

Briefing Report

Plymouth Plan for Nature and People (2025-2030)

October 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.

4. Proposed changes

Following analysis of the feedback received from the public through the consultation process we have identified the main actionable points and how we are going to integrate 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 Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Committee

- 1. Endorse the proposed changes to the draft 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.**
- 2. Approve the creation of a Year 1 Action Plan for delivery in 2026.**
- 3. Request that this item be returned to the Committee for annual review of the Action 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>	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

		<p>children and young people. These versions use simpler language and are designed to be more engaging and inclusive.</p> <p>What have we changed?</p> <p>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 cultural partners like Arts University Plymouth, Stilton 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'.</p> <p>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	<i>"The enhancing of digital</i>	We understand. Volunteering should be flexible

	<p><i>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>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 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	<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 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</p>

		bring together people from a broad range of demographics across the city, helping to ensure their community is represented in the plan
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 clear) about how coastal nature can be improved and protected and accesses in a way that does not damage these fragile habitats."</i>	<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	<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 lots of education initiatives happening in the Council and with our</p>

		<p>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'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 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</p>

		<p>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><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>	<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</p>

		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.
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 understand what moderate/ condition is?”</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 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? 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	<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>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</p>

		<p>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</p>

		<p>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>
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Appendix 2 – Additional Background

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.