs and benefits of a functioning SINC system – using techniques such as natural capital accounting – should be part of long-term economic planning which takes proper account of the value of these assets to the resilience and well-being of local communities. Local planning authorities must report on their actions to conserve and enhance biodiversity, under the strengthened biodiversity duty.

Government guidance says this report can “show other authorities and the general public what they can do for nature recovery and share good practice”

Local communities

Raising awareness

The SINC status of many sites, or its implication for the land-use planning process, is not often not well known. Raising awareness of a site's SINC status will help to ensure that the wildlife interest of a site is 'on the radar'. This encourages more constructive and informed dialogue about the protection and management of the site.

Forward planning

All of London's local authorities are required to prepare Local Plans which set out the policies necessary to shape development within the borough. This includes the identification of SINC and inclusion of policies for their protection.



By participating in the Local Plan consultation process and supporting nature recovery policies, local community groups can send a clear message that the protection of wildlife and natural green spaces are very important to them. Borough Local Plan policies should be scrutinised to confirm they are sufficiently robust to protect and, where appropriate, expand the SINC system.

Development management

Engaging in the planning process can help to influence a decision over a planning application.

Nature conservation is a material consideration within the planning system, and if a SINC is affected by a proposed development then raising this issue with the planning case officer at an early stage is vital.

Making friends of SINC

There are currently over 900 local ‘Friends of’ groups operating in London, that aim to improve their local green space including SINC. Supporting these groups, establishing new ones and helping with activities and site management

can help to raise awareness of the ecological interests and needs of SINC.

Information gathering

Many people have an interest in wildlife, and their involvement can increase the information available regarding London’s SINC. Recording and monitoring wildlife in these areas is essential for supporting effective SINC management.

On the next page are several links of where records can be submitted and stored to help protect London’s nature.



GiGL general records: gigl.org.uk/submit-records/recording-spreadsheet

Dragonfly Detectives:
wildlondon.org.uk/dragonfly

Stag beetle survey:
wildlondon.org.uk/stag-beetle

Owl Prowl:
wildlondon.org.uk/campaign/record-your-sightings/owl-prowl

Kestrel Count:
wildlondon.org.uk/kestrel-count

Water voles: gigl.org.uk/submit-records/watervolerecoveryprogramme

More info on the London survey:
zsl.org/news-and-events/news/get-involved-london-water-vole-conservation

Deer:
gigl.org.uk/lwt-deer-survey

London Wildlife Trust's commitments

As of 2025, the Trust manages 36 reserves, all of which are SINC's (or part of one), and we are working to ensure that these achieve their ecological potential and are places where people can experience London's wildlife close to hand. We will advocate for regular review and surveys of London's SINC's, and through our role on the

London Wildlife Sites Board, help to ensure that their identification is robustly scrutinised. The Trust will continue to promote the importance of London's wildlife sites, and the role they play in enhancing the wider green infrastructure of the city – not only that currently exist but that we need to restore and create. We will work with many partners, landowners and local communities to restore nature through our programmes and the London Local Nature Recovery Strategy (published March 2026). SINC's are critical pieces of the jigsaw that need to be enhanced and better ecologically connected. Our vision for a London alive with wildlife, and nature in everyone's neighbourhood, requires a city-wide network of high-quality natural areas for wildlife and people.





Case Study: Local involvement

Northbrook Park Wetlands, Lewisham

The community came together to create a shared vision for the Grove Park area since 2018 and developed an overarching masterplan for this important green corridor. The masterplan identified opportunities within the area, including the creation of wetlands in Northbrook Park and the adjacent Network Rail site.

In 2025, a project delivered by Lewisham Council in partnership with the Baring Trust, Network Rail, Glendale and Thames 21 daylighted a previously hidden stream, created two new wetland ponds, and planted thousands of native plants to support biodiversity. The works also included rewetting the existing wet woodland, new accessible paths, outdoor learning features, and natural play designed to bring people closer to nature.

The improvements reduce local flood risk, improve water quality, help cool the urban environment, and provide vital habitats for Lewisham priority species, including stag beetle, common toad, and hedgehog.

Local residents, volunteers, and schoolchildren from local primary schools have played a key role in delivering the project, from planting days to pond-dipping sessions that introduce young people to local wildlife. The project team, led by Thames21, was also working closely with the community through an engagement and education initiative, hosting adult volunteering sessions and family-friendly events.

[Funded by: Mayor of London's Rewild London Fund] Environment Agency, Google via the Bonneville Environmental Foundation].



Case Study: Increasing access to nature

Woodberry Wetlands, Hackney

Woodberry Wetlands is a nature reserve and designated Site of Metropolitan Importance to Nature Conservation on the site of the East Reservoir in the Manor House area in the London Borough of Hackney. London Wildlife Trust developed a proposal to enhance the reservoir for wildlife and open it publicly so people can access a high quality, natural space in a densely built-up environment. Works proceeded in collaboration with Thames Water (the landowner), Berkeley Homes (who are redeveloping the adjacent “Woodberry Down”) and London Borough of Hackney, with additional funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The site was opened to the public for the first time in 200 years on 1st May 2016, by Sir David Attenborough.



Covering 4.5 ha (11 acres) and situated close to the Lee Valley, Woodberry Wetlands now offers free public access, and contains a boardwalk, a visitors’ centre with café, toilet facilities and a classroom. The wetlands are owned and operated as a drinking water reservoir by Thames Water and managed for nature recovery by London Wildlife Trust.



Take action

For local authorities

- Raise awareness about the range of benefits SINC's provide within and outside of the local authority
- Survey SINC's to inform local plan making and strengthen their protection
- Promote connectivity of SINC's through policy and projects
- Engage and support community groups to help manage sites
- Ensure planning decisions are informed by up-to-date wildlife data

For local communities

- Raise awareness about your local SINC's
- Join your local 'Friends of' group
- Provide wildlife information about your local SINC's
- Make comments on the development of your Local Plan
- Draw attention to planning applications that affect SINC's



The SINC Resource Hub

gigl.org.uk/sinc-resource-hub

The SINC Resource Hub is an online platform designed to serve both professionals working within the SINC system in London, and those eager to learn more. It brings together essential resources - including strategies, guidance, articles, and timelines - collated or created to address the needs and questions of both experts and the public.

Further Reading

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Richardson, M. (2025) How we lost touch with nature - Modelling Nature Connectedness Within Environmental Systems: Human-Nature Relationships from 1800 to 2020 and Beyond: findingnature.org.uk/2025/08/11/model

Vivid Economics; on behalf of the Greater London Authority (2017) Natural capital accounts - for public green space in London: london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/11015viv_natural_capital_account_for_london_v7_full_vis.pdf



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