



Oversight and Governance

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CABINET

Monday 10 November 2025
3.30 pm
Council House, Plymouth

Members:

Councillor Evans OBE, Chair

Councillor Laing, Vice Chair

Councillors Aspinall, Briars-Delve, Dann, Haydon, Lowry, Penberthy, Cresswell and Stephens.

Members are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business overleaf.

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Tracey Lee

Chief Executive

Cabinet

Agenda

Part I (Public Meeting)

1. Apologies

To receive apologies for absence submitted by Cabinet Members.

2. Declarations of Interest

Cabinet Members will be asked to make any declarations of interest in respect of items on this agenda.

3. Minutes (Pages 1 - 16)

To sign and confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2025.

4. Questions from the Public

To receive questions from the public in accordance with the Constitution.

Questions, of no longer than 50 words, can be submitted to the Democratic Support Unit, Plymouth City Council, Ballard House, Plymouth, PL1 3BJ, or email to democraticsupport@plymouth.gov.uk. Any questions must be received at least five clear working days before the date of the meeting.

5. Chair's Urgent Business

To receive reports on business which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be brought forward for urgent consideration.

Items for decision

- | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|
| 6. | Finance Monitoring Report Month 6: | (Pages 17 - 36) |
| 7. | Plan for Nature and People: | (Pages 37 - 158) |
| 8. | Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26-2029/30: | (Pages 159 - 204) |

Cabinet

Monday 13 October 2025

PRESENT:

Councillor Laing, Chair.

Councillors Aspinall, Briars-Delve, Dann, Haydon, Lowry, Penberthy, Cresswell and Stephens.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Evans OBE.

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 4.26 pm.

Note: The full discussion can be viewed on the webcast of the City Council meeting at www.plymouth.gov.uk. At a future meeting, the Council will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

38. **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

39. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 08 September 2025 were agreed as an accurate record.

40. **Questions from the Public**

Two questions were received from the public:

The following question was asked by Mr Gregg Black

Question: My mother, with undiagnosed dementia, was left to neglect themselves. Adult Social Services' 'least restrictive' approach led to them being found half naked and confused on Embankment Road, then detained by police. I feel let down. How will the Council ensure this doesn't happen to others?

Answer: Least restrictive approaches are a key principle in adult social care and is embedded in a number of areas of legislation including:

The Care Act 2014 which requires local authorities and professionals to act in a way that minimises restrictions on an individual's rights and freedoms.

The mental capacity act 2005 also sets out that a least restrictive principles for individuals who may lack capacity to make specific decisions.

The Human Rights Act 1998 also protects fundamental rights and describes how any restrictions must be lawful, necessary and proportionate

Balancing what's in a person's best interest, the need for least restrictive approaches and risk to individuals is a significant challenge for professional decision makers including social workers, nurses, therapists and care providers. Making decisions on when to intervene and challenge a person's ability to make decisions is always difficult and we have a legal responsibility to respect how people choose to live and balance this with what we know of that person.

Whilst risk is an inherent part of life it is also important that, in the event of an unwanted event like that described, services again seek review decision making with those impacted to reduce or eliminate potential harm.

The following question was asked by Klara Wilkins

Question: Housing First initiatives prioritizes access to permanent housing with tailored wraparound support and no preconditions. Housing First costs £7,700 per person yearly but saves around £15,880 per person per year. Tenancy sustainment stands at 84%. Why is housing first not an option in Plymouth?

Answer: Plymouth City Council is not a stock holding authority and therefore is not able to directly deliver a Housing First model. All social housing stock is allocated through Devon Home Choice.

PATH working with Plymouth Community Homes deliver a version of Housing First. Plymouth Community Homes offers up to 5 properties per year with additional tenancy support for people transitioning from rough sleeping, experiencing homelessness and multiple disadvantage.

41. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

42. **City Brand Strategy**

Councillor Laing (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications) introduced this item and highlighted:

- a) The cross-city, cross-party and cross-sector collaboration involved in developing the new city brand strategy;
- b) Plymouth's significant upcoming changes, including a £4.4 billion investment in the dockyard, Homes England's support for 10,000 homes, and new towns funding for city centre regeneration;
- c) The need to attract 25,000 people over the next decade to fill new jobs;
- d) The importance of positioning Plymouth as an attractive place to live, work, study, visit, and invest;
- e) Research by Bloom Consulting showed that perception impacted 86% of decisions to live, work, invest, or visit a destination, and that improving perception by one decimal point can increase tourism receipts by 15%, talent attraction by 21%, and foreign direct investment by 17.5%;
- f) Research commissioned by Destination Plymouth had found that most people didn't know very much about Plymouth, but that any firm perceptions were rooted from 20 years previous, not of the city it was in the present day;

- g) The report suggested ten opportunities the city could move forward with to reposition the city's brand and grow its reputation nationally, and internationally;
- h) Importance of developing a new narrative for Plymouth that was reflective of the contemporary city in the present day;
- i) The extensive engagement process, including 2,000 hours of meetings with local communities, partners and organisations, 250 public responses, 100 UK-wide surveys, and 100 street conversations and workshops, resulting in overwhelmingly positive feedback;
- j) The launch of the promotional film, which received over 119,000 Facebook views and 3,200 LinkedIn views in its first week;
- k) Thanks to all those involved.

Paul Fieldsend-Danks (Arts University Plymouth) added the following:

- l) He had served as the Chair of the branding group and thanked everyone at Plymouth City Council (PCC) and Destination Plymouth for facilitating UK shared prosperity funding for the process, and thanked funding partners: Princess Yachts, Babcock, The University of Plymouth, and The Box;
- m) An explanation of the brand development process, emphasising authenticity and community engagement;
- n) Three core values had been identified to underpin the actions and capture the unique personality that made Plymouth the truly outstanding place it was: Go Boldly, Go Together, and Go Far;
- o) Six key narratives were presented, including Plymouth's 500-year history of innovation, marine autonomy leadership, employment opportunities, unique natural environment, creative sector strength, and investment pipeline;
- p) The new visual identity was designed to reflect Plymouth's geography and energy, supported by a media hub and image library accessible to all stakeholders.

Adrian Bratt (Princess Yachts) added more on:

- q) Recruitment challenges and how the new brand toolkit would help attract talent by showcasing Plymouth's lifestyle and opportunities to encourage candidates to relocate encouraging people to live and work in the city, not just to visit.

Amanda Lumley (Chief Executive of Destination Plymouth) emphasised:

- r) The need for widespread advocacy and embedding the narratives across networks, schools, and community projects.

David Draffan (Service Director for Economic Development) added:

- s) Thanks to Amanda for her leadership;
- t) The engagement had been exceptional and the brand was of Plymouth, from Plymouth and for Plymouth;
- u) The consultants that had worked on the branding had worked on some of the best branded destinations in the world;
- v) The brand could only be for Plymouth and was authentic to the city.

During discussion, the following was added:

- w) Plans to showcase the new brand on Civic Centre hoardings within two weeks were confirmed;
- x) The brand had been designed to not have ownership, so it could be used across the city by business and communities alike;
- y) Data on usage of the media from the toolkit would be measured;
- z) The importance of authenticity, stakeholder engagement, advocates, and using the toolkit to amplify positive messaging citywide.

Cabinet agreed to:

1. Support the citywide brand strategy and new narratives to position Plymouth as a place to live, work, study, and visit;
2. Adopt key components of the city branding work, including narratives and visuals, and integrate them into delivery programs such as Team Plymouth, Homes England housing development, recruitment initiatives, and the Plymouth Plan where consistent, positive city wide messaging is required;
3. Mandate Destination Plymouth to broaden its remit as a citywide place marketing organisation with strategic responsibility for leading the brand strategy and implementation, positioning the city's 'place' brand going forwards as well as continuing to drive the Visitor Plan;
4. Recognise the support of key city partners in funding and driving this work forwards.

43. **Connect to Work & Get Devon Plymouth and Torbay Working Plan**

Councillor Cresswell (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Apprenticeships) presented the item to Cabinet, supported by David Haley (Director of Children's Services), Tina Brinkworth (Head of Skills and Post-16), and Toby Hall (Funding and Partnership Manager) and highlighted:

- a) The initiative followed the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) publication of the Get Britain Working White Paper, which aimed to build an inclusive and thriving

labour market. Local areas were asked to develop plans addressing labour market participation, progression, earnings, and job quality;

- b) The Get Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Working Plan was co-designed by Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council, and Torbay Council, in collaboration with partners from the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors, education and skills providers, employers, business representatives, the local Integrated Care Board, and Jobcentre Plus. Co-production of the approach was a golden thread running through the city's work;
- c) The plan aimed to tackle long-standing challenges such as economic inactivity and youth unemployment, while also leveraging opportunities arising from defence investment and the work of Team Plymouth;
- d) Connect to Work was a new supported employment programme designed to assist disabled people, those with health conditions, and individuals facing complex barriers to employment. It would also support those at risk of falling out of the labour market to retain employment;
- e) Plymouth City Council would deliver Connect to Work in-house, with a recruitment strategy focused on individuals with lived experience of the barriers being addressed, including disability, long-term health conditions, and care experience. A key part of the approach was to embed lived experience which would ensure the delivery model was empathetic, informed, and responsive;
- f) The Get Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Working Plan had created strong foundations for future investment and partnership working. Connect to Work would be the first delivery element under the plan and would be overseen by a wide range of partners;
- g) A diverse team had been recruited, including individuals with lived experience of disabilities, mental health challenges, and neurodiversity. Approximately 10% of roles would be apprenticeships, with support provided throughout the apprenticeship and into employment;
- h) Delivery would be co-located at Cobourg House, bringing together Skills Launchpad Plymouth, Careers Plymouth, On Course Southwest, and the new Connect to Work team. This co-location would enable effective cross-referrals and improve participant experience;
- i) There had been extensive engagement with internal council teams (including Public Health, SEND, Housing, and Community Connections) and external organisations such as Livewell Southwest and Shekinah. Although Connect to Work would serve different cohorts, regular engagement would ensure strong cross-referral pathways.

In response to questions, it was reported that:

- j) Plymouth had already laid strong foundations through Skills Launchpad, having supported 3,000 residents into employment and 60,000 online. Caseworkers would be embedded in community settings to reach both young people and families,

recognising that barriers to employment often included financial, housing, and health issues;

- k) Cabinet Members expressed strong support for the initiative, noting Plymouth's proactive approach and existing infrastructure.

Cabinet agreed to:

1. Approve and accept the Get Devon Plymouth and Torbay Working plan: 2025 – 2027;
2. Delegate the authority to sign future pilot contracts and agreements associated with the Get Devon Plymouth and Torbay Working plan, such as the Youth Guarantee, to the Director for Children's Services, where they do not already have the authority to do so;
3. Approve the proposal for the Council to deliver the new DWP Connect to Work programme to support approximately 2,100 Plymouth residents (total value of approximately £6.8m over 5 years);
4. Delegate the authority to sign Connect to Work contracts and agreements to the Director for Children's Services, where they do not already have the authority to do so.

44. **Plymouth SEND Improvement update**

Councillor Laing (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications) paid tribute to Hannah McGuigan (Plymouth City Council employee) who had passed away:

- a) Hannah was a bright, determined and talented team player who left a lasting impression on everybody fortunate to work alongside her. Her unwavering commitment to children and families and her dedication to Plymouth City Council was truly inspiring. Hannah's kindness, compassion, and selflessness touched so many lives and the thoughts of Cabinet and the council as a whole remained with her husband, children and extended family. Hannah brought warmth and positivity to everything she did, always putting others first and her legacy would continue to inspire.

Councillor Cresswell (Cabinet Member for Education, Apprenticeships and Skills presented the report, supported by Amanda Davis (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills) and Lisa McDonald (Head of SEND) and made the following key points:

- b) There was strengthened governance arrangements which had been established, including an independently chaired SEND Improvement Board and supporting strategic and operational groups, ensuring robust oversight and accountability across the partnership;

- c) Inspection readiness had been supported through fortnightly workshops, updated self-evaluation frameworks (SEF), and the development of a comprehensive evidence bank to demonstrate impact and progress;
- d) Co-production and the voice of young people had been embedded in service design, with engagement through Plymouth Parent Carer Voice (PPCV), Youth Ascends, and Young Safeguarders. This had led to the creation of inclusive resources such as the Equal Kind and SELF film. Young people had contributed meaningfully to meetings, asking pertinent questions that had influenced the Council's practice;
- e) Plymouth's work in co-production and inclusive education had received national recognition, including nominations for the NASEN SEND Awards and increased visibility through the Department for Education and sector partnerships;
- f) The graduated approach had been strengthened, with targeted support and outreach from special schools improving outcomes for over 300 pupils without Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). The vulnerable pupils panel had also enhanced early intervention;
- g) EHCP timeliness and quality had improved significantly, with reduced backlogs and increased compliance with statutory timelines. Quality assurance processes were embedded and supported by digital tools and standard operating procedures;
- h) Family engagement and communications had been transformed, with the SEND duty system achieving 98% call responsiveness and receiving positive feedback. Themed partnership sessions had further enhanced transparency and collaboration;
- i) A multi-agency waiting well offer had been developed to provide interim support across health, education, and social care. Co-designed resources and helplines were available;
- j) Preparation for adulthood had been supported through collaboration with adult services. Over 100 supported internships had been delivered, with 100% of participants progressing into employment or training. A new transitions protocol and digital resource hub had also been launched;
- k) The graduated approach platform had clarified universal, targeted, and specialist support. An Ordinarily Available Provision had been developed in collaboration with school leaders, the DfE, and families. Extended special school outreach had been introduced, focusing on individual pupils, small groups, and whole-school inclusion strategies;
- l) Targeted funding pathways had been launched in 30 schools, with a further 28 schools offering small group interventions. A higher EHCP banding had been introduced to support pupils with higher needs in mainstream settings;

In response to questions raised it was reported that:

- m) There had been positive improvements in relation to cultural transformation within the SEND team, including improved staff morale and confidence in engagement with

families. Testimonials from families and staff had highlighted the positive impact of the changes;

- n) Family feedback had been central to service development. Over 50 families had been consulted, leading to the redesign of the 0–25 SEND duty team. Six-weekly family forums and fortnightly Lunch and Learn sessions had been established. Parent carer surveys had shown marked improvement in responsiveness and service quality;
- o) There was a national shortage of educational psychologists and was impacting Plymouth. Creative solutions had been implemented, including the recruitment of assistant educational psychologists from local universities, with progression into doctoral training and qualified roles. Collaborative work with schools and families had supported children while awaiting assessments;
- p) The SEND Delivery Board had ensured full partnership and collaboration across the local area. Schools had led workstreams and contributed to improved outcomes, including reduced exclusions and improved attendance. The partnership had demonstrated strong accountability and commitment to Plymouth;
- q) The Cabinet reaffirmed its commitment to SEND as a shared responsibility across elected members and officers, recognising the importance of co-creation, partnership working, and listening to children and families.

Cabinet agreed to:

- I. Note the report.

45. **Digital Apprentices**

Councillor Dann (Cabinet Member for Customer Experience, Sport, Leisure and HR and OD) introduced the report and was supported by Chris Squire (Service Director for HROD) and highlighted the following key points:

- a) The programme was designed to enhance staff skills in data and artificial intelligence (AI), with a focus on improving service delivery, increasing efficiency, and empowering employees. It was noted that the initiative was not about replacing staff with technology but about equipping them to lead change and improve outcomes using digital tools;
- b) The Council had drawn down £1.2 million in additional apprenticeship levy funding, including a £750,000 levy transfer from a large technology company, enabling the creation of a Digital Academy. This supported 49 digital apprentices across all directorates, with a focus on customer experience, financial forecasting, and demand management;
- c) The Council's overall apprenticeship programme included 188 apprentices, comprising new starters and existing staff, with an additional 65 staff in schools and £150,000 passported to 41 social care providers in the city;

d) The Council partnered with Multiverse, a specialist provider in data and AI, to deliver the programme. The curriculum included:

- i. Level 3: Data and Insights for Business Decisions;
- ii. Level 4: Data Fellowship and AI for Business Value;
- iii. AI-Powered Productivity modules;
- iv. Leadership sessions covering AI fundamentals, ethics, and governance;

e) Early feedback from the programme showed:

- i. 91% of managers reported a positive impact;
- ii. 83% of learners felt well supported;
- iii. 66% of managers observed improvements in business outcomes;

f) Examples of early learner projects included:

- i. Reduction in garden waste complaints through improved data categorisation;
- ii. Streamlining Windows 11 upgrade validation, reducing daily processing time from 2–3 hours to 30 minutes;
- iii. Development of a Microsoft Co-Pilot agent to automate finance queries and improve self-service;

g) The programme was supported by a comprehensive communications strategy, including learner spotlights, lunch and learn sessions, virtual coffee mornings, and hackathons. A graduation ceremony was also planned;

h) Planning for Cohort 2 was underway, targeting Adults, Health and Communities, Children's Services, and Public Health. A digital skills audit was also planned to assess staff capabilities and inform future training needs.

In response to questions raised it was reported that:

- i) The importance of engaging elected members in the programme to build understanding and advocacy. It was agreed that scrutiny and member groups would be used to share real examples and outcomes. A digital champion was to be appointed to support this engagement;
- j) The Cabinet welcomed the initiative as a positive and pragmatic approach to digital transformation, noting its alignment with strategic priorities and its potential to build resilience and capacity across services.

Cabinet agreed to:

I. Note the verbal report.

46. **Leader's Announcements**

Councillor Laing (Deputy Leader) delivered leader's announcements on behalf of Councillor Evans OBE (Leader of the Council) and discussed:

- a) Plymouth's designation as one of five key national defence growth areas under the UK Defence Industrial Strategy, backed by a £250 million UK-wide investment. This marked a pivotal moment for the city, unlocking long-term prosperity and economic opportunities;
- b) The launch of Team Plymouth, a strategic partnership aimed at strengthening collaboration between key organisations, fostering innovation, and creating high-quality jobs. The partnership positioned Plymouth to lead in defence, marine autonomy, and advanced manufacturing;
- c) Recent major developments including:
 - i. Plymouth's designation as the National Centre for Marine Autonomy;
 - ii. A £350 million investment by defence tech firm Helsing;
 - iii. Babcock's expansion into Sherford with a new integrated logistics hub and advanced manufacturing base;
 - iv. Confirmation of Plymouth and South Devon Freeport as a Defence Strategic Investment Zone;
- d) Plymouth's selection by the New Towns Commission as one of 12 places to be taken forward as part of the government's next generation of new towns. This recognition followed a year of close collaboration and site visits, and was seen as a powerful endorsement of Plymouth's vision and readiness to deliver. Final government decisions were expected early the next year;
- e) A multi-million pound investment to transform the Mount Batten pontoon into a safer, more accessible marine gateway. Following the removal of the old pontoon and link bridge earlier in the summer, the next phase would see construction of a state-of-the-art replacement. The £4.22 million scheme would:
 - i. Repair critical infrastructure including the bridgehead and seawall;
 - ii. Introduce new commercial berths to generate income for long-term upkeep;
 - iii. Enhance access to water-based activities through the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park and Mount Batten Water Sports and Activity Centre;
- f) Funding for the pontoon project was provided by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, UK Government, and Plymouth City Council. The scheme aimed to improve

accessibility to Plymouth Sound National Marine Park and connect more people with the water and its heritage.

47. **Cabinet Member Updates**

Councillor Dann (Cabinet Member for Customer Experience, Sport, Leisure and HR and OD) introduced her announcements and discussed:

- a) Plymouth's selection as one of Sport England's priority places, following five years of collaboration through the Pathfinder project. The initiative focused on supporting children and young people facing challenges by promoting physical activity to improve emotional and physical health, school attendance, behaviour, and concentration. A £1.8 million award had been secured, with a delivery plan and public relations campaign forthcoming;
- b) The Summer Fit and Fed programme, which delivered 17,851 free spaces across 93 holiday clubs with 58 delivery partners. Over 2,500 free packed lunches were distributed at four community park events. Councillor Dann shared two testimonials highlighting the programme's impact on children with specific needs and the broader benefits to families and communities;
- c) National recognition for Plymouth Diving, with Oliver, Amelia, and Harry selected for the Swim England Junior Development Squad. Oliver was also selected for the Aquatics GP World Class Programme for 2025–26;
- d) Plymouth Active Leisure's shortlisting for the National Swim England Awards in the Pioneering Operator category, recognising innovative approaches to aquatics including open water swimming and inclusive programming for young people and carers;
- e) Increased usage of Plymouth's outdoor pools, with 41,000 visits to Tinside Lido (up 64% from the previous year) and 37,500 visits to Mount Wise (up 44%). The Swim Safe programme reached 2,750 young people;
- f) A new pilot partnership between the Council's Active Wellbeing Team and Derriford Hospital's physiotherapy department, relocating weekly treatment clinics to the Life Centre to improve access and demonstrate the link between physical activity and health outcomes;
- g) Recognition of coach Jackie Floyd, shortlisted in the Fitness Heroes category of the UK Active Awards for work with individuals with special needs;
- h) Continuation of youth swim evenings through the winter using indoor spaces, following the seasonal closure of outdoor pools.

Councillor Cresswell (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Apprenticeships) discussed:

- i) Plymouth's success at the National SEND Awards 2025, winning the Co-Production Award for supported internships. Six internships had been delivered, with further growth anticipated;

- j) Runner-up recognition for SEND Resource of the Year, celebrating the development of the graduated approach and resource directory led by Lisa McDonald (Head of Service). The awards highlighted Plymouth's leadership in inclusive education and the city's growing reputation for best practice nationally;
- k) Plans to present the awards at Discovery College and at the next Full Council meeting.

Councillor Laing (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications) discussed:

- l) The premiere of "The Run", a national fostering awareness film launched on 9 October. The film, produced in partnership with over 90 local authority fostering services and CAN Digital, aimed to highlight the urgent need for foster carers in Plymouth. The emotional narrative followed an 11-year-old boy navigating adversity and finding hope through sport. Councillor Laing encouraged viewers to consider fostering and praised the film's impact;

(A video was played at this time): <https://youtu.be/uvJfnWReclw?si=HkSaj3tphsXEQ69I>)

- m) The fifth anniversary of The Box, Plymouth's museum and cultural centre. Key achievements included:
 - i. 50% of visitors being Plymouth residents;
 - ii. 72,000 international visitors;
 - iii. Over 40,000 schoolchildren welcomed;
 - iv. £28 million economic contribution to the Plymouth economy;
 - v. 100,000 volunteer hours, valued at £1.1 million;
 - vi. £43 million in estimated health benefits for adults over 50;
 - vii. £49 million in estimated health benefits for adults aged 30–49;
 - viii. 250,000 visits by under-25s;
- n) The launch of the new exhibition season, including Grayson Perry's "Vanity of Small Differences" tapestries and works from the British Council and the Centre for Contemporary Art in Gdańsk;
- o) The Box's selection for the DCMS Museum Renewal Fund and its role as Museum in Residence at 10 Downing Street, with works by Stanley Spencer, Jack Pickup, and Alfred Wallis displayed in the Prime Minister's residence.

Councillor Haydon (Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Events, Libraries, Cemeteries and Crematoria) discussed:

- p) Hate Crime Awareness Week 2025, emphasising Plymouth's commitment to dignity, respect, and justice. The campaign encouraged collective action to challenge hate crime across all settings;
- q) Bonfire Night on the Hoe, scheduled for 05 November 2025. The free event included a fairground (from 4pm), catering (from 5pm), bonfire lighting (7pm), and fireworks (7:30pm) provided by Sonic Fireworks. The event would be sponsored by Plymouth Waterfront Partnership;
- r) Remembrance Sunday on 09 November 2025 and the city centre Christmas lights switch-on on 13 November;
- s) The Remembrance poppy display at the Park crematorium, with thanks given to Councillor Pauline Murphy and local knitting groups for their work.

Councillor Stephens (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport) discussed:

- t) Interim results from the Transport Focus "Your Bus Journey" survey undertaken in Plymouth had been released. Plymouth was one of over 50 local authorities who undertook the survey to support the Plymouth Enhanced Bus Partnership and monitor the Bus Service Improvement plan.
- u) The data suggested that the work of the partnership and investment in public transport and infrastructure in Plymouth was having a positive impact. Plymouth scored:
 - i. 89% overall satisfaction (2% above urban average, 5% above national average);
 - ii. 81% satisfaction with wait times;
 - iii. 84% satisfaction with punctuality;
 - iv. 88% satisfaction with journey length;
 - v. 89% satisfaction with bus drivers;
- v) Acknowledgement of a temporary service issue in September 2025, which had now been resolved;
- w) Final survey results were expected in spring 2026.

Councillor Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance) discussed:

- x) Improvements in city centre retail, with the number of empty premises reduced from 100 to 64 over the past year. This brought Plymouth below the national average vacancy rate;

- y) New businesses included ProCook, Victoria Beauty, Alpha supermarket and café, and The Green Room coffee shop. Refits at Waterstones, H&M, and Holland & Barrett signalled retailer confidence. Drakes Circus and The Barcode were almost fully let;
- z) Increased events and footfall in the city centre, with three times more events than the previous year;
- aa) Progress on the next phase of the Armada Way regeneration project, with works on schedule and budget.

Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development and Communities) discussed:

- bb) A new housing partnership project between Plymouth City Council and Plymouth Community Homes, supported by Homes England funding. The £33.5 million scheme would deliver 135 affordable homes (including 80 for social rent) in the Millbay regeneration area, with communal gardens and commercial units;
- cc) A new partnership with Bournemouth Churches Housing Association (BCHA), aiming to deliver 63 affordable homes over five years. BCHA would invest an initial £7 million, with the Council contributing £1 million and seeking £10 million in Homes England grants. The homes would include general needs, specialist, and supported accommodation;
- dd) The partnership built on BCHA's existing work supporting 240 households in Plymouth, including those with additional needs and refugee families.

Councillor Aspinall (Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care) discussed:

- ee) The launch of the "Plymouth Protects" vaccination campaign, supported by posters in wellbeing hubs, libraries, and newsletters targeting carers, older adults, and those with long-term health conditions;
- ff) A myth-busting Q&A by the Director of Public Health would be published in the Chronicle next month, expected to reach over 90,000 homes;
- gg) A social media campaign was live, with over 72,000 views since September 2025;
- hh) Outreach clinics were available throughout the city for residents to attain their vaccinations;
- ii) Access had been expanded to flu vaccines for 2–3 year olds via pharmacies;
- jj) The "Aging Well" event at Tinside Lido, marking the International Day of Older Persons and the Lido's 90th anniversary. Over 50 organisations attended, with reflections from Professor Steve Madden and performances by the Southway Glee Club. The event celebrated social connection and pledged continued work toward an age-friendly city.

Councillor Laing (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications) introduced the LGA Update and discussed:

- a) The LGA's welcome of the Government's Pride in Place programme, which provided councils with new funding and powers to revitalise high streets, regulate betting and vaping shops, and bring empty premises back into use;
- b) The alignment of the programme with the LGA's call for place-based investment, noting that older industrial towns and cities such as Plymouth could unlock up to £13 billion in untapped economic potential with targeted government support;
- c) The LGA's recognition that local authorities were best placed to lead economic renewal, restore pride in communities, and deliver locally tailored solutions;
- d) Serious concerns raised by the LGA regarding access to NHS dental care, with many areas described as "dental deserts" and no local authority area having more than one NHS dentist per thousand residents. Deprived communities were most affected, with the poorest health outcomes and highest rates of child dental decay often coinciding with the fewest NHS dental practices;
- e) The LGA's call for a review of the NHS dental contract and investment in community dental services to ensure fair access to care;
- f) Additional LGA updates included:
 - i. Warnings about rising demand for temporary accommodation and care, combined with the loss of affordable homes, which were driving up costs and stretching council budgets;
 - ii. Support for a new licensing system to give councils stronger powers to regulate vape sales and protect young people;
 - iii. Endorsement of a report calling for better access to physical activity for care-experienced children to support well-being and inclusion;
 - iv. Calls for long-term investment to reduce pressure on health and care services and prevent vulnerable people from being stuck in hospital or unstable housing;
 - v. Advocacy for more support for young carers to ensure they could access services and enjoy their childhood.

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Cabinet



Date of meeting: 10 November 2025
Title of Report: **Finance Monitoring Report Month 6**
Lead Member: Councillor Mark Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance)
Lead Strategic Director: Ian Trisk-Grove (Service Director for Finance)
Author: Helen Slater (Assistant Head of Finance)
Contact Email: Ian.Trisk-Grove@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:
Key Decision: No
Confidentiality: Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

This report sets out the revenue and capital monitoring position of the Council forecast to the end of the financial year 2025/26 at September 2025, Period 6.

Recommendations and Reasons

1. Note the forecast revenue monitoring position at Month 6 is an adverse variance of £8.754m with further risks highlighted.

Reason: Reporting and visibility of the forecast revenue budget outturn is essential to maintain financial oversight and control.

2. Note the overall Capital Budget 2025-2030 is revised to £372.311m as shown in Table 18, with reconciliation and detail of the movements in the quarter set out in Tables 18 and Table 21, and recommend these amendments to City Council for approval.

Reason: Cabinet to recommend these amendments to Full Council for approval in line with the Constitution.

3. Note the performance against Prudential Indicators for Q2 2025/26, detailed in section 13.

Reason: To ensure that the Council's borrowing remain affordable, sustainable, and aligned with its Treasury Management strategy

Alternative options considered and rejected

There are no alternative options – our Financial Regulations require us to produce regular monitoring of our finance resources.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

The report is fundamentally linked to delivering the priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan. Allocating limited resources to key priorities will maximise the benefits to the residents of Plymouth.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

Robust and accurate financial monitoring underpins the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The Council's MTFP is updated based on on-going monitoring information, both on a local and national context. Any adverse variations from the annual budget will place pressure on the MTFP going forward and require additional savings to be generated in future years. Each directorate must mitigate its own pressures and achieve a balanced position by the end of the financial year. Plans need to be robust and achievable.

Financial Risks

Financial risks concerning period 6 reporting are discussed in the body of the report and relate to the attainment of a balanced budget position in financial year 2025/26.

Legal Implications

No direct legal implications arising from this report.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

There are no impacts directly arising from this report.

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

** When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

The reducing revenue and capital resources across the public sector has been identified as a key risk within our Strategic Risk register. The ability to deliver spending plans within budget is paramount to ensuring the Council can achieve its objectives.

Appendices

**Add rows as required to box below*

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Finance Monitoring Report Month 6							

Background papers:

**Add rows as required to box below*

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

Fin	OW. 25.26. 092	Leg	LS/00 0013 12/2/ AC/3 1/10/ 25	Mon Off	N/A	HR	N/A	Asset s	N/A	Strat Proc	N/A
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Ian Trisk-Grove (Service Director for Finance)											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes Date agreed: 31/10/2025											
Cabinet Member approval: Cllr Mark Lowry approved by verbal Date approved: 23/10/2025											

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FINANCE MONITORING REPORT

Month 6 (September 2025)



I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- I.1.** The monitoring position reported at Month 6 is an adverse variance of £8.754m, this is an adverse variance of £1.897m. This report provides an explanation of this position and gives details around further underlying risks.

Table 1: General Fund Revenue Forecast

Directorate	Budget £m	Forecast £m	Variance £m
Total General Fund Budget	253.418	262.172	8.754

- I.2.** Adult Social Care continues to experience additional demand within Care Home related spend, causing an increased pressure at Month 6.
- I.3.** Community Connections is maintaining a pressure at Month 6 due to numbers of clients in temporary accommodation, increasing costs for nightly paid accommodation and unavoidable delays in planned activity to reduce demand.
- I.4.** The Children's Directorate is reporting an increased budget pressure at Month 6, due to Children's Social Care placements, with Residential Placements now at 63 (1 above budget) and Unregistered Placements at 9 (2 above budget), both these numbers continue to reduce.
- The Children's Directorate is also reporting a net cost pressure on short breaks provision, the service is engaged in developing mitigation plans to address.
- I.5.** The Customer & Corporate Directorate is forecasting an adverse variance of £1.274m against budget. This is predominately caused by additional survey requirements for the Facilities Management service, and savings target delivery pressures across the directorate.
- I.6.** Overall, £6.510m of the in-year planned savings targets have been considered achieved, with £3.713m in progress. £2.233m is considered unachievable and being reported as pressures, of which £1.300m relates to an additional income target for Energy from Waste which is not achievable due to maintenance downtime. This pressure is reported as part of the Growth Directorate's position.
- I.7.** Section 12 of this report sets out an update on the Capital Programme at Quarter 2 (see Table 18). As at 30 September 2025 the 5-year capital budget 2025-2030 is currently forecast at £372.311m.

The forecast for 2025/26 has reduced from £178.813m to £161.263m and reflects new approvals added to the programme offset by monthly monitoring and continued project monitoring to reprofile forecasts into future years.

2. DIRECTORATE REVIEW

2.1. The reported position is an overspend of £8.754m at Month 6, an adverse movement of £1.897m from the position reported at Month 5.

Table 2: Revenue Forecast by Directorate*

Directorate	Budget £m	Forecast £m	Variance £m	Status
Adults, Health and Communities Directorate	119.512	122.674	3.162	Over
Children's Directorate	91.843	96.257	4.414	Over
Growth Directorate	30.660	31.960	1.300	Over
Office of the Director of Public Health	3.889	3.511	(0.378)	Under
Chief Executive's Office	1.684	1.529	(0.155)	Under
Customer and Corporate Services	44.120	45.394	1.274	Over
Corporate Items	(38.290)	(39.153)	(0.863)	Under
Total	253.418	262.172	8.754	

*note budget changes at Month 5 due to allocation of pay award budgets previously held Corporately.

3. ADULTS, HEALTH AND COMMUNITIES DIRECTORATE

Table 3: Adults, Health and Communities Directorate Forecast

Adults, Health and Communities Directorate	Variance £m
Adult Social Care	2.243
Community Connections	0.919
Total	3.162

Table 4: Adult Social Care Forecast

Adult Social Care	Variance £m	RAG (mitigations /risk)
Pressures:		
Care package expenditure	4.575	
Community Equipment Service	0.315	
Mitigations:		
Additional client and joint funding income	(2.310)	Amber
Forecast staffing savings	(0.337)	Amber
Total	2.243	

3.1 The Adults, Health and Communities Directorate is reporting a pressure of £2.243m, an increase of £1.188m from the Month 5 position.

- 3.1.1. Domiciliary Care continues to see an increased demand for intermediate care to support clients' discharge from hospital.
- 3.1.2. As assessment waitlists have been reduced, the directorate has seen a significant increase in bedded care clients, as previously included as a risk. Backdated packages have resulted in £0.783m of old year costs being incurred in year.
- 3.1.3. £2.310m additional Joint Funding and client income have been identified, correlating to increased package expenditure. A joint funding panel has been established to improve the process and maximise income.
- 3.1.4. Following the insolvency of the previous provider, an inflationary increase was agreed to ensure the continuing delivery of the Community Equipment Service. We are currently assuming funding will be negotiated to be received from the ICB to meet the additional costs in the pooled budget.

- 3.1.5. The Directorate's Budget Containment Group has been mobilised for 2025/26 and activity is ongoing; the function of the group is to focus on emerging high-risk areas, assigning task groups to identify actions to be taken to contain spend, such as focused package reviews. Work identified includes focus on review and analysis of Domiciliary Care, Bedded Care fees levels and pipeline demand, timescales and planning in increase client in Direct Payments and a focus on the Short-Term Residential clients to identify any barriers to long term care.
- 3.2. Further risks to the Adult Social Care Budget include potential further increases in demand on Care Package budgets and the outcome of the CQC inspection, which may make recommendations that could have an impact on budgets.
- 3.3. Total Delivery Plans of £3.425m, including a prior year target of £0.648m, are assumed to be met in 2025/26. Of the 2025/26 target of £2.733m, £2.074m (75%) has been achieved to date, with £0.659m in progress.

Table 5: Community Connections Forecast

Community Connections		Variance £m	RAG (mitigations /risk)
Pressures:	Delays in planned activity in supply of additional units, increase in demand for temporary accommodation	1.164	
	Domestic Homicide Reviews - activity over budget	0.120	
	Other pressures; incl removals and storage for clients	0.141	
Mitigations:	Additional income from penalty charges	(0.040)	Green
	Grant maximisation and other staffing savings	(0.466)	Green
Total		0.919	

- 3.4. The reported pressure has remained the same since Month 5 at £0.919m. There has been an increase of £0.111m to reported pressure due to increased demand but this has been offset by salary savings.
- 3.5. Drivers for increased demand for temporary accommodation include domestic abuse victims fleeing properties, the cost-of-living crisis, lack of available social housing and lack of affordable private sector accommodation to house clients experiencing homelessness.
- 3.6. There is also a reported pressure of £0.120m due to an increase in the number of Domestic Homicide reviews required this year.
- 3.7. There are salary savings totalling £0.449m at Month 6, these are due to vacancies, gaps whilst recruiting, maternity leave and an increase in posts funded by grants compared to budget. Of this, £0.155m salary savings is offsetting various smaller pressures within Young Carers, Unauthorised Encampments and Removals and Storage, and a further £0.111m has mitigated the additional pressure of temporary accommodation demand. The residual balance has been allocated towards Delivery Plan targets.
- 3.8. The forecast includes £0.200m of additionally identified grant maximisation.
- 3.9. Planned activity within the service to mitigate further budgetary risk includes review of all grant allocations to maximise impact on budgets, increased activity at the front door to reduce demand, additional planned activity to replace delayed projects and continued monitoring of activity and trends to inform full year forecasts.

4. CHILDREN'S DIRECTORATE

Table 6: Children's Directorate – total reported pressure

Children's Directorate	Variance £m
Children, Young People and Families Department	3.731
Education, Participation and Skills Department	-
Children's Central Spine	0.683
Total	4.414

Table 7: Children's Directorate – CYPF Forecast

Children, Young People and Families Department	Variance £m	RAG (mitigations /risk)
Pressures:		
Looked After Children – Placements	3.887	
Agency staffing costs	0.050	
Delivery plan pressure	1.182	
Vacancy savings forecast	(0.050)	Amber
FHFPC Workstream, Reunification & Reconnect	(1.182)	Amber
Partnership working to identify Children transitioning into alternative placement		
Mitigations:		
Removal of Retention Payments for Social Workers in Child Protection Team	(0.032)	Green
Adopt South West - Underspend as provided by Devon County Council	(0.070)	Green
Caritas Agency Recruiter removed	(0.054)	Green
Total	3.731	

4.1. The Children, Young People and Families service is reporting a pressure of £3.731m at Month 6, an adverse movement of £0.288m

- 4.1.1. £3.887m pressure on Children's Social Care placements due to an increase in Independent Sector Placements. This is an adverse placement variation of £0.444m. Residential Placements are now at 63 (1 above budget) and Unregistered Placements at 9 (2 above budget). Of this variance 0.086m relates to Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children who have been placed into Supported Living at above £2,000 p/week.
- 4.1.2. There are also pressures flagged within staffing, primarily down to agency staff and vacancy savings targets, however these costs are mitigated through the planned exit dates of agency staff through Quarter 2
- 4.1.3. Savings have been identified through Quarter 2 Star Chamber monitoring, which is a line-by-line review of the service's expenditure throughout the department. These savings have totalled £0.156m, reducing the overall monthly variance to £0.288m. This includes savings within the Adopt South West Contract and removal of retention payments.

4.2. The service has identified a cohort of children who are currently placed within a Residential or Supported Living setting where transitioning to an alternative placement setting is considered appropriate for the child, such as fostering or reunification. This will always be the correct move for the child which also generates a recordable saving – it is this saving which is being earmarked towards the delivery plan total.

- 4.2.1. This stream of work is called "Steps" and is monitored monthly at the Family Homes for Plymouth Children board, the services is also working with external partners such as Reconnect to help the Authority achieve its targets.

4.2.2. There are currently enough Children identified with suitable transition plans to achieve the remaining £1.161m balance, however it is essential to point out that delays to these plans are possible creating further possible pressure.

4.3. Remaining mitigations are related to Staffing and the ongoing redesign of the CYPF structure. The new structure should align with the National Reform - Families First concept. Current proposals offset all agency pressure as well as achieving Budget Gap savings allocated in 2024/25.

Table 8: Children's Directorate – EPS Forecast

Education, Participation and Skills Department		Variance £m	RAG (mitigations)
Pressure:	Savings delivery plan pressure	0.038	Green
Mitigations:	Net additional income and vacancy savings	(0.038)	
Total		-	

4.4. The Education, Participation and Skills service is reporting nil variance at Month 6, with work carried out by the service to identify additional savings to offset a delivery plan pressure. There is now minimal risk of non-delivery, however work will continue through the year to identify further savings.

4.5. In 2025/26, Plymouth will receive a total Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocation of £312.148m. This funding supports mainstream schools, special schools, Early Years providers, and pupils with additional needs through the High Needs Block. The High Needs Block continues to face significant financial pressure, driven by increased numbers of pupils with EHCPs, and the cost of provision, with a forecast overspend of £35.250m. When combined with the cumulative deficit from prior years of £18.498m, the total projected deficit balance is expected to reach £54.261m by the end of the financial year.

While a statutory override remains in place, allowing local authorities to carry forward DSG deficits there are associated revenue implications. Specifically, the cost of borrowing to fund the unfunded expenditure is estimated to exceed £2m in 2025/26.

Table 9: Children's Directorate – Central Spine Forecast

Children's Central Spine		Variance £m	RAG (mitigations)
Pressures:	Short breaks cost pressures	1.318	Amber
	Potential shortfall on vacancy savings targets	0.024	
	Short breaks Q1 savings identified	(0.446)	
Mitigations:	Delay in Home-to-School forecast increases	(0.187)	Amber
	Admission team savings	(0.026)	Amber
Total		0.683	

4.6. Some Children's Services budgets have now been combined into the 'Central Spine', including Short Breaks, Admissions and School Transport. The monitoring position is unchanged at Month 6, with an overall pressure of £0.683m.

4.6.1. There is a forecast pressure within Short Breaks due to demand, however this has been mitigated through £0.446m of savings identified, leaving a net pressure of £0.872m. The service is currently reviewing saving plans identified to ensure they are achievable and is now tasked with identifying methods to mitigate this residual pressure.

4.6.2. School Transport budgets are currently forecast to make a saving of £0.187m, this is due to the delay in the forecast increase in numbers of EHCPs, which has a direct impact to SEND Home to School Transport demand. This has been reviewed again at the start of the new academic year, and forecasts are still in line with previous estimates.

4.6.3. Additional Admissions Appeals income was identified at Month 4, and forecasts remain at this level.

5. GROWTH DIRECTORATE

Table 10: Growth Directorate Forecast

Growth Directorate		Variance £m	RAG (mitigations)
Pressures:	Economic Development - Land and Property additional professional, redevelopment, legal and events costs	0.683	
	Other delivery pressures within Street Services; including fleet costs and unachieved delivery plans	1.371	
	Management historic efficiency target	0.266	
	SPI - reduced planning income and increased concessionary fares	0.371	
	Loss of EfW income due to downtime	1.300	
	Economic Development - additional commercial lease income	(0.983)	Amber
Mitigations:	SPI - additional vacancy savings	(0.696)	Amber
	Increased parking income and Fleet and Garage efficiencies	(0.414)	Amber
	Further planned management actions	(0.598)	Amber
Total		1.300	

- 5.1.** The Growth Directorate is reporting a pressure of £1.300m at Month 6, this is unchanged from Month 5. The Directorate is unable to contain a £1.300m income budget from the Energy from Waste profit share which is forecast at nil. This is following a significant period of scheduled site downtime for maintenance.
- 5.2.** The Directorate has identified £2.2m of other pressures in year and established a schedule of cross service area management action plans, to achieve mitigation of £1.6m of this as at Month 6. This includes recruitment deferral, income maximisation from grants, car parking and commercial lease events, and the review and deferral of discretionary expenditure where possible. Plans are in hand to build upon this achievement with the aim of achieving £2.2m of total savings by year end.
- 5.3.** The Directorate had in-year savings/income targets for 2025/26 of £3.495m, to date £2.195m has been achieved. The £1.300m target for income from Energy from Waste profit share will not be realised in this financial year and is reported as a pressure.

6. OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Table 11: Office of the Director of Public Health Forecast

Office of the Director of Public Health		Variance £m	RAG (mitigations)
Pressures:	Contract overhead recharge in relation to Coroners arrangements	0.080	
	Bereavement pressures - repairs, caretaking and vehicle hire	0.077	
	Additional income; Civil Protection and Environmental Health	(0.075)	Green
Mitigations:	Leisure Management; efficiencies and contract savings	(0.191)	Green
	Further grant maximisation of eligible expenditure	(0.200)	Amber
	Cross-directorate salary savings	(0.069)	Green
Total		(0.378)	

- 6.1.** The Public Health Directorate is reporting a saving at Month 6 of £0.378m. This is an improvement of £0.014m from the Month 5 position; this is due to additional savings proposals brought forward by the Directorate.
- 6.2.** An additional £0.200m of the Public Health grant has been allocated to cover eligible expenditure.
- 6.3.** Within the Bereavement and Registration service there is a £0.157m reported pressure which includes £0.077m pressure relating to repair and maintenance, caretaking and vehicle hire at the Crematorium and a £0.080m pressure for contract overhead recharges for Coroners arrangements. The current SLA with Devon County is being reviewed and will be further to further engagement.

- 6.4. Pressures are offset by savings achieved through Leisure Management efficiencies and cross-Directorate salary savings.
- 6.5. Underlying risks within the Directorate include the volatility of cremation income within the Bereavement budget, which may deviate from the forecast, and levels of fees and charges income within Public Protection Services.

7. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE

Table 12: Chief Executive's Office Forecast

Chief Executive's Office		Variance £m	RAG (mitigations)
Pressure:	Delivery of planned savings	0.175	
Mitigations	Savings on LGR staffing costs	(0.100)	Amber
	Staffing savings	(0.230)	Amber
Total		(0.155)	

- 7.1. The Chief Executive Office is reporting a favourable variance at Month 6 of £0.155m, noting pressures from brought forward savings targets not expected to be achieved being offset by savings on vacancies held. This position includes an additional savings proposal of £0.100m from reduced staffing costs within the Local Government Reorganisation team as well as savings on staffing.

8. CUSTOMER AND CORPORATE SERVICES DIRECTORATE

Table 13: Customer and Corporate Services Directorate Forecast

Customer & Corporate Services		Variance £m	RAG (mitigations)
	Forecasted survey spends and R+M within Hard FM	0.646	
Pressure:	Guildhall Closure	0.195	
	DEM Referendum	0.169	
	Potential shortfall on vacancy savings targets	0.028	
	Savings plan	1.140	
	Use of flexible capital receipts for transformation	(0.300)	Green
Mitigations:	Release of insurance provision	(0.300)	Green
	Other cross-directorate savings	(0.304)	Amber
Total		1.274	

- 8.1. The Customer and Corporate Services Directorate is reporting a pressure of £1.274m at Month 6, an adverse change of £0.490m since Month 5.
- 8.1.1. Within Hard FM there has been £0.350m of unbudgeted surveys required to ascertain the condition of the Corporate Estate. From these surveys an additional £0.296m of repairs and maintenance has been identified.
- 8.1.2. In Soft FM budgets there is an estimated £0.195m impact, due to reduced income as a result of the extended closure of the Guildhall
- 8.1.3. The DEM Referendum has come in £0.169m over the allocated budget.
- 8.1.4. A net £0.028m pressure is being forecast across the directorate relating to unachievable vacancy savings targets.

- 8.1.5. There are savings plans relating to both 2025/26 and prior year targets, within HR & OD, Departmental Management, Legal, Internal Audit, Transformation and ICT that are unlikely to be achieved. These total £1.140m, of which £0.883m relate to specific 2025/26 plans. The directorate will be working over the coming months to develop business plans to mitigate these pressures.
- 8.1.6. Additional in-year savings have been identified totalling £0.904m, the most significant of which were the use of Capital Receipts flexibilities to fund transformation costs currently met by revenue budgets (£0.300m), and the release of insurance provision (£0.300m).

9. CORPORATE ITEMS

Table 14: Corporate Items Forecast

Corporate Items		Variance £m	RAG (mitigations)
Pressure:	Schools PFI Contract	0.239	
	Pay Award confirmed at 3.2%	0.186	
Mitigations:	Action Plan Proposals - Release additional EPR grant funding	(0.863)	Green
	Additional Support Service Recharge recoverable from funded posts	(0.425)	Green
Total		(0.863)	

Table 15: Progress against savings targets – Treasury Management

Treasury Management Savings Targets	Target per Budget £m	Achieved £m	In Progress £m
Treasury Management Debt rescheduling	0.300	0.300	-
Treasury Management Efficiencies	0.500	0.500	-
Treasury Management MRP adjustment for prior year overpayments	0.634	0.634	-
Total	1.434	1.434	-

- 9.1. This area holds budgets relating to Treasury Management and centrally held grant funding and central expenditure budgets. Additional grant income has been allocated to PCC and this has been released corporately to fund the overall financial position, this results in a favourable variance of £0.863m.
- 9.2. Within Treasury Management, borrowing costs remain managed to budget. The £1.434m savings targets identified in 2025/26 is expected to be fully achieved.
- 9.3. Within Other Corporate Items, there is a pressure arising from the Schools PFI contract, this is expected to be mitigated by additional income from Support Service Recharges (Corporate Overheads) chargeable to funded posts.
- 9.4. The nationally agreed NJC pay award has been confirmed at 3.2%. Provision in the budget allows for a 3% uplift, therefore this confirmation results in financial pressure of £0.186m, which was reported at Month 5.

10. CORE RESOURCES

Table 16: Core Resources Forecast

Core Resources	Budget £m	Forecast £m	Variance £m
Revenue Support Grant	(12.662)	(12.662)	-
Council Tax	(149.450)	(149.450)	-
Business Rates	(86.584)	(86.584)	-
Reserves	(4.722)	(4.722)	-
Total	(253.418)	(253.418)	-

10.1. At Month 6 there are currently no variances forecast against Core Resources which fund the net revenue budget.

11. SAVINGS BUDGETS

Table 17: Summary of progress against savings targets

2025/26 Savings and Management Actions Progress (incl EfW additional income target) - reprofiled for Directorate departmental movements	Total Savings & Management Actions Target		Additional Income Target	Achieved	In Progress	Not achievable	Total
	Recurrent	Non-Recurrent					
Corporate items	(0.500)	(0.300)		(0.800)	-	-	(0.800)
Adult Health & Communities	(2.733)			(2.074)	(0.659)	-	(2.733)
Children's Directorate	(3.142)			(0.613)	(2.529)	-	(3.142)
Growth Directorate	(1.201)	(0.994)	(1.300)	(2.195)		(1.300)	(3.495)
Chief Executive	(0.175)			-	(0.125)	(0.050)	(0.175)
Customer & Corporate	(2.111)			(0.828)	(0.400)	(0.883)	(2.111)
Total	(9.862)	(1.294)	(1.300)	(6.510)	(3.713)	(2.233)	(12.456)

11.1. A summary of the progress achieved against additional savings targets built into Directorate budgets for 2025/26 is set out above. Any pressure in relation to the achievability of these targets is addressed in the relevant Directorate section set out in this report.

12. CAPITAL

12.1. The Capital Programme as at 30 September 2025 incorporates movements since the quarter 1 position as at 30 June 2025, with the 5-year Capital budget 2025-2030 currently forecast at £372.311m.

12.2. Table 18 reflects the change in 5-year programme scope with movement through new approvals and variations since reported at 30 June 2025.

Table 18: Capital Programme Changes

Description	£m
Capital Programme as at 30 June 2025 for 5 year period 2025 - 2030	351.063
New Approvals – see table 21 for breakdown	24.838
Variations	(3.590)
Total Revised Capital Budget (2025/26 -2029/30)	372.311

12.3. A breakdown of the current approved Capital Budget by directorate and by funding is shown in Tables 19 and 20 below.

Table 19: Capital Programme by Directorate

Directorate	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	2029/30 £m	Total
Children's Services	3.501	1.376	-	-	-	4.877
Adults, Health and Communities	13.581	12.964	1.903	-	-	28.448
Growth - Economic Development	49.985	60.393	38.995	10.678	1.917	161.968
Growth - Strategic Planning & Infrastructure	66.688	58.944	10.795	2.856	0.275	139.558
Growth - Street Services	21.960	6.554	0.222	0.212	0.247	29.195
Customer & Corporate Services	5.070	2.516	0.100	0.101	-	7.787
Office for Director of Public Health	0.478	-	-	-	-	0.478
Total	161.263	142.747	52.015	13.847	2.439	372.311

Table 20: Capital Programme Financing

Financed by:	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	2029/30 £m	Total
Capital Receipts	10.518	4.345	1.196	2.840	1.917	20.816
Grant Funding	83.922	42.194	13.744	0.193	0.296	140.349
Corporate Funded borrowing	41.942	33.537	10.225	0.377	-	86.081
Service dept. supported borrowing	20.243	53.927	25.916	10.335	0.226	110.647
Developer contributions	2.454	8.729	0.934	0.102	-	12.219
Other Contributions	2.184	0.015	-	-	-	2.199
Total	161.263	142.747	52.015	13.847	2.439	372.311

12.4. Of the 5-year programme valued at £372.311m, 76.88% is forecast to be funded from grants, contributions and service-supported 'invest-to-save' borrowing, with the remaining 23.12% (£86.081m) forecast to be funded from corporate borrowing. Work is ongoing to update the capital pipeline which will identify further

potential corporate borrowing requirements. Assessment of the future funding assumptions and resulting revenue impact of the capital programme is under review.

Table 21: Capital approvals Quarter 2 including funding

Service /Directorate	Governance	New Approvals	5 Year Programme Approvals £m	
CCO	Exec Dec	Life Centre Fire and PA System Replacement	0.382	URF Corp Borrowing
CCO	Exec Dec	FM Consolidated Capital Programme of Works	2.000	URF Corp Borrowing
SPI	Exec Dec	The Warm Homes: Local Grant	2.571	RF Grant
SPI	Exec Dec	Plymouth Major Road Network	12.809	RF Grant/ URF Grant
CS	Exec Dec	Longcause Office Conversion (Phase 1)	0.208	URF Grant
SS	Exec Dec	Street Furniture Replacements	0.120	URF Corp Borrowing
SS	Exec Dec	Highway Capital Investment Programme	6.482	URF Grant/URF Corp Borrowing
Various	S151	Various Approvals up to £200k	0.266	Various
Total Capital Approvals			24.838	

Financing of New Approvals in Q2	£m	
External Grants, S106 contributions, Cap Receipts	20.402	82.1%
PCC financing (all borrowing and revenue)	4.436	17.9%
Total	24.838	

Glossary	
AHC	Adults, Health and Communities
CS	Children's Services
SPI	Strategic Planning & Infrastructure
SS	Street Services
ED	Economic Development
PH	Public Health
CCO	Customer & Corporate

Glossary	
RF	Ring Fenced
URF	Unring Fenced
CB	Corporate Borrowing
SB	Service Borrowing
Cap Rec	Capital Receipts
Cont	External Contribution

Capital Programme 2025/26 monitoring

- 12.5.** The 2025/26 forecast has decreased by £17.550m, from £178.813m to £161.263m. This reduction is primarily due to £29.109m of planned spending being deferred to later years, partially offset by £12.030m of new approvals expected to be spent this financial year, along with a minor programme adjustment removing £0.471m.
- 12.6.** Table 22 below includes a breakdown by directorate of actual cash spend as at 30 September 2025 shown as a value and percentage against latest forecast (overall 31.37%), with the percentage to Month 6 2024/25 (23.40%) reflecting tighter forecasting in 2025/26.
- 12.7.** Approval is sought for a virement of £425,452.64 to consolidate the Royal Parade project budget, currently split across two separate cost codes. The Royal Parade initiative was initially approved as part of the Better Place Public Realm programme within the Capital Programme. Subsequently, the Transforming Cities Fund was also added to the Capital Programme, which included a separate allocation for Royal Parade focused on Sustainable Transport delivery. Both elements are now being delivered concurrently by the same project team. To streamline project management and reporting, it is proposed that the two budget lines be merged under a single project entry within the Capital Programme.

Table 22: 2025/26 Programme including actual spend and % spent compared to latest forecast

Directorate	Latest Forecast 2025/26	Actual Spend as at 30 September 2025	Spend as a % of Latest Forecast
	£m	£m	%
Children's Services	3.501	0.481	13.73%
Adults, Health and Communities	13.581	4.847	35.69%
Growth - Economic Development	49.985	10.542	21.09%
Growth - Strategic Planning & Infrastructure	66.688	26.263	39.38%
Growth - Street Services	21.960	6.324	28.80%
Customer & Corporate Services	5.070	1.778	35.06%
Office for Director of Public Health	0.478	0.350	73.16%
Total	161.263	50.584	31.37%

- 12.8.** Profiling of the Capital Programme will continue to review robustness of forecasts to spend as project officers assess the inflationary impact to schemes, delivery timescales and challenges to meet grant funding conditions.

13 Prudential Indicators Q2 2025/26

13.1 The Authority measures and manages its capital expenditure, borrowing and commercial and service investments with reference to the following indicators. It is now a requirement of the CIPFA Prudential Code that these are reported on a quarterly basis.

Table 23: Capital Financing Requirement

Capital Financing Requirement	2024/25 actual £m	2025/26 forecast £m	2026/27 budget £m	2027/28 budget £m	2028/29 budget £m
General Fund services	869.516	911.197	975.882	986.747	970.978

Capital Financing Requirement: The Authority's cumulative outstanding amount of underlying debt finance is measured by the capital financing requirement (CFR). This increases with new debt-financed capital expenditure and reduces with Minimum Revenue Provision / loans fund repayments and whenever capital receipts used to replace debt. The actual CFR is calculated on an annual basis.

CFR represents the total amount of capital expenditure that has not yet been financed by capital receipts, grants, or contributions. CFR is not the same as the actual amount of borrowing (loans) held by the authority. Instead, it is an accounting measure that shows the cumulative value of capital expenditure that has been financed by borrowing or other temporary means. It is a way of tracking the long-term impact of capital decisions on the authority's balance sheet.

13.2 Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement

Statutory guidance is that total debt should remain below the capital financing requirement, except in the short term. The Authority has complied with, and expects to continue to comply with, this requirement in the medium term as is shown below.

Table 24: Gross Debt/Capital Financing Requirement

Gross Debt /Capital Financing Requirement	2024/25 actual £m	2025/26 forecast £m	2026/27 budget £m	2027/28 budget £m	2028/29 budget £m	Q2 2025/26 actual £m
Debt (borrowing)	702.532	780.500	922.600	1021.900	1085.300	757.532
PFI & Leases	92.828	88.978	86.478	83.978	81.478	91.478
Gross debt (incl PFI & Leases)	795.360	869.478	1009.078	1105.878	1166.778	849.010
Forecast borrowing for working capital / DSG deficit requirement	18.498	30.000	75.860	131.600	202.520	
Total debt less DSG deficit	684.034	750.500	846.740	890.300	882.780	
Capital Financing Requirement	869.516	911.197	975.882	986.747	970.978	

13.2.1 Note that whilst the underlying driver for Plymouth City Council's borrowing is capital investment, actual borrowing levels are driven by cash flow needs. Therefore, the level of borrowing above also includes the impact of working capital financing, including the cumulative deficit in the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The DSG deficit is treated as a short-term, working capital financing issue because we expect that government will establish a policy framework, guidance and funding to support Local Authorities to reduce and eliminate deficits before the statutory override ends in March 2028. Notwithstanding this expectation, we have included a provisional forecast for DSG deficit borrowing for the 2028/29 financial year, taking a prudent approach whilst we await government announcements on SEND reform. The net working capital requirement in 2025/26 is anticipated to be lower than the forecast cumulative DSG deficit.

13.2.2 Included in the debt balance are amounts relating to 'PFI liabilities & finance leases'. These represent the gross value of the total long-term financing obligations payable or long-term service delivery contracts, e.g. the Energy from Waste plant. Whilst these are both analysed alongside borrowing, these are financing

arrangements directly linked to underlying assets, which represent a prudent approach to enabling key operational initiatives to proceed.

13.3 Debt and the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary:

13.3.1 The Authority is legally obliged to set an affordable borrowing limit (also termed the Authorised Limit for external debt) each year. In line with statutory guidance, a lower “operational boundary” is also set as a warning level should debt approach the limit.

13.3.2 The Council manages its borrowing activity in line with its approved Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy, ensuring that borrowing is managed responsibly, and sustainably. The setting of the Authorised Limit is informed by the CIPFA Prudential Code, and the Council continues to operate well within these defined parameters.

13.3.3 Maintaining borrowing within these limits is essential to ensure that the Council’s capital investment programme remains financially sustainable and that any future implications for Council Tax are manageable and proportionate.

Table 25: Debt and Authorised Limit/Operational Boundary

	Max. debt Q2 2025/26 £m	Debt at Q2 2025/26 £m	Authorised Limit £m	Operational Boundary £m	Complied? Yes/No
Borrowing	800.532	757.532	788.286	838.286	Yes
PFI and Finance Leases	92.828	91.478	217.000	217.000	Yes
Total debt	893.360	849.010	1005.286	1055.286	

Since the operational boundary is a management tool for in-year monitoring it is not significant if the boundary is breached on occasions due to variations in cash flow, and this is not counted as a compliance failure.

13.4 Proportion of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream

Although capital expenditure is not charged directly to the revenue budget, interest payable on loans and MRP/loans fund repayments are charged to revenue. The net annual charge is known as financing costs; this is compared to the net revenue stream i.e. the amount funded from Council Tax, business rates and general government grants.

Table 26: Proportion of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream

	2024/25 actual £m	2025/26 forecast £m	2026/27 budget £m	2027/28 budget £m
Financing costs (£m)	43.480	49.913	57.156	64.660
Proportion of net revenue stream - all financing costs	18.38%	19.73%	22.37%	24.44%
- financing costs exc. Service Borrowing	10.73%	11.98%	14.35%	16.16%

Element of financing costs due to DSG deficit (£m)	n/a	0.450	3.224	5.593
% impact of DSG deficit financing	n/a	0.18%	1.27%	2.12%

13.4.1 The increase in financing costs is driven by assumptions surrounding use of borrowing to support the approved capital programme and cashflow requirements. Currently this includes assumptions on financing required to fund the cumulative DSG deficit, however we are seeking guidance to clarify how this financing

cost should be disclosed within Prudential Code indicators. The level of borrowing incurred, and therefore MRP, may be reduced where external funding sources, e.g. grants, are secured.

13.4.2 It is important to note that (in line with guidance) we have measured total financing costs against the core (net) revenue streams for the authority. However, a large proportion of the financing costs relate to borrowing for investments – known as ‘service borrowing’ - which generate non-core income streams, mainly rents through the authority’s Property Regeneration Fund (PRF) property portfolio. This makes the financing costs more affordable for the Council, providing that risks relating to the income streams are well-managed. This being the case, we have also shown a comparative ratio of financing costs / net revenue stream % figure that excludes service borrowing from the cost of borrowing, which we consider to be a more accurate view of the affordability of debt financing. The impact of DSG deficit financing is shown for information – the % impact is included within the overall % figures for reference.

13.4.3 From 2026/27, the Fair Funding Review will impact general government grants significantly by ‘rolling in’ grant funding streams that have previously been excluded from the Net Revenue Stream – this will have the impact of reducing the proportion of net revenue required for financing costs. At this stage, to ensure comparability with figures published in our 2025/26 Treasury Management Strategy, the anticipated impact of the Fair Funding Review on our net revenue stream has not been included within forward projections for 2026/27 and 2027/28.

13.4.4 Short-term borrowing with other local authorities is currently being secured at 4.25% to 4.65% with comparable 1-year PWLB at 4.58% as at 30 September 2025.

13.5 Net Income from Commercial and Service Investments to Net Revenue Stream

The Authority’s income from commercial and service investments as a proportion of its net revenue stream has been and is expected to be as indicated below.

Table 27: Net Income from Commercial and Service Investments to Net Revenue Stream

	2024/25 actual £m	2025/26 forecast £m	2026/27 budget £m	2027/28 budget £m
Total net income from service & commercial investments (£m)	(11.281)	(12.092)	(12.303)	(13.016)
Proportion of net revenue stream	4.77%	4.78%	4.81%	4.92%

13.5.1 This income relates to the strategic investments made into the Property Regeneration Fund (PRF), currently held as a portfolio of assets with a gross capital cost of £236.3m. The PRF has regenerated areas of the city, encouraged private investment and created or retained employment in the city. Again, forecasts of net revenue stream in future years currently exclude anticipated changes arising from the Fair Funding Review, to ensure comparability with the indicator set in our Treasury Management Strategy for 2025/26.

13.5.2 This is a useful performance indicator for assessing the council’s dependency on ‘non-core’ income; showing that the council is not overly reliant on commercial investments (which could be a risk to financial stability).

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Cabinet



Date of meeting: 10 November 2025

Title of Report: **Plymouth Plan for Nature and People**

Lead Member: Councillor Tom Briars-Delve (Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change)

Lead Strategic Director: Glenn Caplin-Grey (Strategic Director for Growth)

Author: Chris Avent

Contact Email: Chris.avent@plymouth.gov.uk

Your Reference:

Key Decision: No

Confidentiality: Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

To present to Cabinet the purpose of and engagement process followed for producing the final version of the Plymouth Plan for Nature and People, a new strategic delivery plan for the Council.

Recommendations and Reasons

1. Endorse the final version of the Plymouth Plan for Nature and People to act as a strategic delivery framework integrating nature and natural spaces into the city's growth.

Reason: To confirm that the final document following public consultation is approved and taken forward having taken account of consultation responses and to recognise the importance of the document for delivering against city priorities.

2. Approve the creation of a Year 1 Action Plan for delivery in 2026.

Reason: To recognise the need for accountability around specific actions related to the plan.

Alternative options considered and rejected

1. Do nothing
Rejected – this would have left the Council with out-of-date strategic delivery plans related to managing our natural spaces.
2. Update existing plans without any engagement and consultation.
Rejected – it is good practice to consult with the public before the implementation of any new strategic plans.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan Corporate Plan

The plan sets out how we will deliver the objectives using the Corporate Principles of Democracy, Fairness, Responsibility and Co-operation as well as setting out how it supports the city vision of “One of Europe’s most vibrant waterfront cities, where an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by everyone.”

Plymouth Plan

Delivers against HEA7 which focuses on health and wellbeing through natural spaces and GRO6, which emphasises the delivery of a sustainable and integrated natural network.

Implications for the Medium-Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

The plan sets out an ambition to raise external investment to work towards the delivery of the objectives and actions in the plan, ensuring that there is greater value added to council revenue budgets.

Financial Risks

The plan sets out actions to raise significant ongoing external investment to support the delivery of the plan, there are no financial risks to the council directly arising from the adoption of this plan.

Legal Implications

The Plan sets out an approach and actions which ensure the Council meets its new statutory duties in place under the Environment Act 2021.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

This plan supports delivery of actions set out in the Net Zero Action Plan and has objectives focused on environmental enhancement throughout.

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

** When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

The plan has been designed and written to incorporate inclusivity as a principle.

Appendices

**Add rows as required to box below*

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Plymouth Plan for Nature and People Briefing Report							
B	PCC_Plan for Nature and People_two-page Summary_Screen_Final							
C	PCC_Plan for Nature and People_Final							
D	EqlA_Plymouth Plan for Nature and People							

Background papers:

**Add rows as required to box below*

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable)
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	If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

Fin	OW. 25.26. 089	Leg	LS/00 0013 12/2/ AC/3 0/10/ 25	Mon Off	N/A	HR	N/A	Asset s	N/A	Strat Proc	N/A
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Kat Deeney											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes Date agreed: 06/10/2025											
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Tom Briars-Delve approved verbally Date approved: 06/10/2025											

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Briefing Report

Plymouth Plan for Nature and People (2025-2030)

November 2025



1. Background

The Plymouth Plan for Nature and People (2025–2030) articulates a strategic vision to position nature as essential infrastructure within the city’s growth, health and wellbeing, and economic development. It responds to both national and local environmental challenges, including the climate and ecological emergencies, and aligns with the Environment Act 2021 and the Government’s 25-Year Environmental Improvement Plan.

Plymouth’s natural environment—comprising over 40% green space, three National Landscapes, and the UK’s first National Marine Park—is recognised as a key asset for biodiversity, public health, and economic prosperity. The Plan builds on a decade of environmental innovation and delivery, including initiatives such as Plymouth Sound National Marine Park, Green Minds, and Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest.

2. Purpose of the Plan

The Plan serves as a strategic delivery framework for nature recovery and integration across all sectors of city service delivery. Its overarching aim is to establish Plymouth as a Nature-rich Ocean City, where thriving ecosystems are accessible to all and contribute to climate resilience, health equity, and economic opportunity.

The Plan is structured around five key objectives:

1. A Nature-Rich Ocean City
2. A Playful, Active, and Healthy City
3. Inclusive Nature Spaces
4. A Nature-Connected, Engaged, and Empowered City
5. An Innovative Investment City

Each objective is supported by a delivery programme with measurable actions and outcomes, including habitat enhancement, tree planting, community engagement, and green finance initiatives.

3. Engagement and Consultation Process

The Plan was shaped through extensive engagement with over 1,000 residents and stakeholders over the last 15 months. Initial consultation included the 'Summer of Nature' campaign, which gathered over 550 survey responses. This was followed by 12 focus groups held across the city, attended by 110 participants representing community groups, schools, businesses, and charities.

Key themes included access to nature, biodiversity, climate resilience, and community stewardship.

A formal public consultation on the draft Plan was conducted during August–September 2025, receiving 286 survey responses and eight attendees at focus groups, and additional feedback from 36 children and young people. The consultation demonstrated strong support for the Plan’s vision, with 76% of respondents expressing overall approval. Feedback was used to refine the Plan, strengthen delivery actions, and improve clarity and inclusivity.

Following analysis of the feedback received from the public through the consultation process we identified the main actionable points and how we integrated them into the final draft of the PfN&P. This is shown in full in Appendix I, but we summarise here:

1. Strengthening Accessibility and Inclusion

The Plan has been revised to improve clarity and accessibility, including updates to the glossary and the creation of simplified summaries for the public and young people. It now includes stronger commitments to inclusive access to nature spaces, such as coastal areas, and outlines actions like developing anchor points and improving the South West Coast Path. Volunteering opportunities will be communicated both online and offline to ensure broader engagement, especially for those less digitally connected.

2. Enhancing Cultural, Educational, and Community Engagement

Arts and culture have been more prominently integrated into the Plan, with added references to creative programmes and partnerships. Education initiatives have been expanded, including commitments to school-based nature literacy programmes like Sea in Schools and Next Generation Nature. The Plan also now includes clearer actions to support community involvement, such as increasing representation on the Steering Group and strengthening communication about nature-based activities.

3. Improving Specificity, Delivery, and Accountability

To address concerns about vagueness, the Plan now includes a more detailed Delivery Programme with clearer measures of success and team responsibilities. Strategic delivery has been clarified, with oversight from the Natural Environment service and a broadened Steering Group. Monitoring and reporting mechanisms have been reinforced, aligning with national indicators and ensuring transparency in progress tracking.

4. Addressing Climate, Coastal, and Financial Concerns

The Plan now better reflects the urgency of the climate crisis by aligning with Plymouth’s Net Zero Action Plan and the emerging Climate Adaptation Plan. Coastal nature protection has been strengthened through the commitment to a new Plan for Water and updates to the Nature Rich Plymouth vision. Financially, the Plan emphasizes that it will not increase council tax, with 62% of funding sourced externally, and introduces Ocean City Nature as a vehicle for innovative investment to support delivery without burdening taxpayers.

5. Next Steps

Following endorsement, the Plan will be overseen by a cross-sector Steering Group to monitor delivery and ensure accountability. Implementation will be led by the Council's Natural Environment Service in collaboration with internal departments and external partners.

Key next steps include:

- Establishing the Steering Group and delivery governance
- Allocating delivery actions to responsible teams
- Launching a citywide communications campaign
- Publishing Plymouth's Natural Capital Investment Prospectus
- Developing a Plan for Water and Climate Adaptation Plan

Monitoring and reporting will be supported by citizen science, academic research, and digital infrastructure to track progress against environmental and social indicators.

6. Recommendations to Cabinet

1. **Endorse the final version of the Plymouth Plan for Nature and People, following public consultation, to act as a strategic delivery framework integrating nature and natural spaces into the city's growth.**

Reason: To confirm that the final document is approved and taken forward having taken account of consultation responses and recognize the importance of the document for delivering against city priorities.

2. **Approve the creation of a Year 1 Action Plan for delivery in 2026.**

Reason: To recognise the need for accountability around specific actions related to the plan

Kat Deeney, Chris Avent, Liza Oxford & Emmie Readman
Natural Environment Service, Street Services, Plymouth City Council

Appendix I - TOP ACTIONS IDENTIFIED FROM THE SURVEY RESPONSES

The top actionable points from the survey and how we are going to integrate them into the final draft of the PfN&P.

	You said	We said
1	<i>"I think that the planting of more trees is essential for the benefit of nature and people."</i>	<p>We agree – and we're taking action. On page 25 of the Plan, you'll find details about some of the tree planting and maintenance initiatives we're currently working on. Did you know that we have a dedicated and ambitious plan specifically for tree planting across the city? It's called the Plan for Trees, and it sets out our long-term vision for protecting, planting, and celebrating trees across the city. You can explore it on our website here: Plan for Trees PLYMOUTH.GOV.UK.</p> <p>What have we changed? Reviewed document and strengthened references to trees. We have recognised the work of the Plan for Trees partnership on page 17, addressing the challenges of Tree Equity in the City.</p>
2	<i>"I felt the report, and summary, could have been written in a more accessible, plain English way, as much of the language could exclude people from truly engaging or understanding."</i>	<p>We hear you. While the Plan is primarily written as a document for professionals — including funders, investors, and sector specialists — we recognise that not everyone is familiar with technical terms. That's why we've made sure to include two easy-to-read, 2-page summaries: one for the general public and another tailored for children and young people. These versions use simpler language and are designed to be more engaging and inclusive.</p> <p>What have we changed? We've updated the glossary and reviewed the summary documents to make definitions and explanations clearer and more accessible for everyone reading the Plan.</p>
3	<i>"Develop cultural/artistic opportunities to engage with nature within the Plan."</i>	<p>We completely agree. The arts and culture are really important parts of Plymouth's identity. They can animate nature in really engaging, fun, and moving ways, and we know how important they are to help nurture connection between people and nature.</p> <p>We have a strong track record of integrating arts and culture into our environmental work. In recent years we've collaborated with a broad range of</p>

		<p>cultural partners like Arts University Plymouth, Stiltskin Theatre Company, and a range of local artists. Through creative commissions, public art events, and nature-inspired performances, we've celebrated the environment in imaginative and meaningful ways.</p> <p>Looking ahead, we're committed to building on this approach and make sure that when we talk about nature, we are considering opportunities for artistic and cultural collaboration across the city.</p> <p>What have we changed?</p> <p>We have reviewed the document and added in more references to artistic and cultural programmes and opportunities, specifically in the 'Playful, Active, and Healthy Plymouth'. We have also added in another photo of arts and culture practice as well as strengthening references to the strong history of partnership delivery of artistic and cultural programmes through past Council-led projects.</p>
4	<p><i>"The enhancing of digital platforms is interesting but must not be done at the expense of existing channels. It would be a great improvement to have a centralised, easily accessible online presence for volunteers to access to find local nature projects they can join, especially by allowing anyone who has such a project to register that they are looking for volunteers. However, it can't be forgotten that many volunteers are older people or those who struggle with technology, so means must be put in place for those people to feel at no disadvantage when engaging. Any online service must have an offline equivalent."</i></p>	<p>We understand. Volunteering should be flexible and accessible to everyone. Not everyone can sign up to a big commitment of regular volunteering and we know some people would be more comfortable 'doing their bit' whenever they can. We recognise not everyone has access to digital/online platforms.</p> <p>In addition to the digital platform mentioned in the Plan, we'll continue to share volunteering opportunities in other ways too. This includes putting up posters at relevant sites and working closely with our community partners, like Friends of Groups, to spread the word more widely across neighbourhoods. Our aim is to make it as easy as possible for people to get involved, whether online or offline.</p> <p>We know how important communication is to residents and communities for us all to be able to make the most of efforts towards delivering the vision in this plan – we heard this really clearly in the focus groups.</p> <p>What have we changed?</p>

		<p>We have reviewed the Plan with this in mind and felt it was important to strengthen this in a really clear way and so in the Delivery Programme (page 48) we have added a specific measure of success to ensure we are accountable it – regular evaluation with stakeholder’s measures satisfaction with communication about nature-based activity programmes in the city.</p> <p>And to bolster that we have added an action to develop dedicated people in the council to communicate volunteering opportunities using a variety of methods.</p>
5	<p><i>“Focus is needed on existing maintenance. I would like to know what is specific to my neighbourhood.”</i></p>	<p>We agree - ongoing maintenance is really important and it’s a big part of what we do. This plan sits alongside our existing management plans for nature spaces across the whole of Plymouth- every ward and every neighbourhood. While we can’t include every detail in this document, the Plan provides an overview of our broader goals and priorities.</p> <p>We regularly update our maintenance plans to reflect public feedback — like the improvements made to our <u>like our grass cutting map here</u>— and to respond to environmental changes driven by the climate crisis. We’re committed to ensuring that our approach remains adaptive, responsive, and informed by the communities we serve.</p> <p>What have we changed?</p> <p>We have strengthened the signposting to what’s already happening i.e. grass cutting rota and signposting to the specific actions in the delivery programme.</p> <p>We have updated the plan to provide a commitment to more community representation on the Steering Group so that a range of community voices are part of the oversight of the delivery.</p>
6	<p><i>“There is a lot of general 'good intention statements' that few could disagree. The specifics of how to achieve the lofty goals are vague. A proposed structure for the team/s responsible. It doesn't make clear who will be responsible for many actions - who will be on the steering group and who gets to decide that?”</i></p>	<p>We agree as you will see we have included a Delivery Programme in the Appendices at the back of the Plan which sets out the specific, although in some cases still high level, actions required to work towards the measures of success.</p> <p>What have we changed?</p> <p>We have updated the section on Strategic Delivery to make this clearer at this stage. The delivery programme will be led by the council’s Natural Environment service who will collaborate with</p>

		<p>other council service areas and partners to deliver the actions set out. One of the first actions will be to ensure that each of the actions and measures set out in this plan is allocated to specific teams to lead and report back on to ensure we are able to monitor progress and where necessary make adjustments to stay on track.</p> <p>To ensure accountability, we'll be working alongside a wide range of people and partners to oversee the delivery and maintain high standards. This includes expanding the Steering Group to bring together people from a broad range of demographics across the city, helping to ensure their community is represented in the plan</p>
7	<i>"The plan doesn't seem to include allotments."</i>	<p>Allotments are little green havens across our city. Not only do they provide space for residents and communities to grow their own food they also promote physical and mental wellbeing and bring neighbourhoods together. These green spaces also support biodiversity, reduce urban heat, and help people reconnect with nature in even the most built-up environments. They can also be a vital tool in tackling food insecurity and building climate resilience at a local level. Plus, there's something really satisfying about eating something you've grown yourself!</p> <p>We've heard that Allotments are really important to you which is why we've also added into the delivery plan that as the city grows we are exploring the potential expansion of the allotment network.</p> <p>What have we changed?</p> <p>While we mention Allotments on pages 20, 27 and in the Appendices on page 46 we agree that they are important spaces and deserve a dedicated further action point, that we've included on Page 46 under Food Growing - Explore the potential expansion of the allotment network as the city grows. Space is at a premium in the city but as the city grows we are committed to ensuring that opportunity provides scope to increase the number of allotments for residents.</p>
8	<i>"The plan talks about the sea but doesn't reflect (or at least it is not</i>	<p>We have multiple projects and partnerships are dedicated to keeping our rivers, estuaries, and our</p>

	<p><i>clear) about how coastal nature can be improved and protected and accesses in a way that does not damage these fragile habitats.”</i></p>	<p>Sound healthy and thriving. From the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park project to the Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum, we are working alongside experts to keep these habitats safe and healthy.</p> <p>To put all this work together and join up the vision, we are going to be working in partnership with key stakeholders to produce a Plan for Water. This Plan will set out what we’re going to do to keep these blue spaces safe and special for wildlife and for people.</p> <p>Our coastal sites are well recognised, with some being nationally important and we have committed to protecting and enhancing these as part of the Nature Rich Ocean City objective and linked actions (pages 43 and 44).</p> <p>What have we changed?</p> <p>We reviewed the document with this mind and have updated the vision of the Nature Rich Plymouth on page 24 to include specific reference to coast as an important part of the city’s biodiversity.</p>
9	<p><i>“Building on the call for education and public engagement, promote nature literacy in schools, strengthen education programmes in schools.”</i></p>	<p>We know it’s really important to tell people how amazing nature is, and how important it is to protect it. Children, young people, and adults can all benefit from learning more about the incredible wildlife right on our doorstep, the challenges it’s facing, and what we can do to help.</p> <p>Many of you said about how important it is to make sure that we are going into schools to teach children about nature and we absolutely agree. Did you know that many of our projects on the ground deliver activities in schools and with young people every day?</p> <p>The Plymouth Sound National Marine Park team is visiting every school in Plymouth to talk about the importance of the sea and marine life, and how we can protect it. Our Green Communities team runs a Next Generation Nature education programme, running nature-based school sessions to teach about biodiversity and how we can help nature. The new recycling officers in the Council will be going into schools to talk about recycling and litter. There’s</p>

		<p>lots of education initiatives happening in the Council and with our partners.</p> <p>We are committed to making sure that future generations know how important nature is, in Plymouth and beyond, and how they can help to look after it so that it can be enjoyed for generations to come.</p> <p>What have we changed?</p> <p>To make this point clearer and stronger in the plan we have strengthened the reference to education and learning in the nature connected, engaged and empowered Plymouth objective as well as adding a new action in the delivery programme to 'continue to deliver and seek opportunities to expand the city's Sea in Schools Programme with partners in the city.'</p>
10	<p><i>"A positive plan for nature is welcome but nature protection also needs to be built into other policies, especially those on transport, housing and other development issues.</i></p> <p><i>I'm applauding the steering group. think they should be mentioned by name in the plan so it's clear this is a wider than PCC thing."</i></p>	<p>We agree and you will see that we already have agreed specific policies in the <u>Joint Local Plan</u> that offer recognition and protection to our natural environment (DEV26 and DEV27) and Trees and Hedgerows (DEV28) as well as a recognised Biodiversity Network. These policies are balanced against wider infrastructure needs of the city and for people to have good quality homes and neighbourhoods to live in and ways to get around the city.</p> <p>What have we changed?</p> <p>The council also has integrated a Climate Impact Assessment requirement into every Decision taken by the members and officers. This assessment takes into account a range of factors, including biodiversity, to ensure that the proposal aligns with existing Climate and Nature goals. This wasn't referenced in the plan before but we have now added this in to make sure people understand some of the ways behind the scenes that we are working to protect the environment in a growing city and genuinely consider climate goals as part of our decision making.</p> <p>Thanks for recognising the hard work that many have put towards this plan and we agree this needs to be recognised more clearly so we have also added in an acknowledgments section - to recognise and say thank you for the contributions so many</p>

		people, groups and partners have made in helping to shape this plan.
11	<i>“The Plan states that there will be accessible and inclusive natural spaces across the city. But does not state how this will be achieved.”</i>	<p>Every person in Plymouth deserves to enjoy and benefit from getting outside and being in nature. We know that not every nature space is accessible for everyone. Through the Plan, we want to identify places where we can improve access to nature spaces and work with communities to make this happen where possible.</p> <p>Many of you talked about the need to make our coastal spaces more accessible, so more people can feel closer to the sea. Have you heard about our Plymouth Sound National Marine Park (PSNMP)? The PSNMP is working closely with communities near Ernesettle Creek and Firestone Bay to strengthen their connection to local blue spaces. Through the development of Community Access Points, they aim to create welcoming, accessible routes that encourage regular interaction with these natural areas and reflect the needs and aspirations of local residents.</p> <p>We are also working closely with the South West Coast Path, to improve accessibility along Plymouth’s stretch of Coast Path.</p> <p>What have we changed?</p> <p>We have reviewed the plan with this in mind and have made a few changes to ensure the importance of this comes through. We strengthened the action about access to sea and beaches in the Inclusive Nature Spaces section and recognised a specific action to delivering 'anchor points' at Firestone Bay and Ernesettle as part of our NMP programme.</p> <p>We have also ensured that we have made stronger reference in a couple of key places in the Plan to the South West Coast Path and how there is really positive working going on to improve accessibility.</p>
12	<i>“Make sure that you have set up a matrix of what you will measure - insect/plant diversity; residents’ sense of well-being - preferably with comparators. I think the plan needs to use less specific terms and language- will many people</i>	<p>We agree—understanding what’s working and what needs improving is essential. That’s why we’ve built in a commitment to monitor and report on progress throughout the life of the Plan (see page 37).</p> <p>We’ll be tracking our progress against the specific proposed measures of success and actions set out in</p>

	<p><i>understand what moderate/condition is?”</i></p>	<p>the Delivery Programme (pages 43–50 of the Appendices). These measures of success are our benchmarks, and we’ll use them to assess how well we’re delivering on our commitments.</p> <p>What have we changed?</p> <p>We can see that some of the measures might not have been as clear as they could be and that is because in addition to local measures, we’re also working to meet national nature indicators, overseen by organisations like Natural England, to ensure our work contributes to wider environmental goals and we have added in some information linking explain these measures a bit further.</p> <p>After reviewing the section on Strategic Delivery we thought this could also be strengthened and so we have re-written and strengthened this so that it is clearer in how we will ensure oversight of the delivery of the plan. This includes how we’ll regularly review progress with the steering group and publish updates that show how we’re performing against the Plan’s targets—highlighting both successes and areas where more work is needed.</p>
13	<p><i>“I think the plan could be more ambitious in relation to addressing the climate crisis. The urgency of the crisis doesn't necessarily come through.”</i></p>	<p>Taking action about the climate crisis is crucial. We officially declared a Climate Emergency in March 2019 and are working hard to mitigate and address the climate crisis across the Council. Every aim and deliverable in the Plan for Nature and People goes towards combatting the climate crisis.</p> <p>To move us towards the Council’s goal of our being carbon neutral by 2030, we co-developed the Net Zero Action Plan which you can read on our website here: Net Zero Action Plan PLYMOUTH.GOV.UK. This Plan provides clear actions about how we are approaching the climate crisis and moving towards carbon neutrality as a Council. This Plan sits alongside the Plan for Nature and People and our forthcoming Climate Adaptation Plan, which is currently in production.</p> <p>The Delivery Programme has a specific section highlighting measures of success and actions towards Climate Resilience and Adaptation on page 44.</p>

		<p>What have we changed?</p> <p>To strengthen this, we have updated and strengthened references (pages 9, 21, 42) to the city's current Net Zero Action Plan and the emerging Climate Adaptation Plan to clarify how the Plan for Nature and People's objectives also support and align with these plans, reinforcing the city's commitment to climate resilience and carbon neutrality through nature-based solutions.</p>
14	<p><i>"What is the cost of this plan, what is its impact upon council tax bills? We need a clear idea of where the money is coming from and how sure is the council of meeting its £50M goal."</i></p>	<p>This Plan does not require any additional cost to the taxpayer. In fact, 62% of our work is funded through external grants, which means we've successfully secured funding from outside sources for specific nature environment programmes. These funds are ring-fenced and cannot be used for other Council activities but we also work to put them to good effect to deliver socio-economic benefits too.</p> <p>When applying for these funding opportunities, we prioritise collaboration and creativity—ensuring that we can share resources with partners and communities. We know that these projects achieve the greatest impact when delivered collectively, involving a wide range of people and organisations across the city.</p> <p>To learn more about how the Council is working towards the £50 million target, please refer to the Innovative Investment section on pages 32–33 of the Plan.</p> <p>What have we changed?</p> <p>We have added some further information about this in page 32 of the plan to make it clear about the innovative plan for raising these levels of investment.</p> <p>"This, coupled with the existing commitment from the council's budget, mean we are able to deliver more value for money for the city without putting further pressure on the public purse. The council's new innovative Company to drive this forward - Ocean City Nature - looks to build investment up to a level to enable more money to circulate to community activity and deliver the goals of this plan."</p>

An updated strategic document is required to guide investment and activity across the city's natural infrastructure. This need arises from the expiration of previous documents and the introduction of new national legislation and policy.

- The Green Space Strategy (2008–2023) and Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2010–2020) are now outdated.
- New statutory duties under the Environment Act 2021.
- The need to maintain Plymouth’s leadership in nature-based investment and secure new funding streams.
- Support for Plymouth’s growth ambitions through high-quality environments for living, working, studying, and investing.
- The role of nature in supporting the city’s health and wellbeing objectives.
- The imperative to deliver climate mitigation and adaptation measures using cost-effective, nature-based interventions.
- Community feedback from the Summer of Nature survey highlighting aspirations to connect with and enhance nature in the city.



Figure 1: The question ‘What’s your favourite memory from a nature place in Plymouth?’ evoked lots of responses shown graphically.

PLYMOUTH PLAN FOR NATURE AND PEOPLE

2025-2030

Growth, health, and economy
over the next five years.

WHAT IS THE PLAN FOR NATURE AND PEOPLE?

This plan outlines how we will place nature at the heart of our city's identity, growth, health, and economy over the next five years.

Plymouth aims to be locally celebrated and globally recognised as a nature rich ocean city with nature at its heart. We want everyone to enjoy, be part of, and feel connected to our incredible nature spaces.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

Plymouth is an amazing city where nature thrives. With over 40 per cent green space, three National Landscapes, and the UK's first National Marine Park, we have the ability to lead the way in nature recovery, health equity, and climate resilience.

These nature spaces include parks, nature reserves, neighbourhood open spaces, verges, play areas, sports pitches, allotments, cemeteries, streams, ponds, rivers, street trees, woodlands and grassy areas. At sea this includes the open marine environment with all of the habitats and species that exist within and beneath, as well as the estuaries, mudflats, salt marsh, cliffs and rocky shore.

But we face challenges:

- The climate crisis is driving the loss of wildlife and wildlife homes. The Wildlife Trusts, 2022
- Not everyone can access nature spaces
- Inequalities in physical and mental health around the city
- The climate crisis is creating risks and extreme weather events, including flooding and drought

We know from evidence that nature can address these challenges - supporting better health, resilient facilities, and community wellbeing.

WHAT WE HEARD

To shape the plan, we listened to over 650 residents and stakeholders' voices. We believe the plan will only work if we work together. From a 'Summer of Nature' to a number of focus groups, our communities helped to shape the plan. We listened to lots of different ideas, concerns, and suggestions, and we have made sure that they are at the heart of this plan.



WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?



A NATURE RICH OCEAN CITY

A city buzzing with nature

We will create better and more joined up nature spaces on land and in the sea.

Key actions:

- Work with communities to co-design and deliver neighbourhood level wildlife enhancements
- Plant 1,000 individual street trees by 2030; improve 400ha of nature space
- Achieve ‘moderate/good’ condition in 90 per cent of key nature sites



A PLAYFUL, ACTIVE AND HEALTHY CITY

Where everyone can access quality natural spaces

We will make sure that everyone lives within a 400 metre walk of quality natural space, using nature to improve public health and wellbeing.

Key actions:

- Embed nature into public health and care strategies
- Improve facilities and access to parks and marine spaces
- Expand ecotherapy, social prescribing, and wellbeing hubs



INCLUSIVE NATURE SPACES

Meeting the needs of people by supporting activity programmes

We will co-design, invest in and co-manage spaces that are welcoming and accessible to all, addressing inequalities in provision and quality.

Key actions:

- Support inclusive design and neighbourhood masterplans
- Enhance physical and digital platforms to connect communities
- Fund community-led nature enterprises and activities



A NATURE-CONNECTED AND EMPOWERED CITY

Empowering residents to engage in decision making

We will empower communities to lead, co-design, and co-steward nature initiatives, recognising local expertise, and creating green career pathways.

Key actions:

- Invest in volunteering, training, and youth leadership
- Apply a Nature Connectedness approach to engagement, supporting people to feel close to and a part of nature
- Launch a cross-sector Plan for Nature Steering Group



AN INNOVATIVE INVESTMENT CITY

Nature innovation as part of a sustainable city economy

We will work with nature to bring money into the city, create jobs, and drive enterprise.

Key actions:

- Raise £50m by 2030 through green finance and partnerships
- Expand Ocean City Nature and habitat banking
- Publish Plymouth’s first Natural Capital Investment Prospectus

HOW WE WILL DELIVER

Partnership working

across sectors, communities, and institutions

Innovative funding

including biodiversity net gain and social investment

Robust governance

through a new cross-sector Steering Group

Transparent monitoring

using shared data, citizen science, and academic insight

Inclusive communication

that inspires trust and involvement citywide



A CALL TO ACTION

This is more than an environmental strategy; it is a shared commitment to a just, resilient, and vibrant future. It will only succeed if we all play our part, from businesses and schools to residents, funders, and national partners. Together, we can make Plymouth a leading Nature City where people and wildlife flourish, and where nature is valued, protected, and celebrated by all.

PLYMOUTH PLAN FOR NATURE AND PEOPLE 2025-2030



FOREWORD



The natural environment is one of Plymouth's greatest assets. Our green and blue spaces play a vital role in supporting our health and wellbeing, boosting our economy, and helping us to tackle the linked climate and ecological emergencies. Nature is declining across the UK and we need to do more locally to help turn that around.

This Plan for Nature and People 2025–2030 sets out a long-term vision for Plymouth to become a truly nature rich ocean city - one where thriving natural spaces are recognised as essential infrastructure, integrated into planning, investment, growth and service delivery across all sectors. It reflects our ambition to ensure that everyone can benefit from access to high-quality natural environments, and to place communities at the heart of stewarding these spaces for future generations.

The Plan builds on many years of environmental innovation in Plymouth - from the creation of the UK's first National Marine Park to the UK's first council owned Habitat Bank. It provides a clear framework for accelerating green investment, drawing together public, private, and voluntary sector partners around shared goals.

We are proud to present this Plan as a commitment to ensuring that Plymouth's natural environment is protected, enhanced, and celebrated - locally and globally - for the benefit of all.

Councillor Tom Briars-Delve
Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change
Plymouth City Council

Plymouth has an ambitious growth agenda with a clear recognition of the value and importance that our rich natural environment in and around the city has as part of these plans. This plan sets out how we will invest in our natural spaces to raise living standards and improve lives, build climate resilience and create jobs.

The success of our economic strategy relies on our natural environment being the absolute best it can be, whether to support our Visitor Plan, or provide opportunities for businesses across the city meeting their own and the city's sustainability goals.

This plan shows how we can respond positively to the global challenges of climate change and biodiversity crises, positioning Plymouth and its workforce to benefit from the green and blue jobs of the future.

Plymouth is so fortunate to have such amazing nature and people providing vast opportunities for the city to be a fantastic place to live and work. Through working together in partnership, we have seen the city grow sustainably with this plan celebrating many of these successes. Through this plan we will further realise Plymouth's unique potential as Britain's Ocean City and absolutely make sure that everyone has the opportunity to benefit from the investment ahead of us.

Glenn Caplin-Grey
Strategic Director for Growth
Plymouth City Council

Having worked with communities in many projects and activities enhancing green and growing spaces to benefit Plymouth's people and wildlife for nearly 20 years, I am delighted to see the Plan for Nature and People coming to life. As a permaculture practitioner, I always look to learn from the natural world. So, I am encouraged that nature is being acknowledged and given a stronger role in future of the City through the Plan and other channels. This is a continuation of the positive changes and increasingly imaginative approaches I have observed in the City Council, Housing Associations and other key stakeholders over the past two decades. I look forward to continuing to build on the positive experiences of co-designing green spaces and urban places with communities. I will also welcome new opportunities to increase diversity and create an abundance of habitats providing amenity value and food for wildlife and people emerging from the Plan.

Tess Wilmot
Dig for Devonport / Food Plymouth



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SECTION ONE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This plan reflects our ambition to be “locally celebrated and globally recognised as a nature rich ocean city.”

With a growing population of over 264,000, Plymouth stands out nationally for its rich natural assets. Over 40 per cent of the city is green space, surrounded by three National Landscapes, Dartmoor National Park, Marine Protected Area, Plymouth Sound National Marine Park, and a diverse mosaic of nature reserves, parks, and wildlife corridors.

This Plan for Nature and People sets out Plymouth’s commitment to become an engaged, nature rich ocean city, where every citizen benefits from, contributes to, and connects with nature. It builds upon successful foundations laid in the Plymouth Plan and recent partnership delivery to transform our natural environment network into one that is inclusive, community centred, climate-ready, biodiverse, and celebrated locally and globally.

Plymouth’s natural environment is a unique and powerful asset — environmentally, socially, and economically. This Plan sets out how we will enhance and invest in nature as essential infrastructure, creating a city that is climate resilient, equitable, and future-fit.

A network of good quality natural spaces can deliver climate resilience and adaptation and help to reduce health inequalities, prompt economic growth, and strengthen community engagement.

Our vision is for Plymouth to be:

A nature rich ocean city - biodiverse, with thriving land and sea ecosystems

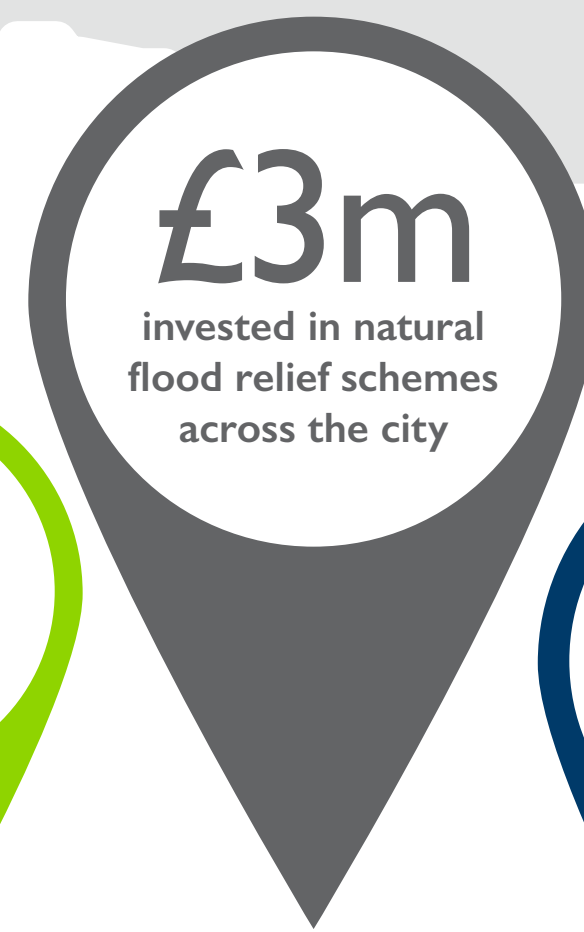
A playful, active and healthy city, where everyone lives within a 400m walk of natural space

A nature connected, engaged and empowered city where residents are engaged in decision making and stewardship

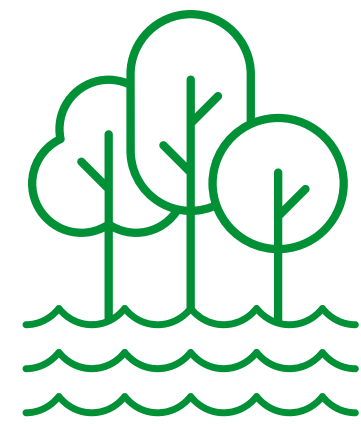
An innovative investment city as part of a sustainable city economy – a global leader in nature innovation

Inclusive nature spaces supporting activity programmes that meet the needs of people in the city

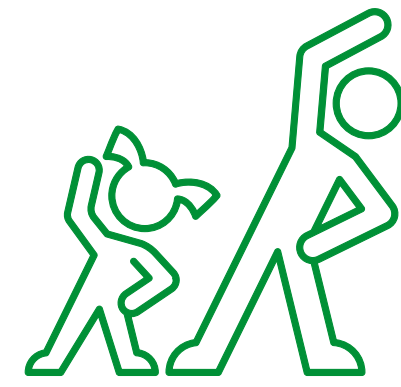
KEY FACTS



WHAT THE PLAN DELIVERS

**A nature rich ocean city**

- biodiverse, with thriving
land and sea ecosystems

**A playful, active
and healthy city**

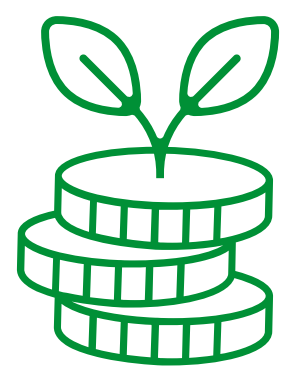
where everyone lives within
a 400m walk of natural space

**Inclusive nature spaces**

supporting activity programmes
that meet the needs of people
in the city

**A nature connected,
engaged and empowered city**

where residents are engaged in
decision making and stewardship

**An innovative
investment city**

as part of a sustainable
city economy – a global
leader in nature innovation

INTRODUCTION

The Plan for Nature and People is a strategic delivery plan aimed at placing nature at the heart of Plymouth's future growth and development. Alongside this, similar strategic needs are identified and united to create a balanced approach to meet the city's present and future needs effectively.

The Plan for Nature and People draws upon policies within the local plan and current Plymouth Plan, particularly HEA7, which focuses on health and wellbeing through natural spaces, and GRO6, which emphasises the delivery of a sustainable and integrated natural network to reflect a growing recognition that nature is as vital to infrastructure as roads, housing, or healthcare. It is key to achieving the city's strategic vision of being one of Europe's most vibrant waterfront cities, where an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by everyone.

Every aim and deliverable in the Plan for Nature and People goes towards combatting the climate crisis and contributing to the city's [Net Zero Action Plan](#). In addition to this the plan has been designed to contribute and support delivery of similar plans for the city focused on health and wellbeing, growth and jobs and children and young people. This is illustrated on [Page 21](#).

This Plan sets clear aims and a delivery programme with specific objectives:

- **A nature rich ocean city**
- **A playful, active and healthy city**
- **Inclusive nature spaces**
- **A nature connected, engaged and empowered city**
- **An innovative investment city**

These objectives also support and align with Plymouth's [Net Zero Action Plan](#) and the Plymouth Climate Adaptation Plan (currently being drafted), reinforcing the city's commitment to climate resilience and carbon neutrality through nature-based solutions.

Plymouth's natural spaces are essential to the city's future. This Plan is founded on the principle of treating nature as a stakeholder, meaning nature should be pro-actively considered in planning for and decisions regarding growth, investment, infrastructure, Planning, and public health.

Delivery of the plan will see Plymouth's natural spaces be of better quality and be better connected contributing to a thriving [Nature Recovery Network](#). It aims to deliver nature-based solutions to climate risks, ranging from flooding to heat stress, while supporting a nature economy that generates thousands of green and blue jobs. Furthermore, the network will provide inclusive access to all residents, be co-designed, stewarded, and celebrated by its communities, and gain national and international recognition for innovation.

This is a strategic, action-oriented roadmap. It is not solely a conservation plan; rather, it represents a whole-city, cross-sector vision for a just, nature connected, and thriving future.

'Access to green space is considered one of the fundamental building blocks for achieving good health and wellbeing. People living in areas with greater access to green space then live longer lives than those without this access.'

Source: [The Health Foundation](#)

'Plymouth's Natural Capital Accounts showed that the city's greenspaces provide services worth £162 million gross per year by attracting an estimated 7 million visits each year, with each visit providing on average £22 of Health and wellbeing services.'

Source: Vivid Economics, 2020

Thanks to all the organisations on the steering group for their support, and to all the teams across the council for their input. We're also really grateful to the community groups, individuals, and businesses who joined the focus groups, and to all the residents who got involved in the Summer of Nature campaign.

BACKGROUND

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

Plymouth is an incredible home for wildlife and people and we want to ensure that the city's nature thrives.

This is part of a national ambition for nature which has been supported by the implementation of the Environment Act in 2021 which requires local authorities to care and enhance biodiversity in their local area, reporting on their activities and engage with communities where street trees need to be removed. It also introduces Biodiversity Net Gain requirements for all developments to deliver a 10 per cent gain in biodiversity through the course of development.

We are not alone in recognising the value of nature to people and the urgency for action. Many other local authorities have similarly ambitious Nature City plans and key partners such as [National Trust](#) have strategies that work towards shared objectives of nature recovery and equitable access to natural spaces.

Locally, the plan builds on some solid foundation of citywide policy and partnership delivery in the last decade.

This plan is framed within the international and locally declared Climate and Nature Emergencies and the Government's 25-Year Environmental Improvement Plan, which commits to leaving the environment in a better state for future generations. It emphasises: *“Creating wildlife-rich habitats and recovering important species; using resources more sustainably; and making sure there are high-quality, accessible natural spaces close to where people live and work.”*

“The truth is: the natural world is changing. And we are totally dependent on that world. It provides our food, water and air. It is the most precious thing we have and we need to defend it.”

Sir David Attenborough



Plymouth has been actively delivering, innovating and pioneering against these ambitions for over a decade. Some highlights of delivery led by the Council to date:

Plymouth Sound National Marine Park

The UK's first National Marine Park, Plymouth Sound National Marine Park - is about forging a new relationship between the city and the sea.

Encouraging people to become 'Marine Citizens', developing closer connections with the ocean, learning to care about our coastal environment and change the way we behave in order to protect it. Thereby creating happy, healthy individuals and communities. In year one **11,572 hours of volunteering** were recorded; more than **3 tonnes of rubbish** have been collected by **114 volunteers** during Coastal Clean ups; **970 students** from **31 primary schools** have taken part in the Sea in the Schools programme; and the 'Little Rays of Hope' programme has received **national coverage** by featuring on **BBC Countryfile**.

11.5k

hours of volunteering were recorded



Green Minds

Green Minds set out to put **nature at the heart** of our decision making and inspire a new wave of citywide investment in nature-based solutions. This meant **fundamentally challenging our existing attitudes** and behaviours towards nature: how we think about it; how we engage with it; how we work with it. Over the course of the project, the partnership embedded nature based solutions and policies in organisations and spaces around the city. The team also engaged with **48,615 people** through over **1200 events**. After participating in these events, over 45 per cent of people said that they felt closer to nature. The learning from this project culminated in the development of the Green Minds Urban Wilding Model.

48.6k

people engaged with over 1200 events

Future Parks Accelerator

Delivered a new approach to our Urban Meadows with a grass cutting regime that maintains a 60:40 balance – 60 per cent for amenity and 40 per cent for nature. This innovation was an example of one of the initiatives supported through our work on the Future Parks Accelerator programme - pioneering a new model of caring for the city's parks and green spaces.



Green Communities

Green Communities is a partnership project, working with communities to nurture nature connected communities and promote community-led, hyper-local nature recovery, while increasing health and wellbeing. In the first 18 months of delivery, Green Communities has engaged with over **5,500 people** over the course of over **2,300 events**, 51 per cent of these events were community led. The team has also worked with over **120 community organisations** in this time.

120

community organisations worked with

Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest

Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest has **planted 500 hectares of new trees and woodlands** alongside **18km of new footpath** - Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest (PSDCF) has been working with partners and communities to plant trees and create woodland since August 2021. The programme contributes to the local and national England's Community Forests' goals to combat climate change, encourage carbon capture, reduce flooding, increase access and biodiversity.

500

hectares of new trees and woodlands planted

Building Resilience in Communities

The Building Resilience in Communities (BRIC) project addresses the issue of flood management from a social innovation perspective. Working with local communities to improve flood resilience through **behaviour change, adaptation and nature-based solutions**. BRIC have led on the public engagement for two local flood relief schemes. In the last two years BRIC have engaged with a **2,491 people** and received a total **71 pledges** to slow the flow, saving and using water more efficiently to reduce flooding. By the end of phase two the **flood awareness score** had risen by 0.5 to 2.25 out 5.

2.4k

people engaged with in the last two years

Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum

The Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum (TECF) is the management partnership for the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries. It brings together organisations with a legal responsibility to manage the Marine Protected Area (MPA). Since 1994, it has provided an effective and collaborative framework for managing the estuary and coast MPA whilst recognising the commercial, defence and recreational importance of the site.

Derriford Community Park

Derriford Community Park, with Poole Farm at its heart, has delivered a **pioneering Ecotherapy programme with over 76 per cent of young people participating reporting a reduction in their anxiety**. The Park is financially self-sufficient setting the blueprint for future parks nationally. Growing people, nurturing enterprise and enabling a positive transition to net zero.

76%

of young people reporting a reduction in anxiety

Plymouth Natural Grid

Plymouth Natural Grid has delivered **improvements to over 49 hectares of habitats across 11 sites**, fostered **6 apprentices and 15 Kickstarters into employment** through its partnership programme between Plymouth City Council and National Trust working with nature and people to combat climate change and biodiversity loss across the city.

49

hectares of habitats improved across 11 sites





People want better access to safe, clean local nature and feel a sense of pride for their city and neighbourhoods but challenges persist:

- 90 per cent of Plymouth residents agree that being in nature makes them happy but only 57 per cent feel part of nature and take time to notice and engage with nature. This shows how **‘the human relationship with the rest of nature is broken. To fix it we need a new more connected relationship that recognises that we are part of nature’**. ([University of Derby Nature Connectedness Research Group](#))
- **A health and inequality crisis**, particularly with the mental health of young people - where 17 per cent of 5-16 year olds will have difficulties with their mental health (A Bright Future, 2021) - and with **access to nature an urgent priority as part of the solution**
- **Budget cuts have significantly reduced the operational workforce** over the last 10 years leaving an ageing workforce with reduced career pathways and ability to deliver good quality natural spaces.
- There is **unequal access to greenspace and trees** across neighbourhoods - There was a marked difference between number of visits in neighbourhoods with more deprived neighbourhoods visiting spaces less. (Student Health-Related Behaviour Survey 2022 (Green Minds Toolkit))
- There are many grey, heat-vulnerable urban areas with limited tree cover - Plymouth has a **distinct disparity in tree equity** with a range from 52 (7 per cent canopy cover) to 100 (28 per cent canopy cover). ([Tree Equity Score UK](#))
- Fragmented, isolated **pockets of nature, lacking corridor connectivity** (Plymouth Nature Recovery Network Report)

- Communities need **better communication with the Council** and visibility of work ([Plan for Nature and People Engagement Report](#))
- There is a lack of co-ordinated training. Youth career pathways and volunteering support mean we are **not making the most of the talent and effort in the city** (Plan for Nature and People Engagement Report)
- 38 per cent of Plymouth students agreed that being in nature makes them happy compared to 87% of students nationally (Student Health-Related Behaviour Survey 2022 (Green Minds Toolkit))
- Adult prevalence of **overweight and obesity in Plymouth was 69.2 per cent** in 2022/23, an increase on 67.4 per cent in 2012/13 and higher than the national average of 64.0 per cent. Rates also vary between wards ([Thrive Plymouth Report 2024](#))
- In 2019-21, life expectancy ranged from 85 to 76.8 years in the most to least deprived wards; a gap of 8.2 years ([Thrive Plymouth Report 2024](#))
- The prevalence of GP reported depression in Plymouth adults is 15.4 per cent, compared to 12.7 per cent for England in 2021/22 ([Thrive Plymouth Report 2024](#))

We know and scientific evidence tells us nature is important in addressing these challenges and making Plymouth a great place to live. Our approach is informed by many years of ongoing community engagement, data from strategic nature audits, and pilot projects across the city.

WHAT WE HEARD COMMUNITY AND SECTOR VOICES

At the heart of this plan are the people and communities across the city - this plan will only work if we, as a city, work together. The Plan has been shaped by a wide engagement programme with people, groups, and organisations across the city which ensured that a representative view is contained within this Plan.

Overall, our engagement reached over 650 residents and a broad variety of stakeholders across a range of engagement methods. The first phase of engagement took place in Summer 2024. We launched a 'Summer of Nature' which consisted of four main questions pertaining to nature connectedness and aspirations for nature in the city, and three asking for demographic data. Surveys were carried out digitally and in person and we received over 550 responses.

The second phase of engagement was a more in-depth programme of focus groups which we hosted at venues around the city. These events were attended by 110 people, representing community groups, schools, businesses/charities, and neighbourhoods. [See appendices for more summary engagement reports and breakdown of questions and responses.](#)

From these exercises, we analysed the responses and identified the following key messages:

Communities need better communication with the Council and visibility of work, and more of a say in what happens in their communities

Community groups, staff and partners want more training, youth career pathways and volunteering support

There is broad support for nature-based enterprise and innovation

There's strong appetite for community empowerment through co-design and co-stewardship

People want better access to safe, clean local nature

The consultation for the Plan for Nature and People adds to a vast amount of engagement experience, nurtured through a number of public facing nature projects coordinated by Plymouth City Council over the last decade. Green Minds project partners have been mapping groups of nature-supporting organisations, resources, spaces and projects in the city as part of the [Growing with Nature Network](#) in response to feedback from community groups, who wanted better ways to connect with each other.

There is wide movement across the city that recognises the value of nature for its social and economic benefits, all striving towards goals for a better environment. There are some inspirational examples of action being taken and recognition of this throughout this Plan through our Nature Notes sections. The Plan for Nature and People engagement exercise and recent partnership work has highlighted that these efforts work best when we all work together.

SECTION TWO

AT A GLANCE

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A BETTER CONNECTED NATURE NETWORK

The Nature Recovery Network is central nationally to the government's Environmental Improvement Plan and its goal of improving nature, taking us from protection to active restoration of the natural world. By creating **better quality** wildlife-rich places in parts of the city where they are **needed the most**, the network seeks to help address the 3 challenges of biodiversity loss, climate change, and public health and well-being.



NATURE NOTE

Poole Farm

At Poole Farm, young people exhibiting low mood, anxiety, and/or neurodivergence attend six, two-hour ecotherapy sessions over the course of six weeks, run by a registered mental health practitioner. They spend therapeutic time with animals, do team and resilience building games, like den building, and stream scrambling, and close the session with reflections around the fire.





NATURE NOTE



Climate Pioneer Street project

Luke Bisgrove is a community champion for the Climate Pioneer Street project on Lorrimore Avenue in St Levan, facilitated by BRIC. He installs the wall-mounted water butts that BRIC provide onto his neighbours' properties, offers them plant pots and seeds, and generally champions the project.

Plymouth is located within the spectacular setting of a natural harbour on the southwest Devon coast adjacent to Cornwall at the mouths of the Rivers Plym, Tavy, Lynher and Tamar which flow into Plymouth Sound.

The city is adjacent to a number of protected landscapes including the Cornwall, Tamar Valley and South Devon National Landscapes and Dartmoor National Park providing an important buffer and connecting points for nature in the city. Plymouth also recognises the value of the South West Coast Path and the King Charles III England Coast Path (KCIIIIECP), both of which enhance access to nature for local communities and visitors, while supporting tourism and contributing to the city's economy.

With a mild climate, being located close to where the warmer waters of the English Channel meet the cooler waters of the Atlantic Ocean, a diverse geology and soils, and an internationally important complex of land and marine ecosystems, Plymouth can be regarded as a nature rich ocean city in terms of the wide variety of wildlife habitats it provides. In fact, current studies show that a quarter of the city can be considered to be nature rich.

But look closer and, as with any city, there are significant challenges to sustaining and enhancing this nature network within a growing city and bringing the benefits nature provides closer to people across the city, particularly those most in need.

Urban communities require trees as essential infrastructure to support public health and climate resilience. The UK Tree Equity Score highlights whether the critical benefits of urban tree canopy cover are reaching those who need them most—communities in tree-poor neighbourhoods who are disproportionately affected by environmental hazards like extreme heat and pollution. In Plymouth there is a distinct variation with some parts of the city scoring as low as 52/100 whilst others achieve 100. Our Plan for Trees partnership with groups like Plymouth Tree People and PSDCF is pro-actively working towards targets to address this inequity.

Whilst safeguarding, enhancing and managing the highest value nature areas will be a key focus of delivering nature recovery through the city, actions across the city such as planting woodland, hedgerows and street trees, enhancing grassland or creating natural ponds as Sustainable Drainage Solutions (SUDS) could help Plymouth support the national target of 30 per cent of land and sea benefiting nature by 2030.



NATURE NOTE



Kickstarter Scheme

The Kickstarter scheme was a nationwide government placement programme for young people between 18-24 years of age out of formal employment, education or training and at risk of long term unemployment. Through this scheme 15 young project assistants were employed through the Kickstarter programme over the course of the project to work alongside the Plymouth Natural Grid team, a partnership between Plymouth City Council and National Trust working to enhance reserves in Plymouth. The project assistants were an important part of our team and supported the delivery of the project, including hands-on practical land management techniques to enhance and protect green spaces as well as engagement of local communities.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Plymouth is rich in both nature and people as assets which combined provide us with the opportunity to deliver this Plan...

PEOPLE



The Plymouth Report 2023 and A Bright Future Report 2021-2026 tells us:

- Plymouth population is estimated to grow to around 273,314 by 2043, a projected increase of 3.3 per cent.
- Plymouth is the **most significant economic centre in the South West** Peninsula, making it a key location for growth.
- The city is home to **three universities and two specialist marine research institutions**, attracting nearly 23,000 students to the city.
- **18,279 people** in Plymouth have previously **served in the Armed Forces**.
- In future, 43 per cent of the job growth will be in graduate level / higher skilled roles, with the majority of these roles in **marine and environmental industries**.
- Plymouth has 39 neighbourhoods across 20 electoral wards.
- Plymouth has **28 areas of the most deprived 10% in England** - home to 46,075 residents (17.6 per cent of the population).
- 20 per cent of the city's population are children and young people
- 31 per cent of these young people would be living in relative poverty

Our community groups and community businesses are involved in:

- Actively **maintaining and stewarding 109 natural spaces** across the city
- Running **18 active formal Friends of Groups**
- Running **5 Allotment Associations**
- Giving **10,000 volunteer hours per year** across Council led programmes
- Nurturing a citywide Growing with Nature Network

Plymouth Economic Strategy 2024 tells us Plymouth:

- Has a real economic output of over £6.97 billion, with 6,325 businesses and a growing workforce of almost 116,000 people
- Became the UK's first Social Enterprise City in 2013 and now with 200 social enterprises and community businesses, employing over 10,000 people
- Identifies the marine environment and Plymouth Sound National Marine Park as well as nature recovery as a key opportunity in the sustainable growth of the city
- Has an ambition to be Net Zero by 2030

2022 City Survey findings told us:

90%

agree that parks and woodlands are important to Plymouth

58%

agree they feel part of nature

60%

agree they are taking more time to notice and engage with everyday nature (e.g. listening to birdsong, noticing butterflies)

88%

agree that being in nature makes them very happy

84%

agree there is good access to parks and woodlands in/from their local area

NATURE

Natural Capital Accounts (2020) produced for the city showed that:

- Annual estimated visits to Plymouth’s parks and natural spaces result in **£162 million per year in gross benefits to local communities**
- **£150 million per year results from health benefits**
- Health and wellbeing services deliver approximately **£22 per visit to a natural space on average**
- Plymouth parks also provide **£11 million in benefits to property owners** through an annualised uplift in the value of residential properties, and help regulate the climate by **removing £0.4 million worth of greenhouse gases every year**

i-Tree Eco survey and report (2020) told us that in Plymouth:

- **There are an estimated 394,900 trees** - 1.5 trees for every person – and **54 recorded tree species**
- **The city has an average canopy cover of 19.2 per cent which provides £4.6 million in annual benefits through:**
 - Filtering an estimated 131 tonnes of airborne pollutants each year
 - A leaf area of 41.8km², which intercepts around 169,100m3 of rainwater every year
 - Remove an estimated 4,291 tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere each year - this is equivalent to the annual carbon dioxide emissions from 217 family cars
- The city’s trees store an impressive 152,780 tonnes of carbon worth £38.7 million

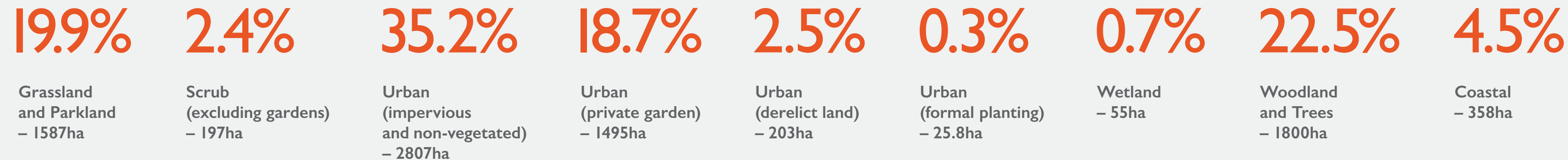


Plymouth is home to the UK’s first urban beaver population in over 400 years

The evidence emerging from Plymouth Nature Recovery Network tells us:

- Approximately 25 per cent of the city’s land and water was mapped within the Nature Recovery Network as **important nature areas meeting the national commitment to protect 30 per cent of land and water by 2030**
- The city has 13 Local Nature Reserves covering over 250 ha, 9 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), 28 County Wildlife Sites (CWS), and shares a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)
- The estuaries and coast within the **Plymouth Sound National Marine Park** are recognised for their international importance
- Home to rare and protected species such as the **Horrid Ground Weaver spider**, the rare **Plymouth Pear tree**, **Devon Cup Coral**, the **St. Piran crab** and migratory fish **Allis Shad** and **Smelt**
- Home of the first urban **Eurasian Beaver** reintroduction

Plymouth Habitat Distribution (Terrestrial Habitats)



HOW WE MANAGE OUR SPACES

The city's natural spaces come in many different forms and are an important part of this Plan. On land these include parks, nature reserves, neighbourhood open spaces, verges, play areas, sports pitches, allotments, cemeteries, streams, ponds, rivers, street trees, woodlands and grassy areas. At sea this includes the open marine environment with all of the habitats and species that exist within and beneath, as well as the estuaries, mudflats, salt marsh, cliffs and rocky shore.

The Plymouth Open Space Assessment 2017 showed that of the 3,500 hectares of open space surveyed 58 per cent (2030 ha) was publicly accessible. However, there is an uneven distribution of this accessible natural space. The Council manages and maintains 1363 ha of this open space and has seven Green Flag parks and natural spaces across the city.

Plymouth City Council provides strategic leadership with cross-boundary collaboration and a strong partnership ethos to provide the city's strategic direction which is set out through the Plymouth Plan and Joint Local Plan as well as strategic delivery plans such as this (see Appendix 5 for illustration of the policy landscape and how PfN&P fits) which are evidence based plans which help inform and guide strategic priorities.

The council has a workforce dedicated to maintaining, enhancing, and activating the public natural spaces. The reality of local authority

finances means that around half of this activity is funded from Council revenue with the other half being sourced from external sources, requiring innovation and new models of working. Plymouth has been successful in evolving to this new model in the last 10 years and has been recognised nationally for its approach.

Investment will be key to sustaining this success and continuing to innovate and work in strong partnership across sectors, with stronger governance and better, more joined up communication is a priority of this plan – see section 10.

We have worked hard in recent years to adapt our maintenance regimes through for example, a more wildlife friendly, city-wide approach to managing grassed areas. In doing that we have remained committed to improving the approach to ensure we achieve a sensible balance and wherever possible nature friendly spaces that people are proud of through an annual review which considers comments from residents and councillors collated across the year.

The power of partnership is also key to developing stronger and better supported community stewardship of the city's natural spaces. Partnerships play a vital role in strengthening and supporting community stewardship of the city's natural spaces. Many successful projects across the city in recent years have demonstrated the value of this approach. This plan builds on those successes, aiming to expand and sustain community involvement citywide.

The Council also has statutory roles as the Local Planning, Highways and Harbour Authorities, under which it has a range of duties to plan for, consider and act as the enabler for development and growth of the city as well as the upkeep and maintenance of the city's roads and shoreline.

Plymouth is working towards being accredited as a Nature City

Plymouth is recognised as a Tree City of the World

The Council shares responsibility for managing the wider estuary and coast, working with the Kings Harbour Master to host the Tamar and Estuaries Consultative Forum (TECF), which fosters collaboration, resource sharing, and knowledge exchange among authorities.

POLICY AND PLAN LANDSCAPE



SECTION THREE

THINGS WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

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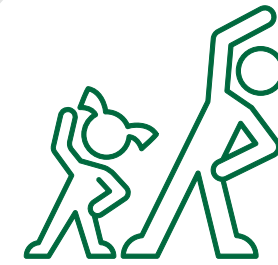


OUR PILLARS OF SUCCESS

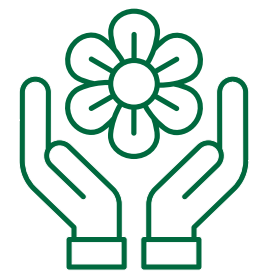
Following the engagement phase of the creation of this plan, we have shaped the Plan for Nature and People around 5 key objectives:



**A NATURE RICH
PLYMOUTH**



**A PLAYFUL, ACTIVE,
AND HEALTHY PLYMOUTH**



**INCLUSIVE
NATURE SPACES**



**A NATURE CONNECTED,
ENGAGED AND
EMPOWERED PLYMOUTH**



**AN INNOVATIVE
INVESTMENT CITY**

HOW WE WILL WORK OUR VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

Our approach is guided by PCC values and shaped by both people and nature:

Democracy

Listening to local voices and shared decision-making

Responsibility

Co-stewardship for the future

Fairness

Equity in access and opportunity

Co-operation

Partnership across sectors and places

Natural England set out 15 Green Infrastructure Principles which have been used to guide the creation of this plan and will guide its delivery.



A NATURE RICH PLYMOUTH

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

We have strong natural assets in and around Plymouth which have been well recognised in a range of strategic plans and most recently mapped through the Plymouth Nature Recovery Network (PNRN). But biodiversity and habitat function is under pressure from a number of angles, and many urban areas lack connection and quality in this network.

With communities, we need to identify opportunities in the most valuable places to connect and improve the quality of the nature recovery network alongside the other infrastructure requirements of the city to ensure Plymouth is a nature-rich and climate resilient place to live for future generations. We require significant new investment to drive this agenda forward and sustain a high-quality nature recovery network providing nature-based solutions for the city.

WHAT IS THE VISION?

A connected, high-quality network of thriving habitats – on land and water, on the coast and at sea - that supports wildlife and people, monitored to national standards alongside nature connected, empowered communities co-stewarding these local natural spaces.

We will work with communities to connect nature-rich spaces, restore biodiversity across the city, and embed nature connected, ecological thinking as part of the city's growth and investment.

We will continue work to build partnerships to build the evidence for nature-based solutions to climate change and biodiversity loss as well as piloting delivery of nature-based solutions across the city as part of our plans for climate adaptation.



HOW WILL WE MAKE IT HAPPEN?

To achieve this vision and targets, we are implementing a range of initiatives and collaborating with key stakeholders through some key actions:

- **Plant, establish, and maintain woodland and trees** to buffer and connect nature-rich sites, improve water quality and mitigate climate change through urban cooling and Natural Flood Management
- Continually improve our **maintenance standards and regimes to be nature-friendly and provide sense of Pride in Place** to build our reputation as an international environmental city
- Work collaboratively with stakeholders to identify areas of the city most in need from **improved and increased ‘Nature Areas’** to invest in and build biodiversity
- **Work with communities to co-design and co-produce neighbourhood level Landscape Masterplans** to support delivery of the nature recovery network, relevant strategies and city-wide investment pipeline
- **Agree an evidence-based monitoring framework with relevant Environmental and Social Indicators** to monitor progress of the the nature recovery network. Use this monitoring and reporting to contribute to Devon LNRS and other relevant strategies and comply with the duty to report on biodiversity
- **Incorporate emerging nature recovery network into discussions and evidence base to inform new Council Strategies**

- Utilise the requirement to deliver **Biodiversity Net Gain** to deliver a sustainable business model for funding targeted parts of the nature recovery network through the city’s habitat bank – Ocean City Biodiversity
- Collaborate with Devon authorities to produce and adopt **Devon LNRS** which influences regional and local strategies to recognise the importance of nature
- We will **work with communities** to ensure that these nature rich spaces are beneficial to their mental and physical wellbeing
- We are working in partnership with key stakeholders — including the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), South West Water (SWW), and the Environment Agency (EA) — to develop a **Plan for Water**. This will set out a coordinated and integrated approach to water management across Plymouth, including water quality. The Plan will also provide guidance and recommendations on how water-related outcomes should be considered within wider planning processes across the city.

We are committed to using these initiatives to deliver **a robust Nature Recovery Network** and **greater ‘equity of nature’** - Providing more trees and access to greenspace in these areas of low tree and nature equity delivers the highest opportunities for improving people’s health and wellbeing

For wildlife we will work towards achieving a ‘Good/ Favourable’* habitat condition across Nature sites and an improvement in species abundance by 2030, as well as a measurable delivery of Biodiversity Gain across the city

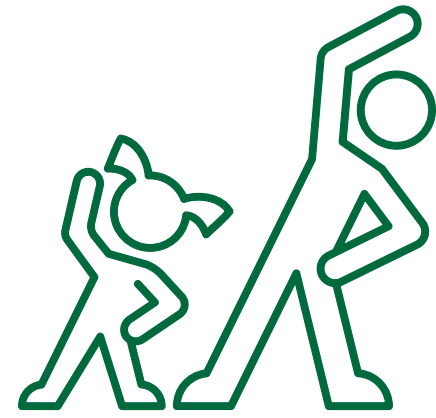
Increase of canopy cover in the city through focusing on achieving a Tree Equity score of at least 75 in all neighbourhoods.

Plant 1,000 individual urban trees in Plymouth by 2030 with a range of innovative schemes which will return street trees to neighbourhoods across Plymouth. This is part of the wider canopy cover increase across the city.

Identify up to 400 hectares of land in the city to improve management and reach ‘Nature Area’ status for example improving pollinator friendly road verges and roundabouts across the city.

Identify areas of the coastline to enhance to ensure favourable condition of the Marine Protected Area Features such as seagrass planting and ‘Allis Shad’ Nature Boost programme.

* 'Good/Favourable' is a [Natural England biodiversity metric](#)



A PLAYFUL, ACTIVE, AND HEALTHY PLYMOUTH

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Access to nature is a fundamental component of health and wellbeing; however, this access is often unequal, particularly in grey and more deprived urban areas. Recognising the disparities in availability and quality of green spaces is crucial to addressing the health needs of all Plymouth residents.

WHAT IS THE VISION?

Our vision is to ensure that all residents have access to nature-rich spaces to support both mental and physical wellbeing, promoting an active lifestyle, and encouraging a strong connection between the community and their natural surroundings.

**My wellbeing has
been improved
by local parks
– 48% agree**

**My wellbeing has
been improved by
local woodlands
– 53% agree**

**My wellbeing has
been improved by
Plymouth Sound
National Marine Park
– 44% agree**



‘I’m worrying about things every single day, but coming out into nature makes me feel a bit more at peace.’

Source: [Plymouth Ecotherapy programme for Adolescence Report, 2025](#)

HOW WILL WE MAKE IT HAPPEN?

To achieve this vision, we are implementing a range of approaches, collaborating with key stakeholders:

- **Collaboration with Health Partners**

We are actively working with Public Health, and the Local Care Partnership to incorporate nature as a health prescription, promoting the benefits of the outdoors for mental and physical health.

- **Nurturing Nature Connection within communities**

This is a relationship that will bring both pro-nature behaviours and improved mental wellbeing and physical health.

- **Enhancing Facilities**

Our plans include maintaining and improving infrastructure, such as paths, slipways, seating and signage, ensuring that natural spaces are accessible and inviting for more users.

Achieve Green Flag status for 12 council sites in the city by 2030 – an increase of 5 from 2024.

Identify a prioritised pipeline of natural space improvements and link this to decisions on new investment and mitigation to deliver greater equity of access to natural space across the city and beyond.

Deliver increase in nature features across sports pitch estate in the city.

- **Developing Green Travel Networks**

We are creating networks that connect various natural spaces, encouraging active travel methods like cycling and walking and sustainable options like buses and ferries to enhance accessibility. This concept is already being championed under the Active Travel Social Prescribing (ATSP) project.

- **Promoting Eco-Therapy and Community Engagement**

We will promote eco-therapy services, organise events, and support community growing and sports programs to engage residents and help nurture a sense of community.

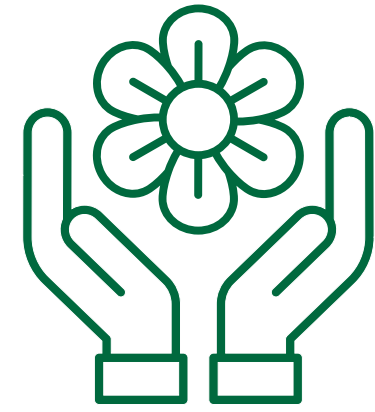
- **Wellbeing Hubs**

Enhancements to services at Poole Farm and exploring the potential expansion of local allotment networks will transform these areas into wellbeing hubs. These will offer residents opportunities for reflection, creativity, and connection to nature.

- **Arts and Culture Integration**

Plymouth’s cultural program will incorporate nature as a key element, recognising its importance in fostering a healthy community.

To further this mission, **we will seek to work towards a target that all residents where achievable live within 400 metres of an accessible natural space** whilst investing strategically in park facilities, marine facilities, allotments, and community growing initiatives. These spaces will be used for events, creativity, leisure, and reflection as central components of a healing environment. Through these collective efforts, we are committed to embedding nature into Plymouth’s health infrastructure and supporting the overall wellbeing of our community.



INCLUSIVE NATURE SPACES

Inclusive nature spaces are vital for promoting a sense of belonging within communities and ensuring fair and equitable access to natural environments. By addressing current disparities in access, we can develop spaces where everyone feels a sense of ownership and welcome.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

While communities have a strong appreciation for nature, there are significant gaps in access, which limits the ability of all community members to fully engage with and benefit from their local natural spaces.

There is good access to parks and woodlands in/ from my local area – 81% agree

There is good access to the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park (e.g., its beaches, coastal paths, or activities on/ in the water) in/ from my local area – 68% agree





NATURE NOTE



Plymouth Sound National Marine Park

PSNMP volunteers are part of a city-wide movement to connect people with Plymouth's rich natural and cultural heritage. We work in partnership with organisations across the city—including other Environmental Planning (EP) projects, Mount Edgumbe, The Box, the National Trust, local community groups, and many more. These collaborations foster a unified approach to breaking down barriers, sharing expertise, and delivering inclusive, impactful experiences. Together, we strive to make Plymouth's blue and green heritage accessible and meaningful for everyone.

WHAT IS THE VISION?

Our vision is to create a city where everyone feels a sense of ownership of their natural spaces. We aim to ensure that these spaces reflect the diversity of the community they serve and offer equal opportunities for engagement and stewardship.

HOW WILL WE MAKE IT HAPPEN?

To realise this vision, we have identified several key strategies for delivery:

- **Support inclusive design and programming**
By designing and investing in accessible spaces, especially in high-need areas, we can address barriers to access and create environments that welcome all community members
- **Provide clear information and communication**
Developing effective communication strategies ensures that communities have the information they need to take part in activities and utilise the resources available
- **Promote community enterprise and social ventures**
Supporting nature-based community businesses and social enterprises helps to drive local economic development while fostering a deeper connection to natural spaces
- **Embed equity in all future planning and investment**
An emphasis on equity in planning and investment ensures that all future projects prioritise inclusive practices

To supplement these strategies, we plan to:

- **Deliver inclusive programmes**
Focus on creating inclusive programs that cater to underrepresented communities, ensuring that their voices and needs are heard and addressed
- **Provide toolkits and support**
Offer resources such as toolkits, guidance in sourcing grant funding and support new volunteering groups, all aimed empowering local initiatives
- **Develop digital platforms**
Develop digital platforms to complement in person/physical ways of promoting volunteering and stewardship activities. Thereby broadening engagement and participation across the city.

Through these targeted actions we aim to create inclusive nature spaces that benefit all people and neighbourhoods, promoting an empowered, connected and nature-aware city.

Working with the South West Coast Path to improve access to green and blue coastal nature spaces.

Facilitate meaningful engagement with residents near Ernesettle Creek and Firestone Bay by establishing Community Access Points that enhance connection to local blue spaces.

We will have successfully completed the delivery of the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park to build a long-term, sustainable access programme for the city's marine spaces by 2030.

By 2030 we will provide new, user-friendly and responsive online and digital information to communicate what is going on in parks and natural spaces and how people can get involved and provide opportunities for feedback.



A NATURE CONNECTED, ENGAGED AND EMPOWERED PLYMOUTH

**Community groups
and community
businesses actively
maintaining
and stewarding
natural spaces**

**Over 7,000
volunteer hours
across Council led
nature and people
programmes
in 2024**

**Nature
education
opportunities
offered across
all Plymouth
schools**

**18 active
formal
Friends of
Groups**

**Estimated
10,000 volunteer
days per year**

**5 Allotment
Associations**

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Plymouth is home to a growing network of inspiring community-led initiatives such as Green Communities, Building Resilience in Communities, and the Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest. These demonstrate a strong desire for civic involvement in environmental action. However, these efforts often operate in isolation and would benefit from greater coordination, structured support, and recognition. This plan outlines our ambition to connect and scale up this momentum, embedding community leadership at the heart of our nature recovery and climate adaptation targets.



NATURE NOTE



The Friends of Tothill Group

The Friends of Tothill Group are celebrating receiving a Green Flag Award for 2024/25 — one of only seven in the area! What sets these parks apart? Active, passionate Friends Groups like theirs.

The gardening crew has been especially busy. One unexpected discovery was an old rockery, likely dating back to the park's early days over a century ago. The team lovingly brought it back to life, reconnecting with the park's original character.

Another lovely moment came when a member planted a sapling grown from an acorn of the legendary Meavy Oak. Fast forward 100 years, and someone will be admiring a mature tree, wondering who planted it. It's a lovely reminder that we're part of a 200-year story — past, present, and future — of people caring for this special place.

WHAT IS THE VISION?

We envisage a city where people from all walks of life—residents, volunteers, schools, community groups, and businesses—are recognised and supported as nature champions, co-creators, and decision-makers. Empowered by knowledge, opportunities, and community pride, Plymouth’s people will be at the forefront of shaping a nature rich, healthier, and more resilient city.

HOW WILL WE MAKE IT HAPPEN?

To empower communities and strengthen their role in environmental leadership, we will:

- **Strengthen and connect local networks**, such as Growing with Nature and Food Plymouth to promote collaboration and shared learning.
- **Launch a formal Plan for Nature and People Steering Group**, bringing together community voices, partners, and stakeholders to drive coordinated delivery.
- **Embed community decision-making and co-production** into citywide programmes and projects, ensuring that local knowledge shapes solutions.
- **Develop clear and inclusive pathways for volunteering, training, and leadership**, creating opportunities for all ages to build skills, confidence, and green career prospects.
- **Support youth and adult learning** through partnerships that link education, skills development, and employment in the environmental sector.

- **Celebrate success stories and local heroes** through a citywide communications and celebration campaign, championing community action and nature connection.
- **Adopt and apply a ‘nature connectedness’ framework** in community engagement to deepen emotional and experiential relationships with nature.
- **Monitor and improve** using tools such as the Nature Connectedness Index, ensuring that our work is inclusive, evidence-led, and responsive to community needs.

We are committed to nurturing nature connected communities and building the confidence and capacity of local people to help lead environmental change. By unlocking the full potential of civic action, we will make Plymouth a national exemplar of how communities can drive meaningful progress for nature and climate resilience.

By 2028, we will have consulted and updated partnership frameworks across the city, empowering groups and individuals to support the delivery for the Plan for Nature and People.

We will have initiated and led a citywide communications campaign by 2030 to champion community action.

During 2026, we will launch and lead a Plan for Nature and People steering group to monitor and account for delivery of the programme.

PSNMP offer a Sea in our School Programme. A citywide initiative offered to all primary schools, aimed at fostering a deep connection between children and their natural environment.

watch this space...



AN INNOVATIVE INVESTMENT CITY

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Plymouth is leading the way in bringing investment into its Nature Economy, with the UK's first National Marine Park and local authority run habitat bank. Plymouth's natural assets are shown to generate £162m annually and is in a fantastic place to bring forward investment to improve and grow these assets, generating a wide range and number of job and career opportunities linked to the growth of the green economy. In 2024/25 the council secured over £10m for specific spending on natural environment related programmes such as Community Forest tree planting and National Marine Park. This, coupled with the existing commitment from the council's budget, mean we are able to deliver more value for money for the city without putting further pressure on the public purse. The council's new innovative Company to drive this forward - Ocean City Nature - looks to build investment up to a level to enable more money to circulate to community activity and deliver the goals of this plan.

WHAT IS THE VISION?

Plymouth will be a city where Nature is recognised and invested in as key infrastructure underpinning the city's economic success and supporting skills, careers and community wealth.

FINANCING
THE COSTS OF
MAINTAINING
AND INVESTING IN
NATURAL SPACES
- 2024/25

66%
External funding
= £11.1m

34%
Internal funding
= £5.7m

Note: the external funding figure includes the full cost of the Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest programme including £5.1m in South Devon area.

By 2030 we aim to raise £50m investment towards our natural environment assets to provide nature-based solutions and activity programmes to deliver targeted outcomes for nature and people

Over £10m investment towards natural space improvements over last 5 years

Each visit to a natural space in Plymouth delivers approximately £22 in health and wellbeing benefits



HOW WILL WE MAKE IT HAPPEN?

To achieve this vision, we will:

- **Produce Plymouth's first Natural Capital Investment Prospectus** to catalyse and bring forward external investment as part of the Plymouth Nature and People Strategic Funding Plan
- **Continue to establish Ocean City Nature** as the key Green Finance investment vehicle for the city and surrounding area, ensuring that it is fit for purpose with robust governance in place to enable all relevant forms of investment and deliver maximum impact
- **Promote and support park and marine based social and community business** which provide high quality facilities and activities in natural spaces, bring in income and support jobs
- **Improve the use of the buildings in green and blue natural spaces** providing toolkits to enable new forms of community and enterprise use to ensure they are high quality, well-used and cared for in the long term
- **Develop new funding streams** to secure sustainable forms of income to deliver high quality maintenance and improvements
- **Pilot nature-finance initiatives** such as nature-based credit systems and carbon/nature offset trading
- **Work with city economic development partners** to ensure that the natural environment and Nature Economy remains a key city asset for the wider city economic strategy, visitor economy and culture programme

- **Explore and collaborate to unlock new investment** and business opportunities with the Creative and Technology sectors
- **Create green and blue job pathways with education and enterprise partners**
- **Link reporting** to citywide investment and economic development plan
- **Establish digital monitoring systems** to collect social, environmental data and evidence our impact publicly against our key measures and indicators



NATURE NOTE



Green Devonport Partnership

The Green Devonport Partnership is a community-run group in the west of Plymouth. Their aim is to make Devonport an even better place for wildlife and for people. Our Green Communities team has joined up with them to co design and deliver mini projects that promote nature connection and nature recovery at a very local level. When a member of the local community recently asked for help to replant the Marlborough Street Planters, over 17 different people came together to make it happen!

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STRATEGIC DELIVERY

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STRATEGIC DELIVERY

Successful delivery of the ambitions set out are underpinned by some key strategic delivery elements which cut across everything we do and how do it. We have a strong commitment to delivering in the best way in line with our values.



WHO WE WORK WITH PARTNERSHIPS

We know that to have the greatest chance and scale of success cross-sector partnerships and delivery models are key. These partnerships are internal to the Council, collaboration across different departments brings better results. External partnerships come from across different sectors as well as community organisations and individual citizens – everybody has a role to play.

The Council is committed to providing leadership and its strengths as an organisation at the heart of the city to deliver against the ambition of this plan – for the benefit of nature and people in and connected to Plymouth.

We are committed to being a good partner in line with our values and principles as set out in Section 5.2 and we will bring a more consistent and responsible approach to sustaining and growing our partnerships and networks through updated partnership agreements.



NATURE NOTE



Forest Rising

Forest Rising is a scheme for the next generation of leaders, that harnesses youth power and puts young people at the heart of the Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest Project. This scheme is youth led – for young people by young people. It has been co designed by the youth forum, giving young people an opportunity to work alongside the PSDCF project and be part of growing the Community Forest across South Devon. The network runs winter and summer workshops introducing young people to woodlands, green skills and the nature industry, as well as events throughout the year for alumnis and has a dedicated youth forum who manage decision making for the wider network.



FUNDING AND INVESTMENT

The economy is changing, and we can no longer rely solely on traditional funding to maintain assets or invest in nature recovery. While developer contributions and national grants will continue in new forms (e.g. Biodiversity Net Gain and loan arrangements), unlocking green finance requires us to evidence impact and return on investment—something we've begun through the creation of our habitat bank.

Mapping our assets and their value is key to attracting and reporting on investment. We're committed to directing new funding to areas of greatest need, ensuring it's well-governed and delivers value for money.

Recognising this, we've created Ocean City Nature, a Council-owned green finance vehicle to maximise investment aligned with this plan and its partnerships. Our first package—Ocean City Biodiversity, the city's Habitat Bank—has secured £0.5m, and we're developing further cases with partners in carbon credits and flood reduction.

Plymouth is investment-ready, offering:

- A pipeline of **nature-based projects ready** for green finance
- A pioneering **Habitat Bank** and BNG-ready planning system
- An ecosystem of **education, enterprise, and social innovation**
- Existing natural capital worth **£162m annually** and growing
- Global leadership in **marine research, nature-tech, and the blue economy**
- A pioneering **Plymouth Sound National Marine Park** partnership

To support this investment-led approach, it is vital that we understand how our decisions affect the Council's net zero ambition. A Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) is therefore required for all key decisions and capital project business cases. This visual tool helps identify potential climate impacts—positive and negative—at an early stage, enabling officers to design proposals that minimise harm to biodiversity, air quality, and other environmental factors. By embedding climate considerations into decision-making, the CIA strengthens our ability to deliver value for money while accelerating progress towards net zero.

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Effective delivery requires strong, representative governance and accountability. To achieve this, we'll be working alongside a wide range of people and partners to oversee the delivery and maintain high standards. This includes expanding the steering group to bring together people from a broad range of demographics across the city, helping to ensure their community is represented in the plan.

The Steering Group will oversee this plan, with annual reviews and integration into Council decision-making forums. The group will have clear terms of reference and monitor delivery against key measures (see Delivery Programme) and ensure the plan remains relevant and responsive to the city's situation.

The delivery programme will be led by the council's Natural Environment service, working in collaboration with other council service areas and external partners to implement the actions outlined in this plan. One of the initial priorities will be to allocate each action and measure to specific teams, who will be responsible for leading delivery and reporting progress. This will enable effective monitoring and, where necessary, adjustments to ensure we remain on track.

IMPROVED COMMUNICATION

Communication challenges

Effective communication is vital to building trust, enabling participation, and inspiring environmental action. At present, Plymouth faces several barriers to achieving this:

- **Limited two-way communication:** Residents and community groups report few opportunities to actively engage with the Council or influence environmental planning and decision-making.
- **Digital exclusion:** Key messages often miss those without internet access or sufficient digital literacy, reducing the inclusivity and reach of campaigns.
- **Inconsistent messaging:** Variability in tone, platforms, and audience targeting has led to confusion about environmental priorities, occasionally contributing to public disengagement.
- **Lack of public awareness:** Many residents remain unaware of environmental projects and their positive impact, or how they can get involved.
- **Perception and reputational challenges:** Contentious decisions - such as tree management - has led to negative coverage and mistrust.
- **Underrepresentation:** Community groups feel their voices are not adequately reflected in decision-making processes.

Our approach to strengthening communication

To address these issues, we will adopt a more inclusive, transparent, and creative approach to communication and engagement:

- **Develop an inclusive communications plan** that blends digital platforms with community-based and creative media, ensuring broad reach and accessibility.
- **Develop centralised online spaces** where individuals can discover, access, and contribute to nature-based activities and volunteering opportunities.
- **Increase proactive outreach** via schools, libraries, community centres, and neighbourhood networks to reach underrepresented and digitally excluded groups.
- **Standardise environmental messaging** across platforms with clear, consistent language and visuals that promote trust, understanding, and action.
- **Celebrate and inspire** by sharing stories of local success, championing environmental heroes, and showcasing the benefits of green initiatives.
- **Use creative incentives** such as recognition schemes to encourage volunteering and participation.
- **Host regular volunteer networking events** to build relationships, foster collaboration, and share knowledge across communities.
- **Improve public signposting** and ensure information about green and blue spaces, conservation efforts, and environmental initiatives is easy to find and understand.
- **Prioritise transparency** in decision-making — especially regarding sensitive issues like tree management — to rebuild confidence and maintain credibility.

Our Commitment

We are committed to making communication a core pillar of our strategy — grounded in transparency, accessibility, and empowerment. By creating meaningful opportunities for dialogue and visibility, we aim to build stronger partnerships, informed communities, and a shared sense of purpose across the city.

MONITORING AND REPORTING

There are a wide range of assets for us to work with to be able to accurately monitor and report on the success of this plan. The main document will be the PfN&P delivery programme, overseen by the proposed cross-sector Steering Group. But beneath that there will be some more specific areas of monitoring and reporting that will feed into that.

As set out in the actions of this plan we will need to bring these together into a coherent framework to ensure that we are using the information we collect in a meaningful and effective way. The vision is to have a city-wide monitoring and reporting network that brings together the strengths we have as city, using our academic research centres and citizen science efforts to be able to report against our shared objectives and common purpose.

We can use this information to better feed into and ensure best representation for nature in city decision making, building investment pipelines based on the needs and potential benefits for nature and people and ensuring our communications are to the best possible standards.

Our Commitment: We will bring together a collaborative approach to monitoring and reporting against the objectives and key measures set out in this plan. This will act as a reference point for accountability, inform communications and celebrate success and impact.



SECTION FIVE

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

This Plan is a big step towards making Plymouth a city where nature and people thrive together. It sets out what we need to do to look after our natural spaces, involve local communities, and make sure nature is considered as key infrastructure as the city grows and improves.

It provides the roots for making Plymouth a more investable city where natural assets are valued as contributing substantially to the local economy, generating opportunities for cross sector collaborations, skills development and more employment opportunities.

We know nature helps people stay healthy, happy, and connected. We also know that Plymouth has amazing natural spaces and people who care deeply about them. This Plan brings these together and shows how we can build a greener, fairer and more resilient city — one where everyone benefits from nature, wherever they live.

But we can't do this alone and as highlighted through the Plan for Nature and People's engagement we need everyone to play their part — local residents, community groups, businesses, schools, and public services. By working together, we can make sure the city's natural spaces are protected, improved, and used in ways that bring people together, support wildlife, and boost local jobs.

We're proud of what Plymouth has already achieved, but there's much more to do. With this Plan, we have a clear and realistic path forward to develop a city where nature is valued, protected, and celebrated — by everyone, for everyone.



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GLOSSARY

30x30

A UK government goal to protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030.

ABCD (Asset-Based Community Development)

A way of working with communities that focuses on their strengths and resources, not their problems.

Climate Adaptation

Preparing for and coping with climate change impacts like rising sea levels, stronger storms, flooding, and hotter temperatures.

ATSP (Active Travel Social Prescribing)

A health initiative where people are encouraged to walk, or cycle, or wheel to improve their wellbeing. Supported by Active Travel England.

BNG (Biodiversity Net Gain)

A planning approach that ensures nature is better off after development than before. Developers must measure and improve biodiversity either on-site or elsewhere.

Biodiversity

The variety of life – including different species, habitats, and ecosystems. It helps nature stay healthy and resilient.

County Wildlife Sites (CWS)

Important wildlife areas in a county. They aren’t legally protected but are recognised for their value to nature.

Devon LNRS (Local Nature Recovery Strategy)

A local plan to help nature recover in Devon.

Ecotherapy (Nature or Green Therapy)

Using nature as a therapeutic tool to support emotional regulation and mental health activities.

Friends of Groups (Parks)

Local volunteer groups who help care for parks and green spaces, working with Plymouth City Council.

Green Flag Parks

Parks and green spaces that meet high standards for management and care, recognised by the Green Flag Award.

Green Investment

Putting money into projects that help the environment and protect natural resources.

Growing with Nature Network

Groups working together to support wildlife by planting trees, creating habitats, and connecting people with nature.

Habitat Banking

A system where landowners protect nature and sell units to developers who need to offset environmental damage.

Joint Local Plan

A shared plan by Plymouth, South Hams, and West Devon councils to guide how places grow and change from 2014 to 2034.

Local Playable Space

A space designed for children to play freely. It includes features that show it's meant for play and reflects local culture and surroundings.

Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)

A protected area in the sea to help marine life and habitats.

Marine Protected Areas (MPA)

Parts of the ocean set aside to protect important species and ecosystems.

Mitigation

Taking action to reduce harm or negative effects.

Natural Assets

Parts of nature that benefit people, like trees that clean the air or wetlands that prevent flooding.

Natural Capital Investment Prospectus

A guide for investors showing opportunities to support Plymouth’s nature and wildlife.

Natural England Green Infrastructure Principles

Guidelines from Natural England to help organisations plan and deliver good green spaces.

Natural Environment Service

The Plymouth City Council team responsible for environmental planning, parks, streets, and marine services.

Natural Infrastructure

A network of green and blue spaces (like parks, rivers, and coastlines) that provide benefits for people, nature, and the climate.

Nature Connectedness

How people feel and relate to nature. It’s more than just spending time outdoors – it’s about feeling part of the natural world.

Neighbourhood Playable Space

A play area for children aged 0–11 to be active and have fun.

Ocean City Nature

A council-led green finance project helping Plymouth meet its environmental goals.

Open Mosaic Habitat

A mix of habitats like meadows, scrub, and wet areas, often with bare ground. Great for wildlife.

PFN&P (Plymouth Plan for Nature and People)

A local plan focused on nature and community wellbeing.

Plymouth Natural Capital Accounts (2020)

A report showing the value of Plymouth’s natural environment.

Plymouth Plan

A long-term plan for Plymouth’s future up to 2034.

PNRN (Plymouth Nature Recovery Network)

A connected network of places that support wildlife on land and at sea.

POSA (Plymouth Open Space Assessment 2017)

A study of Plymouth’s open spaces, looking at their quality, amount, and accessibility.

PSDCF (Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest)

A project planting trees across Plymouth and South Devon, creating a mix of forest habitats.

PSNMP (Plymouth Sound National Marine Park)

The UK’s first national marine park, covering Plymouth Sound and promoting marine conservation and community involvement.

Stewardship

Looking after something responsibly, like a park, organisation, or natural area.

SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems)

Drainage systems that manage rainwater in a natural and eco-friendly way.

SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest)

Protected areas important for wildlife, geology, or land features.

TECF (Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum)

A partnership managing the Plymouth Sound and Tamar Estuaries Marine Protected Area.

Terrestrial Habitats

Land-based environments like forests, grasslands, and meadows that support wildlife.

Tree Equity

Making sure all communities have fair access to trees and green spaces.

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DELIVERY PROGRAMME

NATURE RICH OCEAN CITY

Topic	Proposed measures of success	Proposed actions
Clean and healthy water	The progress of achieving a good status for the city’s water bodies and bathing water quality.	Work collaboratively with key partners to co-produce a Plan for Water for the city. Work with partners to monitor and report on water body ecological status and bathing water quality. Work with partners to identify specific actions and investment required to reduce burden on sewer system and sewage discharges.
Canopy Cover	Increase of canopy cover in the city through focusing on achieving a Tree Equity score of at least 75 in all neighbourhoods. All trees and woods owned and managed by the Community Forest partners are under management to the following standards. <ul style="list-style-type: none">British Standard 3998 for individual treesUnited Kingdom Forest Standard for woodland management	Planting 5,885 medium size trees in streets, parks and gardens in Plymouth by 2050 including 1,000 individual urban trees in Plymouth, towns and villages by 2030. Plant, establish and maintain new woodland and trees outside woodlands to buffer and connect Plymouth’s Nature sites. Continue to deliver against the City’s Ash dieback action plan to monitor and respond to the impact of the disease across the city. Work in partnership to support delivery of tree planting initiatives in schools across the city.
Nature sites	Enhance and connect Plymouth’s network of nature-rich sites buffered and connected through green and blue spaces at a city-wide ecosystem scale to work towards 30% of city spaces benefiting nature. Improvements to habitat condition across Nature Sites towards Good/ Favourable by 2030. Work in partnership to ensure favourable condition for 70% of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) features 2042 with the remainder in recovering condition. Urban Nature Recovery Standard - Urban Local Nature Reserves - 1ha per 1,000 People Continually improve our maintenance standards and regimes to be nature-friendly and provide sense of pride in place to build our reputation as an international green city	Seek to identify up to 400 hectares of land across the city’s Nature Recovery Network with potential to enhance habitat type and condition and/or improve habitat monitoring to justify achieving ‘Nature Area’ status. Prioritise parts of the city (Centre and West) with less provision of Nature Areas. Co-design and Co-produce with communities Neighbourhood level Landscape Masterplans to support delivery of the Nature Recovery Network. Agree an evidence-based monitoring framework to monitor progress of the Nature Recovery Network. Use this monitoring and reporting to contribute to Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy and other relevant strategies and comply with the duty to report on biodiversity. Develop and apply relevant Environmental Indicators and a robust condition monitoring system to help measure the success of the Nature Recovery Network and relevant strategies and plans against a clear and targeted delivery framework for recovering nature across the City. Work in partnership to deliver actions to protect, enhance and monitor estuary and marine habitats through the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries Management Plan, and taking account of the South West Marine Plan in planning. Work in partnership to agree actions to protect, enhance, and monitor freshwater habitats given their significant importance and contribution to local, regional and national nature recovery networks. Deliver Nature Recovery programme across Nature Areas of the city in line with management objectives for sites. Engage with planning on the potential for nature recovery to inform the preparation of a new Local Plan and proposed Spatial Development Strategies for the City. Continually consider opportunities through technology improvements and efficiencies for reducing herbicide use as part of weed management on highway and footways. Continue to improve the nature friendly landscaping across the network of gateways into the city to build a Sense of Pride for residents. Ensure that all Council activity uses peat-free compost. Deliver NMP Nature Boost programme.

Topic	Proposed measures of success	Proposed actions
Biodiversity Net Gain	Measurable delivery of Biodiversity Gain across Plymouth, with a baseline produced in 2026 and regular reporting of progress to show impact towards Nature Recovery ambitions.	Utilise the requirement to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain to achieve a sustainable business model for funding targeted parts of the Nature Recovery Network through the city’s habitat bank – Ocean City Biodiversity. Supporting the monitoring and implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain through the planning system and investigate opportunities, alongside those set out in the South West Marine Plan to deliver BNG in intertidal areas. Contribute towards establishing BNG policy and guidance in new Local Plan in line with national regulations and guidance. Develop a clear set of nature positive maintenance standards which reflect our local targets for high quality habitat management and delivery of biodiversity net gain. Develop mechanism to secure contributions towards intertidal and marine habitat benefits, and identify in partnership strategic opportunity areas.
Species abundance	Improvement in species abundance by 2030 working towards increasing levels by 2042	Prioritise key network features with the potential to deliver greatest benefits to the wider network, such as trees and water habitats leading to the improvement of water quality entering freshwater and marine sites. Work collaboratively to protect Plymouth’s existing woodland, trees and hedges especially ancient woodland and ancient, veteran, and notable trees, as well as facilitating the development of woodland into more mature habitat. Contribute to local and regional strategies by restoring, protecting and enhancing woodland through setting out appropriate management to protect and enhance these sites including through control of invasive non-native species, diseases and mitigating climate risk. Encourage expansion and connection of existing woodland as an important feature of the nature recovery network. Improve the condition of grasslands managed for nature and map those reaching priority habitat status as nature areas and monitor their contribution to 30by30 targets. Manage priority habitat grassland sites effectively to achieve better condition. Adapting our grassland management to support more wildlife, varying the cutting regime in areas agreed with the local community. Work with key partners to carry out a more detailed assessment of open mosaic habitat towards an objective to protect and improve this priority habitat in the city. Produce or contribute to management plans for key habitats and species (terrestrial, aquatic and marine) of significant importance to ensure management is guided and targeted effectively. Address habitat fragmentation and connectivity across the Nature Recovery Network through creating and managing wildlife corridors including new hedges, field edges and dark bat corridors. Monitor actions to manage biohazards including pests, diseases and non-native invasive Species. Collaborate with Devon authorities to produce and adopt Devon LNRS which recognises the Plymouth Nature Recovery Network.
Climate resilience and adaptation	Maximise opportunity to use nature-based solutions to support Plymouth becoming a climate resilient city in line with Climate Adaptation Plan and Net Zero Action Plan. Use habitat metrics to account for carbon stored and sequestered in the city’s natural spaces. Number of locations where flood impact/risk is lowered in line with Flood Risk Strategy. Reduce quantity of urban heat islands by facilitating increased numbers of street trees etc.	Deliver a partnership programme that co-designs climate programmes with communities in neighbourhoods to promote positive behaviour. Work collaboratively with key partners to co-produce a Plan for Water for the city to support the evidence base for recognising the need for spatial allocations for water related infrastructure in the Local Plan. Work collaboratively with key partners to co-produce a Plan for Climate Adaptation for the city to make Plymouth a liveable and sustainable city. Plant, establish, and maintain new woodland and trees outside woodlands improve water quality through infiltration and mitigate climate change through urban cooling and Natural Flood Management. Continue work to build partnerships to build the evidence for nature-based solutions to climate change and biodiversity loss as well as piloting delivery of nature-based solutions across the city as part of our plans for climate adaptation.

A PLAYFUL, ACTIVE AND HEALTHY PLYMOUTH

Topic	Proposed measures of success	Proposed actions
Health and Wellbeing from natural spaces	<p>The level of investment and activity to deliver improvements to parks and natural spaces across the city that supports physical activity, mental wellbeing and connection to nature.</p> <p>Increase number of visits to City’s Natural Spaces from 2026 baseline.</p> <p>Improvement in anxiety levels, wellbeing and absenteeism measures for Children and Young People participating in Ecotherapy and Nature Well programmes.</p> <p>Increased number of participants in Ecotherapy and Nature Well programmes across Plymouth's natural spaces.</p>	<p>Continue to develop partnerships with Health, Children and Youth partners to deliver city-wide Health and Wellbeing and Therapeutic programmes (e.g. Green Social Prescribing programmes such as Ecotherapy and Nature Well programme) to provide meaningful positive impact for children and young people of the city to mitigate the mental health crisis.</p> <p>Adopt and use step counters across key natural spaces to monitor and report on visitor numbers and impact.</p> <p>Continue to develop and deliver improvements to parks and natural space facilities across the city that supports improvements to physical activity levels, mental well-being and connection to nature.</p> <p>Work with partners to continue to develop and create Green Travel networks as part of the city’s wider Active Travel network.</p>
Accessible Natural Spaces	<p>City’s natural space access network achieves good condition and accessibility standards.</p> <p>Achieve Green Flag status for 12 sites in the city by 2030 – an increase of 5 from 2024</p> <p>Each year we will see an increasing number of people able to physically access good quality natural space within walking distance of their home in line with the aspirational target of accessible natural space within 400m of home.</p>	<p>Use relevant national and local standards to plan evidence-based Natural Infrastructure provision and quantifiable targets from a standard Nature Equity score.</p> <p>Continue work with key partners to identify priority natural spaces for improvement.</p> <p>Build community partnerships to co-design, co-deliver and raise investment for a natural space improvement programme.</p>
Play	<p>Seek to increase level of provision of suitable playable spaces for communities as follows;</p> <p>Local playable space within 400m walking distance of all homes and neighbourhood playable space within 1000m of all homes.</p> <p>Number of Play Areas achieving ‘Moderate’/ ‘Good’ condition across ‘play estate’.</p> <p>Deliver increase in more nature-rich playable spaces across the city including more sensory nature play.</p>	<p>Plymouth Play Assessment update 2026 to determine suitable level of provision of play areas to meet measures proposed which are sustainably financed.</p> <p>Produce a business case to bring forward new phase of Play Improvement Programme to include nature-rich playable and naturally playful spaces.</p>
Sport	<p>Explore opportunities for new development proposals to support the measures set out in fig 3.2 of the JLP including working towards a playing pitch standard of 0.79ha per 1000 people.</p> <p>Achieve Moderate/ Good condition of playing pitches across the estate as measured by Governing Body accreditation.</p> <p>Deliver increase in nature features across sports pitch estate in the city.</p> <p>Increase in activity levels for water based activities in the city.</p>	<p>Complete Playing Pitch Strategy update in 2025 and maintain the active places database.</p> <p>Lead partnership group to co-produce a Plan for a Playful Plymouth by 2027 setting strategic direction for the city’s sports and play assets and activity programmes on both land and sea.</p>

Topic	Proposed measures of success	Proposed actions
Food growing	<p>Explore opportunities for new development proposals to support the measures set out in fig 3.2 of the JLP including working towards a provision of allotments/community food growing space of 0.15ha per 1000 people.</p> <p>Support local food production through the provision of good quality allotment sites.</p>	<p>Conduct Allotment estate audit by 2028 to inform business case for allotment investment programme to improve quality of existing allotments estate.</p> <p>Work in partnership to identify and support alternative ways to provide community food provision, education and training around food growing in areas with no allotments.</p> <p>Identify opportunities and implement initiatives to reduce water use on allotment sites.</p> <p>Find opportunities for more community orchards via the Community Forest.</p> <p>Make culinary herbs freely available in major parks.</p> <p>Explore the potential expansion of the allotment network as the city grows.</p>
Activity Programmes in Natural Spaces	<p>Deliver in partnership a diverse range of activity programmes to reach/ engage with over 10,000 people per year, targeting audiences/ groups most in need.</p>	<p>Build a sustainable funding package to sustain and grow the provision of Ecotherapy and Nature Well programmes delivered with key partners in the city.</p> <p>Sustain and grow key Hub sites, such as Poole Farm and Central Park, to act as outdoor Wellbeing Hubs to support provision of natural space activity programmes.</p> <p>Develop programmes of activity around natural spaces that support the more vulnerable children and young people in the city, such as a local Short Breaks programme, as well as partnering with agencies across the city to provide city-wide activity programmes focused on children, young people, and families being active outdoors and in natural spaces.</p>

INCLUSIVE NATURE SPACES

Topic	Proposed measures of success	Proposed actions
Inclusive design and programming	Seek to listen to and engage with local communities and residents of all ages, user groups and organisations in considering actions required to improve their local area and work towards the ambition that all residents have access to a high quality and welcoming natural space within 15mins walking distance of their home to support health and wellbeing.	Establish representative governance to oversee this delivery programme made up of key cross-sectoral representatives. Provide new, user-friendly and responsive online and digital information to communicate what is going on in parks and natural spaces and how people can get involved and provide opportunities for feedback. Invest in a network of inclusive communication formats to distribute information about and promote the city’s natural spaces and access to them. Ensuring that access for all from a physical and sensory perspective is considered and applied to natural spaces across the city in infrastructure, interpretation and on-site facilities.
Inclusive and accessible natural spaces	City’s natural space access network achieves good condition and accessibility standards.	Ensure a safe, inclusive and well-maintained access network across the city to maximise opportunity for people to experience nature in day-to-day activity. Use delivery of the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park to build a long-term, sustainable access programme for the city’s marine spaces through the Pathways to the Sea programme. Facilitate meaningful engagement with residents near Ernesettle Creek and Firestone Bay by establishing Community Access Points that enhance connection to local blue spaces.
Community business and social enterprise	Increasing number of and economic impact of community businesses and social enterprises active across the city’s natural spaces.	Continue to promote opportunities and collaborate to deliver active social enterprises in the city’s natural spaces, including providing clearer signposting and toolkits for others to use. Build digital platforms to facilitate the sharing of volunteering and stewardship opportunities.
Events in Parks and Natural Spaces	Grow the number of events and diversity of attendees of events taking place in the city’s natural spaces.	Ensure that use of parks and natural spaces are embedded within the city’s plans for health and wellbeing including physical activity and leisure. Collaborate with key partners to enable an annual programme of outdoor and water cultural and sporting events to support our cultural sector, attract new users and add vibrancy in ways that don’t damage the long-term condition of parks. Continue to support and evolve processes for residents to plan and host appropriate community and cultural events in parks and natural spaces. Work with partners and event organisers to meet required sustainability standards for events.

A NATURE CONNECTED, ENGAGED AND EMPOWERED PLYMOUTH

Topic	Proposed measures of success	Proposed actions
Volunteering and participation	<p>Report and celebrate annually on collective volunteer effort to maintain, enhance and enable activity in the city’s natural spaces.</p> <p>Increase in % of people carrying out voluntary work or helping out to ‘do their bit’ for nature.</p>	<p>Sustain and grow the Green Communities partnership model of delivery across the city reaching new communities using Asset Based Community Development Principles.</p> <p>Co-ordinate with city partners to bring forward a Volunteer Management System to promote and support safe and recognised volunteering across the city.</p> <p>Co-ordinate with city partners to celebrate volunteer participation across the city.</p> <p>Provide volunteer training programmes (alongside and interrelated to workforce training) to support safe and effective volunteering.</p> <p>Continue to host and support the Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum (TECF) to hold the Port of Plymouth Marine Liaison Committee (PPMLC) which acts as the water user group.</p> <p>Support city networks such as Plymouth Open Space Network and Plymouth Tree People as well as individual Friends and Community groups aligning with this plan.</p> <p>Produce a Plan for Nature & People partnership toolkit to include standard Partnership agreements to enable consistent, far and easily accessible collaboration for aligned groups across the city.</p>
Education and Training	<p>A co-designed curriculum for staff and apprentices to create and evolve accessible career pathways in and across sectors linked to the objectives of this plan. It will provide high quality training and support for our workforce and volunteers alongside apprenticeships and work experience for new entrants, with a particular focus on young people seeking employment, education or training.</p>	<p>Collaborate with education and training sector to establish a Plymouth NE Education and Training programme.</p> <p>Co-design and deliver a curriculum for staff and apprenticeships which support delivery of the objectives of this plan.</p> <p>Co-design a curriculum for the emerging green economy which takes account of future policy and technological advancements.</p> <p>Continue to deliver and seek opportunities to expand the city's Sea in Schools Programme with partners in the city.</p>
Nature Connection	<p>City survey shows increased and sustained nature connection for residents of the city.</p>	<p>Develop and apply relevant Social Indicators and a robust monitoring system to help measure the success of programmes across the City.</p> <p>Deliver programs to improve awareness of disturbance of habitats and species, for marine through the Marine Recreation Mitigation and Enhancement Scheme (MRMMS).</p> <p>Monitor and report on City survey results to questions related to the city’s natural spaces and activity related to it.</p>
Communications	<p>Reach diverse and broad audience across broad range of media - People know what is happening in the city and communities.</p> <p>Annual increase in unique views and engagements and engagement rate across delivery programme activities.</p> <p>Interpretation is clear, accessible and inclusive.</p> <p>Reach new audiences through accurate, responsible, fair and democratic communications.</p> <p>Regular evaluation with stakeholders measures satisfaction with communication about nature-based activity programmes in the city.</p>	<p>Initiate and lead a city-wide communications campaign, championing community action linked to the Climate Connections and other relevant programmes.</p> <p>Collaborate and communicate to communities in most effective way with partners.</p> <p>Consistent stakeholder mapping to recognise full extent of impact across the city.</p> <p>Use our platforms to promote and celebrate work of partners across the city.</p> <p>Use our platforms to promote and celebrate Plymouth's unique wildlife and species such as the Plymouth Pear, Allis Shad and Horrid Groundweaver spider.</p> <p>Develop dedicated people in the council to communicate volunteering opportunities using a variety of methods.</p>

Topic	Proposed measures of success	Proposed actions
Sustainable City growth	<p>Achieve a sustainable service delivery with a carbon positive approach to maintaining and enhancing the city’s natural spaces.</p> <p>The city’s natural spaces play a critical role in the sustainable growth of the city.</p>	<p>Work collaboratively with key partners and communities to ensure marine sites are considered as part of the growth of the city.</p> <p>Protect trees and woodlands through the implementation of Joint Local Plan policy DEV28, Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and planning conditions where amenity is a consideration or the trees are under threat. Ancient woodlands and trees providing habitat for priority species shall receive particular attention for protection.</p> <p>Undertake a desk top review of all the TPO and produce a rolling programme of reviewing individual TPO’s, focussing on old area orders with a minimum of five TPOs being reviewed annually.</p> <p>Ensure TPO and Conservation area GIS data available on the City’s website is updated regularly to assist in service delivery for protected tree checks.</p> <p>Produce an update to the Tree Management Principles document which clearly shows decision making processes around trees in the city.</p> <p>Seek to support the Local Planning Authority in using appropriate planning conditions and developer contributions to ensure developers follow mitigation and Biodiversity Gain hierarchy to minimise impact and secure improvements and additions to the City’s natural environment and features to mitigate for the environmental effects of development.</p> <p>Identify and put into place working practices and machinery that reduces our carbon emissions to zero.</p> <p>Encourage the incorporation of innovative nature-based solutions and ecological engineering opportunities into new developments such as green roofs, seawalls etc.</p> <p>Develop mechanism to monitor delivery of natural infrastructure.</p> <p>Work across Council and external teams to link objectives and outcomes of this plan into existing social value measures through procurement and other voluntary Environmental and Social Goals (ESG) initiatives.</p>
Governance	<p>Positive feedback from Steering Group and wider stakeholders about the delivery of this plan.</p>	<p>Lead a Plan for Nature and People steering group to monitor and account for the delivery of this programme.</p>

AN INNOVATIVE INVESTMENT CITY

Topic	Proposed measures of success	Proposed actions
Investment in Ocean City Nature & the Natural Environment portfolio	Use the targets, outcomes and framework from the Plan for Nature and People and inter-related nature recovery plans to enable significant scale investment - £50m - in natural infrastructure, community engagement and sustainable enterprise to deliver wide ranging social, environmental and financial positive impact including through Plymouth’s green finance vehicle – Ocean City Nature .	Continue to establish Ocean City Nature as the key Green Finance investment vehicle for the city and surrounding area, ensuring that it is fit for purpose to enable all relevant forms of investment and deliver maximum impact. Update the Ocean City Nature Business Plan. PCC to produce a Natural Environment Business Plan. Produce Plymouth’s first Natural Capital Investment Prospectus to catalyse and bring forward external investment to support wider Natural Environment programme delivery.
Investment cases	Support development of a local circular economy around city natural capital. Generating new and enhancing existing natural assets and investing in activity programmes to deliver maximum impact across social, environmental and economic outcomes. Through the city’s Habitat Bank - deliver and provide over 200 Biodiversity Units across the City’s Nature Recovery Network. Work with local landowners to provide a pilot of over 1000 carbon credits to support City’s Net Zero targets.	Promote and support park based social and community business which provide high quality facilities and activities in natural spaces, bring in income and support green jobs. Improve the use and sustainability of the buildings in parks providing toolkits to enable new forms of community and enterprise use to ensure they are high quality, well-used and cared for in the long term. Develop new funding streams to secure sustainable forms of income to deliver high quality maintenance and improvements to existing assets and new assets. Maximise sustainable transport options to parks and natural spaces, providing electric vehicle charging points and car share options and bike rental at key locations and supporting walking and cycling routes to and within parks. Work with city economic development partners to ensure that the natural environment remains a key city asset for the visitor economy and culture programme.
Data	Effectiveness of reporting against Plan metrics	Establish digital monitoring systems to collect social, environmental data and evidence our impact publicly against our key measures and indicators. Utilise citizen science opportunities wherever possible.
Jobs and Career pathways	Number of job opportunities generated per year. Number of apprenticeship and other career gateway roles and opportunities established each year. Improvement in workforce feedback metrics	Continue to implement a workforce development plan for Council teams delivering across our natural spaces to ensure the best levels of skills, knowledge and culture. Work collaboratively with partners to build structures to enable apprenticeship and career gateway opportunities.

PLYMOUTH NATURE RECOVERY NETWORK

At the time of writing Nature Recovery Networks (NRN) are a big topic. The NRN is the Government's national vision for a connected web of wildlife rich places that help restore biodiversity and deliver wider benefits.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies will be the statutory place-based building blocks of the NRN. In Devon this work is being led by Devon County Council as the responsible authority and Plymouth (along with the other Devon District Councils) are a 'supporting authority'.

The Devon LNRS will feed into the local plans providing a spatial evidence base to inform and guide future planning policies. The LPAs are required to have regard to the LNRS when preparing Local Plans.

To support this work Plymouth have been updating the Biodiversity Network evidence which was produced to support the production of the Joint Local Plan adopted in 2019.

This local evidence will support the Devon LNRS by providing a more detailed picture of the state of nature within Plymouth and provide more detailed knowledge to help us target projects and investment that protect and enhance the most important sites, explore opportunities to connect up habitats and deliver other benefits such as flood protection, cleaner air and places for people to enjoy.

This local knowledge will help inform the future Local Plan for Plymouth alongside the Devon LNRS.

Analysis of this network currently show that 25% of the City's area is classed as being an existing Nature Area (as defined below). Other parts of the city will act as Opportunity Areas - areas of land which have some potential, through improvements to their nature value through management and enhancement of sites or parts of a site, will support the Nature Network by providing corridors, stepping stones or buffers.

The Plymouth Nature Recovery Network has two Key categories for Nature sites (plus a rivers and street trees category):

High Value Nature Areas

International, national and local designated sites, irreplaceable habitats, Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and JLP Biodiversity Network Core Sites. Includes terrestrial and aquatic habitats.

(15% of the city).

Other Nature Areas

Non-designated, ecologically valuable sites with a high proportion of Priority Habitat and/or key components of the JLP Biodiversity Network. Includes terrestrial and aquatic habitats.

(10% of the city).



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ENGAGEMENT REPORT

SUMMER OF NATURE 2024

Summary of Survey Results Report

The Summer of Nature survey was live between 27 July and 3 September and was promoted at a variety of events that took place over the summer. From Fit and Fed in four of Plymouth's main parks to Wild and Well at Poole Farm. Surveys were carried out both in person and via a QR code to a Google Form. We also received responses from over 50 staff via the PCC staffroom and Teams.

While we have analysed 486 responses, we received a few extra surveys after the 3 September, which haven't been included but took the response rate to over 500.

The survey consisted of four main questions and three asking for demographic data. The responses were anonymous to allow people to openly express their thoughts and opinions.

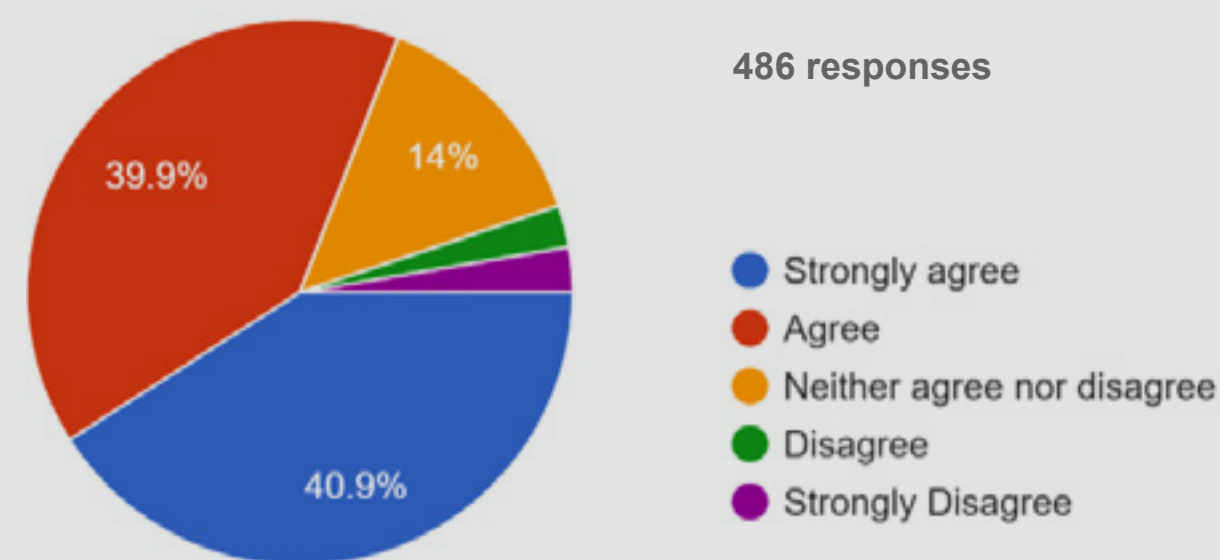
Questions:

- How much do you agree or disagree with the following:
I feel part of nature
- What's your favourite memory from a nature place in Plymouth?
- How much do you agree or disagree with the following:
Being in nature makes me very happy
- What actions can we all do to help care for Plymouth's nature in the future?
- Demographics - What is your postcode?
What age bracket are you in?

Summary of questions

Question 1

How much do you agree or disagree with the following:
I feel part of nature



As can be seen on the pie chart, most people (80.9% or 393 people) strongly agreed or agreed that they felt part of nature and only 5.2% (25 people) did not feel part of nature.

Question 2

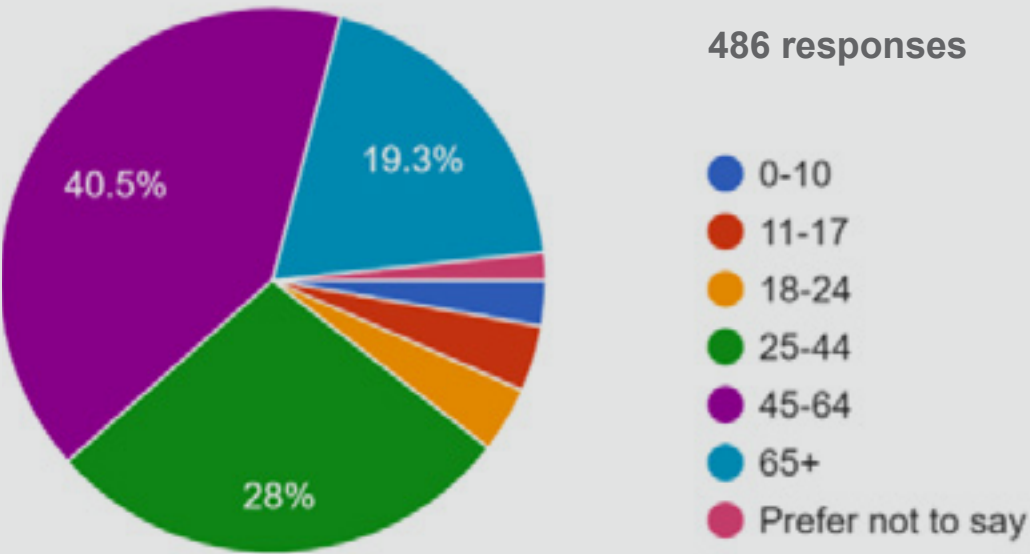
What's your favourite memory from a nature place in Plymouth?



What's your favourite memory from a nature place in Plymouth provided an array of places and verbs. The most frequently mentioned are displayed in larger and bolder font such as woods, parks and walking.

Question 6

What age bracket are you in?



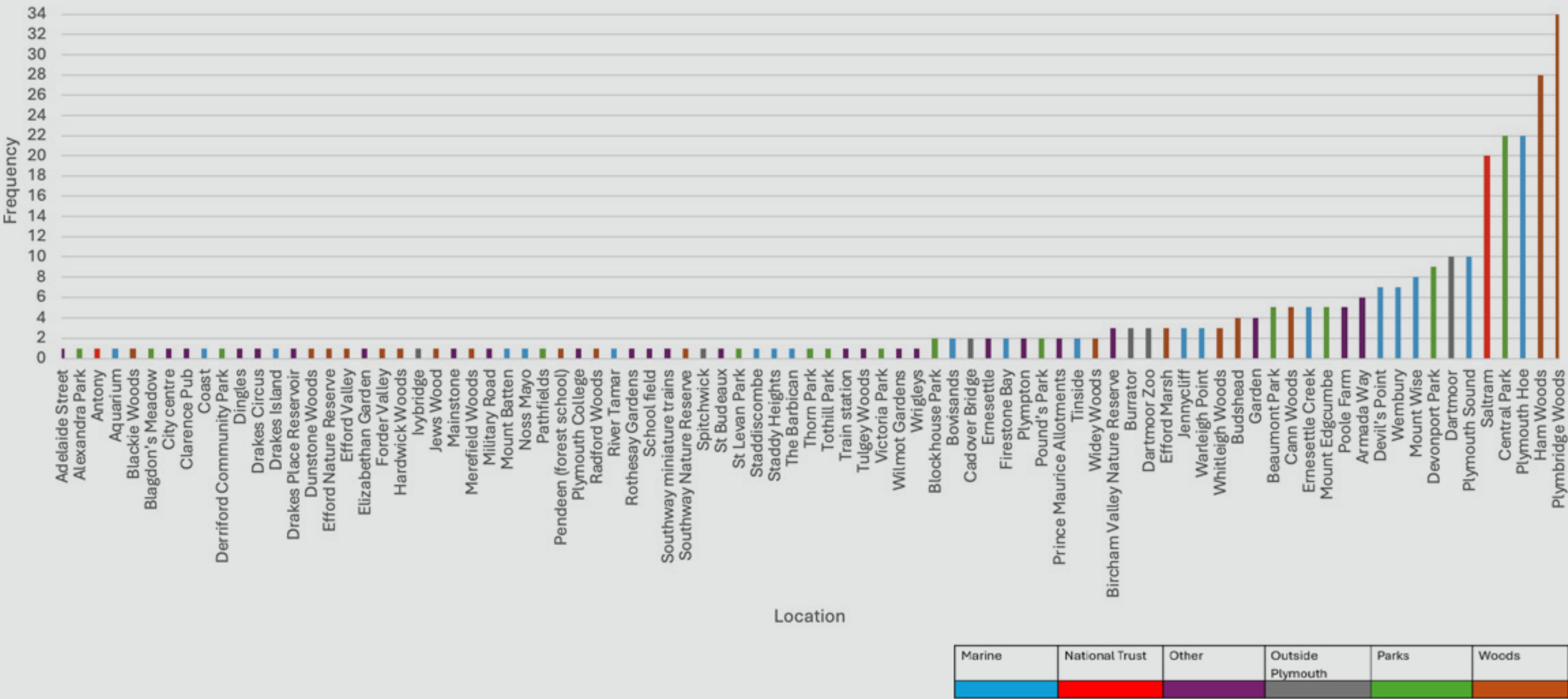
As you can see the 45-64 age range was very well represented (40.5% - 196 respondents) followed by the 25-44 (28% - 136 respondents) bracket and 65+ (19.3% - 94 respondents). Only 60 respondents fell in the 0-24, with a few preferring not to say.

Due to the low representation of young people, and as we have a number of project teams working in schools during the Autumn Term, we decided to extend the Survey just for the 0-24 age bracket up to half-term. We felt this could be achieved relatively easily by adding these questions to lesson evaluations.

The extension until early November to capture more responses from the lower age ranges has not yielded the increase in responses we had hoped and has not altered the results significantly enough to update figures already presented in this report.

We have begun to expand our analysis to see whether where people live, or their age groups make a difference to the nature memories and actions suggested.

Frequency of locations in favourite nature memories



While lots of places were mentioned, there were five stand out attractions - Plymbridge Woods, Ham Woods, Plymouth Hoe, Central Park and Saltram. It is clear that people do appreciate the greenspaces and nature close to their home, however more analysis could show whether people prefer to travel across the city to other nature destinations.

Priority actions by age

Age	Priorities
0-10	Litter picking, Plant more trees
11-17	Litter picking, Natural resource management
18-24	Litter picking, Volunteering/community groups, Plant trees
25-44	Litter, Accountability, Education, Community events, Plant trees, Green investment
45-64	Litter, Grass cutting, Conservation, Community gardens, Wildlife friendly gardening, Housing developments, Look after mature trees
65+	Litter, Conservation, Water quality, Development, Community groups
Not stated	Stop using pesticides, Conservation

The results above show that regardless of age, litter appears consistently as the main theme across all age groups.

The following pages show further analysis by postcode. Page 11 shows the frequency of locations in favourite nature memories Tally graph at a larger scale.

Overall, the summer of nature has proved to be a useful activity which has given us the opportunity to listen to Plymouth residents.

Summary of analysis and themes

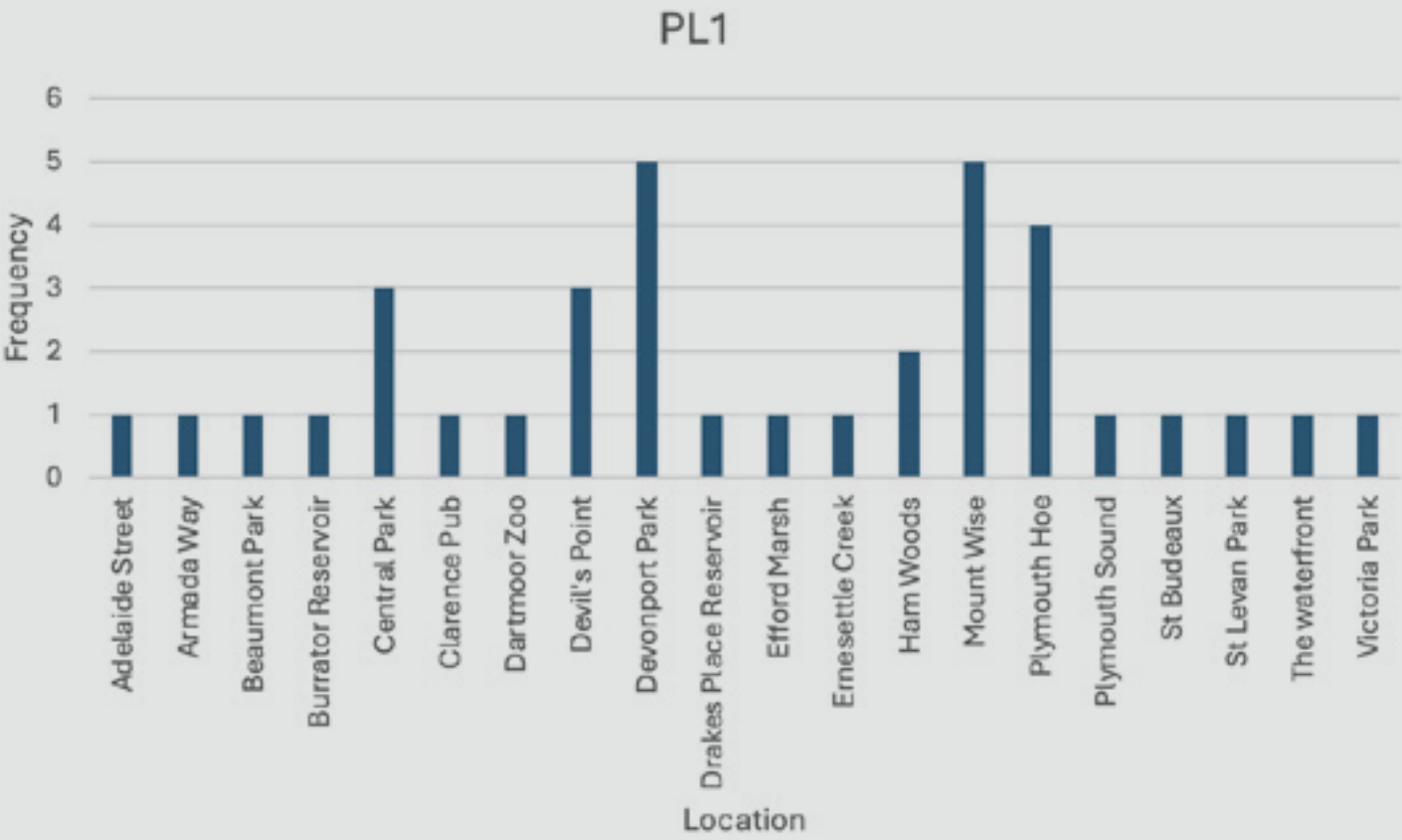
Postcode and favourite nature memories

PL1

In the PL1 area, most locations mentioned as forming part of people’s favourite nature memories are in coastal areas and form part of the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park (PSNMP) with a total of 14. This highlights the correlation between ease of access to nature spaces within this postcode and use of them for swimming.

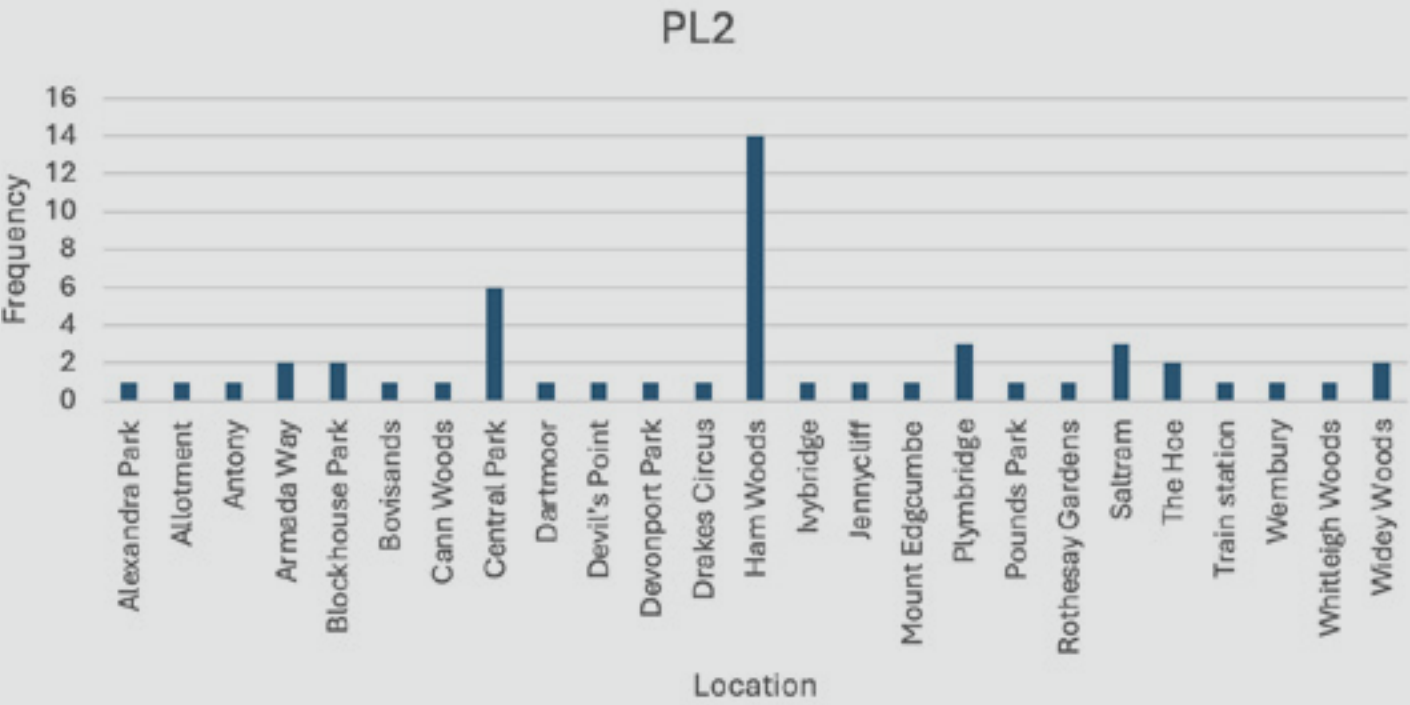
The two most popular locations were Devonport Park and Mount Wise.

In addition to locations within the PSNMP, parks were very common with 11 mentions across five parks located in the Devonport and south of Plymouth. This highlights the importance of local greenspaces and access to these parks.



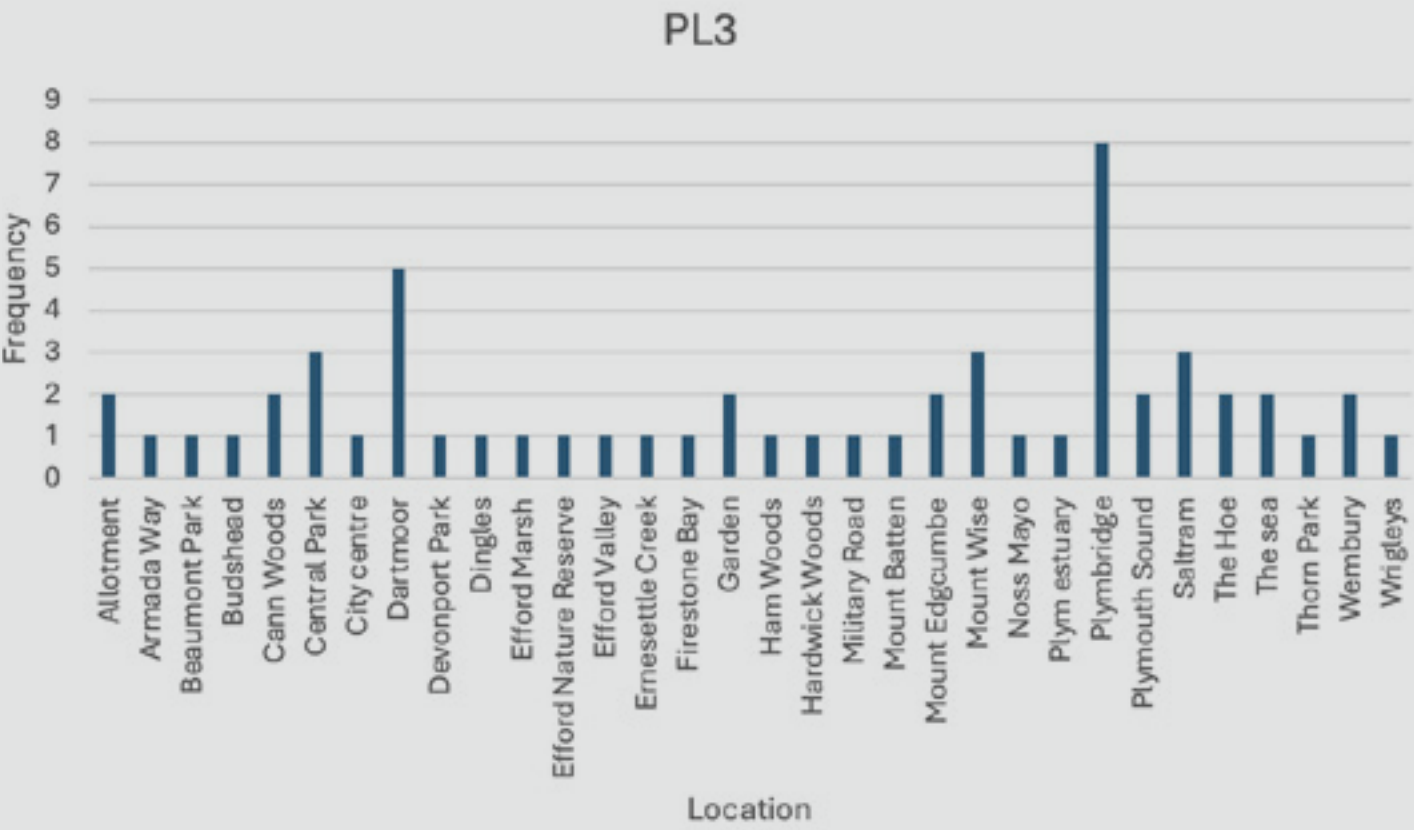
PL2

In the PL2 area, the overall number of locations has increased from 20 in PL1 to 25 in PL2. This could be due to easier access to the Torpoint Ferry as two of these locations are in south-east Cornwall (Antony and Mount Edgcumbe) and its surrounding area in Cornwall. Nine of the favourite nature memories revolve around coastal areas and 25 are in parks with Ham Woods being the most popular of these.



PL3

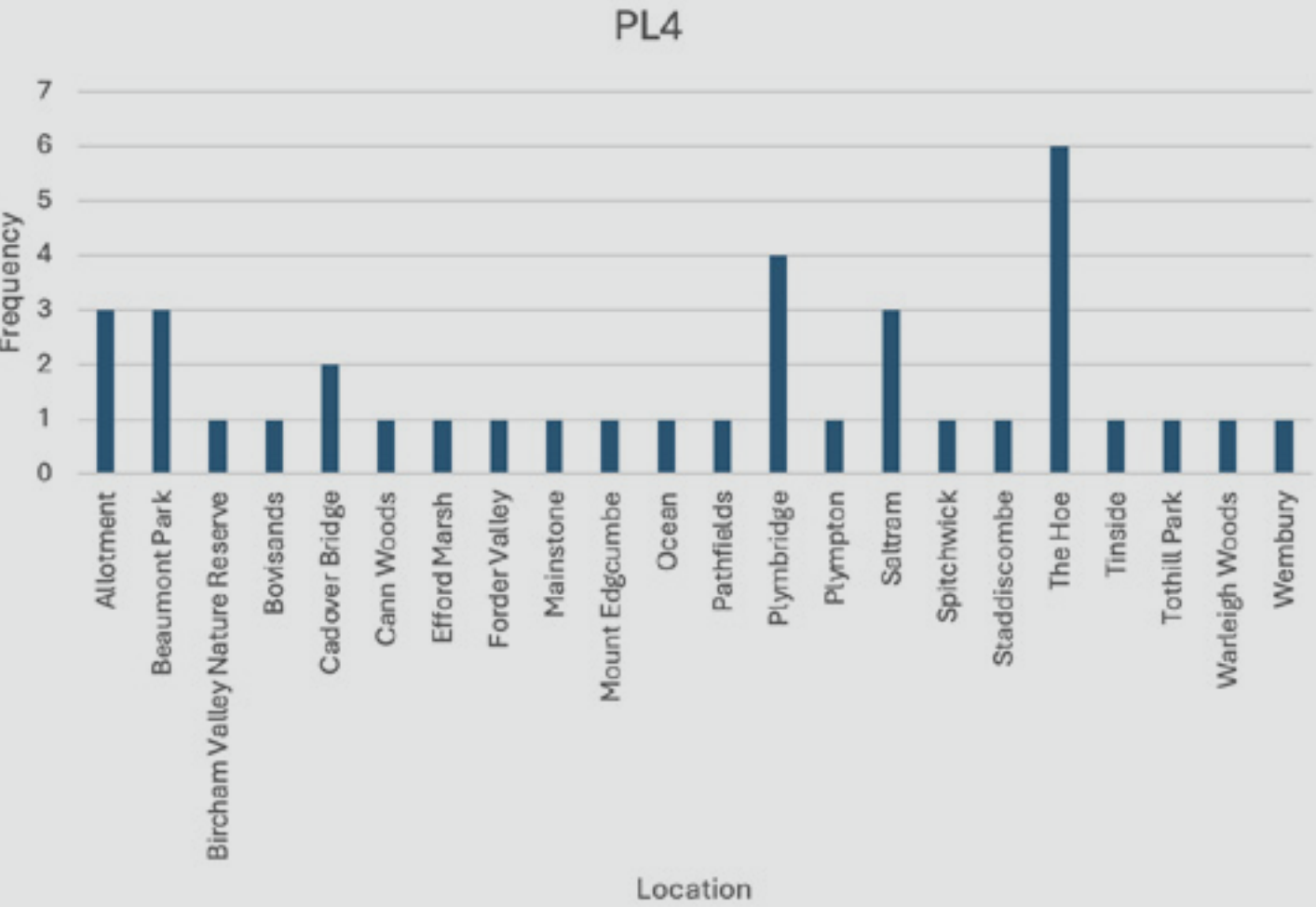
In the PL3 area, it is the first time that private land has been mentioned – gardens. These are nature spaces which are much less common in both PL1 and PL2 where public land was the focus. There are more greenspaces than blue ones interacted with in this area however overall, there is a wider distribution of areas interacted with across Plymouth and the surrounding area.



PL4

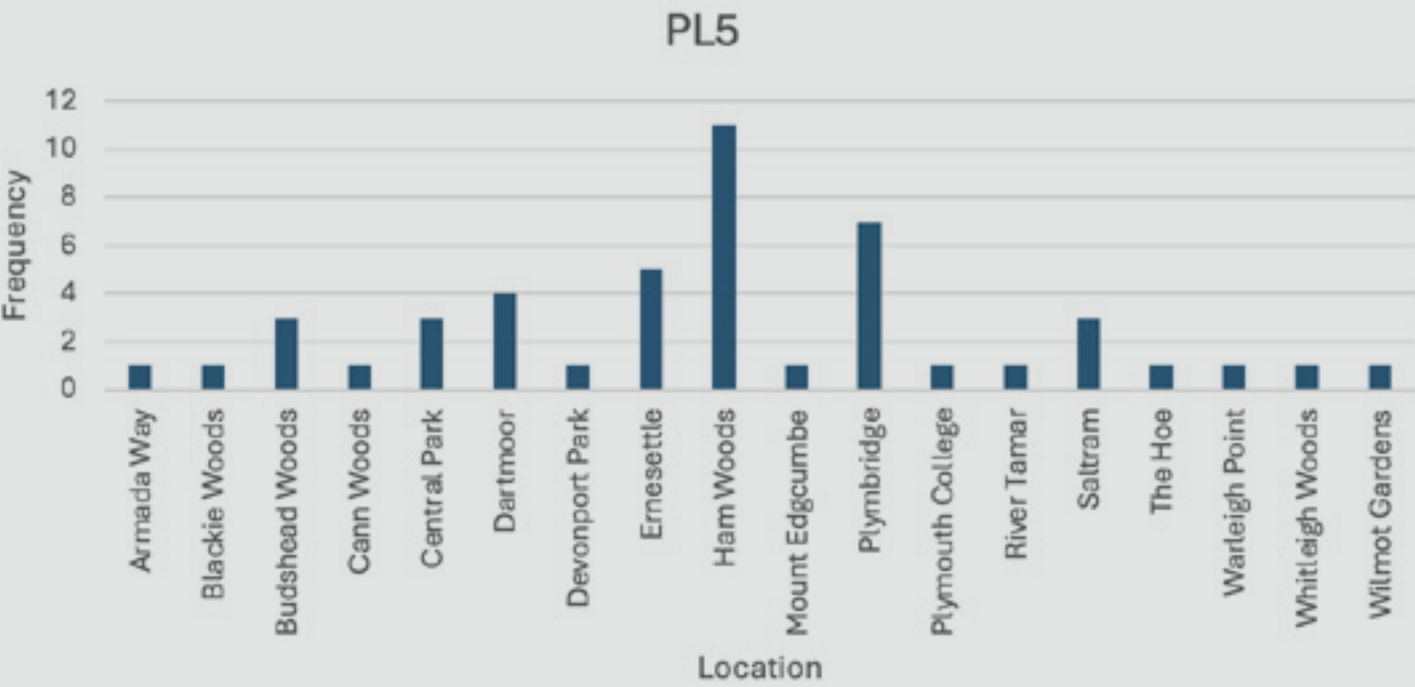
In PL4, there are many locations that feature once in people’s favourite nature memories with the exception of well-known nature spaces including Plymbridge Woods and The Hoe.

Due to the area that the PL4 postcode covers, these locations are found in the postcode and the surrounding area so are not considered to be unexpected responses. Due to the proximity to the city centre, the coastline is an easy access point to feel more connected to nature from.



PL5

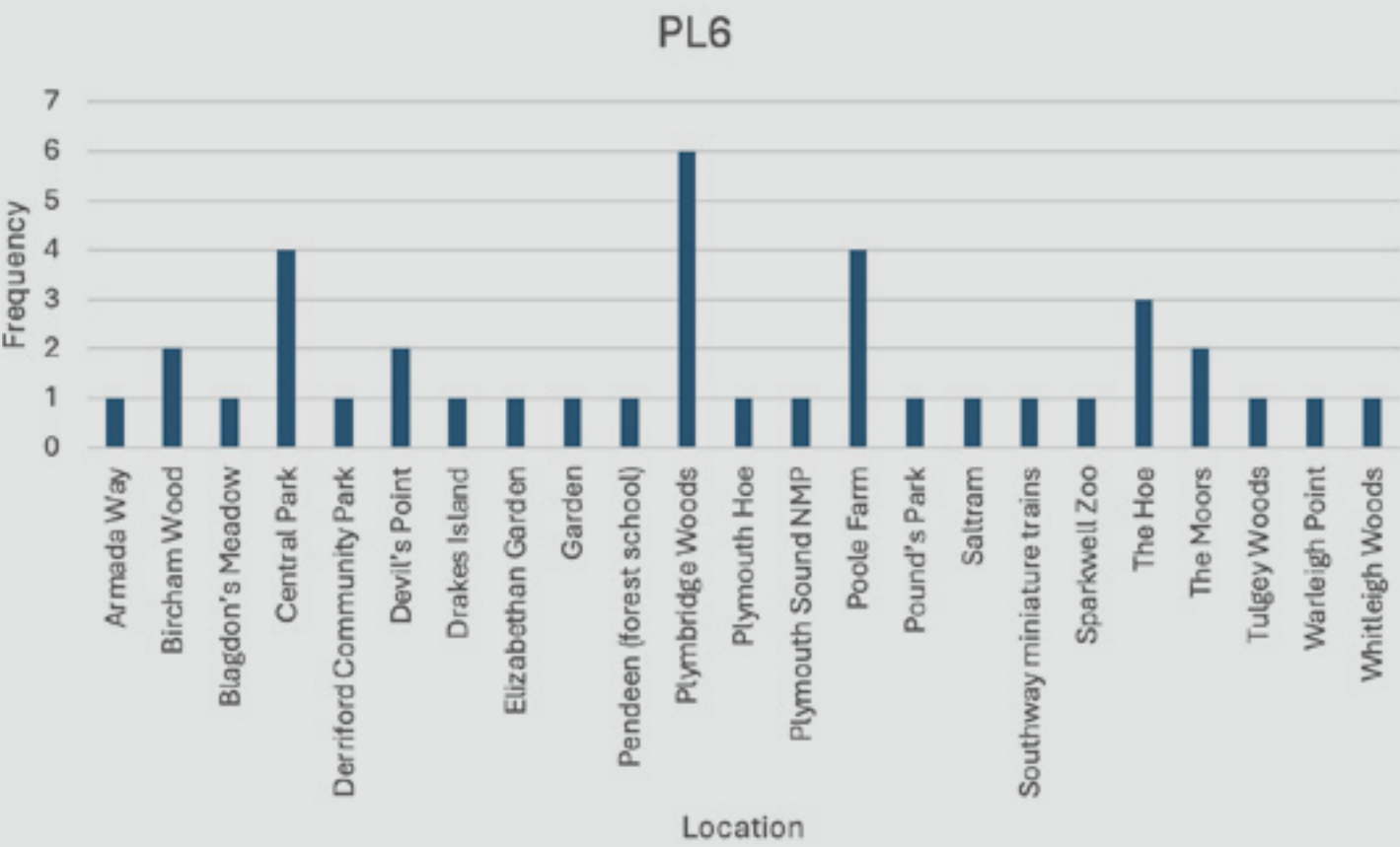
In the PL5 area, there are more inland nature spaces compared to coastal ones – this reflects the area that the postcode encompasses. They most commonly recurring locations are ones which are well known, these include Central Park, Ham Woods and Plymbridge Woods. In comparison to other postcodes, The Hoe or popular swimming places are mentioned once indicating that local residents find the easiest way to access nature is through parks or woodland.



PL6

In PL6, the distribution of nature places across Plymouth that are found in favourite nature memories reflect all four corners of the city. As with PL2-PL5, there are more parks and woodlands than parts of the PSNMP – this reflects the locations of nature places within the PL6 area as this is furthest from the coastline.

The most popular location is Plymbridge Woods – outside of this survey, it is a well-known nature space in Plymouth and its periphery. Some of the lesser-known, or less traditionally thought of locations are included in this graph – for example the Elizabethan Gardens and Tulgey Woods.



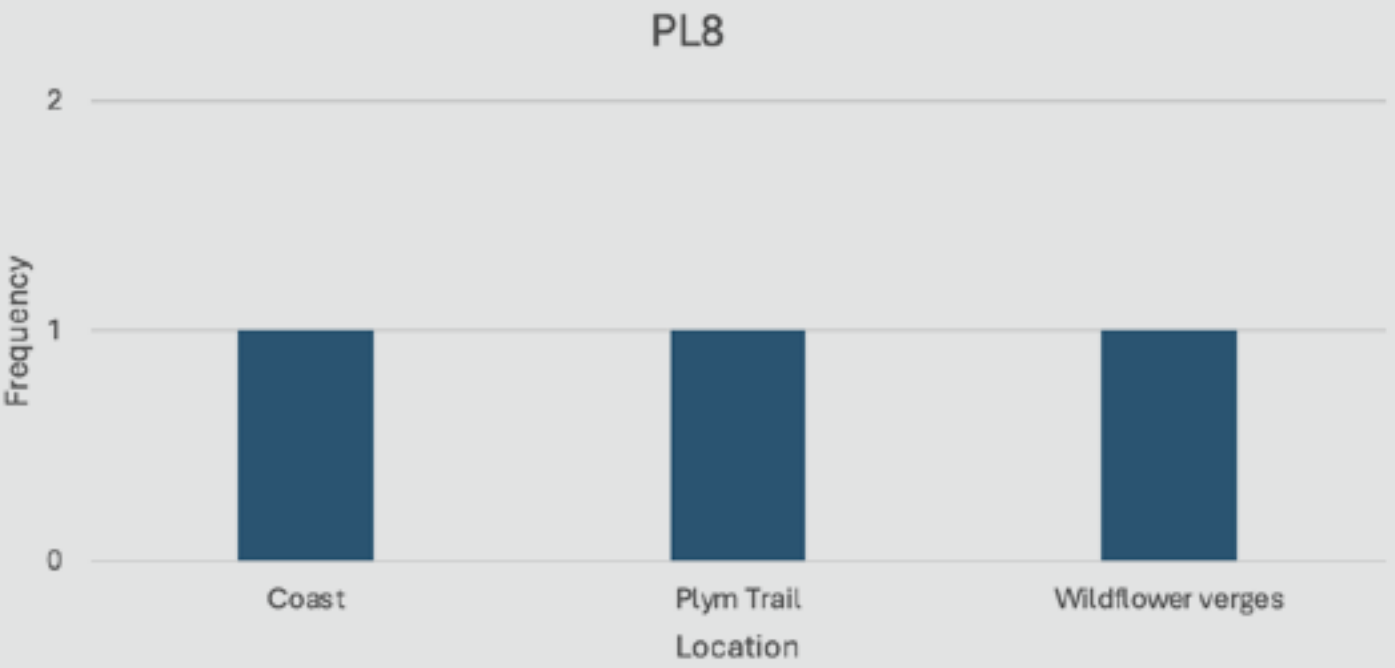
PL7

Within the PL7 area, we had less responses however the locations mentioned are more reflective of the area. There are six coastal locations, which is similar to the PL1 area which had a higher number of coastal locations than PL2-PL6. The remaining locations are all easily accessible for people in this postcode, exemplified by the inclusion of Saltram and Merafield Woods.



PL8

In PL8, there are very few named areas however there was specific mention of coastal species including seaweed and anemones which gives an indication that as it is a more coastal area this is one of the main ways that people are experiencing nature.



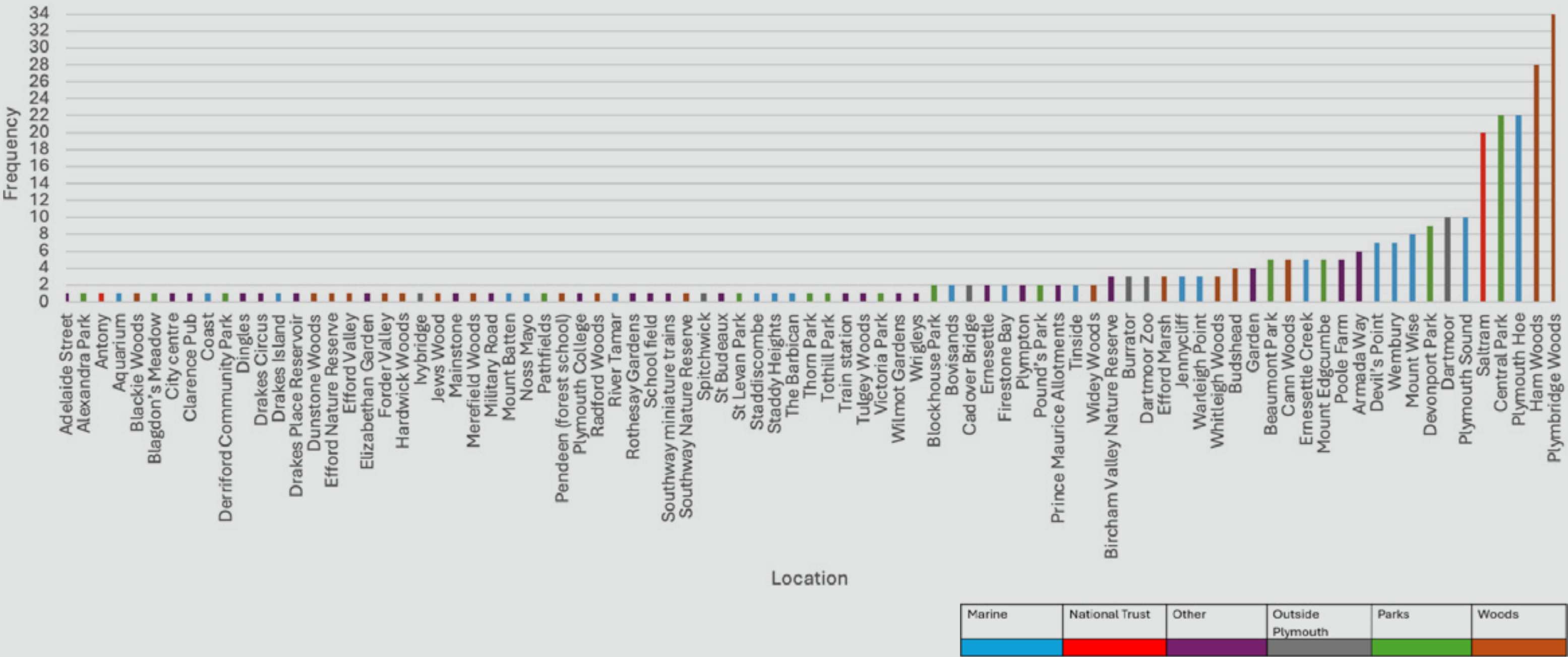
PL9

Within PL9, there is one location north of the A38 (Dartmoor Zoo) and the remaining 14 locations are in the PL9 area and its surroundings. There is a split between inland and coastal locations of approximately two thirds to one third. The distribution of these types of locations is more similar to the PL1 and PL7 areas than PL2-PL6. Two of these locations are used for recreation and leisure – Dartmoor Zoo and Staddy Heights (golf club).

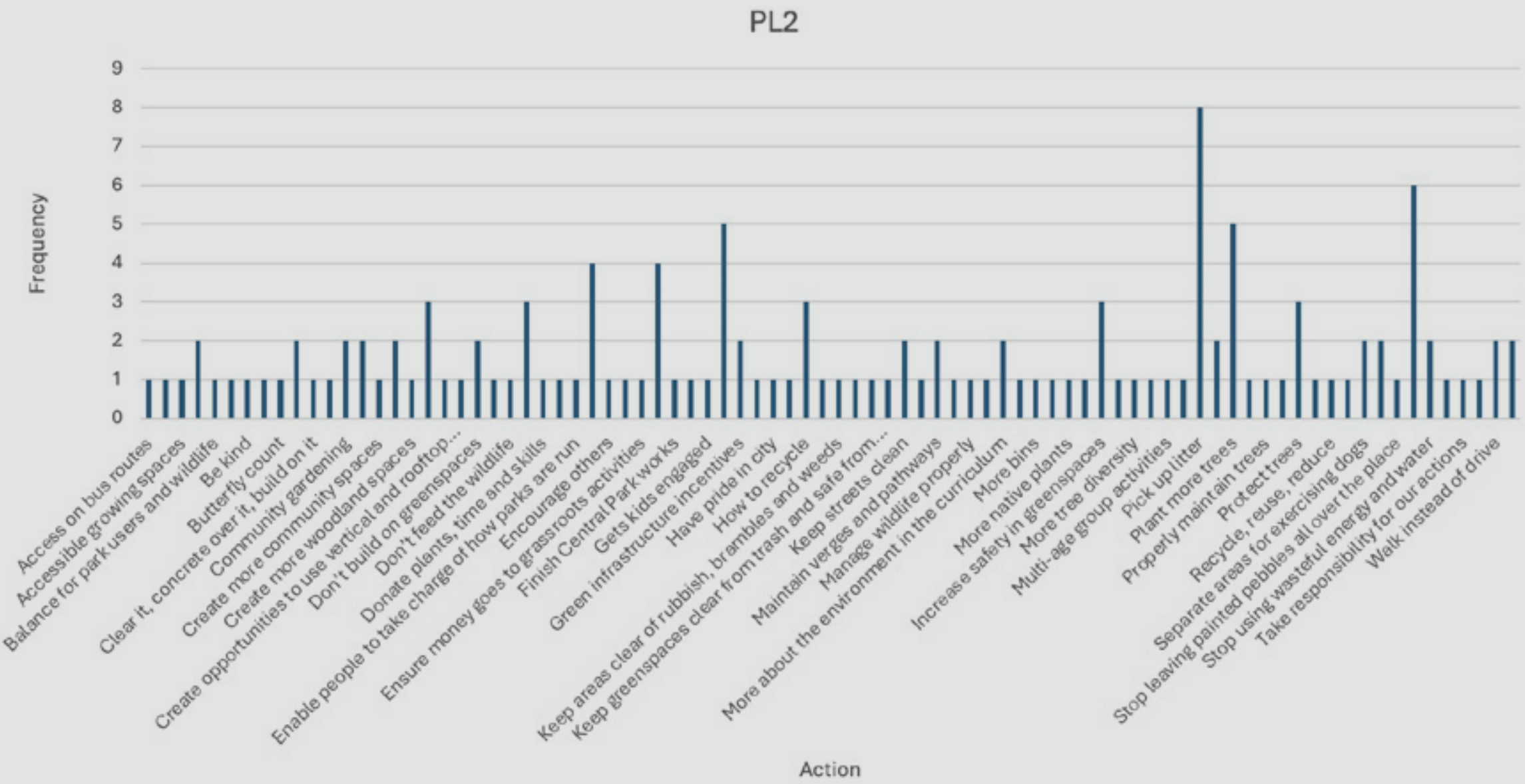
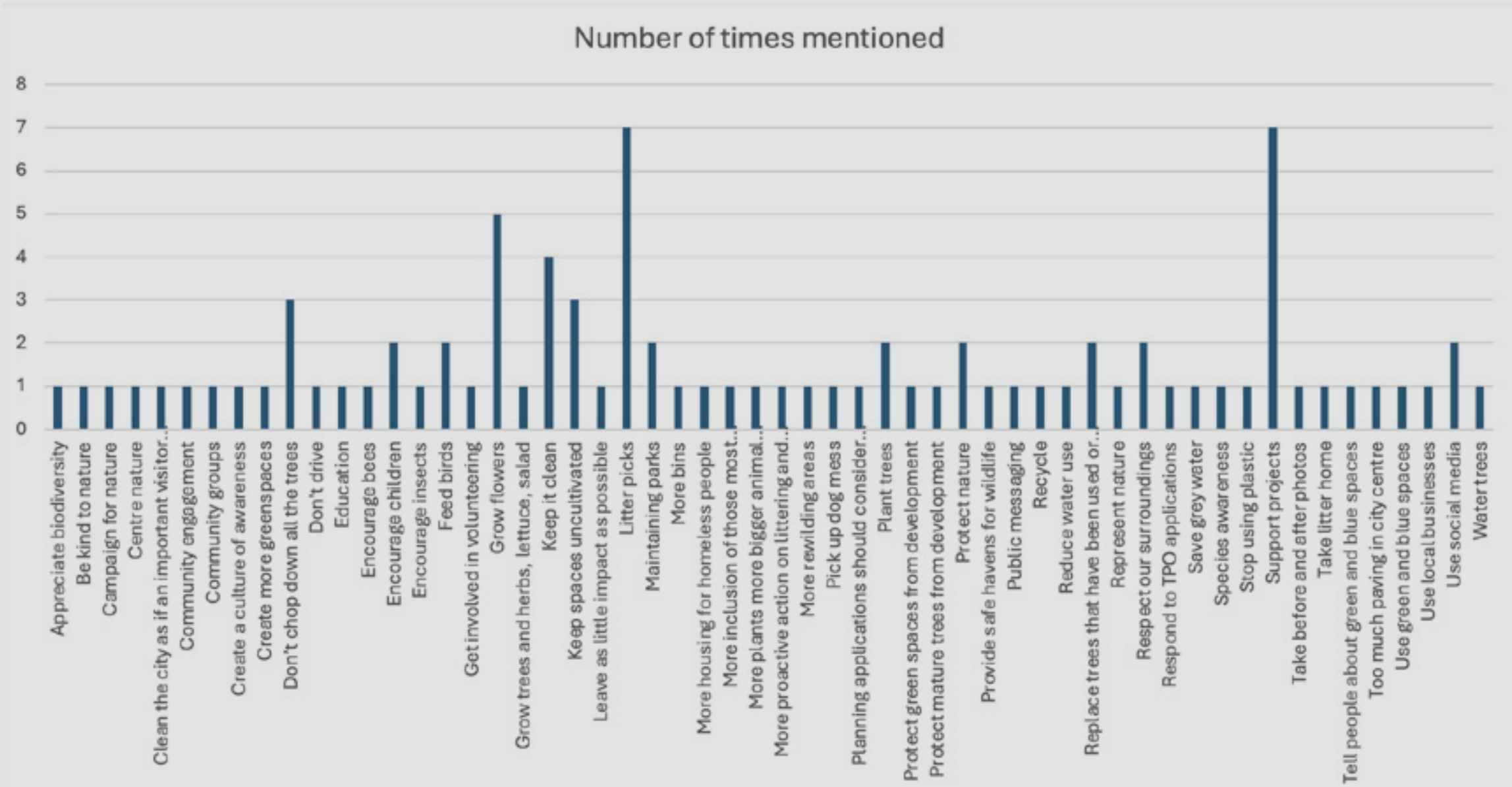
The majority of all the locations in this graph are in the PL9 area and as such can be easily accessed by local residents. An anomaly that one might expect to see in the PL9 area is Mount Batten of which the only mention is in the PL3 graph.

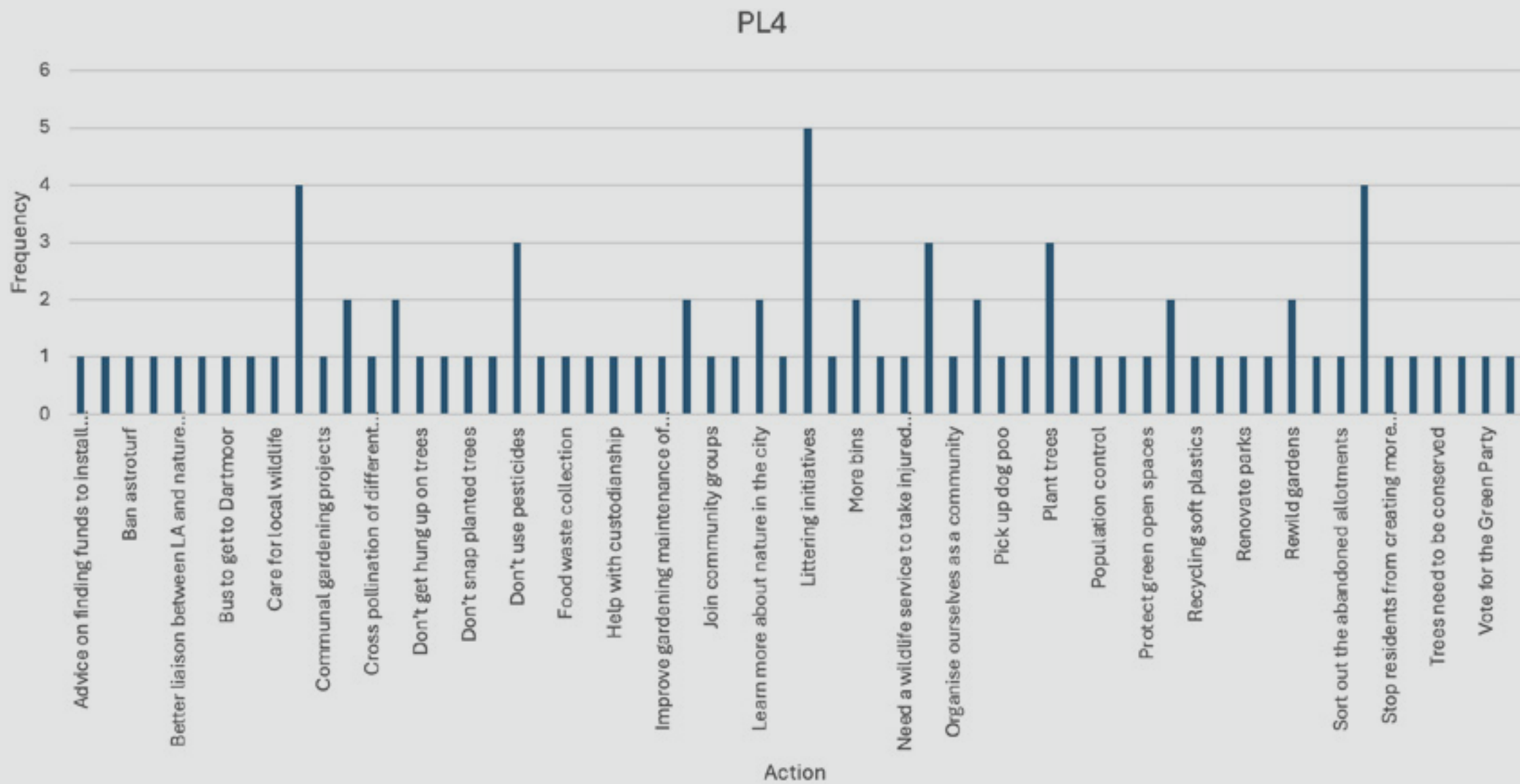
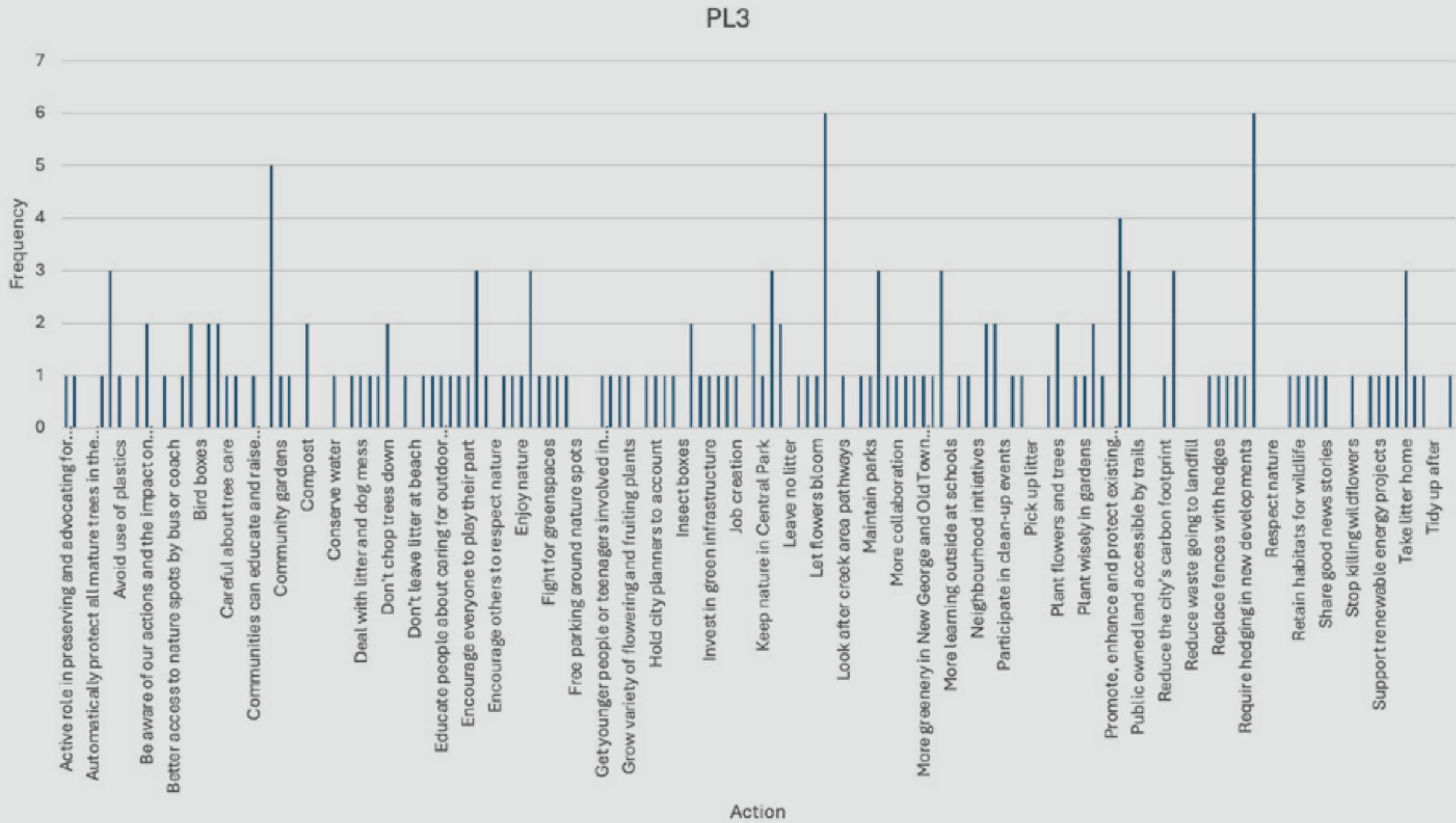


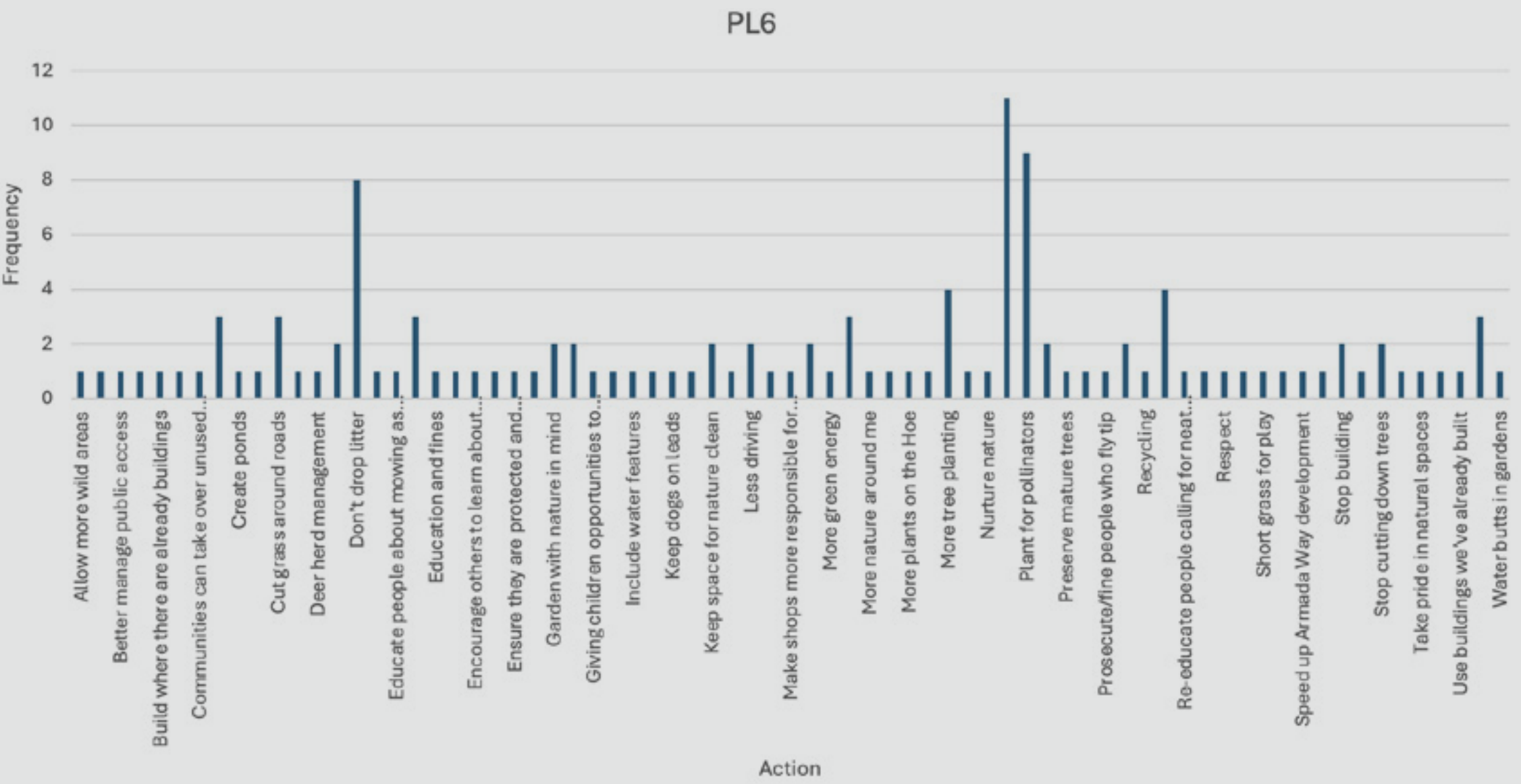
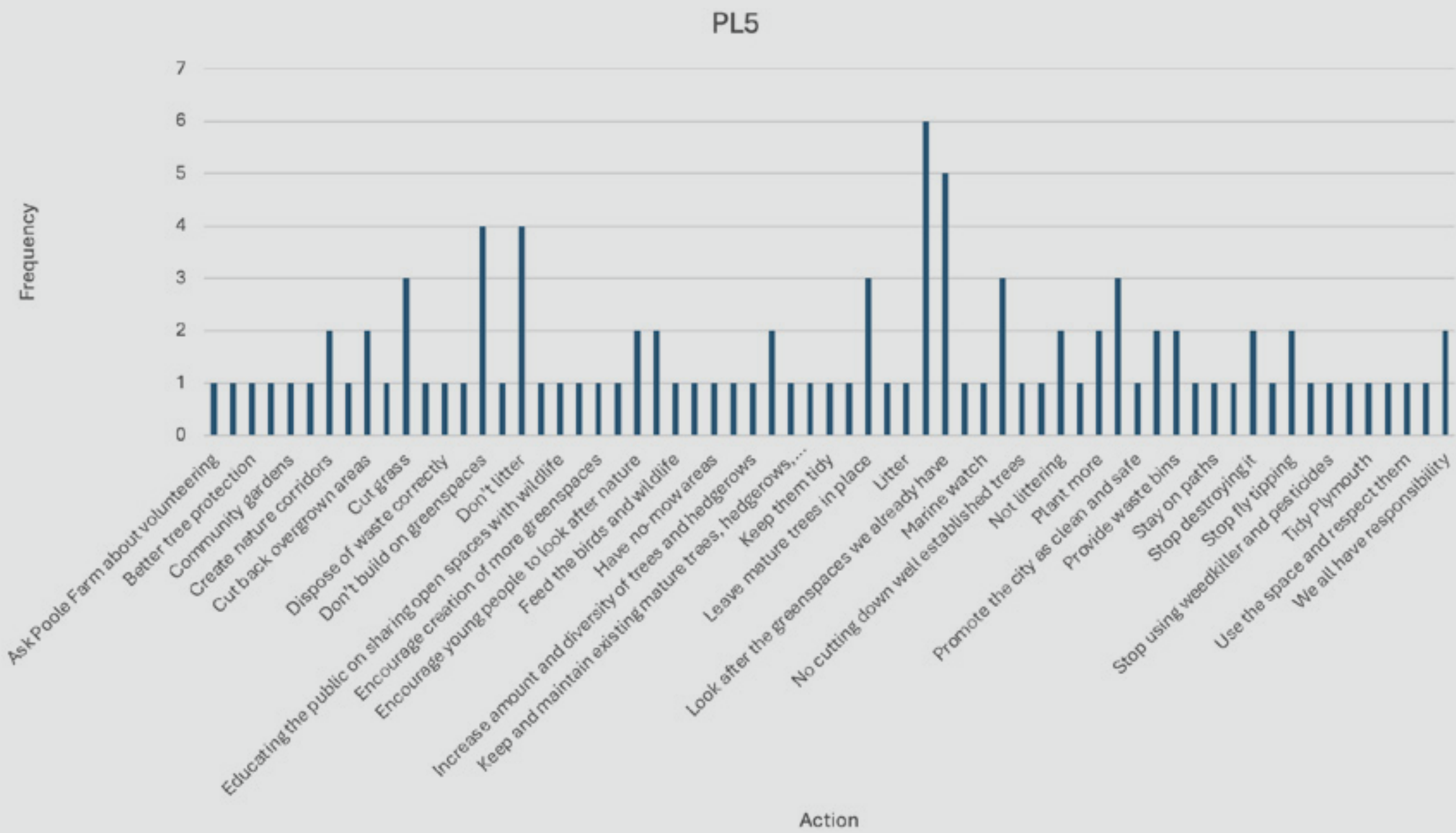
Frequency of locations in favourite nature memories

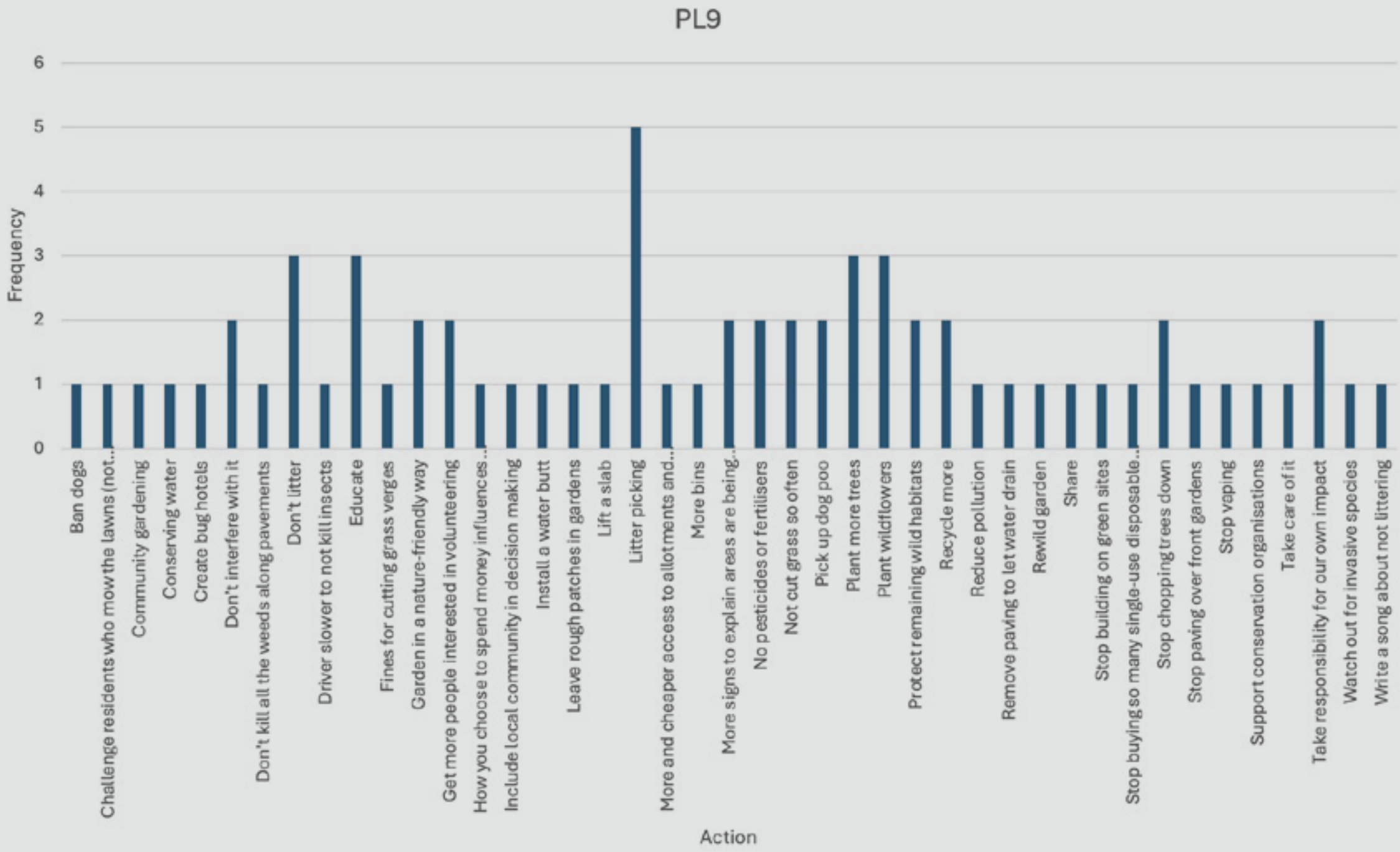
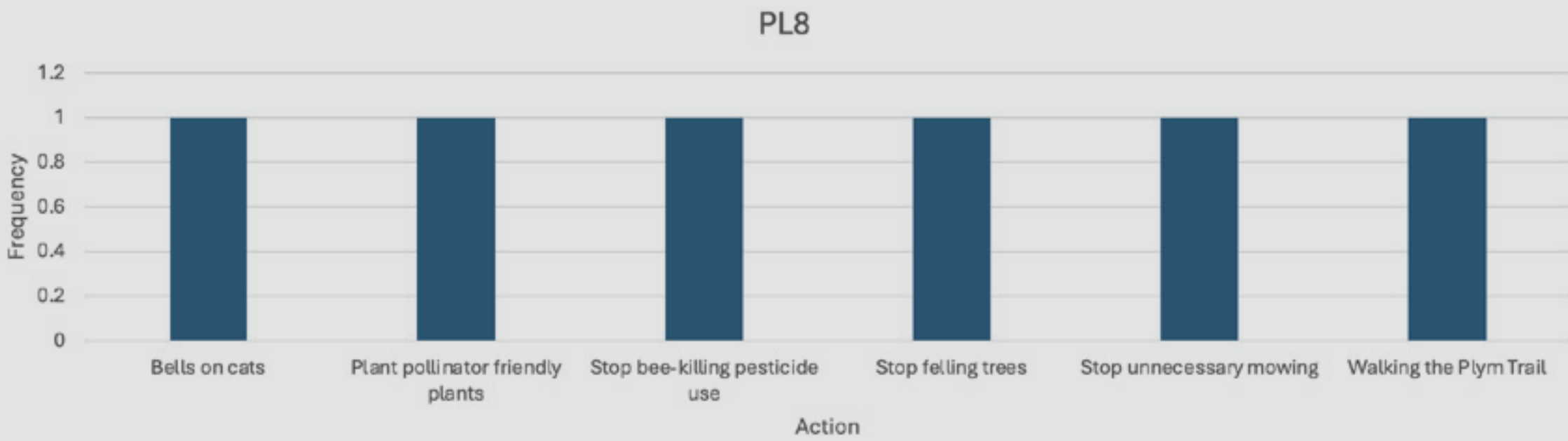
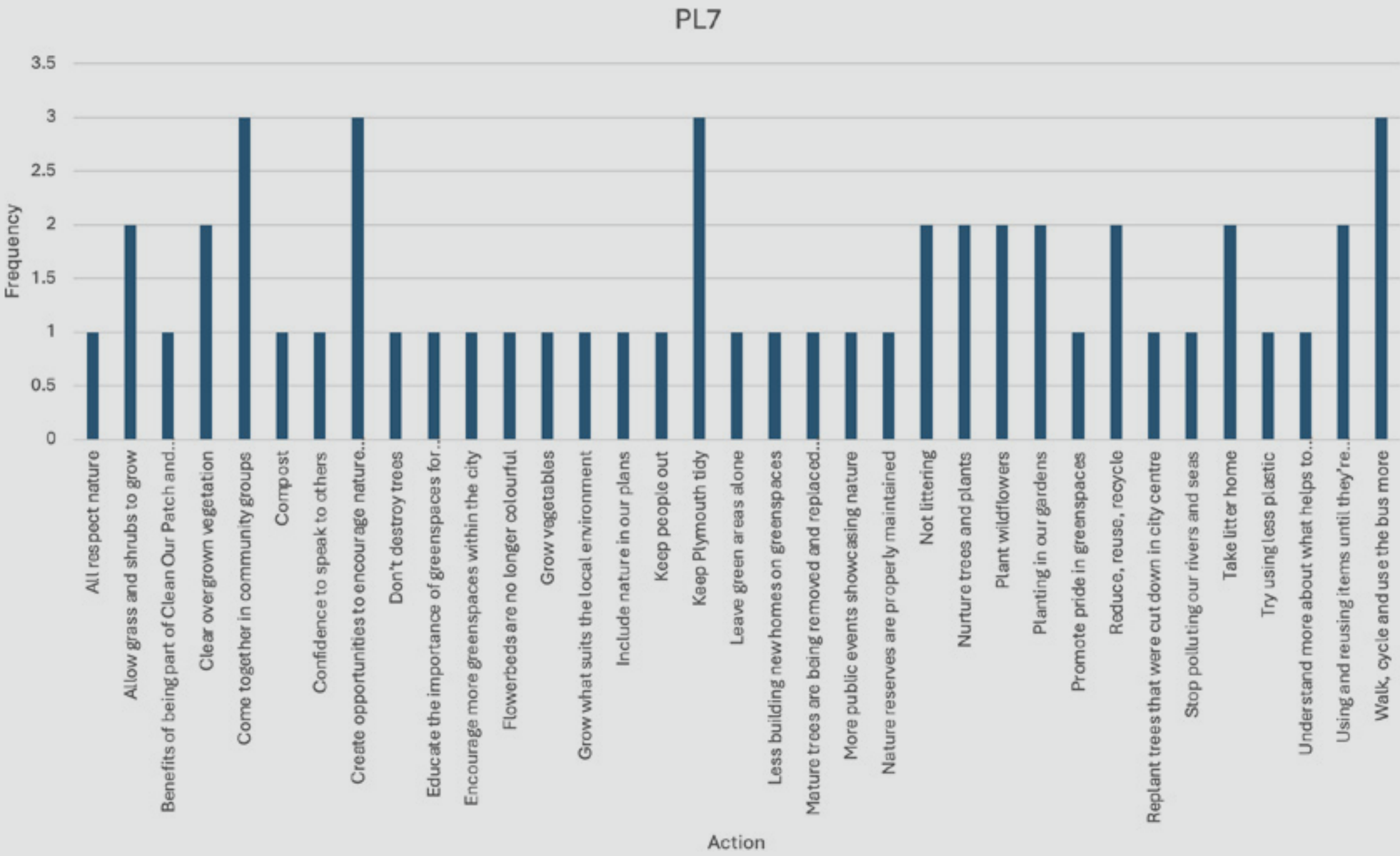


Postcode and Actions for Nature









Priorities by age

Age	Priorities
0-10	Litter picking, Plant more trees
11-17	Litter picking, Natural resource management
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45-64	Litter, Grass cutting, Conservation, Community gardens, Wildlife friendly gardening, Housing developments, Look after mature trees
65+	Litter, Conservation, Water quality, Development, Community groups
Not stated	Stop using pesticides, Conservation

PHASE 2 ENGAGEMENT: FOCUS GROUPS

INTEGRATED REPORT

I. Introduction

This report provides a consolidated analysis of focus group discussions on four key themes: Marine and Water, Trees and Meadows, Nature in a Changing City, and Communities, Volunteering, and Education. The insights gathered reflect public perspectives on the current state, challenges, opportunities, and aspirations for Plymouth’s green and blue spaces, urban development, and community engagement.

We hosted 12 Focus Groups throughout Plymouth, between February 25 and March 25. These events were attended by 110 people, representing community groups, businesses/charities, and neighbourhoods.

N.B. from page 5 onwards we have included four appendices of the in-depth reports for each of the focus group themes.

2. Key Findings Across Themes – Current State of Nature in Plymouth

2.1 Strengths and Opportunities

Rich Environmental Assets and Conservation Efforts:

- Plymouth has a wealth of natural resources, including protected marine areas, woodlands, and public green spaces.
- Strong volunteer networks and local initiatives such as Plymouth Tree People, Clean Our Patch, Plympton Litter Pickers, and Green Devonport Partnership support environmental conservation.
- The city boasts national and international recognition for marine research, with the National Marine Park (NMP) and partnerships with universities and conservation groups.

Community Involvement and Civic Engagement:

- Local communities play a crucial role in conservation and maintenance efforts, contributing an estimated 100,000 volunteer hours annually.
- Initiatives like urban tree planting, meadows management, and marine clean-ups are widely supported and foster a sense of civic pride.
- Educational programs such as forest schools, pond dipping, and university-led conservation projects help connect residents to nature.

Emerging Policies and Infrastructure Improvements:

- Plymouth’s Nature Integrated Construction (NIC) framework supports sustainable urban planning.
- Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements offer an opportunity to ensure that development integrates nature protection.
- Green infrastructure projects, such as SuDS, green roofs, and living walls, are gaining traction in urban planning discussions.

2.2 Challenges and Concerns

Balancing Development with Nature Protection:

- Urban expansion, particularly housing developments, often prioritizes economic growth over environmental sustainability.
- There is a disparity between city planning and conservation goals, leading to habitat fragmentation and loss of biodiversity.
- Green projects frequently face short-term funding cycles, hindering long-term conservation efforts.

Communication:

- Currently limited opportunities for individuals and communities to engage in a two way conversation with the Council
- Messages missed by those who do not have access to the internet or digital literacy
- Lack of consistency in messaging from Council in relation to platforms, audience reach, tone

Water Quality and Pollution Issues:

- Pollution, including sewage overflow, industrial runoff, and plastic waste, remains a significant concern in Plymouth’s marine and freshwater environments.
- Public awareness of water safety, conservation efforts, and biodiversity is limited, leading to misconceptions about marine health.

Limited Access to Green and Blue Spaces:

- Some residents, particularly children and marginalised groups, have limited access to natural spaces due to location, infrastructure, or safety concerns.
- Connectivity between parks, green spaces, and waterfronts could be improved to create cohesive urban nature corridors.
- Community spaces often lack adequate maintenance, signage, and facilities, deterring public engagement.

Volunteer Support and Engagement Barriers:

- Volunteers are critical to maintaining Plymouth’s natural spaces, yet they often lack proper recognition, training, and resources.
- Declining volunteer numbers and difficulties in attracting younger generations pose challenges for long-term sustainability.
- A lack of coordination between volunteer groups and local authorities results in fragmented efforts and inefficiencies.

3. Vision for the Future

3.1 Key Aspirations

An Environmentally Resilient and Sustainable Plymouth:

- Expansion and protection of meadows, woodlands, and marine habitats.
- Sustainable development practices that integrate green infrastructure and minimise environmental impact.
- Increased investment in long-term conservation efforts and biodiversity monitoring.

Stronger Community Engagement and Education Initiatives:

- More interactive and accessible environmental education programs for schools and community groups.
- Expansion of citizen science initiatives and community stewardship models.
- Enhanced communication strategies to raise awareness of conservation projects and their impact.

Improved Infrastructure and Access to Nature:

- Strengthening nature corridors by linking parks, forests, and waterfronts.
- Ensuring green and blue spaces are accessible, safe, and welcoming for all residents.
- Upgrading urban environments with living walls, green roofs, and SuDS to enhance biodiversity.

A Collaborative Approach to Conservation and Development:

- Greater transparency and inclusivity in planning decisions related to nature conservation and development.
- Cross-sector collaboration between the local government, conservation groups, businesses, and educational institutions.
- Clearer governance structures to ensure policies and initiatives align with the city’s broader environmental goals.

4. Recommended Actions

4.1 Policy and Governance Improvements

- Strengthen enforcement of environmental regulations to ensure developments align with sustainability goals.
- Expand biodiversity net gain (BNG) strategies to integrate nature into all urban planning projects.
- Enhance funding and long-term planning for conservation efforts to prevent reliance on short-term grants.

4.2 Community and Volunteer Engagement

- Develop structured volunteer training programs to equip residents with conservation skills.
- Create a centralised online hub to improve coordination between volunteer groups and environmental projects.
- Encourage school and university involvement in conservation efforts through work experience programs and research initiatives.

4.3 Infrastructure and Public Awareness

- Improve access to nature by developing urban green corridors that link parks, nature reserves, and marine areas.
- Upgrade signage and information boards to promote local biodiversity and conservation activities.
- Enhance communication strategies through social media, community events, and interactive educational programs.
- Develop better, further reaching, joined up communications, creating opportunities for more two-way conversations with PCC

5. Conclusion

Plymouth is well-positioned to become a leader in sustainable urban development and community-driven conservation efforts. While challenges exist in balancing economic growth with environmental protection, there are strong community networks, conservation projects, and policy opportunities that can drive meaningful change. By fostering long-term collaboration, investing in natural infrastructure, and strengthening public engagement, Plymouth can create a city that prioritises both nature and people, ensuring a thriving and resilient future for all.

APPENDIX I

PHASE 2 ENGAGEMENT: FOCUS GROUPS

MARINE AND WATER FEEDBACK REPORT

I. Introduction

This report presents key insights and themes identified during focus groups with residents, community groups, businesses, and other stakeholders regarding marine and water-related issues in Plymouth. The discussions explored existing challenges, strengths, opportunities, and a collective vision for the future of Plymouth’s marine and water environments.

2. Current State of Marine and Water in Plymouth

2.1 Strengths and Opportunities

Strong Institutional Presence: Plymouth has a wealth of marine-focused organisations, including Plymouth Sound National Marine Park, Plymouth Marine Laboratory, Ocean Conservation Trust, National Marine Aquarium, Shark Trust, Marine Biological Association, Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum, University of Plymouth, Lead Local Flood Authority and others.

Environmental Initiatives:

- Seagrass restoration and voluntary anchor zones (VAZ).
- Efforts to improve bathing water status.
- Ongoing water quality monitoring by EA, Surfers Against Sewage and South West Water
- Localised projects such as Building Resilience in Communities working with communities to encourage a reduction in property run off
- First National Marine Park (NMP): A major asset for conservation, research, and education.
- Marine Biodiversity:
 - Firestone Bay recognised for its rich biodiversity.
 - Conservation of priority habitats such as seagrass beds, mudflats, and blue mussel beds.
- Economic & Tourism Potential:
 - Britain’s Ocean City branding supports marine tourism.
 - Growth of the marine sector, including shipbuilding, ferries, and research.
- Interest in increasing cruise liner visits (though concerns exist about balancing tourism and conservation).

2.2 Challenges and Concerns

Water Quality and Pollution:

- Ongoing issues with sewage discharges, Combined Sewer Overflows, agricultural runoff into rivers and waterways, and pollution from industrial sources.
- Perceived lack of transparency and accountability from water companies.
- Concerns about pollution’s impact on marine biodiversity and human health.

Infrastructure and Accessibility:

- Ageing Victorian sewage system struggles to cope with modern demands.
- Insufficient investment in flood mitigation and sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).
- Limited access to blue spaces, particularly for marginalised communities.

Public Awareness and Engagement:

- Lack of information on marine conservation efforts, limiting public involvement.
- Poor communication about available marine activities and environmental issues.
- Limited educational opportunities around the Barbican and other key areas to find out about marine heritage and what lives in the Sound and beyond.

Governance and Coordination:

- Lack of coordination among marine-focused groups and authorities.
- Challenge to balance increased usage of the Sound and surrounding waterways with protecting biodiversity.
- Concern over heritage projects withdrawn due to funding issues.
- Uncertainty around policies regarding marine conservation and land use planning.

3. Vision for the Future

3.1 Key Aspirations

- Cleaner and More Diverse Waters:** Plymouth should aim for the best bathing water quality in the UK, ensuring a balance between conservation and economic activities.
- Sustainable Urban Development:**
- Improved surface water management, better drainage infrastructure, and nature-based solutions.
 - Separate drainage systems for new builds to prevent runoff pollution.
 - Alleviate flood risk through more permeable surfaces and increased access to water butts
- Public Engagement and Education:**
- Stronger community-led initiatives to increase marine literacy.
 - More interactive and engaging marine conservation campaigns.
 - Improved access to information about Plymouth’s marine assets- across a range of media.
- Improved Access and Inclusivity:**
- More accessible entry points for recreational activities (e.g., better slipways, tidal pools, and pontoons).
 - Expanded water safety education and community programs.
 - Greater inclusion of older people and diverse communities in marine-based activities.
- Stronger Collaboration Between Stakeholders:**
- Multi-agency work involving PCC, businesses, residents, and conservation groups.
 - A chartership pledge from businesses to support marine sustainability.
 - Coordinated investment in water conservation and flood prevention.

4. Recommended Actions

4.1 Policy and Infrastructure Improvements

- Improve water quality monitoring** and ensure transparency from water companies.
- Expand sustainable drainage solutions (SuDS)** in urban planning.
- Increase enforcement of environmental regulations,** including planning for driveways and floodplain development.
- Develop a robust marine conservation strategy,** balancing tourism and sustainability.
-
- #### 4.2 Community Engagement and Education
- Enhance marine education programs** in schools and public spaces.
- Develop interactive and engaging communication strategies,** including signage, guided walks, and digital campaigns.
- Strengthen public participation in marine conservation,** encouraging volunteerism and citizen science projects.

4.3 Accessibility and Public Use of Blue Spaces

- Ensure equitable access to marine environments** by improving transport links and free public entry points.
- Restore and maintain public coastal facilities,** such as tidal pools and boardwalks.
- Enhance recreational opportunities,** including safer swimming areas and sustainable tourism experiences.

5. Conclusion

Plymouth has a strong foundation of marine research, conservation, and economic opportunities, but challenges related to water quality, governance, and public engagement must be addressed. A well-coordinated effort between government agencies, businesses, conservation groups, and residents will be key to achieving a sustainable and thriving marine environment for the future.

APPENDIX 2

PHASE 2 ENGAGEMENT: FOCUS GROUPS

TREES AND MEADOWS FEEDBACK REPORT

I. Introduction

This report presents key insights and themes identified during focus groups with residents, community groups, businesses, and other stakeholders regarding trees and meadows in Plymouth. The discussions explored existing challenges, strengths, opportunities, and a collective vision for the future of Plymouth’s green infrastructure.

2. Current State of Trees and Meadows in Plymouth

2.1 Strengths and Opportunities

Growing Community Involvement:

- Active volunteer programmes through groups and projects such as Plymouth Tree People, Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest, and Plymouth Natural Grid are leading tree planting and meadow creation initiatives.
- Community efforts in maintaining green spaces, including Friends of Devonport Park and other local groups.
- Projects like Green Communities taking successful co-stewardship approach with communities to promote nature connection and local nature recovery
- Strong local expertise in tree and meadow conservation (e.g. All Ways Apples, Pollenize).

Increasing Green Infrastructure:

- Plymouth’s tree cover is at 20%, higher than the national average of 13%.
- Expanding urban wildflower and grassland meadows, though maintenance remains a challenge.
- Grass cutting maps and tree planting programs provide useful public resources.

Policy and Planning:

- Plymouth Plan for Trees offers a formal approach to urban forestry.
- Green wall and meadow initiatives, such as the Union Street green wall.
- Integration of urban planning with tree and meadow conservation in some areas.

2.2 Challenges and Concerns

Lack of Protection and Monitoring:

- Many wildlife sites across the city lack proper management and monitoring.
- Disparity between urban development and nature protection, with developments often conflicting with conservation priorities.

Poor Communication and Engagement:

- Insufficient public awareness about the value of trees and meadows.
- Negative coverage of tree management decisions (e.g. Armada Way trees) damaging council’s reputation.
- Need for better signposting and accessible information on available green spaces and conservation projects.

Sustainability and Maintenance Issues:

- Trees removed for development are often replaced by whips, which require decades to mature.
- Lack of clear maintenance plans for tree planting and meadow management.
- Security concerns in parks and meadows, including fly-tipping and vandalism.

Urban Development and Planning Challenges:

- Highways and development projects often prioritise infrastructure over tree conservation.
- Insufficient integration of biodiversity net gain policies into planning processes.
- Limited use of sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) to address waterlogging and climate resilience.

3. Vision for the Future

3.1 Key Aspirations

Stronger Protection for Trees and Meadows:

- Ensure mature trees are protected and monitored.
- Increase tree equity across different neighbourhoods, especially in deprived areas.
- Better monitoring and understanding of ecology in the city
 - what we have got where
- Expand the use of conservation status for significant wildlife sites (SSSIs and CWS).

Community-Driven Green Space Management:

- Establish local stewardship models where businesses and communities care for public green spaces.
- Train and empower community volunteers for long-term maintenance efforts.
- Improve collaboration between community groups and the council, like the Green Communities model

Improved Urban Planning and Policy:

- Develop an integrated spatial plan balancing urban development with green infrastructure.
- Implement biodiversity net gain principles across all development projects.
- Encourage nature-based solutions, such as reintroducing lost hedgerows and tree corridors.

Education and Public Engagement:

- Promote nature literacy in schools and among decision-makers.
- Increase visibility of conservation efforts through better communication and public engagement.
- Use technology to educate the public about tree and meadow management (e.g., interactive maps, dashboards).

4. Recommended Actions

4.1 Policy and Infrastructure Improvements

Enhance monitoring and protection of existing trees and meadows through updated surveys and conservation status.

Improve maintenance planning, ensuring proper long-term care for newly planted trees and meadows.

Expand nature-based solutions like SuDS to prevent waterlogging and enhance biodiversity.

Increase enforcement of planning policies to better integrate tree conservation with city development.

4.2 Community Engagement and Education

Develop public information campaigns about the benefits of trees and meadows.

Strengthen education programs in schools to promote environmental awareness.

Support volunteer-driven conservation efforts with funding, training, and formalized roles.

Encourage local stewardship models where businesses and communities take responsibility for green space maintenance.

4.3 Enhancing Public Access and Green Space Use

Improve accessibility and safety in parks and meadows, including better lighting and infrastructure.

Expand interactive green spaces, such as community orchards, medicinal gardens, and sensory gardens.

Promote active use of green spaces, balancing manicured and wild areas for recreation and biodiversity.

5. Conclusion

Plymouth has a strong foundation of tree and meadow conservation efforts, but challenges in maintenance, urban planning integration, and public engagement need to be addressed. By strengthening community involvement, improving infrastructure, and ensuring sustainable policies, Plymouth can enhance its green spaces for future generations while fostering biodiversity and climate resilience.

APPENDIX 3

PHASE 2 ENGAGEMENT: FOCUS GROUPS

NATURE IN A CHANGING CITY FEEDBACK REPORT

I. Introduction

This report presents key insights and themes identified during focus groups with residents, community groups, businesses, and other stakeholders regarding the relationship between nature and urban development in Plymouth. Discussions explored existing challenges, strengths, opportunities, and a collective vision for integrating nature into the city’s evolving landscape.

2. Current State of Nature in Plymouth’s Urban Environment

2.1 Strengths and Opportunities

Green Initiatives and Community-Led Projects:

- Strong sense of community ownership in areas like Devonport, supported by groups such as Zebra Collective and Green Devonport Partnership.
- Emerging opportunities in mapping and protecting green assets.
- Habitat creation initiatives and bio-corridors increasing accessibility for nature conservation.

Urban Greening and Conservation Efforts:

- Nature Integrated Construction (NIC) policies are shaping new planning rules.
- The Union Street green building showcases urban greening potential.
- Green Minds program demonstrated the social, economic, and environmental benefits of sustainable urban planning.

Policy and Governance Efforts:

- Plymouth was the first council to declare an ocean motion, signalling commitment to environmental priorities.
- Brownfield site regeneration presents opportunities for sustainable development and/or nature-based solutions.
- National policy changes, including mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements for developers, present new ways to integrate nature into development.

2.2 Challenges and Concerns

Conflict Between Development and Nature Conservation:

- Lack of stipulations on sustainability within planning regulations.
- Perceived prioritisation of economic growth and mass housing over nature.
- Pressure to build on green spaces due to government housing targets.

Fragmented and Short-Term Approaches:

- Green projects often lack continuity, with short-term funding cycles preventing long-term sustainability.
- Intermittent government grants focus more on trees than meadows, limiting biodiversity efforts.
- Planning decisions sometimes lack transparency, leading to public distrust.

Urban Infrastructure and Environmental Degradation:

- Insufficient maintenance of urban green spaces, leading to litter, fly-tipping, and vandalism.
- Lack of green and blue spaces in key areas, particularly in the city centre.
- Oversized carriageways and excessive concrete surfaces limit street trees and SuDS (sustainable urban drainage systems).
- Increased urbanization placing pressure on natural ecosystems.

Public Engagement and Communication Issues:

- Residents often unaware of existing environmental projects and their benefits.
- Mixed messaging on climate and environmental priorities causes eco-anxiety and inaction.
- Community groups feel underrepresented in planning and decision-making processes.

3. Vision for the Future

3.1 Key Aspirations

A Nature-Positive City with Green Infrastructure as a Priority:

- More trees, green spaces, and wildflower meadows integrated into development plans.
- Stronger protection and monitoring of green spaces.
- Designation of legal rights for nature to ensure its long-term protection.

Better Integration of Nature into Urban Planning:

- Urban greening initiatives such as living walls, green roofs, and tree planting along major roads.
- Sustainable retrofitting of buildings to incorporate solar panels, heat pumps, and green infrastructure.
- More cohesive mapping and linking of green corridors to enhance biodiversity.

Empowering Communities Through Stewardship and Engagement:

- More accessible information on green spaces and conservation efforts.
- Local stewardship models for maintaining urban green spaces.
- Education programs to enhance nature literacy in schools and among decision-makers.

Sustainable Development with a Focus on Well-Being:

- Nature-based employment opportunities, including environmental and sustainable jobs.
- Widespread eco-therapy and social prescribing programs to improve mental and physical health.
- Accessible urban green spaces for all residents, particularly in high-density areas.

4. Recommended Actions

4.1 Policy and Infrastructure Improvements

Strengthen environmental protections in planning regulations, ensuring that nature is not compromised in development.

Expand and maintain urban greening initiatives, such as tree-lined streets, SuDS, permeable surfaces, and green roofs.

Enhance monitoring and enforcement of environmental regulations to prevent overdevelopment in sensitive areas.

Increase investment in nature-based solutions to address climate resilience and urban sustainability.

4.2 Community Engagement and Education

Develop clear and transparent communication strategies to inform residents about environmental projects.

Support grassroots community initiatives to engage people in urban conservation efforts.

Enhance environmental education programs in schools and workplaces to foster a culture of sustainability.

Encourage public involvement in decision-making by strengthening consultation processes and citizen engagement forums.

4.3 Sustainable Development and Urban Greening

Incorporate biodiversity net gain (BNG) principles into all new developments.

Promote adaptive reuse of vacant buildings for community-led environmental initiatives.

Support community-driven food and nature initiatives, such as urban farms and food-growing competitions.

Improve accessibility to green spaces, ensuring they cater to people of all ages and abilities

5. Conclusion

Plymouth is at a crossroads in balancing urban development with nature conservation. While there are strong grassroots efforts, green infrastructure initiatives, and policy commitments, significant challenges remain in integrating nature effectively into urban planning. By prioritising long-term sustainability, strengthening community engagement, and embedding nature into city planning, Plymouth can become a leading example of a nature-positive urban environment.

APPENDIX 4

PHASE 2 ENGAGEMENT: FOCUS GROUPS

COMMUNITIES, VOLUNTEERING, AND EDUCATION FEEDBACK REPORT

I. Introduction

This report presents key insights and themes identified during focus groups with residents, community groups, businesses, and other stakeholders regarding community engagement, volunteering, and education in Plymouth. The discussions explored existing challenges, strengths, opportunities, and a collective vision for strengthening community involvement and environmental education.

2. Current State of Community, Volunteering, and Education in Plymouth

2.1 Strengths and Opportunities

Strong Community Involvement:

- An estimated 100,000 hours of volunteering occur in Plymouth, demonstrating a strong foundation of community participation.
- Local groups, such as Clean Our Patch, Friends of Groups, and community hubs, contribute significantly to maintaining green spaces.
- Projects like Green Devonport Partnership, Building Resilience in Communities and Green Communities demonstrate the impact of community-led environmental initiatives.

Existing Volunteering Opportunities:

- A wide range of volunteer activities, including tree planting, conservation, and educational events, are already in place.
- Successful community-building programs, such as Plymouth Open Space Network (POSN) and Green Community support, offer engagement opportunities.
- Student Union and university societies engage in contracted voluntary work, with potential for expansion.

Educational Engagement and Informal Learning:

- Programs such as forest schools, pond dipping, and bat walks provide interactive environmental education experiences.
- Schools are showing interest in engagement, but curriculum constraints limit full participation.
- University outreach and local partnerships, including Poole Farm and Saltram, offer valuable learning experiences outside the classroom.

2.2 Challenges and Concerns

Declining Volunteer Numbers and Barriers to Participation:

- Fewer people are volunteering than in previous years, with accessibility and engagement being key barriers.
- Many volunteers feel undervalued and lack proper training, particularly in areas such as health and safety.
- Volunteering often appears surface-level, lacking opportunities for skill-building and long-term involvement.

Disconnect Between Education and Community Engagement:

- Schools struggle to integrate environmental learning due to national curriculum constraints.
- Limited university outreach and engagement with local communities hinder potential collaboration.
- Younger generations are increasingly disconnected from nature, spending less time outdoors.

Fragmented Communication and Awareness Issues:

- Volunteer opportunities are not always well advertised, making it difficult for new participants to get involved.
- Community groups are often working in isolation, without strong coordination or knowledge-sharing.
- Digital exclusion prevents some groups from accessing event information and engagement opportunities.

Reliance on Volunteers Without Proper Support:

- Volunteers are often used to fill gaps caused by lack of funding, leading to burnout and frustration.
- Community groups struggle to secure consistent funding for long-term projects.
- Civic pride in Plymouth is not well-established, and there is a need to promote local engagement.

3. Vision for the Future

3.1 Key Aspirations

A Stronger Culture of Volunteering and Civic Pride:

- Volunteering seen as a valued, integral part of community development.
- More inclusive and accessible volunteering opportunities for all demographics.
- Clearer recognition and appreciation of volunteers’ contributions.

Better Integration of Education and Community Involvement:

- Greater collaboration between schools, universities, and community groups.
- Informal education initiatives, such as outdoor learning programs, embedded into community activities.
- More student engagement in volunteering and conservation projects.

Improved Communication and Coordination:

- A centralised platform for volunteering opportunities, making it easier for residents to get involved.
- Better networking between community groups, local authorities, and volunteers.
- Increased use of social media, influencers, and innovative communication methods to reach diverse audiences.

Sustainable and Supported Volunteering Initiatives:

- Longer-term investment in community programs to ensure continuity and impact.
- Sustainable funding streams for volunteering projects.
- Increased focus on community ownership of projects, ensuring long-term maintenance and engagement.

4. Recommended Actions

4.1 Policy and Infrastructure Improvements

Strengthen volunteer management systems to ensure clear communication and support for volunteers.

Establish long-term funding strategies for community projects to prevent reliance on short-term grants.

Enhance collaboration between local government, businesses, and community organisations to create sustainable volunteering opportunities.

Promote civic pride initiatives, encouraging community involvement in green space maintenance and beautification.

4.2 Community Engagement and Education

Develop structured volunteer training programs to equip volunteers with the necessary skills.

Increase school engagement by incorporating environmental education into extracurricular activities.

Encourage partnerships between universities and local organisations to create meaningful work experience opportunities for students.

Support informal learning experiences, such as urban nature festivals, skill-sharing programs, and community-led environmental education.

4.3 Strengthening Communication and Access to Opportunities

Create a centralised online hub to connect volunteers with organisations seeking help.

Increase outreach through schools, community centres, and social media to engage a broader audience.

Use creative incentives, such as volunteer recognition programs and social credits, to encourage participation.

Facilitate regular citywide volunteer networking events to foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing.

5. Conclusion

Plymouth has a strong and engaged community of volunteers and environmental advocates. However, challenges in communication, volunteer support, and integration with education need to be addressed. By fostering civic pride, improving volunteer engagement, and creating stronger partnerships between schools, universities, and community groups, Plymouth can further develop a thriving culture of volunteering and environmental stewardship.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION REPORT

This report details the feedback received from the

- **286 survey respondents**
- **36 children and young people and**
- **eight attendees of two focus groups**

about the Plymouth Plan for Nature and People following a four-week Public Consultation. The Public Consultation took place between Tuesday 26 August 2025 to Monday 22 September 2025.

This report particularly focusses on the support for the plan, the perception of the delivery plan and its benefits, inclusion and access, connectedness to nature and respondent demographics. It also includes a summary of comments by theme.

Also discussed is the extensive consultation that took place with the public during our Summer of Nature Campaign from July to September 2024, and focus groups held during February and March of 2025, the information from which helped to shape and inform the content of the plan.

Along with the public engagement mentioned above, a Steering Group of external and internal stakeholders was formed to ensure accountability and that the plan was a fair representation of what Plymouth needs to place nature at the heart of Plymouth’s future growth and development.

Summer of Nature Campaign – Summer 2024

The Summer of Nature was the first phase of our engagement. We carried out surveys between 27 July 2024 and 2 September 2024. The campaign was promoted at a variety of events, from Fit and Fed in four of Plymouth’s main parks to Wild and Well at Poole Farm. Surveys were carried out both in person and via a QR code to a Google Form. We received and analysed 486 responses. However, we received extra responses after the closing date which took the numbers to over 500 – these are not included in the results.

Eight key themes emerged from the Summer of Nature Campaign.

- Grass cutting
- Clean up litter and rubbish, including more dog poo bins
- Plant more trees and plants/wildflowers
- Education
- Development/house building
- Water quality
- Energy
- Opportunities to get involved – community and volunteering

The Summer of Nature allowed for breadth of feedback. This information was distilled to four main themes that could be discussed in more detail at the focus groups.

See Appendix in the full plan for full engagement report.

Focus Groups – Spring 2025

This second phase of engagement was more in depth and hosted at various venues across the city between February 2025 and March 2025. A total of 110 people attended the 12 focus groups, representing community groups, neighbourhoods, education sector, businesses, charities and individuals.

The key themes discussed were.

- Marine and Water
- Trees and Meadows
- Nature in a Changing City
- Communities, Volunteering and Education

The report in the Appendix of the plan shows that the following were areas were considered - strengths and opportunities, challenges and concerns, vision for the future and recommended actions.

Using a combination of feedback from the Summer of Nature, Focus Groups, Steering Group and representation of internal Council departments such as Environmental Planning, Planning, and Public Health the draft plan was compiled and released for Public Consultation.

TOP ACTIONS IDENTIFIED FROM THE SURVEY RESPONSES

The top actionable points from the survey and how we are going to integrate them into the final draft of the PfN&P.

	You said	We said
1	“I think that the planting of more trees is essential for the benefit of nature and people.”	<p>We agree – and we’re taking action. On page 25 of the Plan, you’ll find details about some of the tree planting and maintenance initiatives we’re currently working on. Did you know that we have a dedicated and ambitious plan specifically for tree planting across the city? It’s called the Plan for Trees, and it sets out our long-term vision for protecting, planting, and celebrating trees across the city. You can explore it on our website here: Plan for Trees PLYMOUTH.GOV.UK.</p> <p>What have we changed? Reviewed document and strengthened references to trees. We have recognised the work of the Plan for Trees partnership on page 17, addressing the challenges of Tree Equity in the City.</p>
2	“I felt the report, and summary, could have been written in a more accessible, plain English way, as much of the language could exclude people from truly engaging or understanding.”	<p>We hear you. While the Plan is primarily written as a document for professionals — including funders, investors, and sector specialists — we recognise that not everyone is familiar with technical terms. That’s why we’ve made sure to include two easy-to-read, 2-page summaries: one for the general public and another tailored for children and young people. These versions use simpler language and are designed to be more engaging and inclusive.</p> <p>What have we changed? We’ve updated the glossary and reviewed the summary documents to make definitions and explanations clearer and more accessible for everyone reading the Plan.</p>
3	“Develop cultural/artistic opportunities to engage with nature within the Plan.”	<p>We completely agree. The arts and culture are really important parts of Plymouth’s identity. They can animate nature in really engaging, fun, and moving ways, and we know how important they are to help nurture connection between people and nature.</p> <p>We have a strong track record of integrating arts and culture into our environmental work. In recent years we’ve collaborated with a broad range of cultural partners like Arts University Plymouth, Stiltskin Theatre Company, and a range of local artists. Through creative commissions, public art events, and nature-inspired performances, we’ve celebrated the environment in imaginative and meaningful ways.</p> <p>Looking ahead, we’re committed to building on this approach and make sure that when we talk about nature, we are considering opportunities for artistic and cultural collaboration across the city.</p> <p>What have we changed? We have reviewed the document and added in more references to artistic and cultural programmes and opportunities, specifically in the 'Playful, Active, and Healthy Plymouth'. We have also added in another photo of arts and culture practice as well as strengthening references to the strong history of partnership delivery of artistic and cultural programmes through past Council-led projects.</p>

	You said	We said
4	“The enhancing of digital platforms is interesting but must not be done at the expense of existing channels. It would be a great improvement to have a centralised, easily accessible online presence for volunteers to access to find local nature projects they can join, especially by allowing anyone who has such a project to register that they are looking for volunteers. However, it can't be forgotten that many volunteers are older people or those who struggle with technology, so means must be put in place for those people to feel at no disadvantage when engaging. Any online service must have an offline equivalent.”	<p>We understand. Volunteering should be flexible and accessible to everyone. Not everyone can sign up to a big commitment of regular volunteering and we know some people would be more comfortable ‘doing their bit’ whenever they can. We recognise not everyone has access to digital/online platforms.</p> <p>In addition to the digital platform mentioned in the Plan, we’ll continue to share volunteering opportunities in other ways too. This includes putting up posters at relevant sites and working closely with our community partners, like Friends of Groups, to spread the word more widely across neighbourhoods. Our aim is to make it as easy as possible for people to get involved, whether online or offline.</p> <p>We know how important communication is to residents and communities for us all to be able to make the most of efforts towards delivering the vision in this plan – we heard this really clearly in the focus groups.</p> <p>What have we changed?</p> <p>We have reviewed the Plan with this in mind and felt it was important to strengthen this in a really clear way and so in the Delivery Programme (page 48) we have added a specific measure of success to ensure we are accountable it – regular evaluation with stakeholder’s measures satisfaction with communication about nature-based activity programmes in the city.</p> <p>And to bolster that we have added an action to develop dedicated people in the council to communicate volunteering opportunities using a variety of methods.</p>
5	“Focus is needed on existing maintenance. I would like to know what is specific to my neighbourhood.”	<p>We agree - ongoing maintenance is really important and it’s a big part of what we do. This plan sits alongside our existing management plans for nature spaces across the whole of Plymouth - every ward and every neighbourhood. While we can’t include every detail in this document, the Plan provides an overview of our broader goals and priorities.</p> <p>We regularly update our maintenance plans to reflect public feedback — like the improvements made to our like our grass cutting map here — and to respond to environmental changes driven by the climate crisis. We’re committed to ensuring that our approach remains adaptive, responsive, and informed by the communities we serve.</p> <p>What have we changed?</p> <p>We have strengthened the signposting to what's already happening i.e. grass cutting rota and signposting to the specific actions in the delivery programme.</p> <p>We have updated the plan to provide a commitment to more community representation on the Steering Group so that a range of community voices are part of the oversight of the delivery.</p>
6	“There is a lot of general 'good intention statements' that few could disagree. The specifics of how to achieve the lofty goals are vague. A proposed structure for the team/s responsible. It doesn't make clear who will be responsible for many actions - who will be on the steering group and who gets to decide that?”	<p>We agree as you will see we have included a Delivery Programme in the Appendices at the back of the Plan which sets out the specific, although in some cases still high level, actions required to work towards the measures of success.</p> <p>What have we changed?</p> <p>We have updated the section on Strategic Delivery to make this clearer at this stage. The delivery programme will be led by the council's Natural Environment service who will collaborate with other council service areas and partners to deliver the actions set out. One of the first actions will be to ensure that each of the actions and measures set out in this plan is allocated to specific teams to lead and report back on to ensure we are able to monitor progress and where necessary make adjustments to stay on track.</p> <p>To ensure accountability, we’ll be working alongside a wide range of people and partners to oversee the delivery and maintain high standards. This includes expanding the Steering Group to bring together people from a broad range of demographics across the city, helping to ensure their community is represented in the plan</p>

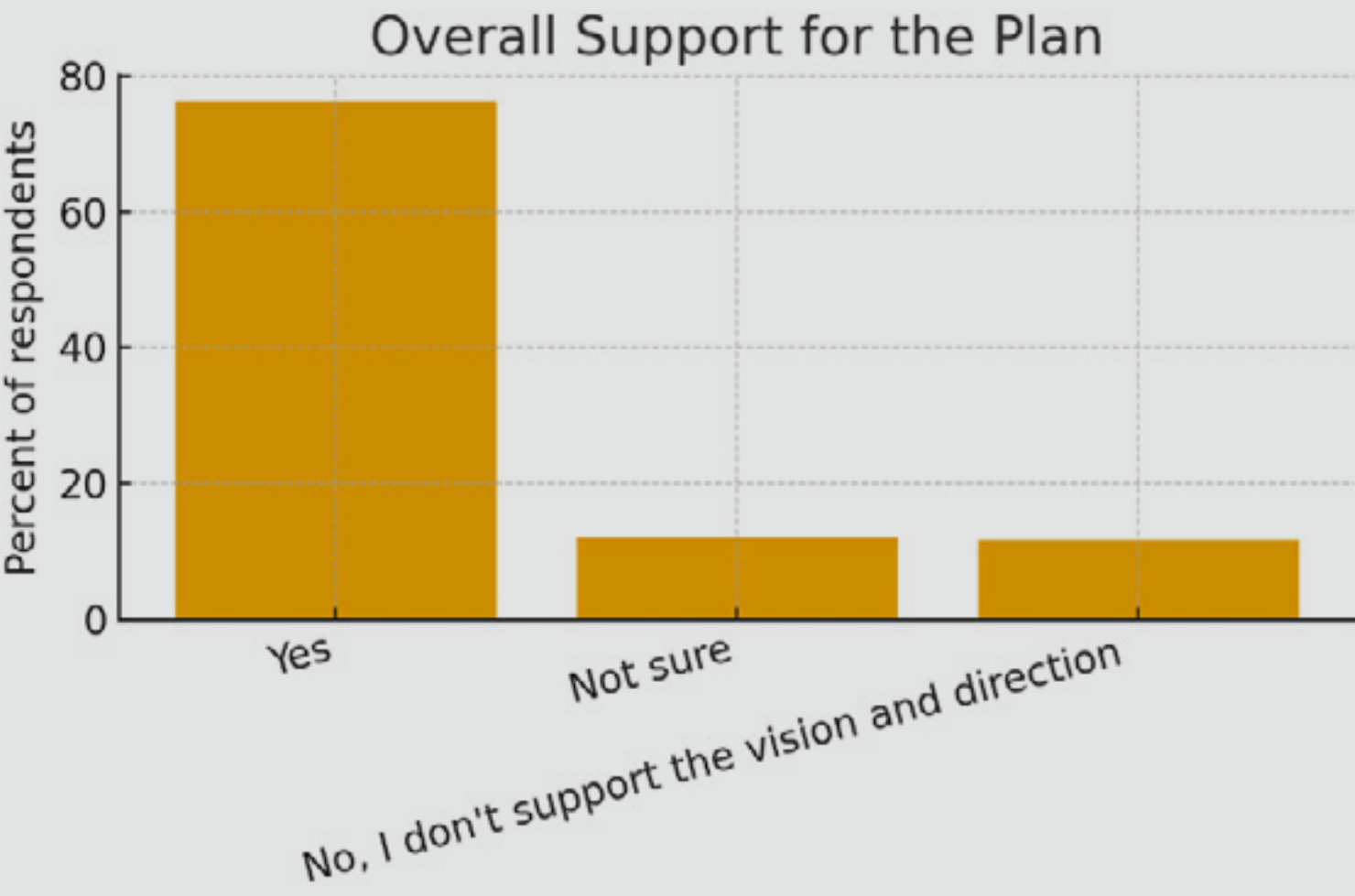
	You said	We said
7	“The plan doesn’t seem to include allotments.”	<p>Allotments are little green havens across our city. Not only do they provide space for residents and communities to grow their own food they also promote physical and mental wellbeing and bring neighbourhoods together. These green spaces also support biodiversity, reduce urban heat, and help people reconnect with nature in even the most built-up environments. They can also be a vital tool in tackling food insecurity and building climate resilience at a local level. Plus, there’s something really satisfying about eating something you’ve grown yourself!</p> <p>We’ve heard that Allotments are really important to you which is why we’ve also added into the delivery plan that as the city grows we are exploring the potential expansion of the allotment network.</p> <p>What have we changed?</p> <p>While we mention Allotments on pages 20, 27 and in the Appendices on page 46 we agree that they are important spaces and deserve a dedicated further action point, that we’ve included on Page 46 under Food Growing - Explore the potential expansion of the allotment network as the city grows. Space is at a premium in the city but as the city grows we are committed to ensuring that opportunity provides scope to increase the number of allotments for residents.</p>
8	“The plan talks about the sea but doesn’t reflect (or at least it is not clear) about how coastal nature can be improved and protected and accesses in a way that does not damage these fragile habitats.”	<p>We have multiple projects and partnerships are dedicated to keeping our rivers, estuaries, and our Sound healthy and thriving. From the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park project to the Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum, we are working alongside experts to keep these habitats safe and healthy.</p> <p>To put all this work together and join up the vision, we are going to be working in partnership with key stakeholders to produce a Plan for Water. This Plan will set out what we’re going to do to keep these blue spaces safe and special for wildlife and for people.</p> <p>Our coastal sites are well recognised, with some being nationally important and we have committed to protecting and enhancing these as part of the Nature Rich Ocean City objective and linked actions (pages 43 and 44).</p> <p>What have we changed?</p> <p>We reviewed the document with this mind and have updated the vision of the Nature Rich Plymouth on page 24 to include specific reference to coast as an important part of the city’s biodiversity.</p>
9	“Building on the call for education and public engagement, promote nature literacy in schools, strengthen education programmes in schools.”	<p>We know it’s really important to tell people how amazing nature is, and how important it is to protect it. Children, young people, and adults can all benefit from learning more about the incredible wildlife right on our doorstep, the challenges it’s facing, and what we can do to help.</p> <p>Many of you said about how important it is to make sure that we are going into schools to teach children about nature and we absolutely agree. Did you know that many of our projects on the ground deliver activities in schools and with young people every day?</p> <p>The Plymouth Sound National Marine Park team is visiting every school in Plymouth to talk about the importance of the sea and marine life, and how we can protect it. Our Green Communities team runs a Next Generation Nature education programme, running nature-based school sessions to teach about biodiversity and how we can help nature. The new recycling officers in the Council will be going into schools to talk about recycling and litter. There’s lots of education initiatives happening in the Council and with our partners.</p> <p>We are committed to making sure that future generations know how important nature is, in Plymouth and beyond, and how they can help to look after it so that it can be enjoyed for generations to come.</p> <p>What have we changed?</p> <p>To make this point clearer and stronger in the plan we have strengthened the reference to education and learning in the nature connected, engaged and empowered Plymouth objective as well as adding a new action in the delivery programme to ‘continue to deliver and seek opportunities to expand the city’s Sea in Schools Programme with partners in the city.’</p>

	You said	We said
I0	<p>“A positive plan for nature is welcome but nature protection also needs to be built into other policies, especially those on transport, housing and other development issues.</p> <p>I'm applauding the steering group. think they should be mentioned by name in the plan so it's clear this is a wider than PCC thing.”</p>	<p>We agree and you will see that we already have agreed specific policies in the Joint Local Plan that offer recognition and protection to our natural environment (DEV26 and DEV27) and Trees and Hedgerows (DEV28) as well as a recognised Biodiversity Network. These policies are balanced against wider infrastructure needs of the city and for people to have good quality homes and neighbourhoods to live in and ways to get around the city.</p> <p>What have we changed?</p> <p>The council also has integrated a Climate Impact Assessment requirement into every Decision taken by the members and officers. This assessment takes into account a range of factors, including biodiversity, to ensure that the proposal aligns with existing Climate and Nature goals. This wasn’t referenced in the plan before but we have now added this in to make sure people understand some of the ways behind the scenes that we are working to protect the environment in a growing city and genuinely consider climate goals as part of our decision making.</p> <p>Thanks for recognising the hard work that many have put towards this plan and we agree this needs to be recognised more clearly so we have also added in an acknowledgments section - to recognise and say thank you for the contributions so many people, groups and partners have made in helping to shape this plan.</p>
II	<p>“The Plan states that there will be accessible and inclusive natural spaces across the city. But does not state how this will be achieved.”</p>	<p>Every person in Plymouth deserves to enjoy and benefit from getting outside and being in nature. We know that not every nature space is accessible for everyone. Through the Plan, we want to identify places where we can improve access to nature spaces and work with communities to make this happen where possible.</p> <p>Many of you talked about the need to make our coastal spaces more accessible, so more people can feel closer to the sea. Have you heard about our Plymouth Sound National Marine Park (PSNMP)? The PSNMP is working closely with communities near Ernesettle Creek and Firestone Bay to strengthen their connection to local blue spaces. Through the development of Community Access Points, they aim to create welcoming, accessible routes that encourage regular interaction with these natural areas and reflect the needs and aspirations of local residents.</p> <p>We are also working closely with the South West Coast Path, to improve accessibility along Plymouth’s stretch of Coast Path.</p> <p>What have we changed?</p> <p>We have reviewed the plan with this in mind and have made a few changes to ensure the importance of this comes through. We strengthened the action about access to sea and beaches in the Inclusive Nature Spaces section and recognised a specific action to delivering 'anchor points' at Firestone Bay and Ernesettle as part of our NMP programme.</p> <p>We have also ensured that we have made stronger reference in a couple of key places in the Plan to the South West Coast Path and how there is really positive working going on to improve accessibility.</p>
I2	<p>“Make sure that you have set up a matrix of what you will measure - insect/plant diversity; residents’ sense of well-being - preferably with comparators. I think the plan needs to use less specific terms and language- will many people understand what moderate/ condition is?”</p>	<p>We agree—understanding what’s working and what needs improving is essential. That’s why we’ve built in a commitment to monitor and report on progress throughout the life of the Plan (see page 37).</p> <p>We’ll be tracking our progress against the specific proposed measures of success and actions set out in the Delivery Programme (pages 43–50 of the Appendices). These measures of success are our benchmarks, and we’ll use them to assess how well we’re delivering on our commitments.</p> <p>What have we changed?</p> <p>We can see that some of the measures might not have been as clear as they could be and that is because in addition to local measures, we’re also working to meet national nature indicators, overseen by organisations like Natural England, to ensure our work contributes to wider environmental goals and we have added in some information linking explain these measures a bit further.</p> <p>After reviewing the section on Strategic Delivery we thought this could also be strengthened and so we have re-written and strengthened this so that it is clearer in how we will ensure oversight of the delivery of the plan. This includes how we’ll regularly review progress with the steering group and publish updates that show how we’re performing against the Plan’s targets—highlighting both successes and areas where more work is needed.</p>

	You said	We said
13	“I think the plan could be more ambitious in relation to addressing the climate crisis. The urgency of the crisis doesn't necessarily come through.”	<p>Taking action about the climate crisis is crucial. We officially declared a Climate Emergency in March 2019 and are working hard to mitigate and address the climate crisis across the Council. Every aim and deliverable in the Plan for Nature and People goes towards combatting the climate crisis.</p> <p>To move us towards the Council's goal of our being carbon neutral by 2030, we co-developed the Net Zero Action Plan which you can read on our website here: Net Zero Action Plan PLYMOUTH.GOV.UK. This Plan provides clear actions about how we are approaching the climate crisis and moving towards carbon neutrality as a Council. This Plan sits alongside the Plan for Nature and People and our forthcoming Climate Adaptation Plan, which is currently in production.</p> <p>The Delivery Programme has a specific section highlighting measures of success and actions towards Climate Resilience and Adaptation on page 44.</p> <p>What have we changed?</p> <p>To strengthen this, we have updated and strengthened references (pages 9, 21, 42) to the city's current Net Zero Action Plan and the emerging Climate Adaptation Plan to clarify how the Plan for Nature and People's objectives also support and align with these plans, reinforcing the city's commitment to climate resilience and carbon neutrality through nature-based solutions.</p>
14	“What is the cost of this plan, what is its impact upon council tax bills? We need a clear idea of where the money is coming from and how sure is the council of meeting its £50M goal.”	<p>This Plan does not require any additional cost to the taxpayer. In fact, 62% of our work is funded through external grants, which means we've successfully secured funding from outside sources for specific nature environment programmes. These funds are ring-fenced and cannot be used for other Council activities but we also work to put them to good effect to deliver socio-economic benefits too.</p> <p>When applying for these funding opportunities, we prioritise collaboration and creativity—ensuring that we can share resources with partners and communities. We know that these projects achieve the greatest impact when delivered collectively, involving a wide range of people and organisations across the city.</p> <p>To learn more about how the Council is working towards the £50 million target, please refer to the Innovative Investment section on pages 32–33 of the Plan.</p> <p>What have we changed?</p> <p>We have added some further information about this in page 32 of the plan to make it clear about the innovative plan for raising these levels of investment.</p> <p>“This, coupled with the existing commitment from the council's budget, mean we are able to deliver more value for money for the city without putting further pressure on the public purse. The council's new innovative Company to drive this forward - Ocean City Nature - looks to build investment up to a level to enable more money to circulate to community activity and deliver the goals of this plan.”</p>

Support and understanding

- There is a 76.2% overall support for the plan with 12.2% unsure and 11.5% giving no support
- 88.1% agree/strongly agree understand the aims of the plan
- 75.2% agree/strongly agree that the plan is ambitious and reflects the urgency of nature/climate challenges
- 76.2% agree/strongly agree the plan presents a clear, achievable vision
- 53.8% agree/strongly agree regarding the clarity of delivery i.e. who and how. 19.6% disagree and 17.8% are neutral – **this would suggest this is an area for improvement**



Benefits, access and inclusion

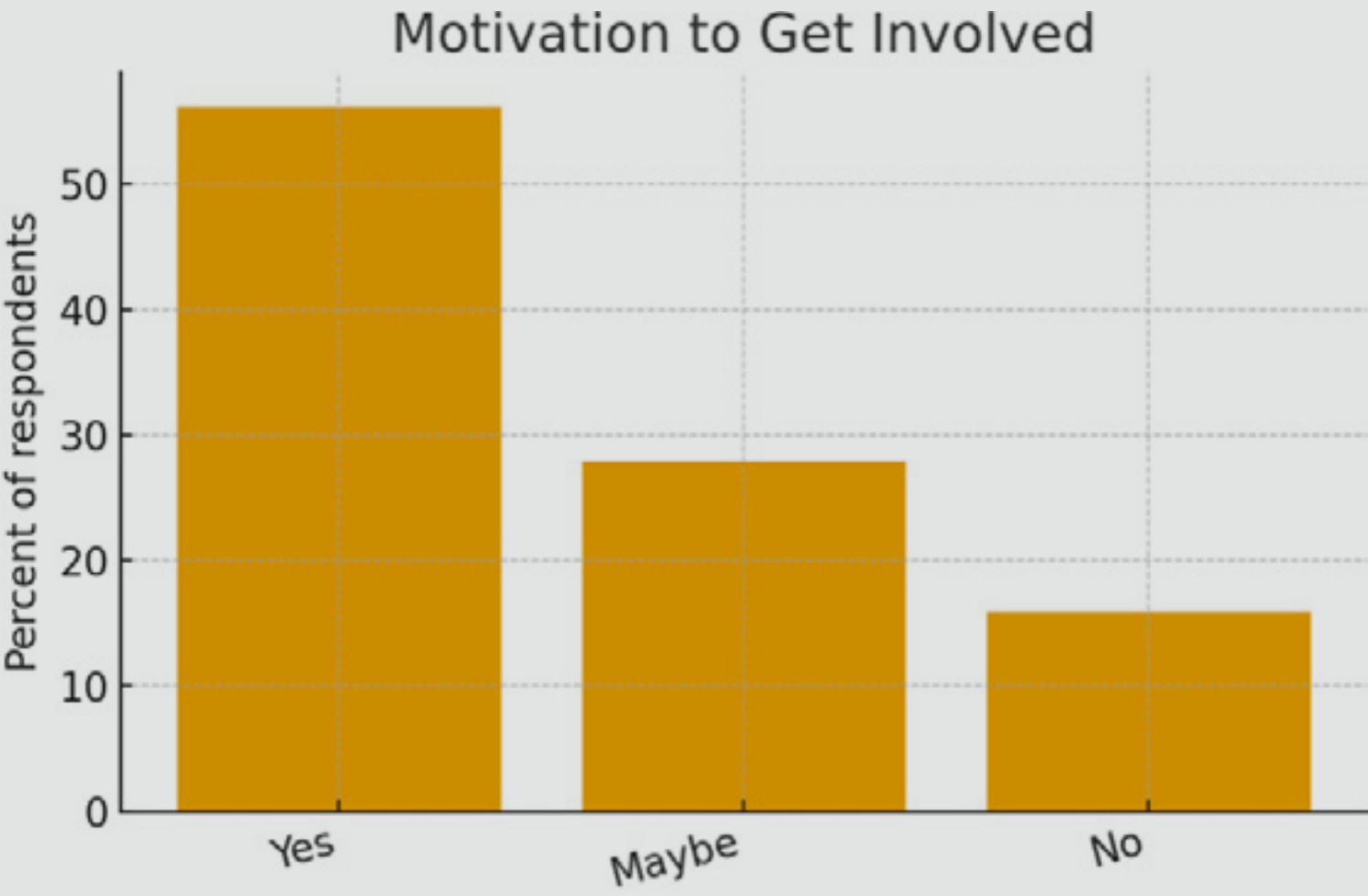
- 80.8% agree/strongly agree with the 400m access target to natural space
- 64% agree/strongly agree the plan is welcoming and inclusive, 28% neutral or disagree
- 72.8% agree/strongly agree the use of a digital platform could broaden participation
- 55.6% agree/strongly agree the plan will support green/blue jobs and investment, 26.6% neutral and 17.8% disagree/strongly disagree

Actions

- 79.8% agree/strongly agree that tree planting, biodiversity gain etc will support nature recovery
- 77.3% agree/strongly agree with targeting least-served areas for tree planting i.e. street trees

Motivation to get involved

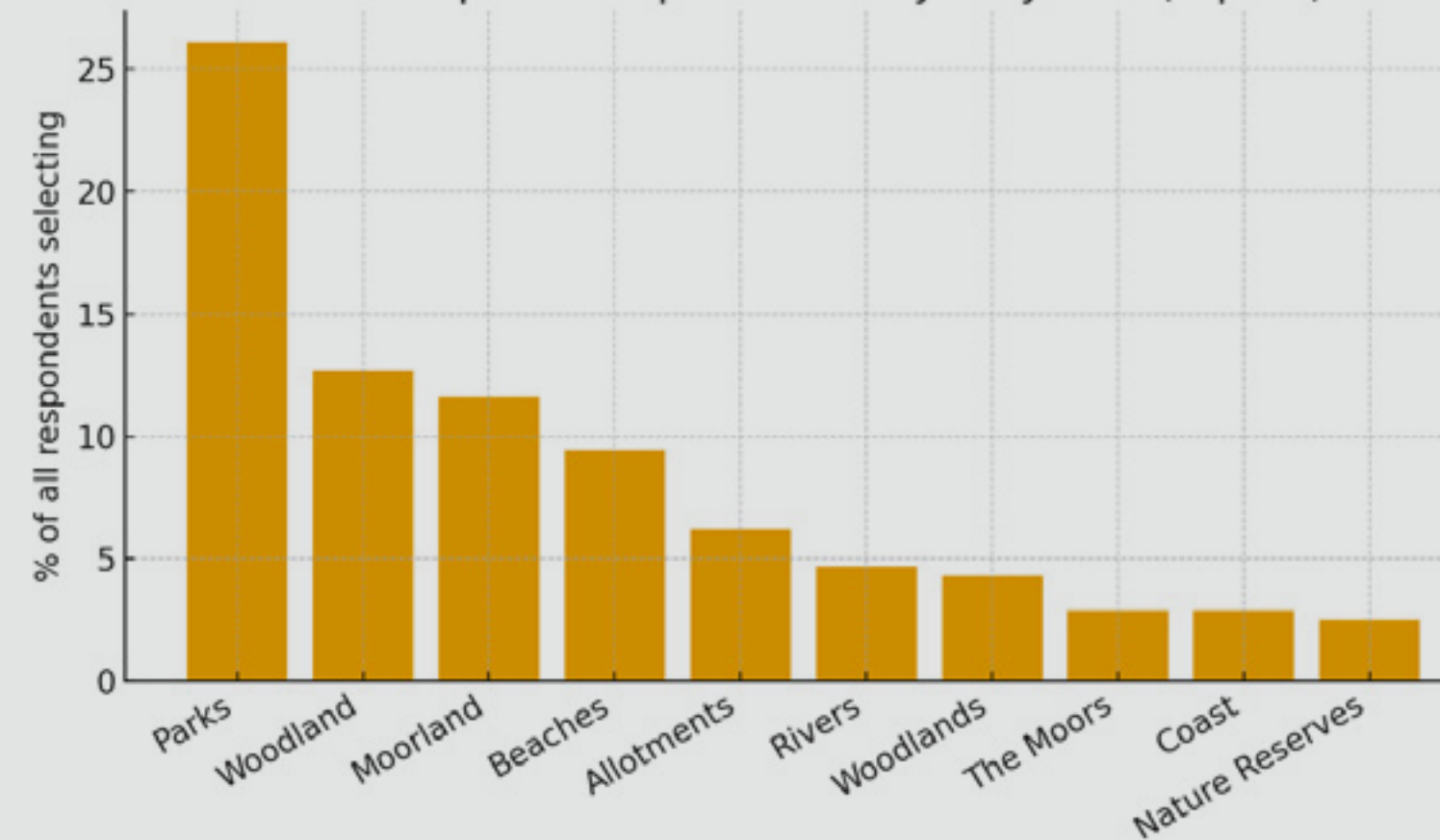
- 56.3% said Yes, 28% Maybe” and 15.7% No. This potentially gives a good base of willing volunteers;



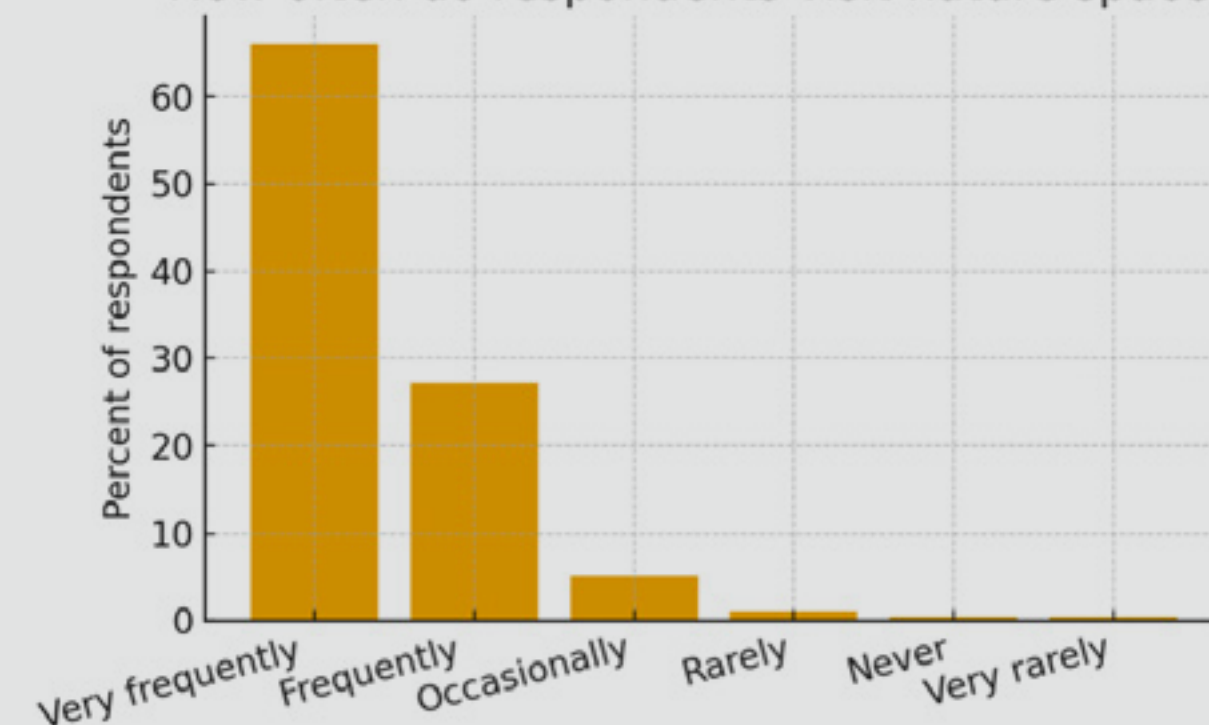
Nature connectedness

- 90.6% frequently/very frequently visit nature spaces
- Nature spaces in order of mention:
 - o Parks were most commonly, mentioned, specifically Central, Devonport and Victoria Parks
 - o Coast and Sea including Plymouth Hoe, The Sounds and South West Coast path
 - o Dartmoor
 - o Woodlands
 - o Beaches
 - o National Trust
 - o Nature reserves
 - o Rivers

Nature spaces respondents say they visit (top 10)



How often do respondents visit nature spaces?



What appears to be working

75-82% agreement that the vision, ambition, urgency and equity of access are landing well

81% agreement that actions are credible for nature recovery

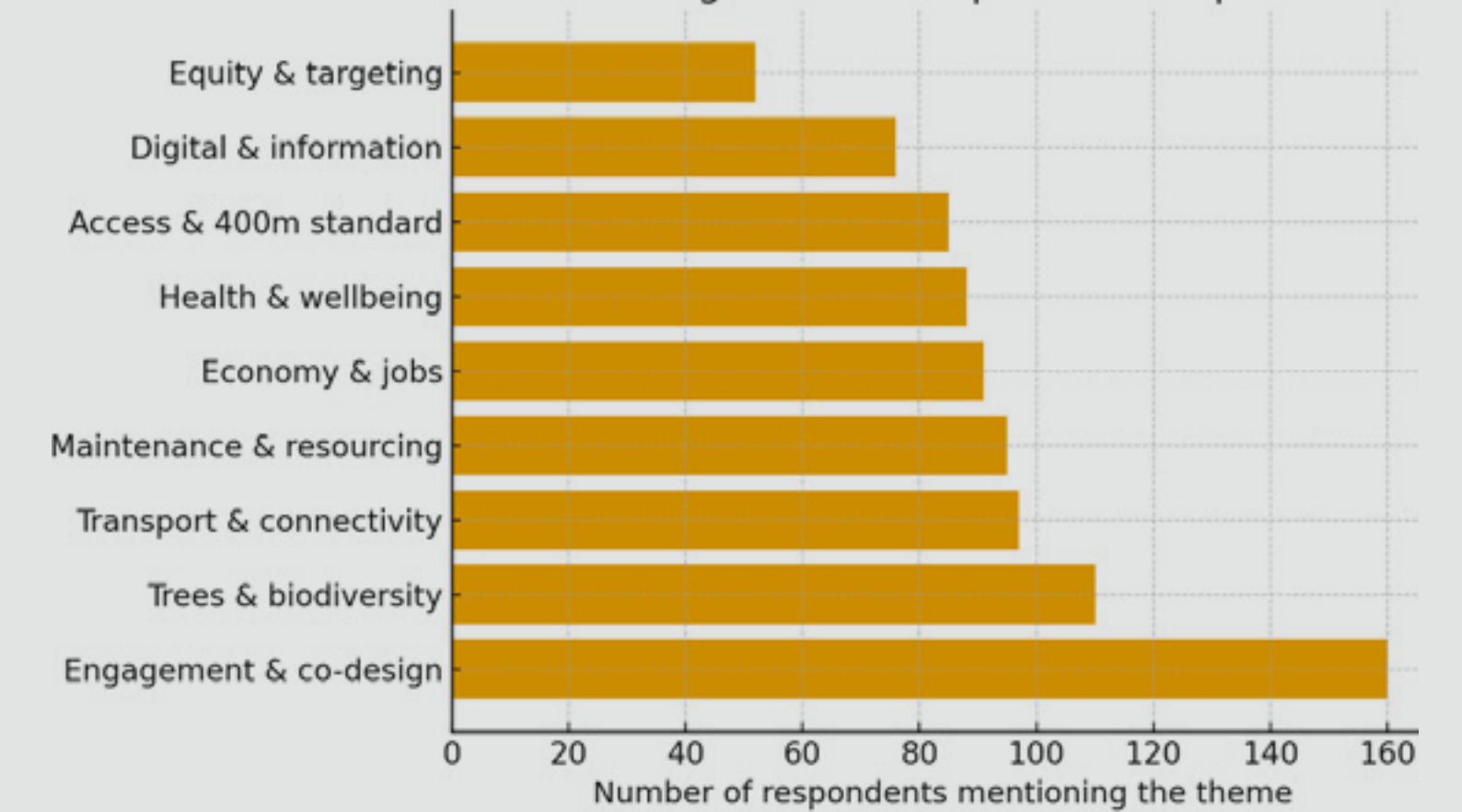
56% have an appetite for digital engagement and volunteering – 30% maybe's who could be open to conversion

What People Talked About Most

From the written comments, the most common themes were:

- Engagement & co-design (mentions across ~160 respondents)
- Trees & biodiversity (~110)
- Transport & connectivity (~97)
- Maintenance & resourcing (~95)
- Economy & jobs (~91)
- Health & wellbeing (~88)
- Access & the 400 m standard (~85)
- Digital & information (~76)
- Equity & targeting (~52)

Recurring themes in open-text responses



What People Agree On

Most people agree with the following parts of the Plan:

- 1. The Plan’s aims are clear (88% agree).
- 2. Everyone should live within 400 metres of a green space (80%).
- 3. Actions like tree planting and biodiversity projects will help nature (80%).

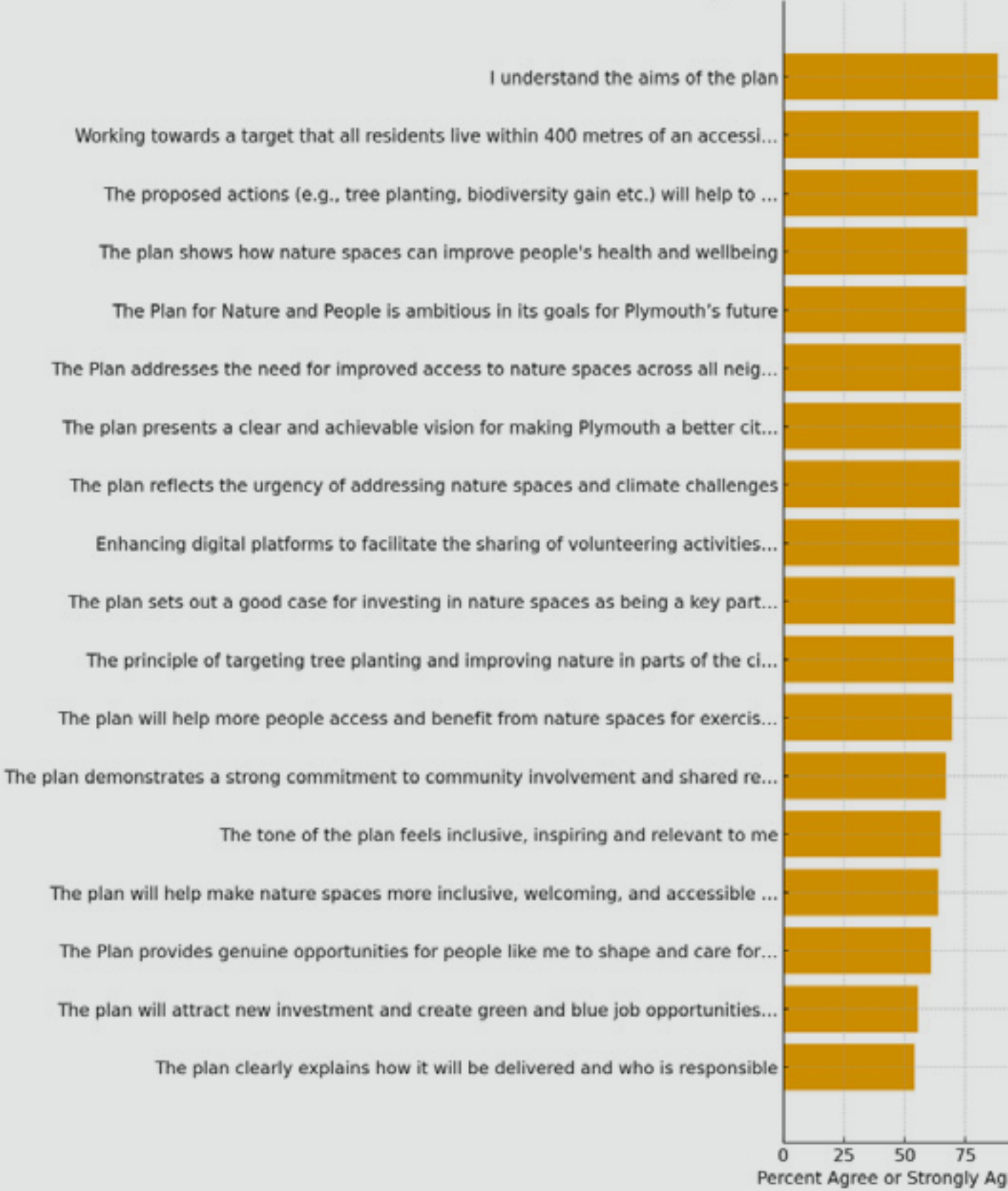
Areas to improve

Clarity over delivery – who does what, when and how progress is tracked. Turning intent into visible tracked actions

The narrative for investment 59% agrees, 24% neutral and 16% disagree

Whether the plan offers genuine chances for people to get involved (61%)

Agreement across Plan Statements



COMMENTS BY THEME

Nature Rich City

- Protect existing trees – strong concern about tree loss. Tree planting must be matched with protection and proper aftercare
- Tree planting should be thoughtful, seasonal, and suited to local ecosystems. Fruit bearing trees are encouraged for pollinators and public benefit
- Wildlife corridors are essential for biodiversity; connectivity across the city is vital
- Some green space should be left wild to support biodiversity but not neglected under the guise of environmental care
- Focus on creating a few high-quality habitats as showcases, rather than many mediocre ones
- Green areas should balance wildlife needs with safe, accessible play areas for children
- Plans should include youth participation and education to give young people a better start
- Opportunities for all Plymouth schools to be involved in nature-based activities
- Restrict cars for public and environmental health
- Ensure transport and pathways support access to green spaces and wildlife corridors
- New developments should work around existing natural structures, not just meet minimum requirements
- Tree planting and wildflower areas need proper care and seasonal timing

- Gardening teams should follow best practices, like annual wildflower cutting to encourage regrowth
- Forest Rising could be extended to retired groups – suggested involvement in planting in gardens of less able or low-income residents
- Unused allotment plots should be reassigned. Community gardening is seen as vital for urban health.
- Questions raised about past decision and accountability

Playful, Active and Healthy City

- School-level education is vital to instil respect for green spaces
- Educating the public on the ecological value of wildflowers, grasses and trees is essential
- Encourage community involvement initiatives like ‘Adopt a Patch’, litter picking and guerilla gardening – though this needs coordination to avoid accidental damage
- Many green spaces are neglected, overgrown or mismanaged
- More staff are needed to maintain parks and planters (four gardeners for Plymouth is not enough!)
- Improve existing infrastructure with drought-tolerant plants, wildlife features and better water bin coverage
- Ensure spaces are clean, safe and accessible – including for disabled users
- Promote outdoor play through low-cost activities like treasure hunts and nature trails

- Educate parents on the importance of outdoor play
- Address safety concerns e.g. anti-social behaviour, dog control to make spaces more family friendly
- Support initiatives like park yoga, park runs and outdoor gyms for all ages
- Social prescribing is praised but must be backed by safe, accessible spaces
- Create nature trails with artistic and reflective elements to deepen engagement
- Convert unused or neglected areas i.e. bin alleys, unmanaged grass patches into micro-green spaces
- Improve access to nature, especially in built up areas and ensure public transport supports this
- Make permeable materials mandatory for front garden paving to support drainage and biodiversity
- Prevent development on green spaces
- Balance nature growth with infrastructure safety e.g. road visibility
- Protect wildlife from disturbances e.g. dogs in ponds
- There is a frustration over the council’s slow progress and populist decision-making
- Lack of awareness of existing nature spaces e.g. Ford Cemetery
- Long allotment waiting lists despite unused plots

Inclusive Nature Spaces

- Improve disabled access to walkways, steps, picnic tables and planters, especially in parks like Devonport Park
- Ensure all areas of Plymouth are included, not just those labelled as deprived
- Address digital exclusion by combining online resources within person engagement and physical signage
- Support inclusive access to nature, especially for communities like Stonehouse who feel excluded
- Allocate one plot per allotment for community activities and volunteering
- Encourage children’s involvement in volunteering e.g. litter picking, recycling
- Provide free summer events to raise awareness of green spaces
- Support Friends of Groups and key volunteers to reach excluded groups via posters, libraries and surgeries.
- Develop modern, sleek, bug free apps that are easy to use
- Create a central digital hub for nature-related resources, organisations and volunteering opportunities
- Council must have a clear, committed environmental Improvement Policy
- Promote anti-littering messages and encourage a local pride in nature spaces
- Include local art and community health groups in environmental initiatives
- Make advertising a priority – Plymouth needs better self-promotion
- Improve event visibility to help residents discover opportunities to engage

- Residents should feel empowered to enhance their environment without fear of council disapproval e.g. planting flowers for pollinators
- Listen to local voices, including objections during planning applications
- Clarify funding sources, priorities and whether targets are tied to external funding

Nature Connected, Engaged and Empowered City

- Groups like Plymouth Tree Partnership should be named in plan to show it’s a city-wide effort, not just PCC led
- Wildlife gardens such as Delamere Road face threats from a ‘neat and tide’ mindset
- Nature advocates feel unheard and unsupported
- Long-term support and protection for these areas is essential
- Improve access to green spaces, especially in deprived areas
- Avoid creating inaccessible or neglected spaces
- Ensure netter access for disabled people and provide more public toilets
- Go beyond websites – use signs, town halls and face to face outreach
- Older residents and others may struggle with online-only resources
- Host workshops and talks in parks and community centres on rewilding and permaculture etc.
- Nature is not inherently untidy; council actions e.g. strimming and tree removal undermine ecological efforts
- Allotment policies should reflect sustainable practices like no-dig gardening
- Urban gardens (18.7%) need more attention and mention

- Suggest a self-assessment checklist for nature-friendly gardens with possible recognition schemes
- Improve online reporting systems to cover more issues e.g. blocked drains, paths etc.
- Over reliance on community volunteers is risky without proper support
- People need to feel safe and empowered to participate, which is challenging in the current climate
- Nature protection must be embedded in broader policies – transport, housing development etc.
- Prioritise improving existing green areas before creating new ones
- Ensure new spaces are sustainable and based on existing natural habitats

Innovative, Investment City

- Nature improvement plans should include clear figures and pathways for external investment, similar to the inclusive growth plan
- Use strong environmental vulnerability data to attract investors
- The council should proactively incentivise business investment through simplified processed and financial benefits like reduced business rates
- Emphasise the economic benefits of environmental initiatives to gain broader support
- Involve children and schools in nature projects; their creativity and ideas are valuable
- Engage unemployed individuals in planting and greening efforts, potentially linking it to universal credit

- Increase social media presence and councillor engagement to raise awareness
- Create green classrooms in every school to foster environmental education
- Invest in all local areas, not just affluent ones
- Support volunteers and residents with small-scale nature projects like growing food on vacant plots
- Encourage community management of small spaces and avoid selling them off
- Promote inner-city housing with eco-friendly features and improve access with small eco-buses
- Improve public outreach about coastal and park ecosystems with informative signage
- Collaborate with university students in art and science to create educational materials
- Recognise and include local nature enthusiasts and gardeners in planning and decision-making
- Support structured career paths in woodland management and tree surgery for young people
- Promote habitat banking Plymouth as a model for attracting investment and creating jobs
- Ensure new developments include allotments and community spaces
- Encourage green roofs, solar panels and water harvesting, and surface water management
- Take inspiration from ambitious European green spaces
- Be cautious with Biodiversity Net Gain schemes; some habitats cannot be replaced and need full protection
- Communicate the economic, ethical and social benefits of environmental actions clearly to avoid public scepticism.

Other points respondents would like to see

- Defend wildlife gardens, community areas, and nature reserves from being dismissed as “messy.”
- Guarantee protection of allotments from sell-offs.
- Support for local nurseries, seed banks, and tree supply chains.
- Species-specific support: swift and owl boxes, bat and bird watching, migratory bird assistance.
- Wildlife corridors and rolling biodiversity surveys to ensure habitat connectivity.
- Proper maintenance of green spaces to avoid neglect and misuse (e.g., mislabelled wildflower meadows).
- Encourage community stewardship of vacant plots for nature and people.
- Concerns about housing developments impacting green spaces and increasing traffic.
- Call for joined-up working across council departments, especially with the Nature & People team.
- Desire for greener back lanes and more trees in residential areas.
- Flooding risk management and extreme heat mitigation should be integrated into planning.
- Improved green transport and congestion charges to reduce pollution.
- Farmers market in Central Park to encourage community interaction and nature engagement.
- Improved play parks to get children active in green spaces.
- Panel of city residents to be involved in green space planning.
- Local consultation, especially with those caring for nature spaces.
- Cultural events like a flower festival or Seafest expansion to celebrate community and nature.

- Strong emphasis on clear, inclusive communication (e.g., readability of documents).
- Need for effective communication strategies to explain the benefits of nature projects.
- Focus on Strategic Delivery (P36) and shifting from a defensive to collaborative tone.
- Highlighted importance of audience, reach, and tone in public documents.
- More dog waste bins.
- Apprenticeships and local volunteer involvement in nature projects.
- Visual aids to highlight historical and green areas in the city.
- Accessible infrastructure (e.g., ramps instead of steps at Tinside).
- Species lists and planting schemes to guide informed decisions.
- Incorporate models like One Planet Development (Wales).
- Address climate change impacts already being felt.
- Link nature plans to poverty and social equity—recognizing barriers to engagement.
- Criticism of superficial accolades like “Tree City of the World” without real maintenance.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The survey respondents lean towards frequent users of nature spaces and older age bands; views of infrequent users, families with young children, or certain communities may be under-represented.

Age

- Majority respondents aged 55+ (162)
- Largest group 55–64 (77)
- Second largest group 65–74 (62)
- 25 to 34 (21)
- 35 to 44 (27)

Underrepresented age groups via survey:

- 15 and under – 0
- 16 to 19 – 0
- 20 to 24 – 5

It is noted that the children, young people and family demographics (U15, 16-19, 20-24 & 25-44) were underrepresented. To increase responses in the 25-44 age range we used a targeted and paid social media campaign.

To increase representation from children and young people we:

- attended a Climate Ambassadors meeting in collaboration with the Net Zero and Building Resilience in Communities (BRIC) Teams
- attended two Poole Farm youth groups in collaboration with the Community Connection Teams
- carried out a ‘paid’ social media campaign via our Corporate Comms Team
- contacted all schools in Plymouth asking for the survey to be circulated via school bulletins via the Education, Participation and Skills Team
- Green Communities Team attended Plymouth University’s Freshers Fair, shared at libraries and parks in the city
- encouraged both internal and external stakeholders to share the consultation across their networks

Responses from Children and Young People

Climate Ambassadors (15/09/25):

1 young person aged 16–19

3 young people aged 15 and under

Poole Farm (16/09/25):

15 young people aged 15 and under

17 young people aged 16–19

Green Spaces Visited

Poole Farm, Budshead Woods, Crownhill Woods, Whitleigh Woods, Trefusis Park, Devonport Park, paddling in the sea, kayaking at Mount Batten, Parkway Woods, Forder Valley Nature Reserve, Central Park, gran’s garden and Frogmore.

Accessibility

All young people could access green space within 10 minutes of where they live.

Why Green Spaces Matter

Provide oxygen and clean air

Support wildlife (bees, pollinators, beavers)

Offer clean water and shade

Grass cools feet, trees provide shade

Spaces for food (e.g., apples for people and wildlife)

Opportunities for fun, relaxation, and community

Nature Metaphors

Young people identified with elements of nature (e.g., woods, apple tree, shark, bee, fox, pig, badger, mole, robin, hedgehog), each linking their needs and wellbeing to the health of natural spaces.

What Young People Want from the Plan

Maintenance & Investment:

More funding for upkeep (removing rubbish, updating signs, maintaining paths)

Improved access points, especially in woods

Leave some fields wild, only mow paths

Food & Community:

Use fruit trees for community food projects and food banks

Combine beehives with orchards

Wildlife & Biodiversity:

Clean up the sea for marine life

More wildflowers and bee habitats

Protect soil for burrowing animals

Plant berry bushes for birds

Safety & Accessibility:

Safe, chemical-free habitats

Spaces away from roads

Quiet areas for relaxation and mental health

Personal Connections:

Nature helps with communication and wellbeing

Planting and caring for nature is meaningful

General Comments & Suggestions

Enable people to connect in nature without harming it

Ensure outdoor spaces are safe, welcoming, and well-advertised

More bike trails and benches

More wildlife, greenery, and better management

Keep wild spaces clean and open

Volunteering and youth leadership are working well

Avoid turning Plymouth into a “concrete jungle”

Reduce pollution, especially in the sea

Maintenance and investment are crucial

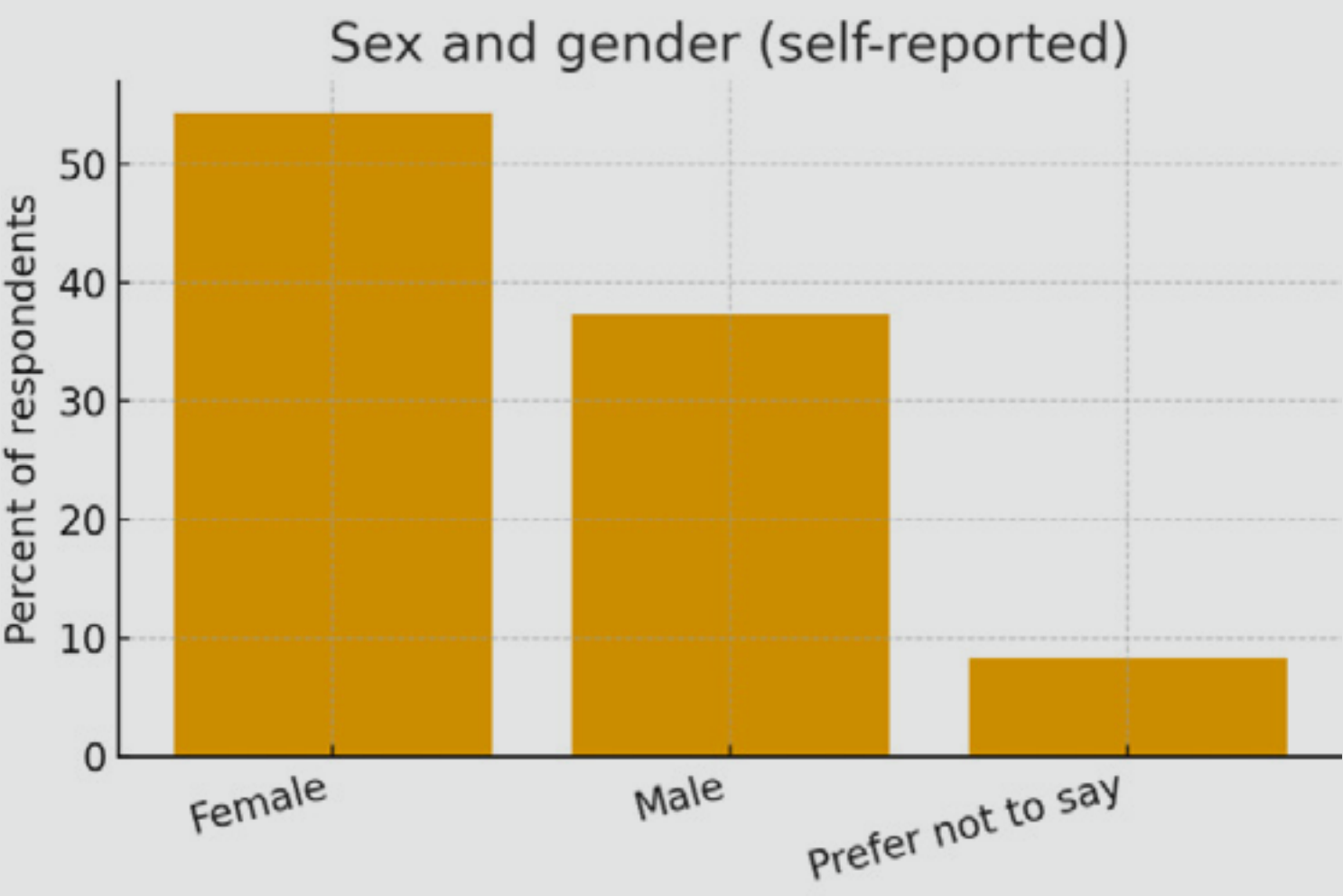
Nature brings people together and supports wellbeing

Children and Young People - summary

Young people value easy access to well-maintained, safe, and biodiverse green spaces. They want investment in maintenance, more opportunities for community involvement, and a focus on both people and wildlife thriving together. They see nature as essential for wellbeing, connection, and the future of Plymouth.

Sex and Gender

- Majority female respondents (151)
- Minority male respondents (109)
- Remaining prefer not to say (26)



Ethnicity

- 84% white (240)
- 3.1% others (9)
- 10.1% prefer not to say (29)

Conclusion

The public consultation for the Plymouth Plan for Nature and People has demonstrated strong support for the vision, ambition, and actions set out in the draft plan. Respondents have shown a clear desire for accessible, well-maintained, and inclusive nature spaces that benefit both people and wildlife. The feedback highlights the importance of ongoing investment, clear communication, and joined up working across departments and communities to deliver meaningful change.

While the plan’s aims and many of its actions are widely supported, the consultation has identified areas for improvement—particularly around clarity of delivery, communication of investment, and ensuring opportunities for all residents to get involved. The voices of children, young people, and underrepresented groups have added valuable perspectives, reinforcing the need for targeted engagement and inclusive approaches.

The insights gathered through the consultation have helped to shape the final draft of the Plymouth Plan for Nature and People. Key actions have been strengthened, language has been clarified, and new commitments have been made to address the priorities raised by the respondents. The plan now better reflects Plymouth’s shared ambition to place nature at the heart of the city’s future, ensuring that everyone can enjoy, value, and help care for our natural environment.

Ongoing collaboration, transparency, and community involvement will be essential as we move from planning to delivery. By working together, we can create a greener, healthier, and more resilient Plymouth for current and future generations.

GREEN MINDS MODEL

SUMMARY

The Green Minds Model aims to summarise the structure of the Green Minds approach, to aid its transfer and replication to other urban areas and authorities.

Green Minds piloted new ways of implementing nature-based solutions within an urban environment. The project’s central aim was to collaborate with stakeholders to recognise how humans, as part of nature, interact with nature in a complex system and to identify ways in which systemic change is brought about.

The model is presented as an integrated approach, where various nested elements are shown working together as a system. It reflects the particular challenges and scales of focus in urban areas – from individuals, to communities and neighbourhoods and at a citywide level. It focuses on particular leverage points for change (best practices) with regard to nature in cities, and is guided at its core by a set of underlying principles to inform practice.

At the centre of the model sits the system goal – *Urban Wilding. A set of guiding Principles have been created to inform the practice of Urban Wilding. These principles have emerged from our experiences designing and implementing Urban Wilding in Plymouth.

The eight Principles that have emerged from our programme of testing and development represent key leverage points to effect system change and to successfully integrate nature within urban place shaping. This includes exploring deeply held beliefs and values around our relationship to nature and to others, the creation of new organisational and digital infrastructures which empower citizens, and the development of new policy, planning and financial frameworks to support this.

Complex systems can behave differently at differing scales and so these are reflected too in the model to recognise the importance of understanding who needs to be engaged and how. This takes into account the need for multiple perspectives and the importance of equity (who participates), through an inclusive process of engagement from individuals to groups and organisations, and at neighbourhood and citywide scales.

Finally, the model acknowledges the importance of an ongoing and iterative co-design process. This process recognises that resilience requires the ability to adapt as solutions emerge within a complex and constantly changing environment. It is delivered through a cyclical, action learning approach in which lessons learned influence the next cycle of implementation to ensure a progressive approach.

The model is brought to life through our suite of Insight Papers, Guides and Case Studies which aim to illustrate how the model was implemented and what we learnt.

*We have chosen to use the term ‘wilding’ instead of ‘rewilding’, as it better reflects the reality of nature in urban areas - to rewild implies a return to nature before urbanisation, which is not possible.

URBAN WILDING PRINCIPLES

The quality and quantity of nature has declined significantly in recent decades. Across the UK and Europe, nature recovery and restoration, rather than just preserving or conserving what remains, has become a high priority, as we have become more aware of society’s dependence on nature^[1].

We know that spaces that are more biodiverse can deliver multiple health and wellbeing benefits as well as other nature-based solutions such as improvements in water drainage, increased carbon sequestration, removal of air pollutants and increased pollination for food security^[2].

‘Rewilding’ has gained prominence as one approach to achieving such improvements in biodiversity, with a growing research body assessing its impact.

Urban (re)wilding, however, is still a new concept. We define Urban Wilding as ‘any initiative, both human-aided and natural colonization, that aims to encourage biodiversity, ecosystem function and native species in urban settings’^[3].

Urban Wilding is fundamentally different from wilding/rewilding/renaturing elsewhere. Cities and towns are dominated by human infrastructure and activity. Consequently, many natural ecosystem processes are significantly modified or constrained in urban areas.

We rely upon ecosystem services for our health and wellbeing. Urban ecologies, which deliver these ecosystem services, are complex and poorly understood. However, we know that more biodiverse systems deliver more or better ecosystem services. We also know that we can mimic, or engineer, some specific ecosystem services such as storm water management. Whilst we don’t know enough to design urban ecosystems to deliver all the services we need, we do know that more nature is good for people

and urban living and that arranging it in certain ways can deliver certain specific benefits. We can’t achieve this by doing nothing – positive interventions are required, which in turn demand enabling policy, community action and practical delivery mechanisms.

The Green Minds understanding of Urban Wilding recognises the need to shift from nature conservation to nature recovery - to focus on restoring much of what is rare or has gone and a recognition that we need to bring high quality Nature into places where people live.^[4]

The Urban Wilding Principles below are designed as a set of prompts to help guide initiatives for nature to thrive in cities: to survive and reproduce, to expand, and to function as a system and so deliver more and better services to support urban environmental health, our economy, and human wellbeing.

Support people and nature together

Promote a just transition to wilder cities through equitable access to nature, socially just policy and involvement in the co-creation and co-stewardship of nature-based solutions that are adapted to climate change, biodiverse and support nature connection.

Promote nature-inspired leadership

At all levels of management (individual, community/neighbourhood, city administration, business, etc) enable nature positive actions to enhance urban liveability through education, training, and policy.

Develop co-stewardship for land management

Democratise land management and ownership through the development of co-stewardship solutions with user communities, introducing inclusive and empowering processes for engagement, creating community assets, and utilising diverse governance structures.

Deliver nature recovery at multiple scales

Make the most of the local built environment and its scale, acknowledging that no space is too small to be valuable whilst at the same time recognizing that larger green spaces and high degrees of connectivity are key for nature recovery.

Secure benefits for the long-term

Develop integrated policy instruments that embed urban wilding in development practice, led by communities and advised and supported by public administrations to create resilient cities and a population connected to nature.

Create purposeful data and information supported by digital infrastructure

Develop new digital infrastructures to generate community-owned and insightful knowledge of urban nature to support nature connection, and nature-positive policy and practice.

Create resilient local economies

Promote and empower nature-related careers, cooperatives and social enterprise across all sectors, to create new jobs and new value in green and blue infrastructure.

Change values and attitudes to nature

Promote nature connection amongst citizens, to enhance individual and community wellbeing and to foster nature-positive choices.

^[1] Nature Recovery for Our Survival, Prosperity and Wellbeing: A Joint Statement by the Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies of the UK. jncc.gov.uk/our-role/the-uk/nature-recovery-joint-statement

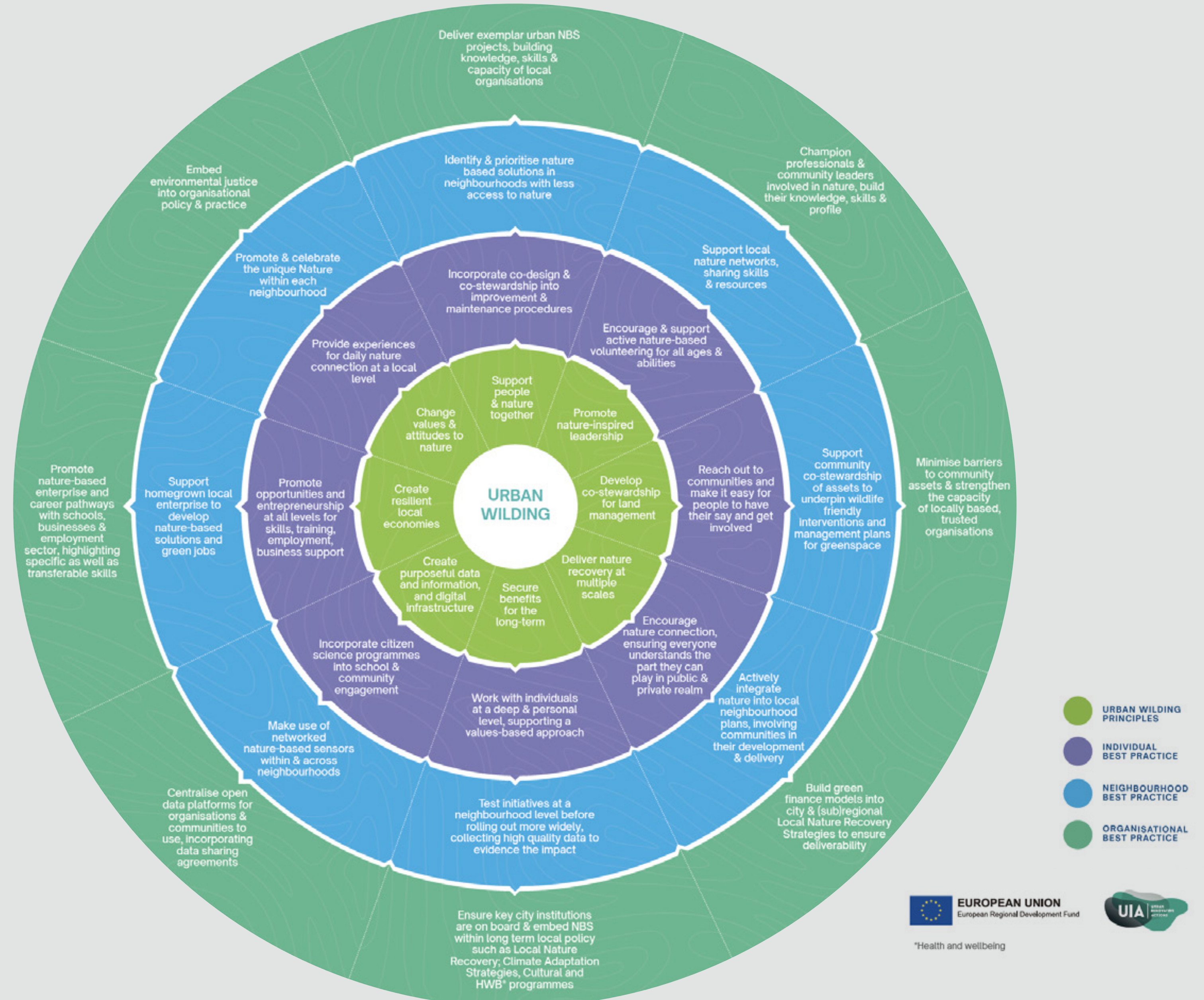
^[2] Dasgupta, P. (2021). The Economics of Biodiversity: the Dasgupta Review. London (HM Treasury); Maller, C. (2018) Healthy Urban Environments. Routledge

^[3] Maller, C., Mumaw, L., & Cooke, B. (2019). Health and social benefits of living with ‘wild’ nature. Ch 9 in Rewilding. Pettorelli, N., Durant, S., and du Toit, J. (eds). Cambridge University Press

^[4] Juniper, T. (2022) Tony Juniper: Green Paper – an opportunity for an integrated approach to Nature recovery - Natural England

The model illustrates the three system levels at which the Urban Wilding principles are applied to drive action: the individual, with neighbourhoods, and within organisations.

Permeability, both within and between segments, reflects the need for adaptability through local learning gained through an action learning approach, in which lessons learned influence the next cycle of implementation.



Plymouth’s Natural Capital Account: Executive Summary

Natural Capital Account - Plymouth

Prepared for Plymouth City Council



OFFICIAL
Natu

Plymouth’s greenspaces provide services worth £162 million gross per year

Plymouth’s parks receive an estimated 7 million recreational visits per year.

This results in **£162 million per year** in gross benefits to local communities.

£150 million per year results from health benefits, composed of improvements to mental wellbeing (60% of the gross value) and increases in the quantity and quality of life from physical activity (33% of gross value).

Health and wellbeing services deliver approximately **£22 per visit** on average.

Plymouth parks also provide **£11 million in benefits to property owners** through an annualised uplift in the value of residential properties, and help regulate the climate by **removing £0.4 million worth of greenhouse gases** every year.



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Recap: £162 million of gross value is created by the city’s greenspaces, over 90% resulting from improvements in health and wellbeing



Smaller greenspaces are a vital source of value for urban residents in densely populated areas, delivering more value per hectare than larger sized greenspaces which tend to be located in less densely populated areas.



Visits to greenspaces have significant benefits for mental wellbeing and physical health, valued at £150 million per year.



Going forward, increasing the frequency of visits to greenspaces and the level of physical activity in these spaces could unlock even greater value from existing parks. Similarly, new green infrastructure developments could target densely populated areas where accessibility to existing greenspace is low and the scope to create new greenspaces is less.

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Valuing PLYMOUTH'S Urban Forest



Urban forests provide people with a range of benefits, known as ecosystem services, which help make our towns and cities better places to live.

Trees filter air pollution, reduce flooding, remove and store carbon, whilst also improving our health and providing important habitats for wildlife. Trees provide many other

benefits too, all at the same time and at little cost.

Plymouth's Plan for Trees partners have worked with Treeconomics to use a tree canopy assessment tool, i-Tree Eco, with the aim of quantifying the structure of Plymouth's Urban Forest. This allows for the valuation of a range of ecosystem services it provides to society.

52% of Plymouth's land cover is green space!

Number of Trees
394,900

19.2% Canopy Cover

54 Recorded Tree Species










£4.6 million Annual Benefits

In addition, these trees:

- filter an estimated 131 tonnes of airborne pollutants each year, worth more than £2.9 million in social damage costs.
- have a leaf area of 41.8km², which intercepts around 169,100m³ of rain water every year, at a saving of over £605,000 in avoided stormwater treatment costs.
- store an impressive 152,780 tonnes of carbon worth £38.7 million.
- remove an estimated 4,291 tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere each year, worth over £1.1 million. This is equivalent to the annual carbon dioxide emissions from 217 family cars.
- have a total amenity asset value of over £3.4 billion throughout Plymouth's urban forest.

In Plymouth, there are 1.5 trees for every person!





What Is i-Tree Eco?

A state-of-the-art, peer-reviewed software suite from the US Department of Agriculture Forest Service. i-Tree Eco quantifies the structure and functions of community trees & urban forests.


It is adaptable to multiple scales from a single tree to area-wide assessments. It's also open source and free to use.

How?


To gather a collective representation of Plymouth's urban forest across both public and private land, a field-based assessment was undertaken using i-Tree Eco. 280 randomly allocated plots were surveyed, representing 0.14% of the total study area.

Information on the plot was recorded, including land use, ground cover, % tree cover, % shrub cover, % plantable space, and % impermeable ground. Within the plot, tree information was also recorded. This includes tree and shrub species, height, trunk diameter, canopy spread, health and fullness of the canopy, light exposure and life expectancy.

This data was then scaled-up across the study area to give a representative estimation of the structure of Plymouth's urban forest and the benefits it provides.




Ecosystem services are directly related to photosynthetic area. Trees with a larger surface area can hold greater amounts of air pollution or rainfall within the canopy.



Plymouth's Most Common Tree Species:
Oak, Sycamore and Ash

The chart below illustrates the quantity and value of individual pollutants removed by Plymouth's trees.

Pollutant	Pollution (kg)	Value (£)
CO	1,429.21	£1,429.21
NO2	286,827.61	£286,827.61
O3	731,429.75	£731,429.75
P.M. 2.5	1,827,583.57	£1,827,583.57
SO2	57,622.76	£57,622.76



Conclusions

Plymouth's trees provide a valuable benefit to its community through the delivery of ecosystem services.


However, there are challenges too. For example, the Acute Oak Decline disease threatens around 17% of Plymouth's tree resource, and this could have a devastating effect on the provision of tree benefits.

Understanding urban forest composition is the first step in the proactive management of this important resource.

What Next?

Now we can begin to strategically plan to improve and maintain our urban forest. Through targeted planting, diversifying, monitoring, community engagement, training and a whole range of other activities, we can ensure that Plymouth's urban forest continues to provide benefits long into the future.

Treeconomics Limited is a social enterprise, an organisation that applies commercial strategies to maximise improvements in human and environmental wellbeing, rather than growing profits for external shareholders.



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92 PLAN FOR NATURE AND PEOPLE / i-Tree Eco survey and report

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EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT – PLYMOUTH PLAN FOR NATURE AND PEOPLE

SECTION ONE: INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROPOSAL

Author(s): The person completing the EIA template.	Chris Avent	Department and service:	Street Services, Natural Environment service	Date of assessment:	24/10/2025
Lead Officer: Head of Service, Service Director, or Strategic Director.	Kat Deeney	Signature:		Approval date:	24/10/2025
Overview:	The Plan serves as a strategic delivery framework for nature recovery and integration across all sectors of city service delivery.				
Decision required:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Endorse the final version of the Plymouth Plan for Nature and People to act as a strategic delivery framework integrating nature and natural spaces into the city's growth. 2. Approve the creation of a Year 1 Action Plan for delivery in 2026. 				

SECTION TWO: EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCREENING TOOL

Potential external impacts: Does the proposal have the potential to negatively impact service users, communities or residents with protected characteristics?	Yes		No	x
Potential internal impacts: Does the proposal have the potential to negatively impact Plymouth City Council employees?	Yes		No	x
Is a full Equality Impact Assessment required? (if you have answered yes to either of the questions above then a full impact assessment is required and you must complete section three)	Yes		No	x

If you do not agree that a full equality impact assessment is required, please set out your justification for why not.	The Plan does not negatively impact any protected characteristics in fact it sets out a core objective to work towards Inclusive Natural Spaces, supporting and recognising diversity and inclusion as a valuable social asset for the city.
--	--

SECTION THREE: FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Protected characteristics (Equality Act, 2010)	Evidence and information (e.g. data and consultation feedback)	Adverse impact	Mitigation activities	Timescale and responsible department
--	--	----------------	-----------------------	--------------------------------------

Age	Plymouth			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">16.4 per cent of people in Plymouth are children aged under 15.65.1 per cent are adults aged 15 to 64.18.5 percent are adults aged 65 and over.2.4 percent of the resident population are 85 and over.			
	South West			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">15.9 per cent of people are aged 0 to 14, 61.8 per cent are aged 15 to 64.22.3 per cent are aged 65 and over.			
	England			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">17.4 per cent of people are aged 0 to 14.64.2 per cent of people are aged 15 to 64.18.4 per cent of people are aged 65 and over.			
	(2021 Census)			

<p>Care experienced individuals</p> <p>(Note that as per the Independent Review of Children's Social Care recommendations, Plymouth City Council is treating care experience as though it is a protected characteristic).</p>	<p>It is estimated that 26 per cent of the homeless population in the UK have care experience. In Plymouth there are currently 7 per cent of care leavers open to the service (6 per cent aged 18-20 and 12 per cent of those aged 21+) who are in unsuitable accommodation.</p> <p>The Care Review reported that 41 per cent of 19-21 year old care leavers are not in education, employment or training (NEET) compared to 12 per cent of all other young people in the same age group.</p> <p>In Plymouth there are currently 50 per cent of care leavers aged 18-21 Not in Education Training or Employment (54 per cent of all those care leavers aged 18-24 who are open to the service).</p> <p>There are currently 195 care leavers aged 18 to 20 (statutory service) and 58 aged 21 to 24 (extended offer). There are more care leavers aged 21 to 24 who could return for support from services if they wished to.</p>			
<p>Disability</p>	<p>9.4 per cent of residents in Plymouth have their activities limited 'a lot' because of a physical or mental health problem.</p> <p>12.2 per cent of residents in Plymouth have their activities limited 'a little' because of a physical or mental health problem (2021 Census)</p>			

Gender reassignment	0.5 per cent of residents in Plymouth have a gender identity that is different from their sex registered at birth. 0.1 per cent of residents identify as a trans man, 0.1 per cent identify as non-binary and, 0.1 per cent identify as a trans women (2021 Census).			
Marriage and civil partnership	<p>40.1 per cent of residents have never married and never registered a civil partnership. 10 per cent are divorced, 6 percent are widowed, with 2.5 per cent are separated but still married.</p> <p>0.49 per cent of residents are, or were, married or in a civil partnerships of the same sex. 0.06 per cent of residents are in a civil partnerships with the opposite sex (2021 Census).</p>			
Pregnancy and maternity	The total fertility rate (TFR) for England was 1.62 children per woman in 2021. The total fertility rate (TFR) for Plymouth in 2021 was 1.5.			

Race	<p>In 2021, 94.9 per cent of Plymouth's population identified their ethnicity as White, 2.3 per cent as Asian and 1.1 per cent as Black (2021 Census)</p> <p>People with a mixed ethnic background comprised 1.8 per cent of the population. 1 per cent of the population use a different term to describe their ethnicity (2021 Census)</p> <p>92.7 per cent of residents speak English as their main language. 2021 Census data shows that after English, Polish, Romanian, Chinese, Portuguese, and Arabic are the most spoken languages in Plymouth (2021 Census).</p>			
Religion or belief	<p>48.9 per cent of the Plymouth population stated they had no religion. 42.5 per cent of the population identified as Christian (2021 Census).</p> <p>Those who identified as Muslim account for 1.3 per cent of Plymouth's population while Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish or Sikh combined totalled less than 1 per cent (2021 Census).</p>			
Sex	<p>51 per cent of our population are women and 49 per cent are men (2021 Census).</p>			
Sexual orientation	<p>88.95 per cent of residents aged 16 years and over in Plymouth describe their sexual orientation as straight or heterosexual. 2.06 per cent describe their sexuality as bisexual, 1.97 per cent of people describe their sexual orientation as gay or lesbian. 0.42 per cent of residents describe their sexual orientation using a different term (2021 Census).</p>			

SECTION FOUR: HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

Human Rights	Implications	Mitigation Actions	Timescale and responsible department

SECTION FIVE: OUR EQUALITY OBJECTIVES

Equality objectives	Implications	Mitigation Actions	Timescale and responsible department
Work together in partnership to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ promote equality, diversity and inclusion▪ facilitate community cohesion▪ support people with different backgrounds and lived experiences to get on well together			
Give specific consideration to care experienced people to improve their life outcomes, including access to training, employment and housing.			
Build and develop a diverse workforce that represents the community and citizens it serves.			
Support diverse communities to feel confident to report crime and anti-social behaviour, including hate crime and hate incidents, and work with partners to ensure Plymouth is a city where everybody feels safe and welcome.			

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Cabinet



Date of meeting:	10 November 2025
Title of Report:	Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 – 2029/30
Lead Member:	Councillor Mark Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance)
Lead Strategic Director:	Ian Trisk-Grove (Service Director for Finance)
Author:	Ian Trisk-Grove
Contact Email:	ian.trisk-grove@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

Under the Council's Financial Regulations, the Responsible Financial Officer (Section 151 officer) is required to report the medium term budget prospects. Cabinet is asked to consider the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2025/26 to 2029/30.

The MTFS reflects the latest funding projections and sets out the forecasted budget shortfall in each year. The Strategy does not set out projected savings over the plan period; savings required for 2026/27 will be incorporated into the annual budget to be presented to Council in February 2025 and incorporated into the revised Medium-Term Financial Plan to be presented and approved alongside the budget.

Recommendations and Reasons

1. Approves and recommends the Medium Term Financial Strategy to the City Council at its meeting on 24 November 2025.
Reason: The MTFS forms a key part of the budget setting process, which itself is essential to maintain financial control.

Alternative options considered and rejected

1. This document is the required update to the Council's MTFP from February 2025, outlining the key drivers that will inform the 2026/27 budget and setting the foundation of the next MTFP. Our Financial Regulations require us to produce regular reports on our finance resources and as such there is no alternative option.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

The report is fundamentally linked to delivering the priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan. Allocating limited resources to key priorities will maximise the benefits to the residents of Plymouth.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

The resource implications are set out in the body of the report.

Financial Risks

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is the Council's primary financial strategic and planning document linking the revenue budget, the capital programme and the treasury management strategy. The Strategy sets out the financial planning assumptions for the next five years and ensures resource allocation is in line with Plymouth's priorities. A full analysis of the financial risks will be set out in the Budget Report to Full Council at the meeting in February 2026.

Legal Implications

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

There are no impacts directly arising from this report.

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

** When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

The reducing revenue and capital resources across the public sector has been identified as a key risk within our Strategic Risk register. The ability to deliver spending plans within budget is paramount to ensuring the Council can achieve its objectives.

Appendices

**Add rows as required to box below*

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Medium Term Financial Strategy 25/26 – 29/30							

Background papers:

**Add rows as required to box below*

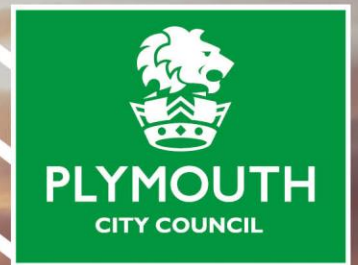
Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

Fin	OW. 25.26. 091	Leg	LS/00 0013 12/1/ AC/3 1/10/ 25	Mon Off	N/A	HR	N/A	Assets	N/A	Strat Proc	N/A
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Ian Trisk-Grove (Service Director for Finance)											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes Date agreed: 31/10/2025											
Cabinet Member approval: Cllr Mark Lowry approved by email Date approved: 31/10/2025											

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MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY



PLYMOUTH
Britain's Ocean City

City Council
MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY
2025/26 – 2029/30



PREFACE

Plymouth is entering a period of significant opportunity and transformation. With a strong foundation of strategic planning, financial governance, and a clear commitment to delivering for our residents, the city is positioned to navigate the challenges ahead and seek to maximise the opportunities on the horizon.

This Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets the backdrop for how Plymouth City Council will need to manage its resources over the next five years to deliver over 300 core services, support inclusive growth, and build towards long-term financial resilience. It provides a clear and coherent framework for decision-making, setting financial planning in the context of the Council's Corporate Plan and the Plymouth Plan, aiming to focus priorities to reflect the needs and aspirations of our communities.

The Strategy is published at a time when the national funding landscape is undergoing major reform. The Government's Fair Funding 2.0 consultation - a comprehensive review of local authority finance - aims to create a simpler, fairer, and more transparent system that better reflects local need. While the proposals offer progress, early modelling suggests that Plymouth will continue to face challenges, particularly due to the city's relatively low council tax base. Nonetheless, the introduction of multi-year settlements provides greater certainty and enables more strategic financial planning.

The MTFS acknowledges the pressures facing the Council, including rising demand in adult and children's social care, homelessness, and SEND provision. It also recognises the growing impact of financing the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit. These challenges are not unique to Plymouth, but the Council is taking a proactive and ambitious approach to managing them.

At the heart of our strategy is a bold and proactive commitment to prevention – the critically needed approach to reshaping how we respond to rising demand across our services. The financial pressures we face require more than short-term fixes. Transformation in the context of prevention is not just a programme; it is a whole-system commitment to embed prevention at the heart of everything we do.

This approach builds on the work already underway across the Council. Our transformation journey is one of adaptation, learning, and development, shaped by increasing demand, ambitious goals, and the realities of reduced funding. Our business plans and savings initiatives are not simply about cost reduction - they are about shifting our cost base and laying the foundations for future delivery. The City Help & Support programme exemplifies this shift. It aims to bring together cross-functional teams to deliver outcomes that reduce reliance on high-cost, crisis-driven services.

The MTFS also sets out how we will strengthen our financial resilience. We are replenishing reserves, maintaining income collection, and embedding robust financial modelling across the organisation. Our Capital Programme supports regeneration and growth, with a focus on delivering measurable outcomes and ensuring value for money. We continue to take a prudent approach to borrowing, guided by the principles of the Prudential Code and supported by independent advice.

Looking ahead, Plymouth is well-placed to benefit from longer-term national investment programmes. The city's designation as a National Defence Growth Area and its inclusion in the New Towns programme

present significant opportunities to support housing delivery, infrastructure investment, and economic growth. These developments align with our strategic ambitions and will be integrated into our financial and service planning as further details emerge. The MTFS ensures that the Council is financially prepared to make the most of these opportunities - by maintaining flexibility, aligning resources, and planning for the long term.

Councillor Mark Lowry
Cabinet Member for Finance

Ian Trisk-Grove
Service Director for Finance
(Section 151 Officer)

Plymouth City Council

**MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY
2025/26 – 2029/30**

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I Introduction

The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is a key document that integrates the Council's revenue budget, capital programme, treasury management strategy, and capital strategy. It enables the Council to plan its finances over a five-year horizon, ensuring the sustainable delivery of services while aligning financial resources with strategic priorities. By extending the focus beyond the annual budget cycle, the MTFP supports the anticipation of future financial risks and the development of mitigation strategies, thereby strengthening financial resilience in the face of uncertainty. It also enables the Council to respond effectively to both internal and external influences, including rising costs and increasing demand for services.

As a cornerstone of the Council's financial and service planning framework, this document - the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS or 'the Strategy') - is a first stage of the annual budget-setting process. It outlines the key drivers that will inform the 2026/27 budget and sets the foundation of the next MTFP, promotes transparency and accountability, ensures compliance with statutory requirements, and demonstrates sound financial governance. The Strategy provides a clear and coherent foundation for decision-making, helping to safeguard the Council's financial sustainability over the medium-term.

This Strategy is prepared during a period of uncertainty within the local authority financial landscape. While the principles and assumptions underpinning the Strategy will be set out within this document, further clarity regarding funding arrangements for future years is not expected until the publication of the Local Government Finance Policy Statement in November 2025. More definitive confirmation of funding allocations is anticipated with the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement in December 2025.

This year marks a significant shift in the local government funding landscape, with the introduction of a multi-year financial settlement for the first time in over a decade. This welcome development provides greater certainty for medium-term planning and enables a more strategic approach to resource allocation and service delivery. While the settlement brings additional funding, early modelling suggests it may not fully address the scale of demand pressures facing local authorities. This reinforces the importance of maintaining a strong focus on prevention, transformation, and long-term financial sustainability.

The outcomes of the Fair Funding 2.0 consultation and the anticipated reform of the Business Rates Retention Scheme are expected to significantly reshape how councils are funded. These changes, while potentially beneficial in the long term, introduce a period of transition that will require careful financial planning. In addition, the Council is managing a growing deficit within the Dedicated Schools Grant. Although this deficit is currently excluded from the Council's financial position through a statutory override, it nonetheless impacts the revenue budget through increased borrowing costs required to fund the associated expenditure.

The Council has been required to draw on its usable reserves and provisions to balance budgets and mitigate in-year financial pressures. While this approach has been necessary, continued reliance on reserves risks undermining the Council's long-term financial resilience and stability.

As the Council looks ahead to ensure long-term financial sustainability, it is driving forward its transformation programme, centered on a 'Prevention First' approach. This represents a more cross-cutting and transformative method of managing demand and avoiding costs, supporting the Council's ambition to deliver services more effectively and efficiently in the face of ongoing financial pressures.

Further detail on each of these areas will be set out within the Strategy to provide context, clarity, and transparency for decision-makers and stakeholders.

This MTFS covers the five-year period from 2025/26 to 2029/30. It acknowledges that the 2025/26 financial year has already been approved as part of the Council's annual budget, while the projections for the latter

years are provided for illustrative purposes to support strategic planning. The Strategy is set within a context of ongoing funding uncertainty and increasing demand for services across the Council.

By establishing a clear financial framework, the MTFs ensures that annual budgets are developed in alignment with Plymouth's strategic priorities, while also identifying appropriate mitigations for the financial risks outlined. Further detail on the assumptions, risks, and planning principles underpinning each year of the Strategy will be set out within the document to support transparency and informed decision-making.

Strategic Financial Principles

- The Council will maintain a balanced budget each financial year. Budget managers are responsible for ensuring that expenditure remains within their approved allocations.
- Services will be charged in accordance with the Council's Fees and Charges Policy, with annual adjustments made to reflect inflation.
- Provision for pay inflation will be held centrally and allocated to service budgets once agreed.
- Specific, ringfenced grants will be incorporated into service budgets. Any subsequent reduction in grant funding must be managed within the service's existing budget, except in exceptional circumstances.
- Whilst these principles will be maintained, transitional measures may need to be considered in light of Fair Funding 2.0 and future funding allocations, particularly given the anticipated consolidation of multiple existing grant schemes.
- In-year savings will be reported separately as part of the financial monitoring cycle and will be removed from service budgets in the year they are delivered.
- Capital financing costs for service-led projects will be met by the relevant service departments where these projects generate savings or additional revenue to offset financing costs. Other projects that meet corporate priorities or deliver essential maintenance may be funded centrally.
- ICT and vehicle expenditure will be funded by service departments, with corporate or cross-cutting ICT schemes supported through central funding.
- Corporate overheads will be charged against revenue funding streams in accordance with the Council's internal charging framework

Strategic Financial Objectives

- Ensure the Council sets a balanced and sustainable budget each year.
- Maximise funding opportunities to support the delivery of statutory services and wider priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan
- Ensure the Council manages and monitors its financial resources effectively, so that spending commitments remain within available resources in each service area. Where ring-fenced government funding is reduced, the relevant service must take appropriate action to reduce expenditure.
- Prioritise capital investment based on the delivery of measurable outcomes, with full consideration of the revenue implications of borrowing. All capital projects will be assessed in the context of their contribution to Corporate Plan objective
- Set Council Tax levels in accordance with central government limits
- Ensure full recovery of overheads from grants
- Optimise current income streams and continue to identify new opportunities for income generation and efficiency savings
- Work towards maintaining a General Fund working balance of at least 5% of net revenue expenditure, to safeguard the long-term financial health and viability of the Council.

- This objective will be reviewed in light of the Fair Funding 2.0 and future funding allocations, as the anticipated consolidation of specific grants into the Settlement Funding Assessment is expected to significantly alter the level of net revenue budget.

2 Local Economy

Plymouth, known as ‘Britain’s Ocean City’, is the largest urban area in the South West outside Bristol, with a population of approximately 272,100 and an economy valued at £7.27bn, supporting 117,000 jobs. Despite high employment rates, the city faces challenges with low productivity, Gross Value Added (GVA) stands at 81.1% of the UK average, and average wages remain below the national level. Improving productivity is therefore central to enhancing prosperity for all residents, particularly by supporting higher-value sectors where Plymouth has a natural advantage.

The city’s distinctive assets include the largest naval base in Western Europe, a successful manufacturing and engineering sector, a vibrant creative and cultural sector, one of only 16 critical care teaching hospitals in the UK, the associated Plymouth Science Park, and the newly established National Marine Park. Fostering strong communities and a clear sense of place is essential to creating a vibrant, attractive city in which to live, work, study, visit, and invest.

Plymouth has recently been named one of five key national defence growth areas in the UK Defence Industrial Strategy, supported by a £250m UK-wide investment. This builds on the city’s designation as the national centre for marine autonomy and the Government’s 10-year, £4.4bn investment in HMNB Devonport. Together, these developments present a significant opportunity to drive sustainable, long-term growth for Plymouth and the wider region.

Key city economic data

- *Gross Value Added (GVA)*: Plymouth’s annual GVA was £7.27bn in 2023.
- *Employment*: There were 117,000 jobs in the city in 2023.
- *Working Age Population*: Approximately 174,700 residents (64%) are of working age, a proportion higher than both the England and South West averages (2024 estimates)
- *Employment Rate*: Plymouth’s employment rate in 2024 was 74.5%, slightly below the national average of 75.6%. However, unemployment rates indicate the city is effectively at full employment.
- *UC/JSA Claimants*: In August 2025, the claimant rate was 3.4%, lower than the national average of 4.1%. Plymouth’s claimant rate has remained below the national average since April 2020, when it was higher (Plymouth: 5.6% England: 5.0%).
- *Wages*: Average weekly earnings for Plymouth workers were £655.30, compared to £729.80 nationally (full-time workers by place of residence, 2024).
- *Wage Distribution*: In 2024, the lowest paid 20% of full-time workers saw a 3.9% increase in maximum weekly wages to £496.80, while the highest paid 20% saw a 2% increase to £885.50. The wage gap for full-time workers narrowed between 2023 and 2024. For all workers, the lowest paid 20% increased to £330.50, while the highest paid 20% decreased by 0.4% to £807.00, further narrowing the wage gap.
- *Qualifications*: In 2024, 34.8% of working-age residents were qualified to RQF4+ (degree level or above), compared to 47.2% nationally. The proportion with no qualifications was 9.6%, higher than the national average of 6.8%.
- *Apprenticeships*: A higher proportion of Key Stage 4 leavers (Year 11, age 16) in Plymouth move into apprenticeships (approximately 9%) compared to the national average of 3% (2022/23)

2.1 The Plymouth Plan

The Plymouth Plan is an ambitious and forward-thinking strategy that sets out a shared vision for the city’s future through to 2034. It brings together a range of strategic planning processes into a single, cohesive framework, guiding Plymouth’s long-term development and growth.

The plan outlines how the city will strengthen its economy, meet future transport and housing needs, and improve outcomes for children and young people, particularly by tackling the root causes of child poverty. It also sets a bold aspiration for Plymouth to become a healthier, more prosperous city, enriched by a vibrant arts and cultural scene.

Crucially, the Plymouth Plan defines the city’s spatial strategy, incorporating the Plymouth-specific elements of the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan, ensuring that future development is sustainable, inclusive, and aligned with the city’s wider ambitions.

More details around the Plymouth Plan can be found here: <https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/plymouth-plan>

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE...

HEALTHY CITY

People live in happy, healthy, safe and aspiring communities

GROWING CITY

A city which has used its strengths to deliver quality and sustainable growth

INTERNATIONAL CITY

Plymouth is internationally renowned as Britain's Ocean City and is the UK's premier marine city, famous for its waterfront, and being home to the UK's first National Marine Park

REGIONAL CITY

Plymouth will be fulfilling its role as a regional city and a major economic driver for the Heart of the South West

2.2 Corporate Plan

The vision for Plymouth remains clear: to be one of Europe's most vibrant waterfront cities, where everyone enjoys an outstanding quality of life. The MTFS is shaped by the Council's Corporate Plan, which sets out how this vision will be delivered.

The administration's priorities reflect the issues that matter most to residents, tackling crime and anti-social behaviour, repairing roads, creating cleaner streets, building new homes, investing in green infrastructure, supporting jobs and skills, and improving access to healthcare and dentistry. At the heart of the plan is a commitment to making Plymouth a fairer, greener city, one where everyone contributes to a thriving community, and where people can grow up and grow old with dignity and opportunity, despite the ongoing pressures of the cost-of-living crisis.

Achieving this ambition requires strong partnerships across the city and a commitment to evidence-led decision-making. The Corporate Plan sets out six strategic priorities and highlights the contributions of both the Council and its partners in delivering them. There is a clear recognition of the vital role played by other organisations in supporting residents to age well and live fulfilling lives.

OUR PLAN
BUILD A BETTER PLYMOUTH

CITY VISION: Britain's Ocean City
One of Europe's most vibrant waterfront cities, where an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by everyone

OUR MISSION: Making Plymouth a fairer, greener city, where everyone does their bit

WE BELIEVE IN:

- DEMOCRACY**
Because we listen and hear what people want
- RESPONSIBILITY**
Because we care about the impact of our decisions and actions
- FAIRNESS**
Because we want to address inequality and inequity in our city
- CO-OPERATION**
Because we achieve more together than we would alone

WE WILL:

- Make Plymouth a great place to grow up and grow old
- Minimise the impact of the cost of living crisis

OUR PRIORITIES:

- Working with the Police to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour
- Fewer potholes, cleaner, greener streets and transport
- Build more homes - for social rent and affordable ownership
- Green investment, jobs, skills and better education
- Working with the NHS to provide better access to health, care and dentistry
- Keeping children, adults and communities safe

DOING THIS BY:

- Providing quality public services
- Trusting and engaging our communities
- Focusing on prevention and early intervention
- Spending money wisely
- Empowering and engaging our staff
- Being a strong voice for Plymouth

www.plymouth.gov.uk/ourplan

3 Fair Funding Review 2.0

On 20 June 2025, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government announced the launch of the Fair Funding Review 2.0 consultation, which ran until 15 August 2025. The review sets out proposals to reform the way local authorities in England are funded through the Local Government Finance Settlement from 2026/27 onwards. Its aim is to create a simpler, fairer, and more transparent system that better reflects local needs, costs, and revenue-raising capacity.

Key proposals include:

- Updated funding formulae based on relative need and local resources.
- Consolidation of over 300 grants into fewer core funding streams, including new grants for homelessness, public health, crisis resilience, and children's services.
- Inclusion of existing social care grants (e.g. Social Care Grant, Better Care Fund, Market Sustainability Fund) within the Settlement Funding Assessment.
- Phased transition arrangements, including a three-year settlement and potential funding floor to protect councils from cash losses.
- Full reset of the Business Rates Retention system in 2026/27, with revised safety net and levy mechanisms.
- Review of fees and charges framework, with potential for greater local flexibility.
- Extension of the DSG Statutory Override to 2027/28, alongside SEND system reform.

Plymouth, with a relatively low council tax base and high levels of need, particularly in adult social care, children's services, and temporary accommodation, has historically been disadvantaged under the current system. The proposed reforms aim to address these disparities by redistributing funding more equitably.

While technical details were provided, no provisional allocations were published. Internal and external analysis is ongoing to assess the potential impact on Plymouth's future funding.

Further clarity on the impact of the Fair Funding 2.0 proposals is expected in the Local Policy Statement, due in November 2025. However, confirmation of individual local authority allocations will not be available until the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, anticipated in December 2025.

To enable preparation of the MTFs, it has been necessary to make assumptions about the level of additional funding expected from changes to allocations under Fair Funding 2.0.

Modelling indicates that the transition to the new funding formula is projected to result in a £6.7m increase to Plymouth's baseline funding over the three-year settlement period. This is supplemented by a further £4.3m allocated through the announcement made in the June 2025 Spending Review, resulting in a total modelled increase of £11.0m

To help rebalance the impact of these demographic pressures and address the cost burden faced by the city, we have urged MHCLG to place greater emphasis on deprivation within the funding formula. Increasing the weighting for deprivation would help mitigate the effects of slower population growth and ensure that funding is more effectively targeted to areas with the highest levels of relative need.

Last year we welcomed an additional £7.0m of funding via the Recovery Grant. Recognised as more than a one-off funding measure, the Recovery Grant represented a transitional step toward the revised funding formula. While there is an expectation that this year the funding will be continued by 'rolling-in' to the RSG, we have advocated for the continuation of the Recovery Grant as a distinct funding stream within the settlement, with its existing distribution methodology preserved. This is essential to ensure that funding remains responsive to local need and that councils are supported in managing the ongoing financial challenges they face.

The adoption of a 'notional' rate of Council Tax to achieve full equalisation has provided support to Plymouth, given the city's relatively weaker tax base. Analysis indicates that, considered in isolation, this change has resulted in a relative gain of £27.4m in settlement allocation for Plymouth.

In addition, Plymouth has urged the Government to fund transition arrangements through a separate allocation, rather than offsetting these costs by delaying gains for authorities identified as requiring increased support under the proposed Fair Funding 2.0 reforms.

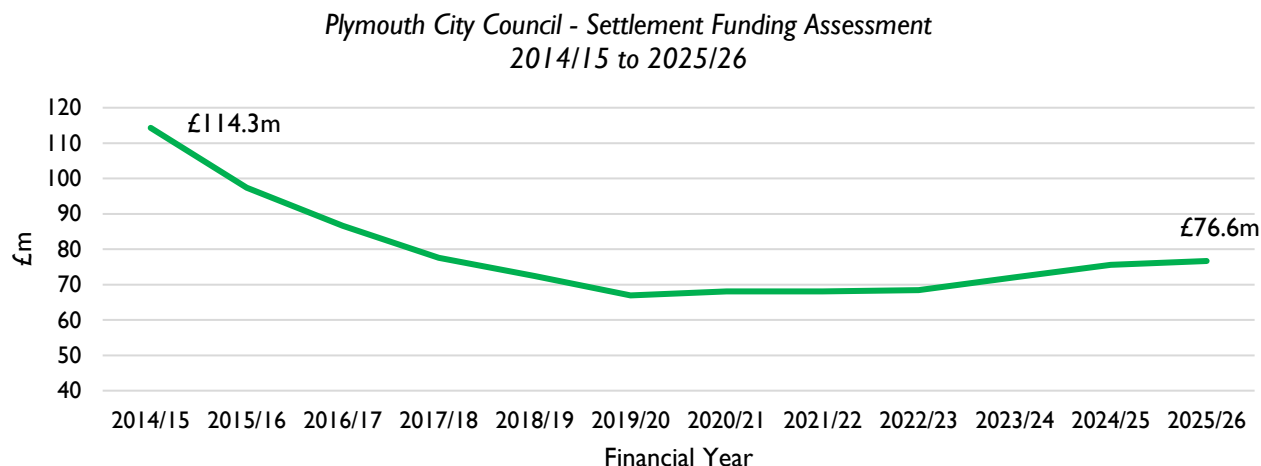
4 Settlement Funding Assessment

The Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA) is the Government's measure of core funding required by a Local Authority to meet its net revenue expenditure after accounting for income generated from Council Tax. The Settlement Funding Assessment consists of the local share of business rates, and Revenue Support Grant. It has been used to distribute Revenue Support Grant (RSG) to Local Authorities. SFA was reduced over a number of years including the amount of RSG. Inflationary uplifts have been applied since 2020/21, but these uplifts have not restored reductions made in previous years and leave Local Authorities vulnerable to

inflationary and demand pressures. In 2025/26 the increase to RSG was 1.7% as based on the September 2024 CPI rate.

The chart below shows the settlement funding assessment for Plymouth City Council since 2014/15.

Graph 1: Plymouth SFA 2014/15 to 2025/26



4.1 Fair Funding 2.0 Impact

Looking ahead, the expected roll-in of several large specific grants into the SFA from 2026/27, and other changes as a result of Fair Funding, will significantly alter its structure. As a result, year-on-year comparisons with earlier periods will become increasingly difficult, limiting its usefulness as a consistent funding benchmark over time.

Table 1: Specific grants expected to be rolled in to SFA

Specific Grants	£m
Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund	5.618
Social Care Grant	33.789
New Homes Bonus (ceasing)	0.030
Local Better Care Grant	15.955
Temporary Accommodation element of HPG	0.979
Recovery Grant	6.592
Employer NIC compensation grant	2.063
Total	65.027

The baseline funding modelled for comparison under the Fair Funding 2.0 now stands at £161.38m for Plymouth City Council. This figure differs significantly from the way the SFA is presented for 2025/26. Crucially, this is not additional funding, the increase reflects the anticipated roll-in of specific grants that were previously held and reported separately.

Table 2: Revised SFA under Fair Funding 2.0

Revised Settlement Funding Assessment	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total Increase
	£m	£m	£m	£m
New Settlement Funding Assessment	161.380	166.200	169.053	
Modelled increase via FFR 2.0	2.715	1.776	2.240	6.732
Modelled additional funding via Spending Review	2.105	1.076	1.093	4.274
Total New SFA	166.200	169.053	172.386	11.006
% increase against baseline SFA	2.99%	1.72%	1.97%	6.82%

5 Council Core Resources

5.1 Council Tax

In the 2025/26 Local Government Finance Settlement, local authorities were permitted to apply an increase in core Council Tax of up to 2.99%, alongside an additional 2% increase for the Adult Social Care precept. Plymouth City Council agreed to apply both of these increases in full.

For the purposes of the MTFS, it is assumed that these limits will continue to be applied into 2026/27 and future years, and that Council Tax will be increased up to the maximum permitted level. However, this assumption remains subject to annual approval by Full Council each February as part of the formal budget-setting process.

For Plymouth, a 0.25% increase in Council Tax is estimated to generate an additional £0.352m in 2026/27. This figure supports financial planning and sensitivity analysis within the MTFS.

Assumptions made in 2025/26 also reflect the impact of Empty Homes and Second Homes premiums, which were introduced in 2024/25 and 2025/26 respectively. These premiums are now embedded within the Council Tax base calculation and are considered permanent features of the funding framework.

The Council Tax Base report for 2025/26 was approved by Full Council in January 2025. It set the number of Band D equivalent properties at 76,557, an increase of 1,168 compared to 2024/25. This growth is largely attributable to the inclusion of assumptions around the application of premiums. The collection rate remains at 97.5%, which is considered both realistic and prudent given the prevailing economic conditions.

The Council Tax base assumed for each financial year is shown in the table below. Future years incorporate estimates of residential property growth and the impact of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme. These projections are informed by historic trends, anticipated future developments, and the expected proportion of properties falling within Band D equivalency.

The notional Council Tax figures used within the Fair Funding 2.0 to estimate the level of resources required by Plymouth are not reflective of the actual Council Tax income that should be included in the MTFS. These figures are used for comparative and modelling purposes at a national level and do not align with the statutory processes that govern local budget setting.

Council Tax income should continue to be modelled in accordance with established statutory procedures. This includes the formal calculation of the Council Tax Base and the determination of the Council Tax

Requirement, both of which are approved annually by Full Council as part of the budget-setting process. Maintaining this approach ensures consistency, transparency, and compliance with legal requirements.

Table 3: Council Tax Income 2025/26 – 2029/30

Council Tax Income	2025/26 Budget £m	2026/27 Forecast £m	2027/28 Forecast £m	2028/29 Forecast £m	2029/30 Forecast £m
Previous year Council Tax total	138.768	147.950	155.824	164.115	172.843
Increase in base assumptions	2.150	0.468	0.491	0.513	0.541
Revised base	140.918	148.418	156.315	164.628	173.384
Council Tax increase (2.99%) on revised base	4.213	4.438	4.674	4.922	5.184
ASC precept (2%) on revised based	2.818	2.968	3.126	3.293	3.468
Council Tax total	147.950	155.824	164.115	172.843	182.036

5.2 Council Tax Discounts and Premiums

As a result of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, local authorities were given enhanced powers to apply council tax premiums on certain types of properties. From April 2024, councils could apply the empty homes premium on dwellings that have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for one year, reducing the previous qualifying period of two years. Additionally, from April 2025, councils could introduce a new discretionary council tax premium of up to 100% on second homes. Plymouth has implemented both of these premiums.

Tax base growth from both the empty homes and second homes premiums has been incorporated into the MTFS from 2025/26 onwards. These assumptions reflect the anticipated impact of the new powers on council tax income and housing availability.

5.3 Council Tax Support Scheme

Local authorities have a statutory duty to implement and administer a local Council Tax Support Scheme (CTSS), which provides financial assistance to low-income households - both in and out of work - to help meet their Council Tax obligations. This scheme is currently accessed by c.22,000 local residents, of whom nearly 70% are of working age. Any owner-occupier or tenant aged 18 or over who is legally responsible for paying Council Tax may apply for support. The level of assistance awarded is determined by the household's income and individual circumstances.

The Government prescribes the rules for calculating Council Tax support for applicants who have reached state pension age. Under these regulations, eligible pension-age claimants may receive up to 100% support against their Council Tax liability. For working-age residents, Plymouth City Council operates an Income-Banded scheme, under which the maximum support available is capped at 80% of the Council Tax charge. This approach ensures targeted support while maintaining financial sustainability within the scheme. The table below shows the level of council tax forgone due to the application of the Council Tax Support Scheme.

Table 4: Council Tax Forgone – Council Tax Support Scheme

Council Tax Support Scheme	2020/21 £m	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m
Total Council Support (Council Tax forgone)	16.971	16.981	18.935	20.181	21.535	22.145

Whilst no amendments to the Council Tax Support Scheme are planned for 2026/27, this will remain under review and consultation in respect of futures years may be considered as we progress and finalise the MTFP.

5.4 Council Tax Administration Consultation

The "Modernising and improving the administration of council tax" consultation was announced and published on 20 June 2025 by MHCLG. The consultation ran from 20 June to 12 September 2025 and sought views on a range of proposals aimed at improving how council tax is billed, collected, and enforced, as well as modernising the support available within the system.

The Government's consultation seeks to reform council tax enforcement by making debt collection more proportionate and supportive. Current practices allow councils to demand full annual payment shortly after a missed instalment, possibly then escalating quickly to court action. Proposed changes aim to slow this process, cap additional charges, and require councils to signpost residents to support services, reducing the financial and emotional strain on vulnerable households.

The consultation also explores modernising the structure and fairness of council tax. This includes simplifying the process for challenging outdated property banding and updating eligibility criteria for discounts such as those for carers and apprentices. Additionally, the Government proposes changing the default payment schedule from 10 to 12 monthly instalments to support household budgeting.

Further proposals focus on improving transparency and efficiency in council tax administration. Councils are encouraged to adopt digital systems, integrate data with HMRC and DWP, streamline billing processes, and consider deferred payment options in certain circumstances. These reforms aim to make the system more responsive, equitable, and financially sustainable.

At present, no changes are required to the modelling of Council Tax income within the MTFS as a result of the proposals outlined. While the consultation includes a range of potential reforms, such as changes to enforcement, payment structures, and liability, none have yet been confirmed or legislated in a way that would impact current financial planning assumptions.

5.5 Business Rates

Under the Government's current funding framework for local authorities, the Business Rates Retention Scheme enables councils to retain a proportion of their business rates income, including any growth. At present, this retention stands at 49% of total receipts. While this arrangement allows authorities to benefit from growth, it also exposes them to the risk of reductions in business rates income during economic downturns. To mitigate extreme losses, a 'safety net' mechanism is in place.

Table 5: Business Rates Income 2025/26 to 2028/29

Business Rates - Net Rates Calculation	2025/26 Budget £m	2026/27 Forecast £m	2027/28 Forecast £m	2028/29 Forecast £m	2029/30 Forecast £m
Rateable Value	241.725	241.725	241.725	241.725	241.725
Gross Rates (after application of multipliers)	129.786	131.324	132.887	134.477	136.094
Net Rates Payable (after reliefs and transitional arrangements)	90.189	91.021	91.866	92.726	93.601
PCC Share	49%	49%	49%	49%	49%
Business Rates Income	44.193	44.600	45.014	45.436	45.864
Other Adjustments (incl. Top Up and multiplier compensation)	38.641	39.186	39.740	40.013	40.292
Surplus/(Deficit) to be charged to the General Fund	1.000	0.500	0.000	0.000	0.000
Plus Pooling Gains / Losses	2.750	2.500	2.500	2.500	2.500
Total Business Rates Income	86.584	86.786	87.254	87.949	88.656

Additionally, local authorities are compensated via Section 31 grants for reductions in business rates income resulting from Government policy changes introduced since the scheme's inception, such as the implementation of additional reliefs or the freezing of the business rates multiplier.

The final determination of business rates resources is based on the completion of the Government's NNDR I return (National Non-Domestic Rates). As the timing of this return falls outside the budget-setting cycle, assumptions must be made during the budget preparation process.

Looking ahead to 2026/27 and beyond, there is uncertainty surrounding the potential impact of a reset of the business rates retention system and the associated transitional arrangements. The Government has announced several changes to take effect from 2026/27:

- **Revaluation 2026:** The Valuation Office Agency is preparing a new rating list to be implemented from 1 April 2026. This will update property valuations and alter business rates bills. However, the Government has indicated that the revaluation will be revenue-neutral for local authorities, likely achieved through adjustments to Top-Up or Tariff payments, as in previous revaluations.
- **New Business Rates Multipliers:** As announced in Budget 2024, the Government intends to introduce differentiated multipliers, including reduced rates for the Retail, Hospitality, and Leisure sectors, alongside a higher multiplier to fund these reductions. This change is also expected to be revenue-neutral for local government, potentially managed in a similar manner to revaluations.
- **Business Rates Reset:** The original design of the retention scheme included a reset mechanism. Each authority has a Baseline Funding Level (BFL) and a Business Rates Baseline (BRB), both of which are inflated annually by the multiplier. Changes in the tax base, such as shifts between small and standard multipliers or changes in reliefs, result in growth or decline. A reset would revise both the BFL and BRB, redistributing growth from areas where it has occurred to those where the Government wishes to allocate additional funding.

It is important to note that the methodology for the reset has not yet been published, nor is it clear whether transitional arrangements will be applied. The final figures will also be subject to the outcome of the Fair Funding 2.0.

Given the level of uncertainty in this area, current modelling assumptions for business rates income remain aligned with previous forecasting approaches. These assumptions are consistent with models produced by external advisors.

A specific area requiring close attention is the future of the Devon Business Rates Pool. The MTFs currently assumes continued gains from the Pool, with £2.750m included for 2025/26 and £2.500m assumed in subsequent years. Should pooling arrangements be discontinued under the new system, this would represent a financial risk.

The table below shows pooling gain levels for the past three years. The assumption for 2025/26 is informed both by these trends and by analysis by our external advisors provided in October 2024.

Table 6: Devon Business Rates Pooling Gains

Devon Business Rates Pooling Gains 2023/24 - 2025/26	2022/23 Actual £m	2023/24 Actual £m	2024/25 Actual £m	2025/26 Forecast £m
Plymouth	1.957	2.262	2.455	2.750
Increase £	-	0.305	0.193	0.295
Increase %	-	15.60%	8.50%	12.00%

6 Government Grants

6.1 Revenue Support Grant (RSG)

Revenue Support Grant is a central government funding stream provided to local authorities to support revenue expenditure across any service area. The level of grant allocated to each authority is determined through the Local Government Finance Settlement.

Under the emerging proposals for the Fair Funding 2.0, the structure and composition of RSG may change significantly compared to previous years. Specific grants that have historically been allocated separately may be consolidated into the RSG, and any additional funding due to Plymouth under the revised formula could also be incorporated into this grant. However, it is also possible that such changes could be implemented through adjustments to the Business Rates element of the SFA instead.

This approach presents challenges for year-on-year comparisons, as the integration of previously distinct funding streams may obscure historical trends and make it more difficult to track changes in individual allocations over time.

6.2 Dedicated Schools Grant

The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is a ring-fenced grant provided to local authorities by the Department for Education (DfE) to fund expenditure on schools, early years and children and young people with high needs.

The DSG is divided into four distinct blocks, each serving a specific purpose;

- Schools Block – Funds the provision of mainstream education in primary and secondary schools (from reception to year 11).
- High Needs Block – Supports children and young people aged 0 – 25 with special education needs and disabilities (SEND). This includes funding for special schools, alternative provision, support within mainstream schools / support units and further education (post 16).
- Early Years Block – Funds the various free early education entitlements for children aged 0-5. This includes the universal 15 hours for all 3 & 4-year-olds and the additional 15/30-hour entitlement for children of working parents (from 9 months).
- Central School Services Block (CSSB) – Funds statutory duties carried out by local authorities, such as school admissions, asset management, support services as well as some historic commitments.

Table 7: Plymouth's DSG Allocation 2025/26

Dedicated Schools Grant Blocks	2025/26 Allocation (£m)	2025/26 Forecast (£m)	Variance (£m)
Schools Block (before academy recoupment)	218.961	218.961	-
High Needs Block	52.210	86.826	34.616
Central Schools Services Block	2.536	2.536	-
Early Years Block	38.441	39.075	0.634
Total DSG allocation (Gross)	312.148	347.398	35.250

Plymouth is experiencing pressures consistent with national trends in SEND provision. Population growth, improved identification of needs, and a post-COVID increase in mental health and speech and language issues have significantly driven up demand. The 2014 SEND Code of Practice expanded eligibility and support up to age 25, but has not been matched by sufficient funding, contributing to wider system pressures, including increased demand for school transport.

Nationally, the number of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) has risen by 140% over the past decade, from 240,183 in 2015 to 575,973 in 2023/24 and local authorities are forecast to carry a cumulative £5bn SEND deficit by March 2026. Over half are now engaged in Department for Education intervention programmes such as Safety Valve and Delivering Better Value in SEND.

Locally, Plymouth's maintained special schools and academies are at full capacity, resulting in greater reliance on high-cost independent placements outside the area.

The Council awaits the publication of the SEND White Paper, expected in January 2026, which is anticipated to set out long-term, systemic reforms to address the challenges outlined above. It is important that any reforms are underpinned by a clear and coherent vision for improving outcomes for children with SEND, rather than simply reducing support or altering legal entitlements without offering robust alternatives. Any such changes must be carefully considered to avoid unintended consequences for the children who currently benefit from existing support.

The Government has indicated an intention to strengthen core SEND provision within mainstream schools. In principle, this could lead to improved outcomes at a lower long-term cost. However, realising this ambition will require a well-planned strategy to build capacity and a commitment to developing the evidence base for what works in supporting children with SEND.

Councils are currently permitted to exclude DSG deficits from their main balance sheets under a temporary accounting provision known as the "statutory override," which has been extended until March 2028. This measure provides short-term financial flexibility while local authorities await further clarity on in the national SEND reforms.

Plymouth has experienced pressures on the High Needs Block in recent years, and for 2025/26 is forecasting an in-year pressure of £35.250m. This added to the brought forward deficit balance of £18.498m brings a forecast estimated deficit balance of £53.748m at the end of 2025/26.

Without intervention, demand for EHCPs is expected to continue rising. Mitigation strategies focus on reducing reliance on independent specialist providers by increasing support in mainstream schools and expanding local specialist school provision. The most ambitious scenario combines these measures with a substantial reduction in new EHCP applications.

DSG High Needs Block deficits represent a growing financial liability that must eventually be addressed. If the override is not extended beyond March 2028 or if no long-term funding solution is provided, these deficits could fall back onto councils' core budgets, severely impacting their financial sustainability.

This is not considered to be likely at this point, and the assumption for this strategy is that the override will continue for the term of the MTFS. However, the revenue impact of borrowing costs required to fund this un-funded expenditure is included and flagged in the MTFS for future years, with an estimated cost of financing the deficit in 2026/27 of £2.774m.

Table 8: DSG Deficit financing costs

DSG Deficit	2025/26 Forecast £m	2026/27 Forecast £m	2027/28 Forecast £m	2028/29 Forecast £m
Initial estimated DSG deficit for TM modelling	53.748	75.860	131.600	202.520
SEND - DSG deficit financing cost (step up)	0.450	2.774	2.369	3.014

6.3 Public Health Grant

The Public Health Grant is a ring-fenced allocation provided by the Department of Health and Social Care to local authorities in England to support the delivery of public health responsibilities. It funds a wide range of preventative services aimed at improving population health and reducing health inequalities. These include sexual health services, drug and alcohol treatment, smoking cessation, children's health services, and broader health promotion initiatives.

Although Plymouth has received a significant increase in its Public Health Grant allocation between 2024/25 and 2025/26, the funding continues to face real-terms pressures driven by rising demand, inflationary costs, and historically inequitable distribution. Planning assumptions for future years currently forecast an annual increase of 1%.

Table 9: Public Health Grant Allocations

Public Health Grant	2024/25 Actual £m	2025/26 Actual £m	2026/27 Forecast £m	2027/28 Forecast £m	2028/29 Forecast £m	2029/30 Forecast £m
Public Health Grant Allocations and Estimates	16.737	18.089	18.270	18.453	18.637	18.823

As part of the Fair Funding 2.0 consultation, it states that the Public Health Grant will be consolidated alongside other service-specific grants to create a wider Public Health grant, delivered as a separate grant within the Local Government Finance Settlement in 2026-27.

6.4 Housing Benefit Subsidy

For 2025/26, Plymouth City Council is forecast to receive £45m in Housing Benefit Subsidy Grant. This grant is provided by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to reimburse local authorities for the cost of Housing Benefit payments made to eligible claimants. Most payments attract 100% subsidy; however, there has been a notable increase in claims related to Supported Accommodation provided by non-Registered Providers, which do not qualify for full subsidy. Depending on the claimant's vulnerability, these cases receive either 60% or 0% subsidy above the rent officer-determined amount, resulting in an estimated funding gap of approximately £0.750m in 2025/26.

Additionally, Housing Benefit overpayments typically attract only a 40% subsidy from DWP, although the Council can invoice claimants for the full amount. This has contributed to a growing level of outstanding debt, which currently exceeds £8m. In response, the Council is actively engaging with Registered Providers to maximise subsidy entitlement and has allocated additional resources to strengthen debt recovery processes.

6.5 Social Care Grants

In 2025/26, three grants within the Local Government Finance Settlement provide targeted funding to support adult social care services: the Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund (£5.618m), the Local Authority Better Care Fund (£15.955m), and the Social Care Grant (£33.789m), the latter of which supports both adult and children's social care. These grants are intended to help local authorities address key pressures in the care system, including increasing provider fee rates, expanding and retaining the social care

workforce, reducing waiting times for care, improving hospital discharge performance, and promoting integrated working between councils and the NHS.

Table 10: Social Care Grants

Social Care Grants	2025/26 Allocations £m
ASC - Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund	5.618
Social Care Grant	33.789
ASC - Local Better Care Grant	15.955
Total	55.362

As noted earlier in this document, our assumptions around Fair Funding 2.0 include the anticipated integration of specific grants into the SFA. These grants, previously allocated through separate methodologies, are now expected to be rolled into the RSG. Analysis indicates this change could result in a adverse financial impact for Plymouth, estimated at £12.8m, due to the loss of targeted funding that previously reflected local need more accurately.

Included within the existing Social Care grants was a partial equalisation mechanism against the social care precept. Under the proposed changes, when these grants are rolled into the SFA, equalisation would instead be applied on a needs-share basis. This change would remove the current equalisation effect, resulting in a funding loss of an estimated £12.4m, as the new formula does not compensate for Plymouth's relative inability to raise funds locally.

7 Financing the Council

The MTFs is based on the national and local economic context and local strategic direction. This table below sets out the Council's key funding assumptions, with percentages indicating the year-on-year changes. The resultant impact on the resources are set out in a later table.

Table 11: Key Assumptions

2025/26	Item	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
£1,932.55	Increase in Core Council Tax Charge	2.99%	2.99%	2.99%	2.99%
36.81	Increase in Adult Social Care Precept	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%
76,557	C. Tax Base (No. of Band D equivalents)	76,799	77,041	77,282	77,524
-	Collection Rate	97.50%	97.50%	97.50%	97.50%
49.9p	Increase in Small Business Rates Multiplier	1.70%	1.70%	1.70%	1.70%

Table 12: Core Resources Sensitivity Analysis

Sensitivity Analysis – Core Resources		2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
		£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Council Tax						
Current Assumption:						
Core Council Tax Increase (to current referendum limit)		2.99%	2.99%	2.99%	2.99%	2.99%
ASC Precept Council Tax Increase (to current referendum limit)		2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%
Sensitivity Analysis:						
Lost Council Tax if reduced:	-0.5%	(0.704)	(0.742)	(0.782)	(0.823)	(0.867)
	-1.0%	(1.409)	(1.484)	(1.563)	(1.646)	(1.734)
	-2.0%	(2.818)	(2.968)	(3.126)	(3.292)	(3.468)
Current Assumption:						
Growth in Council Tax Base (prior to adjs)		248	248	248	248	248
Sensitivity Analysis:						
Lost Council Tax if reduced:	-50	(0.094)	(0.099)	(0.104)	(0.109)	(0.114)
	-100	(0.188)	(0.199)	(0.208)	(0.218)	(0.228)
Additional Council Tax if increased:	+25	0.047	0.049	0.052	0.055	0.057
	+75	0.141	0.148	0.156	0.164	0.172
Current Assumption:						
Collection Rate		97.50%	97.50%	97.50%	97.50%	97.50%
Sensitivity Analysis:						
Reduction in income assumption if reduced:	-0.5%	(0.750)	(0.791)	(0.833)	(0.877)	(0.924)
	-1.0%	(1.502)	(1.581)	(1.666)	(1.754)	(1.848)
Business Rates						
Current Assumption:						
Inflation Multiplier Assumption		1.70%	1.70%	1.70%	1.70%	1.70%
Addl Business Rates if increased:	0.50%	0.406	0.410	0.415	0.419	0.422
	1.00%	0.811	0.821	0.830	0.837	0.844

7.1 Key Financial Planning Assumptions

Revenue Support Grant is expected to undergo significant reform under Fair Funding 2.0. Assumptions regarding future increases have been incorporated into the MTFS, based on analysis of the current proposals. However, the future structure of the Settlement Funding Assessment remains uncertain. It is possible that the RSG may subsume certain specific grants in future allocations; for the purposes of current modelling, these elements are presented separately for clarity.

Table 13: Potential Revenue Support Grant

MTFP 2025/26 to 2029/30	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Revenue Support Grant	(12.662)	(12.662)	(17.482)	(20.335)	(23.668)
Addn. Revenue Support Grant (from modelling)		(4.820)	(2.852)	(3.333)	
Inflationary Assumption - post-transition					(0.473)
Specific Grants Rolled in to Core Resources		(65.027)	(65.027)	(65.027)	(65.027)
Potential New Revenue Support Grant	(12.662)	(82.509)	(85.362)	(88.695)	(89.168)

< 3-year settlement period>

- Multi-year settlements to commence from 2026/27.
- Threshold for Council Tax increases will continue at 2.99% and a further 2% Adult Social Care precept modelled for all future years. The final decision on core Council Tax and ASC Precept changes will require Full Council approval as part of the annual budget setting.
- Uncertainty around the future of the Business Rates Retention Scheme, and other expected changes impacting on the Business Rates element of Core Resources. Modelling informed by support from external advisors currently maintains the status quo.
- Planning reflects expected increased costs in demand-led services; Children's Social Care, Adults Social Care, SEND and Homelessness
- Interest rate assumption for Treasury Management Forecasting: PWLB 4.5% all future years, Short Term Borrowing 4.00% 2026/27, 3.75% 2027/28 and 2028/29. Increasing the assumption for Short Term borrowing to 4.00% in all future years increases borrowing costs by approximately £0.480m annually.
- The MTFS has been prepared on the basis of the Letter of Assurance received from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG, previously Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) in February 2024, regarding the accounting treatment of the Council's pension arrears from 2019/20. Engagement with MHCLG has been continuing and the working assumption remains that a Capitalisation Direction will be granted from 2025/26, with the associated MRP charges commencing from 2026/27.
- The MTFS does not include any assumptions regarding future changes in funding or expenditure arising from Local Government Reorganisation, as there are currently no known implications.

7.2 Income Collection

The 2026/27 revenue budget and MTFS assumptions are based on achieving the collection targets as set out. These targets and levels of bad debt provisions are kept under regular review by the Section 151 Officer.

Table 14: Debt collection rates 2024/25

Type of debt	Actual 2024/25 %	Target %
Council Tax	96.4	97.5
Business Rates	98.7	97.5
Sundry Debt	96.3	97.5

7.3 Right-sizing the Budget

Only material cost pressures have been explicitly detailed in the MTFS on the basis that service departments will generally manage increased demand and inflationary impacts through proactive measures and operational efficiencies within their existing budgets. Any future funding allocations must be supported by a robust business case and approved by as part of the final budget setting process.

Some assumptions from the previous MTFS, which were reflected in last year's approved budget, now require ongoing resources. These include provisions for salary-related cost increases and the reversal of one-off savings or expenditure allocations from prior years. In addition, there are corporate commitments that are not attributable to individual directorates and must be accounted for centrally.

Table 15: “Right-sizing the budget” adjustments

Additional Costs – right-sizing the budget	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Salary related costs	3.630	3.733	3.845	3.960
Treasury Management: add'n net borrowing costs	2.726	2.931	4.986	-
RCCO/s106 swap phased reduction	-	0.980	0.900	0.210
Replenish Reserves	0.543	0.548	0.554	0.559
Total	6.898	8.192	10.284	4.729

7.4 Salary Related Costs

The NJC Pay Award for 2025/26 has been confirmed as a 3.2% increase across all scale points, resulting in an additional cost of £0.186m above the budgeted 3% uplift. This variance has been reflected in the MTFS assumptions for 2026/27, with a further 3% pay award modelled for all subsequent years.

At present, there are no other known changes to salary costs. However, any announcements made in the Autumn Budget will be reviewed and incorporated into future iterations of the MTFS as appropriate

7.5 RCCO/s106 swap phased reduction

Planning obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), commonly known as S106 agreements, are a mechanism which make a development proposal acceptable in planning terms, that would not otherwise be acceptable. In previous years, in order to bridge the budget funding gap, monies have been borrowed from s106, and adjustments will be made over 3 years from 2027/28 to rebalance this budget.

7.6 Replenish reserves

To balance prior year budgets and manage in-year financial pressures, the Council has drawn on reserves where necessary. The MTFS now includes a commitment to replenish reserves annually by 1% of the total value of usable reserves. Strengthening reserves enhances the Council's financial resilience, enabling it to better manage unforeseen risks and funding volatility. Reserves also support medium-term financial planning, provide flexibility to invest in transformation and service redesign, and help smooth budget pressures without immediate service reductions. Maintaining adequate reserves ensures compliance with statutory requirements and supports corporate priorities that may not sit within individual directorate budgets.

7.7 Treasury Management

Revenue impact modelling for borrowing incorporates all known costs, including fixed charges from existing long-term borrowing, the cost of refinancing maturing long-term debt, and a range of interest rate scenarios for both Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) and short-term borrowing with other local authorities. The modelling also profiles the costs of funding the capital programme and includes assumptions for interest receivable from investments.

As outlined in section 6.2 above, this year's modelling identifies, for the first time, a separate revenue impact arising from the requirement to fund DSG deficits – reflecting the growing scale and significance of the pressure, and ensuring it is managed transparently and effectively.

7.8 One-off 'roll-in' of Specific Grant Funding

As outlined earlier in the report, proposals under Fair Funding 2.0 include the integration of several large specific grants, primarily Social Care Grants, into the SFA. As these grants will become part of the Council's 'Core Resources', a one-off budget adjustment is required to remove the associated income lines from the Directorate budgets where they are currently held. This adjustment is net neutral, as core funding will increase by an equivalent amount.

The relevant grants are listed below. It should be noted that while the New Homes Bonus is included in the table, it is ceasing permanently; however, the associated income budget must still be removed. The Recovery Grant was received as a one-off in 2025/26 and, although not yet confirmed for inclusion in the SFA, current modelling assumes it will be rolled in.

Table 16: Specific Grants 'roll-in'

Specific Grants	£m	Existing Budget Area
Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund	5.618	ASC/Corporate
Social Care Grant	33.789	ASC/Corporate
New Homes Bonus (ceasing)	0.030	Growth
Local Better Care Grant	15.955	ASC/Corporate
Temporary Accommodation element of HPG	0.979	Community Connections
Recovery Grant	6.592	Corporate
Employer NIC compensation grant	2.063	Corporate
Total	65.027	

8 Demand-Led Pressures

In addition to the pressures already outlined, the Council must consider a range of demand-led cost pressures relating to services where expenditure is driven by levels of need, which can fluctuate due to demographic changes, policy shifts, or external factors.

The MTFS includes assumptions for increased budget requirements within these demand-led services, informed by detailed cost and volume analysis. This analysis draws on current demand data, historic trends, and forecasts of future service needs. These assumptions are critical to ensure the Council can plan effectively for future financial sustainability while maintaining service delivery standards.

Table 17: Demand-led budget pressures

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Budget Pressure	£m	£m	£m	£m
Adult Social Care Fee Uplifts (NLW & Inflation)	5.473	5.010	4.866	4.425
Adult Social Care Demand	5.701	3.655	3.669	3.655
Homelessness	1.130	0.506	0.207	0.207
Children's Social Care	6.193	4.869	5.252	5.669
Home to School Transport	2.601	3.003	2.746	2.698
SEND - DSG deficit financing cost	2.774	2.369	3.014	-
Total	23.872	19.412	19.754	16.654

Plymouth is not alone in facing significant budgetary pressures across key service areas such as social care, homelessness, and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). These challenges are being experienced by councils across the country, driven by rising demand, increasing complexity of need, and constrained levels of funding.

Further detail is provided later in this document regarding the Council's new Prevention First Strategy, which will be delivered through the City Help and Support programme. This strategic approach is designed to reduce demand on high-cost services over the longer term by focusing on early intervention, targeted support, and improved access to preventative services.

The strategy represents a fundamental shift in how the Council responds to need, aiming to address issues before they escalate into crisis. By embedding prevention at the heart of service delivery, the Council seeks to reduce reliance on temporary accommodation, statutory social care interventions, and other reactive services, ultimately supporting better outcomes for residents and improving financial sustainability.

8.1 ASC Fee Uplifts: National Living Wage

The Council remains committed to passing on the additional costs associated with increases to the National Living Wage (NLW) to Adult Social Care providers. The NLW rate announced for April 2025 is £12.21 per hour. For 2026/27, the current modelled rate, based on projections from the Low Pay Commission, is £12.80 per hour.

While the NLW rate for April 2026 has not yet been confirmed, the MTFs will be updated to reflect any changes once announced. For modelling purposes, future NLW assumptions are based on recent trends and guidance from the Low Pay Commission, although final rates will be determined by Central Government.

Table 18: National Living Wage Assumptions

Adult Social Care - NLW (Fee Uplift)	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
NLW Assumption Rate £/hour	£12.21	£12.80	£13.42	£14.00	£14.50

To illustrate the financial impact of National Living Wage (NLW) increases, a 20 pence rise in the hourly rate would result in an additional budget requirement of approximately £1.327m. This highlights the sensitivity of Adult Social Care commissioning costs to even modest changes in wage rates.

8.2 ASC Fee Uplifts: Inflationary Uplifts to Care Providers

Decisions regarding fee uplifts to Adult Social Care providers consider both the impact of National Living Wage increases and broader inflationary pressures. For modelling purposes, it is assumed that approximately 70% of care costs relate to staffing, with the remaining 30% attributed to non-staff costs. This split enables a more accurate assessment of the financial impact of wage and inflation changes on provider fees.

Table 19: ASC Inflationary Assumptions

Adult Social Care - Inflation (Fee Uplift)	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Inflation assumption %	1.93%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%
Application to Fees - Staffing 30%	0.58%	0.60%	0.60%	0.60%

To illustrate the sensitivity of these assumptions, a 2% increase in inflation applied to the non-staff cost element would require an additional £0.694m in funding. This highlights the importance of maintaining robust modelling to ensure provider sustainability and continued service delivery in the face of rising costs.

8.3 ASC – Demand

Separating inflationary pressures from those arising due to increased demand and complexity of need provides greater transparency in understanding the overall budgetary requirements.

As of the latest data, 3,907 adults are in the care of Plymouth City Council. Within the modelled budget increase, there are significant cost pressure from the growth in client numbers and average hours of care provided per person as well as increased 'cost complexity', reflecting rising care needs driving higher costs outside of standard fee rate uplifts. This includes more intensive support packages and specialist interventions required to meet individual needs.

The Directorate maintains an ongoing programme of work focused on understanding, managing, and controlling costs across Adult Social Care services. This includes exploring innovative approaches to service delivery, improving operational efficiency, and identifying opportunities for transformation. The aim is to ensure that resources are used effectively while maintaining high standards of care.

At the heart of this work is a commitment to safeguarding the wellbeing of vulnerable adults. The Directorate continues to prioritise the delivery of appropriate and personalised care, ensuring that individuals receive the support they need in a way that is both financially sustainable and aligned with statutory responsibilities.

8.4 Homelessness

Demand for temporary accommodation continues to be a significant driver of budgetary pressure, influenced by a range of factors including evictions from the private rented sector, the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, and a shortage of affordable housing. The limited availability of suitable long-term housing options means individuals and families are remaining in temporary placements for extended periods. These placements are often high-cost and not always appropriate for the needs of those being housed. In addition, councils are experiencing rising caseloads due to expanded statutory duties, with many individuals presenting with complex needs such as mental health challenges, domestic abuse, or substance misuse, which further increases service demand and cost.

Financial modelling within the MTFS reflects current levels of demand and known service interventions. It also incorporates assumptions for inflationary increases in the rates paid for nightly accommodation. The service continues to implement targeted measures to reduce costs where possible, but the sustained growth in the number of eligible households presents an ongoing challenge.

8.5 Children's Social Care – Inflation and Demand

Children's Social Care in Plymouth continues to experience financial pressures due to rising demand and increasing placement costs. The number of children in residential care has exceeded planned levels, and some placements are now costing over £10,000 per week, significantly higher than budgeted. Unregistered placements, which often require intensive staffing arrangements such as 2:1 or 4:1 agency support, are also above expected levels. While some of these cases receive partial funding from Health partners, the overall financial impact remains considerable and requires close monitoring.

Positively, there has been a reduction in the number of children placed with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs), resulting in cost savings. This has been matched by growth in the Council's in-house fostering provision, which is more sustainable and cost-effective. However, overall there has been a shift away from fostering towards more expensive residential placements, reflecting a national shortage of foster carers and associated changes in placement patterns.

The cost and volume modelling within the MTFS reflects current levels of demand and includes assumptions for future growth. These projections are based on historical trends, service data, and anticipated changes in

need. However, it is important to note that these figures represent only one part of the picture. Alongside this modelling, the Directorate is actively progressing a number of strategic workstreams aimed at reducing demand and improving service efficiency.

These initiatives focus on transforming how services are delivered, identifying earlier interventions, and promoting more sustainable models of care. The overarching goal is to manage financial pressures while continuing to safeguard and support vulnerable children and young people. This approach ensures that resources are targeted effectively, and that the right support is provided at the right time, without compromising on quality or safety.

8.6 SEND – Financing the DSG Deficit

As highlighted earlier in this report, rising demand is placing pressure on the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). While councils are currently permitted to exclude DSG deficits from their main balance sheets under a temporary accounting provision known as the “statutory override,” this measure has only been extended until March 2028.

The revenue impact of borrowing costs required to fund this unfunded expenditure is included in the MTFS and flagged as a future financial pressure. This ensures transparency around the long-term implications of the deficit and provides for the continuation of associated financing beyond the statutory override period.

8.7 Home to School Transport

Pressures on the High Needs and SEND budgets are directly impacting the revenue-funded Home to School Transport service. The Council has a statutory duty to provide transport for pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), subject to assessment. Increasing numbers of pupils with EHCPs, combined with a shortage of places in special schools within the city, have led to greater reliance on independent sector placements located further away. This is driving up both the volume and cost of transport provision.

Modelling within the MTFS reflects projected growth in specialist placements and includes an annual inflationary uplift of 3% to account for rising costs from transport providers. The service continues to implement targeted route planning and efficiency measures to manage costs. However, the growing number of eligible pupils presents an ongoing challenge.

9 The Council's Reserves

The Council has established a number of specific reserves and provisions to support the planning and management of known and anticipated future revenue costs. These reserves play a key role in ensuring financial resilience and enabling the Council to respond to emerging pressures in a controlled and sustainable manner.

The appropriateness and use of these reserves are reviewed regularly throughout the financial year, with a formal review of all specific reserves undertaken annually as part of the year-end accounting closedown process. This ensures that reserves remain aligned with strategic priorities and are used effectively to support the Council's financial strategy.

As previously noted, the Council's financial strategy includes a commitment to replenish usable reserves, which have been drawn upon in recent years to support the balancing of budgets and address in-year financial pressures.

9.1 Unusable Reserves

The Council holds a number of unusable reserves on its Balance Sheet, which are not available to support day-to-day spending. These reserves are maintained either to comply with statutory requirements or to reflect proper accounting practice. The largest of these is the Asset Revaluation Reserve, currently valued at £378.263m. This reserve records gains arising from increases in the value of the Council's Property, Plant and Equipment and ensures that asset revaluations are accounted for separately from usable resources.

Other unusable reserves include the Pensions Reserve, which reflects the accounting valuation of the Council's pension liabilities. This reserve absorbs timing differences between the recognition of post-employment benefits in the accounts and the actual funding of those benefits in line with statutory provisions. While these reserves do not impact the Council's cash position, they are essential for presenting a true and fair view of the Council's financial standing in accordance with accounting standards.

Table 20: Unusable Reserves

Analysis of Reserves	31 March 2025
Unusable Reserves:	£m
Revaluation Reserve	378.263
Capital Adjustment Account	125.980
Financial Instruments Adjustments Account	(23.572)
Pensions Reserve	(75.575)
Collection Fund Adjustment Account	(1.047)
Accumulating Compensated Absences Adjustment Account	(3.369)
Deferred Capital Receipts	0.316
Pooled Investment Fund Adjustment Account	(1.560)
DSG Deficit Account	(18.498)
Total Unusable Reserves	380.938

9.2 Usable Reserves

The Council also holds a number of Usable Reserves, which are those reserves that can be applied to support service delivery, subject to maintaining a prudent level of reserves and complying with any statutory restrictions on their use. These reserves provide flexibility in managing financial pressures and supporting strategic priorities. For example, the Capital Receipts Reserve may only be used to fund capital expenditure or repay debt, and, subject to Council approval, may also be used to finance transformation projects.

Regular review and careful management of usable reserves are essential to ensure they remain aligned with the Council's financial strategy and are available to support both planned investment and unforeseen pressures. Their use is governed by financial regulations and forms a key part of the Council's approach to maintaining financial sustainability.

Table 21: Reserve held at end of 2024/25

Reserves Analysis	31 March 2025
	£m
General Fund Balance (Working Balance)	11.862
Earmarked General Fund Reserves	60.784
Capital Receipts Reserve	15.792
Capital Grants and Contributions Unapplied	37.823
Total Usable Reserves	126.261
Total Unusable Reserves	380.938
Total Reserves	507.199

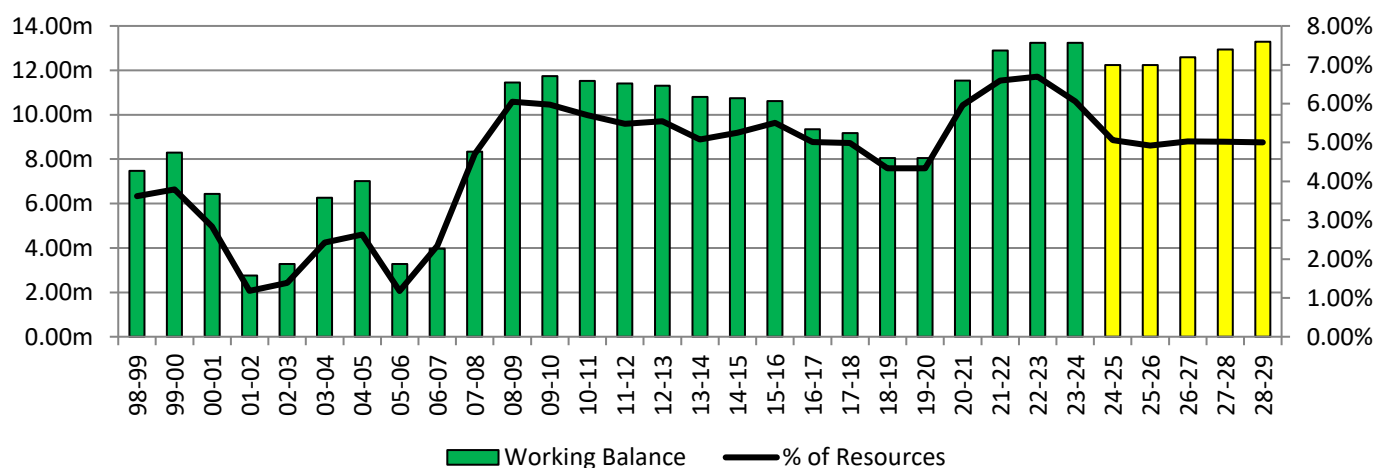
9.3 General Fund Balance (Working Balance)

The Council's Working Balance is a core revenue reserve held to mitigate significant business risks and unforeseen financial pressures. The target minimum level for the Working Balance is set at 5% of the net revenue budget.

In 2024/25, it was possible to retrospectively apply additional funding, no longer required within the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP), to the Working Balance. This followed the reclassification of a transaction previously treated as capital, which was restated as revenue, thereby releasing the associated provision.

As a result, £3.494m was retrospectively added to the Working Balance for 2020/21, and a further £1.000m for 2021/22. These adjustments increased the Working Balance to £11.862m by the end of 2024/25, representing 4.9% of the net revenue budget for that year.

Graph 2: Working Balance Levels – prior to SFA changes



However, the 5% target will need to be reviewed if the proposed changes under the Fair Funding 2.0 are implemented. In particular, the roll-in of £65.027m of specific grants into the SFA, rather than including them within service revenue budgets, would significantly increase the reported net revenue budget. While this adjustment does not affect the overall level of financing, it does alter the basis of reporting. Current modelling indicates that the SFA could rise to approximately £323.404m (from £253.418m), meaning the current working balance would represent just 3.7% of the new total.

One option for consideration is to maintain a 3.7% target throughout the three-year Fair Funding 2.0 transition period, then gradually increase this to 5% over the following five years. Estimated annual increases

required for a 3.7% interim target would be £0.427m in 2027/28, £0.484m in 2028/29, and potentially £0.657m in 2029/30.

This approach will be further developed and confirmed in a revised Reserves Strategy, which will be developed over the coming weeks alongside an updated MTFP, to be issued with and accompany the 2026/27 Budget.

9.4 Earmarked General Fund Reserves

Earmarked reserves are set aside to provide financing for future expenditure plans and policy initiatives. The main earmarked reserves and their purposes are outlined below:

- **Education Carry Forwards:**

These reserves are held on behalf of various educational establishments operating under devolved budget arrangements. Surpluses or deficits generated by these establishments are carried forward to the following financial year, ensuring continuity and financial stability for individual schools and educational settings.

- **School Budget Share:**

This reserve represents unspent balances at year-end against schools' delegated budgets. As at 31 March 2025, the balance relating to the school budget share was £2.691m (compared to £3.149m at 31 March 2024). These funds are retained to support future school expenditure and to manage fluctuations in funding or costs.

- **Collection Fund Reserve:**

The Collection Fund Reserve is used to smooth the impact of fluctuations in grant funding for Business Rates and Council Tax across multiple financial years. This helps to manage volatility and provides greater certainty for budget planning.

- **Interest Rate Swap Reserve:**

This reserve holds gains arising from fair value movements in interest rate swaps. As these swaps approach maturity, the gains will reverse over time. Our current policy is to hold this reserve so that it is not available to finance revenue expenditure whilst the Council continues to hold interest rate swaps, but is instead held to manage the accounting impact of these financial instruments.

10 Capital Budget and Programme

Planned capital expenditure and its associated financing are set out in the budget report approved by Council in February 2025. Any amendments to the capital programme are subject to quarterly approval by Council, ensuring ongoing oversight and alignment with strategic priorities. A fully updated capital programme will be prepared for Council approval in February 2026. In the interim, the programme will be regularly reviewed and re-profiled to reflect changes in inflation, interest rates, and emerging service priorities.

At the end of the first quarter of 2025/26, the amended Capital Programme for the five-year period to 2029/30 stands at £351.063m.

Funding for the Capital Programme is comprised of four main sources:

- Grant funding from external organisations, primarily government departments, totalling £121.848m (34.7%)

- Service-funded borrowing, where departments fund the cost of borrowing, amounting to £106.495m (30.3%)
- Corporate-funded borrowing, supported by central resources, contributing £87.217m (24.8%)
- Other funding sources, including:
 - Capital receipts from the sale of assets: £20.813m (5.9%)
 - Third-party contributions, mainly from developers: £14.690m (4.3%)

Together, these sources ensure a balanced and sustainable approach to financing the Council's capital investment.

The Council remains committed to a carefully managed capital investment programme. We will continue to work with partners to support the city's regeneration, contributing to improvements and supporting local employment opportunities, such as in the construction sector. However, we recognise the need to balance ambition with financial sustainability and will ensure that all capital investments are subject to robust appraisal and risk assessment. Our focus will be on maximising outcomes and delivering revenue savings wherever possible, for example, by supporting business growth and new housing to increase business rates and Council Tax income, while remaining responsive to changing economic conditions and emerging risks.

Table 22: Capital Programme 2025/26 to 2029/30 by Directorate

Directorate	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	
Children's Services	4.474	0.075	-	-	-	4.549
Adults, Health and Communities	15.412	11.038	1.903	-	-	28.353
Growth - Economic Development	60.619	57.765	33.025	12.427	0.008	163.844
Growth - Strategic Planning & Infrastructure	79.105	30.764	6.216	9.225	0.275	125.585
Growth - Street Services	15.482	6.403	0.242	0.212	0.247	22.586
Customer & Corporate Services	3.185	2.044	0.28	0.101	-	5.61
Office for Director of Public Health	0.536	-	-	-	-	0.536
Total	178.813	108.089	41.666	21.965	0.530	351.063

Table 23: Capital Programme Financing – 2025/26 to 2029/30

Financed by:	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	
Capital receipts	11.106	3.914	1.196	4.589	0.008	20.813
Grant funding	80.149	28.817	12.394	0.193	0.295	121.848
Corporate funded borrowing	44.936	25.992	10.965	5.324	-	87.217
Service dept. supported borrowing	38.012	40.667	16.095	11.494	0.227	106.495
Developer contributions	2.477	8.686	1.016	0.102	-	12.281
Other Contributions	2.133	0.013	-	0.263	-	2.409
Total	178.813	108.089	41.666	21.965	0.530	351.063

Officers will continue to take a proactive approach to securing external grant funding wherever possible, supporting the delivery of significant and ambitious capital investment in the city. The capital budget will be updated regularly as further details of funding become available, ensuring that investment decisions remain responsive to changing circumstances.

All projects seeking funding through service borrowing must adhere to the principle of 'Invest to Save'. Business cases will be required to demonstrate, through robust financial modelling and discounted cash flow analysis, that any borrowing can be repaid from the net revenue benefits generated by the investment. This approach ensures that borrowing is only undertaken where there is clear evidence of affordability and value for money, and that risks to the Council's financial position are carefully managed.

11 Key Financial Strategies

11.1 Treasury Management

The Council's Treasury Management practices, principles, and schedules are designed to ensure full compliance with the approved Treasury Management Policy and Strategy. These working practices are reviewed annually and underpin the Council's approach to managing borrowing costs and investment returns, both of which have a direct impact on the Council's budget. The Treasury Management Strategy sets out the authorised limits and operational boundaries within which all investment and borrowing decisions are made, ensuring that risks are identified, monitored, and managed appropriately. Effective treasury management is essential to supporting the Council's business and service objectives, while safeguarding its financial position.

There is regular engagement with the Council's Treasury Management advisors, Arlingclose, whose independent advice is sought on both strategic direction and key operational decisions. This external scrutiny helps ensure that the Council's approach remains prudent and responsive to changing market conditions.

Full Council receives regular reports on Treasury and Investment Management policies, practices, and activities. As a minimum, this includes an annual strategy and plan before the start of the year, a mid-year review, and an annual report after year-end. This robust reporting framework ensures transparency, accountability, and ongoing oversight of treasury activities

11.2 Borrowing Limits

The Council must have full regard to the Prudential Code when setting its Authorised Borrowing Limit. The Prudential Code, published by CIPFA, establishes a framework of self-regulation for local authority capital financing, ensuring that borrowing and investment decisions are affordable, prudent, and sustainable. In setting the Authorised Borrowing Limit, the Council considers current and future capital financing requirements, revenue implications, and the risks associated with changes in interest rates and economic conditions.

This approach ensures that the Council's borrowing remains within safe and manageable limits, and that all decisions are subject to robust scrutiny and regular review. The Authorised Borrowing Limit is reviewed annually as part of the Treasury Management Strategy, and may be revised in-year if circumstances require, to ensure ongoing compliance with the Prudential Code and to safeguard the Council's financial resilience.

11.3 Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy

The Council is required to set aside funding each year from its revenue budget to provide for the repayment of loans used to finance capital expenditure. This is governed by the Government's Capital Financing Regulations, which place a statutory duty on local authorities to make a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) that is considered 'prudent'.

A prudent MRP ensures that debt is repaid over a period that is reasonably aligned with the useful life of the assets funded by the borrowing. This approach supports long-term financial sustainability by avoiding undue pressure on future budgets and ensuring that the cost of capital investment is fairly spread across the generations that benefit from it. The Council reviews its MRP policy annually as part of the Treasury Management Strategy, taking into account changes in regulation, asset life, and financial risk.

11.4 Flexible use of Capital Receipts

A Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy was submitted to Council as part of the 2025/26 budget process. This strategy enables the Council to support more efficient and sustainable service delivery by allowing up to 100% of eligible fixed asset receipts (excluding Right to Buy receipts) to be used to fund the revenue costs of transformation projects, rather than being restricted solely to new capital investment.

The use of this flexibility is subject to strict government guidance and local governance arrangements, ensuring that any application of capital receipts is carefully assessed for value for money and long-term financial sustainability. All proposals for the flexible use of capital receipts are subject to robust business case approval and regular monitoring, to ensure that the Council's financial position remains secure and that transformation projects deliver the intended benefits.

12 Financial outlook for 2026/27 and after

There remains uncertainty as we prepare for 2026/27 and update our assumptions for the MTFS period.

As previously reported, the proposed changes arising from the Fair Funding 2.0 have been analysed, and the current working assumption is for an increase in funding through the SFA. This position could change materially should the proposals regarding the incorporation of specific grants be amended.

Similarly, changes to the Business Rates Retention Scheme have yet to be confirmed. In line with external advice, the MTFS currently assumes a continuation of the existing arrangements.

It is confirmed that 2026/27 will be the first year of a multi-year settlement. While the practical implications of this approach are yet to be fully understood, it is anticipated that a multi-year settlement will provide greater certainty and support more effective financial planning and decision-making.

This uncertainty is compounded by the continuing and escalating demand pressures across key service areas, including adult social care, homelessness, and SEND. These challenges are further intensified by inflationary cost increases, elevated interest rates, and the ongoing impact of the cost-of-living crisis.

The table below sets out the current overall position for 2026/27 onwards, which shows the Council is still required to achieve savings of £13.657m to be able to balance the 2026/27 budget. This savings target has been accepted across the organisation, and all directorates are actively working on proposals to address this requirement.

Table 24: Summary Medium-Term Financial Strategy

MTFP 2025/26 to 2029/30	2026/27 original	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Core Resources	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Total Core Resources	(322.990)	(325.119)	(336.731)	(349.487)	(359.861)
brought forward budget requirement <i>(rebased)</i>	318.445	318.445	325.119	336.731	349.487
Demand-Led Pressures	8.216	23.872	19.412	19.754	16.654
Adult Social Care Fee Uplifts (NLW & Inflation)	4.000	5.473	5.010	4.866	4.425
Adult Social Care Demand	4.000	5.701	3.655	3.669	3.655
Homelessness	-	1.130	0.506	0.207	0.207
Children's Social Care	0.216	6.193	4.869	5.252	5.669
Home to School Transport	-	2.601	3.003	2.746	2.698
SEND - DSG deficit financing cost	-	2.774	2.369	3.014	-
Required Budget Adjustments	6.996	6.898	8.192	10.284	4.729
Salary Costs - Pay Award	4.080	3.630	3.733	3.845	3.960
Treasury Management	2.416	2.726	2.931	4.986	-
RCCO Swap phased reduction - to nil by 2029/30	-	-	0.980	0.900	0.210
Replenish Reserves	0.500	0.543	0.548	0.554	0.559
Savings	(6.437)	(17.523)	-	-	-
Other Growth Asks	3.767	7.084	-	-	-
Total Additional Costs/Savings	12.542	20.332	27.604	30.039	21.383
Total Budget Requirement	330.987	338.777	352.723	366.769	370.871
Total Core Resources	(322.990)	(325.119)	(336.731)	(349.487)	(359.861)
Indicative Gap	7.997	13.657	15.993	17.282	11.010
Cumulative Gap	7.997	13.657	29.650	46.932	57.942

12.1 Core Resources

The key assumptions underpinning Core Resources are set out within this document.

These include assumptions based on analysis of the Fair Funding 2.0 proposals; however, no confirmation of individual allocations has been received at this stage.

Table 25: Core Resources 2025/26 – 2029/30

MTFP 2025/26 to 2029/30	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Core Resources	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Revenue Support Grant	(12.662)	(12.662)	(17.482)	(20.335)	(23.668)
Addn. Revenue Support Grant (from modelling)	-	(4.820)	(2.852)	(3.333)	(0.473)
Council Tax	(149.450)	(155.824)	(164.115)	(172.843)	(182.036)
Business Rates	(86.584)	(86.786)	(87.254)	(87.949)	(88.656)
Reserves	(4.722)	-	-	-	-
Specific Grants Rolled in to Core Resources	-	(65.027)	(65.027)	(65.027)	(65.027)
Total Core Resources	(253.418)	(325.119)	(336.731)	(349.487)	(359.860)

12.2 Additional Income

In previous years, the modelling included separate assumptions for increases to social care grant funding. As these grants are now incorporated within core resources, no separate assumptions for increases have been made.

The planned use of capital receipts to fund transformation projects will be detailed in the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Statement for 2026/27, which will accompany the budget paper.

12.3 Savings Proposals

Directorates have been developing evidenced savings proposals for 2026/27 to support the budget and will continue this work throughout the year as part of the budget-setting process. These proposals build on the work undertaken for the 2025/26 budget, with further targeted savings required to help close the gap between projected income and the additional budgetary growth needed to meet service demands. The total figures assumed for savings within the MTFS are shown in the table shown below.

Table 26: Summary of savings proposals included with MTFS

Savings	2026/27 £m
Operating Models / staffing changes	(4.785)
Consolidate existing vacancies	(0.145)
Partner contributions / contract management	(1.775)
Demand management	(7.809)
Budget adjustments	0.487
Fees and Charges / additional income	(2.696)
One-off reserves	(0.800)
Total	(17.523)

13 Closing the financial gap and Medium-Term Financial Strategy

The MTFS identifies a budget shortfall in 2026/27, which is projected to increase over the remainder of the strategy period. Plymouth has a strong track record of taking an ambitious and forward-thinking approach to managing financial challenges. However, with the potential for the Fair Funding 2.0 to deliver less additional benefit than initially anticipated, and with demand pressures continuing across key services, it is important to take a longer-term view.

Given that funding is not increasing at the same pace as demand, the Council will need to explore sustainable approaches to managing and reducing demand over time. This will require close collaboration with partners and a continued focus on improving outcomes for the people of Plymouth.

Recent commercial ventures include the Plymouth and South Devon Freeport Company, a public-private partnership established in 2022 after our successful bid to host one of England's eight freeports. Another major initiative is the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park, established as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) to create the UK's first National Marine Park.

Delt Shared Services Ltd was founded in 2014 by Plymouth City Council and NHS Devon to run IT services for both partners. Since its creation Delt has grown from revenues of around £9m pa to revenues of over £25m pa, and employment in Delt has grown from a headcount of 95 to around 250 currently. Delt has also broadened the range of services it provides from IT to payroll, printing, facilities management, procurement and finance, to public sector clients in Plymouth and the wider Southwest.

We have also undertaken end to end reviews of services, such as Street Services to maximise efficiency and to help create new income streams generating a gross benefit of over £1.5m pa through commercial offers for waste services.

13.1 Prevention First Approach

Plymouth City Council is taking a bold and proactive stance in reshaping how we respond to rising demand across our services. The financial pressures we face - particularly in children's and adult social care, temporary accommodation, and SEND provision - require more than short-term fixes. They demand a fundamental shift in how we operate. Our "Prevention First" approach is not just a programme; it is a commitment to embed prevention at the heart of everything we do. It recognises that early intervention, smarter service design, and targeted support are essential to reversing the trajectory of demand and securing long-term financial sustainability.

This approach builds on the work already underway across the Council. Our transformation journey is one of adaptation, learning, and development, shaped by increasing demand, ambitious goals, and the realities of reduced funding. Our business plans and savings initiatives are not simply about cost reduction, they are about shifting our cost base and laying the foundations for future delivery. At the service level, we are driving efficiency, reducing waste, and seek to increase income generation. At the same time, we are investing in the organisational capabilities needed to enable transformation, including new data and insight tools, digital platforms, and integrated working models.

While the Fair Funding Review is expected to deliver additional resources, early modelling suggests it will not be sufficient to fully address the scale of demand pressures we face. This reinforces the need for the council to adopt a long-term, strategic approach to managing demand on statutory services, ensuring that every intervention is targeted, preventative, and financially sustainable. Delivery against these challenges requires a clear alignment of near-term actions with longer-term pathways towards systemic change. The City Help & Support programme exemplifies this shift, bringing together cross-functional teams to deliver outcomes that reduce reliance on high-cost, crisis-driven services. By understanding the key drivers for

change and connecting operational delivery with strategic ambition, our Prevention First approach will enable a more sustainable financial future.

1

Reducing Placement Costs

Targeted action is being taken now in areas where demand is growing fastest. In Adult Social Care, transformation programmes are expanding reablement, community outreach, and exploring technology-enabled care to reduce long-term dependency and promote independence. Alongside this, we are strengthening sufficiency planning for children's placements, expanding SEND provision, and increasing temporary accommodation to address homelessness.

2

Enabling Our Organisation To Change

We are investing in the tools and capabilities that enable smarter working - particularly in data, insight, and digital and AI-enabled infrastructure. This transformation is helping us to make better decisions, improve customer experience, and embed a culture of continuous improvement across the organisation, ensuring we are fit for the future.

3

City Help & Support Programme

This programme is the cornerstone of our prevention-first strategy. It brings together multi-disciplinary teams to deliver early help and targeted support, reducing the need for costly statutory interventions. By rebalancing resources and focusing on long-term outcomes, the programme is helping to reshape how we deliver services and achieve lasting financial benefits.

4

Service-Level Delivery

We are improving operational efficiency across all directorates by streamlining processes, reducing duplication, and ensuring services are delivered right first time. Commercial opportunities are being explored to maximise income, while business plans are focused on reshaping the cost base to support long-term sustainability.

13.2 Reducing Placement Costs

The Council is focused on managing demand for services in areas of high need, while seeking to provide long-term, sustainable support.

- **Children's Homes – Residential and Short Breaks:** The “Family Homes for Plymouth Children” program envisions Plymouth City Council as a direct provider of residential care for children. The proposal includes three core elements:
 - A hub for short residential breaks for children with complex health needs and disabilities.
 - Residential care options with a “circuit break” component for children in care.
 - Dedicated residential services for children with complex emotional and behavioural needs, developed in partnership with the ICB.
- **Homelessness Provision:** Demand remains high, but our emphasis on early intervention and “front door” prevention has helped manage some pressures. We delivered 27 new units in 2024/25 and anticipate delivering an additional 114 units in 2025/26. We are also exploring partnerships with organisations such as BCHA and PCH to increase available temporary accommodations.
- **Adult Social Care Provision:** The new Meadow View facility, expected summer 2026, will expand day and respite services, reducing the need for high-cost out-of-area placements. Additionally, our Housing Needs Assessment has identified ways to support people who may provide Adult Social Care services within the community.
- **Children's SEND Provision:** Plymouth has seen a 9.6% increase in children with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) since 2022/23, reflecting a national trend. With the SEND Sufficiency Plan approved in September 2024, we aim to expand and reconfigure our special educational estate, reduce reliance on costly independent placements, and strengthen mainstream schools' capacity to serve specialist needs and improve inclusion, in line with national reforms and the revised Ofsted framework. Key next steps include deploying the project team to assessing site viability, and establish timelines for feasibility and procurement. The site viability will consider meeting children's high level and complex needs, through specialist provision as satellites along mainstream schools, resourced provision for children who may need additional support alongside mainstream education and targeted support to ensure children's needs are met at the earliest opportunity to avoid costly intervention at a later stage.

13.3 Enabling Our Organisation to Change

The Council's transformation efforts are designed to create a leaner, more agile organisation that operates efficiently. Day to day efforts across our Directorate teams are focussed on delivery of services, realisation of business plans and in-year achieving savings initiatives – driving efficiency, reducing waste through getting the basics right, and first time, and reducing costs.

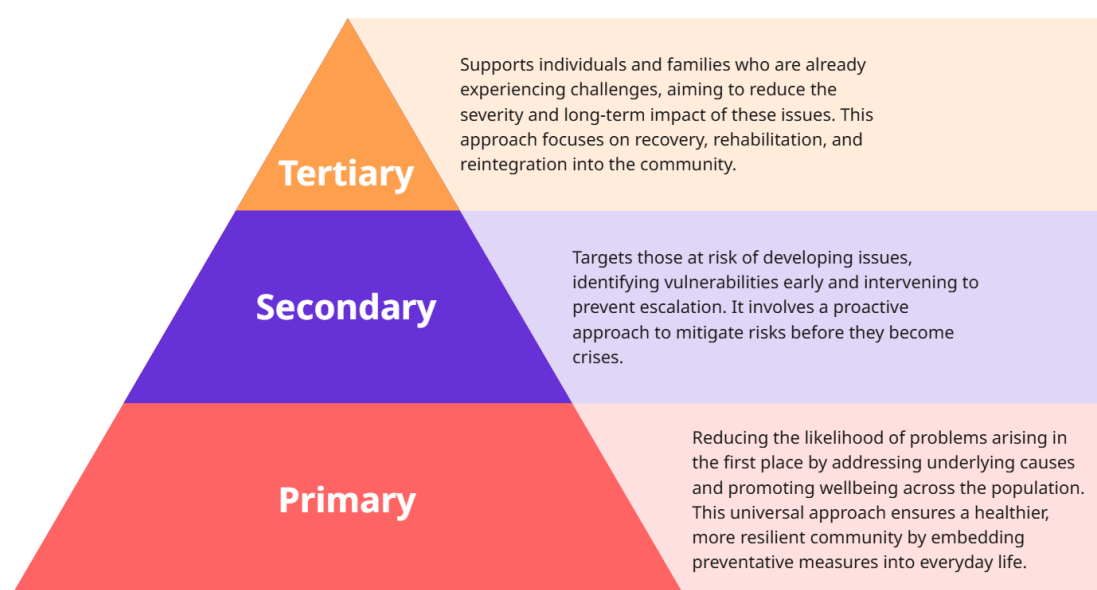
Organisational effectiveness is a critical driver of Plymouth City Council's success, ensuring that our operations deliver maximum impact. High-performing organisations consistently evaluate their operational efficiency, workforce performance, and leadership approaches. To support and challenge our continuous improvement journey, we have prioritised a series of strategic enabling initiatives designed to strengthen our capacity and enhance organisational capability:

- **Engagement:** A new approach to better understand our communities' needs and aspirations to better shape our services
- **Asset Management:** development of a new strategy to deliver a shared view of our asset portfolio enabling us to improve, identify opportunities to rationalise, divest and release.
- **Data, Insight & AI:** establishing a professional, organisation-wide capability delivering services that are evidence-based, allowing us to ‘work smarter’ and to achieve better outcomes for our residents

- **Digital & Customer Experience:** adopting a customer-first approach to service delivery, underpinned by smart use of digital and automated solutions, enabling us to better understand and meet customer needs consistently across all services.
- **Growth and Municipal Enterprise:** leveraging property and regeneration to ensure we support our wider delivery by seeking commercial revenue maximisation, particularly seeking new innovative ways to deliver increased income.

13.4 City Help & Support Programme






The City Help and Support programme is the transformational cornerstone of the Council's financial strategy, designed to deliver change that suppresses demand on expensive, crisis-driven statutory services. This is not a theoretical exercise, but a strategic investment in a new operating model. The programme will implement a tiered prevention framework to fundamentally rebalance resources away from late-stage interventions and towards early help. This will be delivered through a portfolio of cross-cutting prevention projects, alongside a specific workstream aiming to build capacity at the community level.



The programme's success hinges on a set of core enablers that will transform how the Council operates. A key pillar is the establishment of a new Data, Insight, and AI service to create a 'Single Citizen View'. This will provide rich, real-time intelligence, enabling staff to identify and support vulnerable residents before their needs escalate into crisis. Work focussed on localities will drive a shift from siloed departments to integrated, multi-disciplinary teams working directly in communities. This will be supported by a focus on asset management to ensure that community hubs and other physical assets are strategically aligned with the prevention-first approach.

Financially, the programme is built on the objective of achieving a significant, long-term reduction in overall expenditure through cost avoidance. This will be realised by reducing the reliance on high-cost placements and temporary accommodation for children in care and homeless individuals. The reinvestment of these savings will be a continuous cycle, with funds directed back into the preventative initiatives that demonstrate a clear return on investment.

Investment Objectives

	To improve the effectiveness of public services by shifting the Council's approach to early intervention and prevention.
	To improve the economy and efficiency of public services through cost reduction by reducing demand on high-cost services by 2030.
	To improve individual and community outcomes by increasing resilience and social capacity within local communities over a 10-year period.
	To improve staff efficiency and satisfaction by enabling cross-functional working, skills development, and the use of data and AI.
	To increase the effectiveness of service delivery by establishing new collaborative partnerships and empowering communities to lead on prevention by 2030.

The programme is working at pace, with the first projects expected to be implemented prior to the start of the 2026/27 financial period to deliver initial benefits in the first forecast year of the MFTS. We anticipate that more complex projects will be delivered throughout the MTFs period. We will front-load delivery to realise benefits that can then be reinvested in future prevention initiatives in the second half of the MTFs.

Projects currently in train include:

- *Single Citizen View*: A data platform to provide a holistic view of resident needs.
- *Predictive Analytics*: Tools for homelessness and school exclusion prevention.
- *Digital Information, Advice and Guidance*: Enabling self-help through accessible digital content.
- *Technology Enabled Care*: A proactive model to reduce the cost of domiciliary care.
- *Domestic Abuse*: Workforce development and specialists embedded within Children and Family Services.
- *Commissioning for Prevention*: Ensuring the Council's spending is aligned with the Prevention-First approach.
- *Localities Model*: Delivering structural and cultural change to embed multi-disciplinary teams and empower communities.
- *Single View of Communities*: Shared understanding of the intractable issues to focus on.

This framework is a brave, long-term commitment to systemic change. It requires a cultural shift away from reactive mindsets, supported by clear governance and a robust monitoring and evaluation framework. By focusing on these concrete deliverables, the City Help and Support programme provides a clear, actionable plan to address the Council's financial picture and build a more resilient Plymouth.

Work is currently underway to finalise the key programme aims for City Help & Support. As part of this work, an assessment of financial outcomes will be derived for inclusion as part of the MTFP to be published alongside the 2026/27 budget. These financial outcomes will detail targeted savings to be achieved as a result of the work undertaken to suppress demand, offsetting in part the increasing pressure seen in the outer years of the MTFP period up to 2030/31.

13.5 Looking to the future

Plymouth City Council is on a path toward sustainable growth and service excellence. By focusing on organisational effectiveness, transformative strategies, financial stability, demand management, and continuous improvement, we are facing into the challenges in the near-term. With a plan in development and working with key internal stakeholders to develop in full as part of the 2026/27 budget setting and MTFP process, our commitment remains firm: to serve Plymouth's residents with efficiency, transparency, and resilience, building a city where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

14 Conclusion

The Council's medium-term financial risks are comprehensively assessed within the MTFS. This includes a thorough evaluation of uncertainties related to Government funding, other key income streams, potential budget shortfalls, and both local and national economic factors that may impact the Council's financial stability.

In setting both the annual budget and the MTFS, the Council is committed to rigorously identifying, assessing, and actively managing potential risks. Where appropriate, these risks will be mitigated through the use of Contingencies, Balances, or Earmarked Reserves to ensure their impact is minimised and financial resilience is maintained. Throughout the year, the Council will closely monitor its revenue and capital budgets on a monthly basis, with formal reports provided to Cabinet on a quarterly schedule.

It is important to recognise that the revised forecast represents the Council's best estimate of its future financial position. However, there remain a number of risks associated with these projections:

- *Financial:* The forecasts for future years are underpinned by a range of assumptions. The further into the future these projections extend, the greater the risk that underlying assumptions may prove inaccurate, potentially impacting the Council's financial planning.
- *Political:* The impact and uncertainties around Fair Funding 2.0, Business Rates Reform and SEND reform are set out clearly in this document. As further details are released, or any other changes are announced, the impact will be analysed and added to our medium-term planning.
- *Treasury Management:* The MTFS is predicated on the assumption of a relatively stable global financial environment. Any significant changes to this context could have a major impact on the Council's financial position, particularly in relation to the cost of borrowing.
- *Capacity and Skills:* Delivering the transformation required to achieve long-term financial sustainability, as set out in the MTFS, will demand additional capacity and new skillsets. The Council is committed to ensuring that projects are not compromised by resource constraints and will take steps to secure the necessary expertise as required.

The MTFS outlines projected budget shortfalls from 2026/27 onwards and emphasises the need for proactive planning to support the Council's financial sustainability over the medium-term. The current forecast presents a challenging outlook, with increasing budgetary pressures, particularly in children's social care, adult social care, and homelessness, growing at a faster rate than available funding.

The Council continues to strengthen its financial and governance arrangements. Improvements have been made in financial management and performance monitoring, scrutiny processes have been enhanced, and the independent Audit and Governance Committee is functioning effectively. These developments provide a solid foundation for managing future challenges and supporting informed decision-making.

The Council's medium-term strategy is focused on integrating key elements to enable effective and coordinated monitoring and management of:

- The Corporate Plan and its priorities
- Benchmarking of expenditure and key performance indicators
- Revenue budgets and spending aligned to priorities
- Progress against revenue delivery plans
- Delivery of the capital programme

At present, specific savings to offset future pressures have not yet been identified. With reserves having been used to balance recent years' outturns, there is limited opportunity to replenish these reserves in the short term.

It will remain essential to robustly challenge any additional budget pressures before incorporating them into future budgets. At the same time, urgent action is required to identify solutions for addressing projected budget shortfalls in the coming years.

To close the financial gap for 2026/27, the Council must identify the necessary savings and efficiencies ahead of the Full Council Budget meeting in February 2026. Full clarity on grant allocations will not be available until the Provisional Settlement is announced in December. During the period leading up to February, the budget will be presented to the Scrutiny Management Board and senior officers, and Cabinet will continue to work towards the February deadline.

The MTFS is designed to supplement, not replace, the annual budget-setting process by providing a forward-looking view of risks and opportunities. Final decisions on key elements will be made by Full Council at the annual budget meeting each February.

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