

# 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 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 long-term 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.

Over the course of the next generation, we aim for Plymouth to be:

**A nature-rich 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 feel 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

**13**

Local Nature Reserves

**£3m**

invested in natural flood relief schemes across the city

**Home to 25**  
nationally important plant and animal species**7m**

annual visits to parks and nature spaces

**109**

natural spaces actively managed by community groups and businesses

Ambition to become the UK's most investable Nature City

**First**

local authority Habitat Bank

**7**

Green Flag Parks and Natural Spaces

**9**

SITES OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST (SSSIs)

**£162m**

per year in health, carbon, and economic value from natural assets

A thriving and growing network of local heroes, community organisations, and volunteers who champion nature daily

**7**

Green Flag Parks and Natural Spaces

**9**

SITES OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST (SSSIs)

**2030**

hectares of publicly accessible open space

**489**

surveyed open spaces

**28**

County Wildlife Sites

**First**

UK National Marine Park

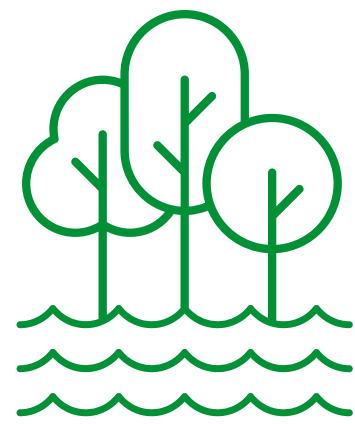
Internationally important Marine Protected Area

**KEY FACT**  
**3,482**

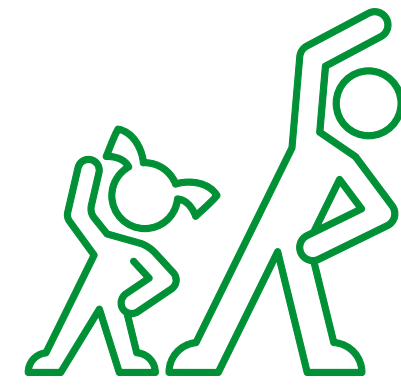
hectares of natural space - that's 43% of the city



# WHAT THE PLAN DELIVERS

**A nature-rich city**

- biodiverse, with thriving land and sea ecosystems

**A playful, active and healthy city**

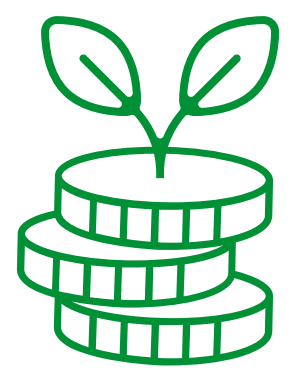
where everyone lives within a 400m walk of natural space

**Inclusive nature spaces**

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

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

where residents feel 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 long-term 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.

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

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

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.

By 2025, Plymouth's nature network will be more extensive, better connected, and contribute 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

**'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



# 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.



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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.



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## 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.

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 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.

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

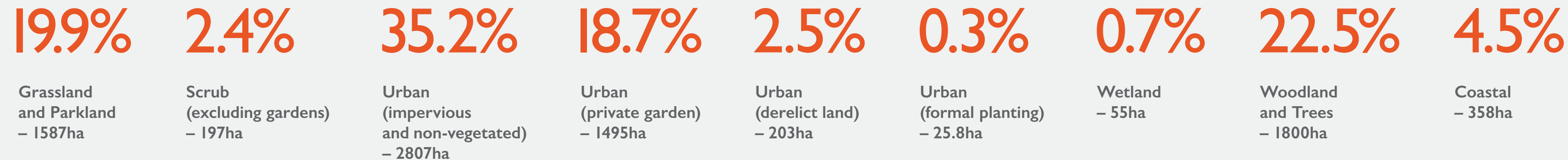


Plymouth is home to the UK’s first urban beaver population in over 400 years

### 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**, the **Short and Long Snouted Seahorses**, 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 to set out strategic priorities for long term planning and delivery.

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.

Whilst also maintaining our own shorelines, the council has a shared responsibility over management of the wider estuary and coast. To do this the Council works with the Kings Harbour Master (KHM) to host the Tamar and Estuaries Consultative Forum (TECF) which enables collaboration, shared resources and knowledge exchange between other authorities.

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 Authority and Highways Authority, under which it has a range of duties to plan and act as the gatekeeper for development and growth of the city and the upkeep and maintenance of the city's roads. These roles are an important factor in successful delivery of this plan.

**Plymouth is recognised as a Tree City of the World**

**Plymouth is working towards being accredited as a Nature City**





# POLICY AND PLAN LANDSCAPE





SECTION THREE

# THINGS WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

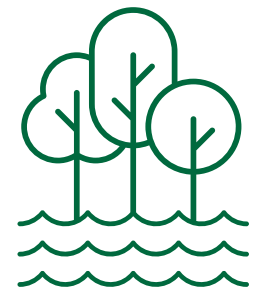
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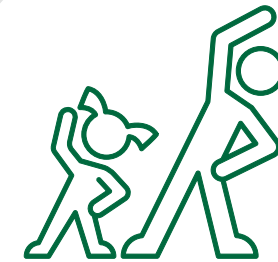


# OUR PILLARS OF SUCCESS

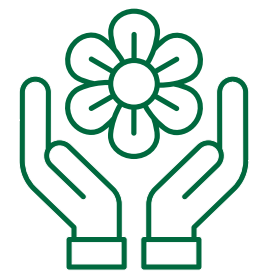
Following the engagement phase of the creation of this plan, we have shaped the Plan for Nature and People around 5 key objectives:



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, water and 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 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

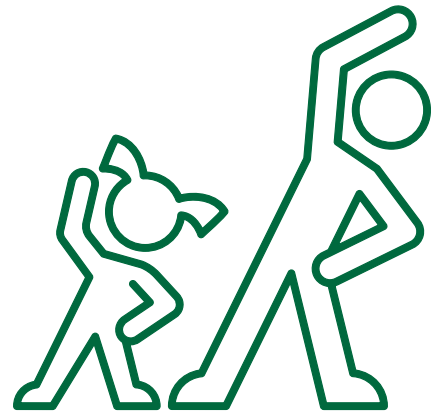
**Plant 1,000 individual urban trees in Plymouth by 2030 with a range of innovative schemes which will return street trees to neighbourhoods across Plymouth. This is part of the wider canopy cover increase across the city.**

**Identify 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.**

**Plant 5,885 medium size trees in streets, parks and gardens in Plymouth to achieve a Tree Equity score of at least 75 in all neighbourhoods by 2050, with a focus on neighbourhoods significantly below this level.**

**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.**





# 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**





## 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 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.**

- **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**

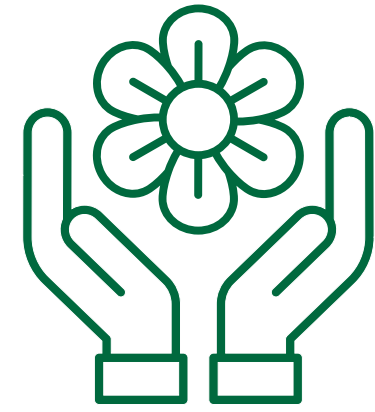
Enhancements to services at Poole Farm and local allotments will transform these areas into wellbeing hubs, offering residents opportunities for reflection, creativity, and connection to nature.

- **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 work towards a target that all residents 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 Edgcumbe, 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

**By 2030 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 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.**

- **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
- **Build digital platforms**  
Establish digital platforms to facilitate the sharing of volunteering activities, and stewardship opportunities. 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.





# A NATURE CONNECTED, ENGAGED AND EMPOWERED PLYMOUTH

## 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.

**5 Allotment  
Associations**

**18 active  
formal Friends  
of Groups**

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

**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**



## 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 2030, we will consult and update partnership frameworks across the city to empower groups and individuals to support the delivery for the Plan for Nature and People.**

**By 2030, we will initiate and lead a city-wide communications campaign, championing community action.**

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







# 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.

## 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.

**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**







**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**

## 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!





SECTION FOUR

# 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 local and global economy are changing. We can no longer rely on traditional forms of funding to sustain our existing assets let alone provide the level of investment required to recover nature and maximise the benefits it can bring to the city.

Traditional forms of funding such as developer contributions and national grant programmes will continue albeit in new forms (e.g. Biodiversity Net Gain and loan arrangements). Unlocking new forms of ‘Green finance’ investment requires us to be able to evidence impact and returns on investment (something we have done with the creation of our habitat bank) and so building a thorough map of our assets and their value will enable us to build investment and report widely of the impact of this investment over time.

We are committed to and have begun work to ensure we can attract and direct new investment into the areas most at need, to deliver the maximum benefit we can. This needs to be well governed and networked to ensure that this investment provides good value for money.

We have realised the importance of this and worked innovatively to create a Council-owned ‘green finance’ vehicle – Ocean City Nature – to act in this space and maximise investment opportunity into the city to deliver against this plan and with its partnerships. As well as bringing forward our first investment package – Ocean City Biodiversity, the city’s Habitat Bank with £0.5m of investment – we have also been developing a number of other investment cases with partners in carbon credits and flood reduction.

**Plymouth is investment-ready and we are committed to 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 blue economy**
- A **pioneering Plymouth Sound National Marine Park** partnership

## GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Another key element to successful delivery is providing effective, representative and efficient governance to this plan and the initiatives that are delivered through it. We recognise and our **committed to establishing a dedicated cross-sector Steering Group** to guide and oversee the delivery programme of this plan with regular governance and delivery reviews. This steering group will be representative across sectors and be integrated with Council decision making forums to ensure it can help to support balanced and best-informed decision making. This Group will have specific terms of reference and be able to monitor the effectiveness of the success of delivery against the key measures in the delivery programme (see appendix I).

This plan will continually need to respond evolving needs and opportunities of Plymouth as it grows and moves towards the 2030’s. As such the Steering Group will formally review the Plan every 3 years to ensure that it is compatible and relevant to the city’s situation.



# 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.





SECTION SIX

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# GLOSSARY

Asset Based Community Development

County Wildlife Sites

Habitat Bank

Habitat Banking Vehicle

Local Nature Recovery

Natural Capitall

Natural assets

Natural Infrastructure

Nature Recovery

Natural spaces

Nature connection

Marine Protected Area

Scientific Site of Special Interest

Tree Equity Score

30x30

Open Mosaic habitat

Local Playable Space

Neighbourhood Playable Space

Natural Environment Service



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42. Plymouth Play Assessment

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44. Bright Futures Report

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# DELIVERY PROGRAMME

## NATURE RICH 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 in partnership with key stakeholders to 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	An increase of canopy cover in the city of Plymouth to achieve a Tree Equity score of at least 75 in all neighbourhoods by 2050, with a focus on neighbourhoods significantly below this level.  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"><li>• British Standard 3998 for individual trees</li><li>• United Kingdom Forest Standard for woodland management</li></ul>	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	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. Incorporate the Nature Recovery Network into discussions and evidence base to inform 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 as well as current and future Local Plan policies.
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 Plan for the city to support the evidence base for the Local Plan 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 see an increasing number of people able to physically access good quality natural space within walking distance of their home in line with Local Plan and National standards (the city’s current standard is to aspire to provide accessible green space within 400m of home).</p>	<p>Work with Strategic Planning to co-design and deliver an update to the evidence base required to support updated policies around accessible natural space in the city line with Local Plan timelines.</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>
Play	<p>Level of provision of suitable playable spaces meets aspirational levels set out in the Local Plan (currently 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>Playing pitch standards meet required quantities for the city as set out in Local Plan.</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>Provision of suitable food growing/ allotment spatial provision for City population as set out in the Local Plan (Current aspiration is 45 hectares for 300,000 popl)</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.</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>
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	Listen to and engage with local communities and visitors of all ages, user groups and organisations in decision making that affect their local area to work towards an ambition that all residents have access to a high quality and welcoming natural space within 15 mins walking distance of their home to support their health and wellbeing.	<p>Establish representative governance to oversee this delivery programme made up of key cross-sectoral representatives.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Invest in a network of inclusive communication formats to distribute information about and promote the city’s natural spaces and access to them.</p> <p>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.</p>
Inclusive and accessible natural spaces	City’s natural space access network achieves good condition and accessibility standards.	<p>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.</p> <p>Use delivery of the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park to build a long-term, sustainable access programme for the city’s marine spaces.</p>
Community business and social enterprise	Increasing number of and economic impact of community businesses and social enterprises active across the city’s natural spaces	<p>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.</p> <p>Build digital platforms to facilitate the sharing of volunteering and stewardship opportunities.</p>
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.	<p>Ensure that use of parks and natural spaces are embedded within the city’s plans for health and wellbeing including physical activity and leisure.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Continue to support and evolve processes for residents to plan and host appropriate community and cultural events in parks and natural spaces.</p> <p>Work with partners and event organisers to meet required sustainability standards for events.</p>



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 &amp; 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>
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>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>



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>Consider marine sites and related policies in work to bring forward new Local Plan policies.</p> <p>Protect trees and woodlands through the implementation and use of local planning policy, 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, Section 106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy 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 are a big topic. New Local Nature Recovery Strategies, as required under the Environment Act, are being produced across the country, including in Devon. To support this in Plymouth we have been working to bring up to date our Biodiversity Network to align with the national and regional context. Importantly this work will feed into a new Local Plan for Plymouth enabling us to better plan for nature as the City grows and provide a framework and guiding plan for all actions – from developers to community members - towards nature recovery in and beyond the City. The purpose of Nature Recovery Networks is not to create new policy, but to provide evidence to enable informed plan development and decision making.

The Nature Recovery Network has a foundation in and has evolved from the Biodiversity Network which was the previous approach to nature networks and forms part of the Joint Local Plan adopted in 2019. It will aim to act as a single point of reference to drive secure and target investment and provide an evidence base to inform future neighbourhood, local, and regional strategies. It will also support considerations of development proposals through planning. Nature knows no boundaries and so this covers areas beyond the City boundary to connect habitats beyond the city.

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.

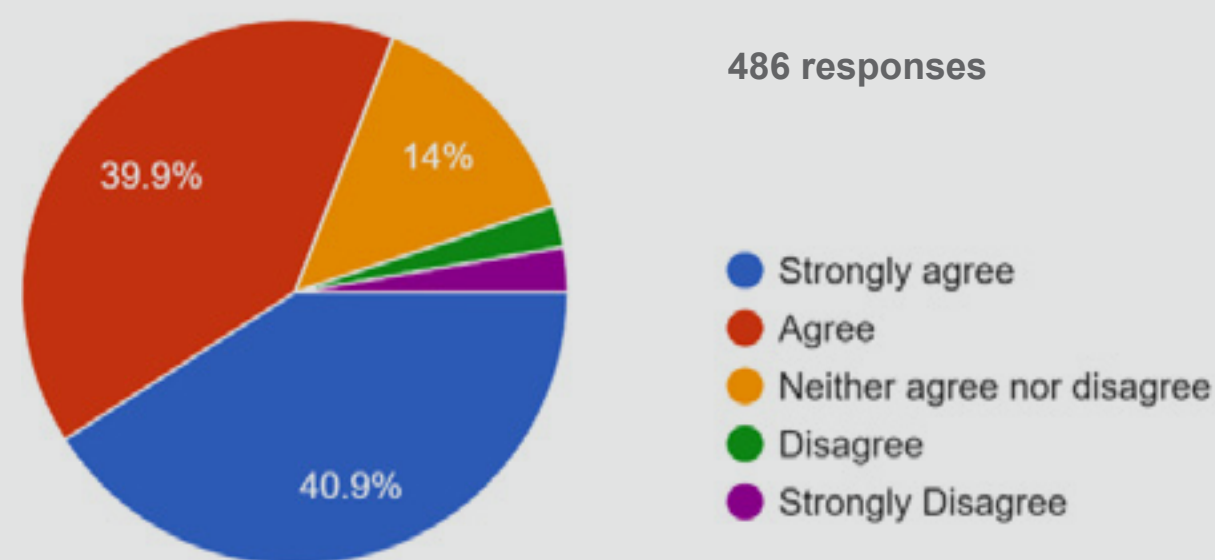
## Questions:

- 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.

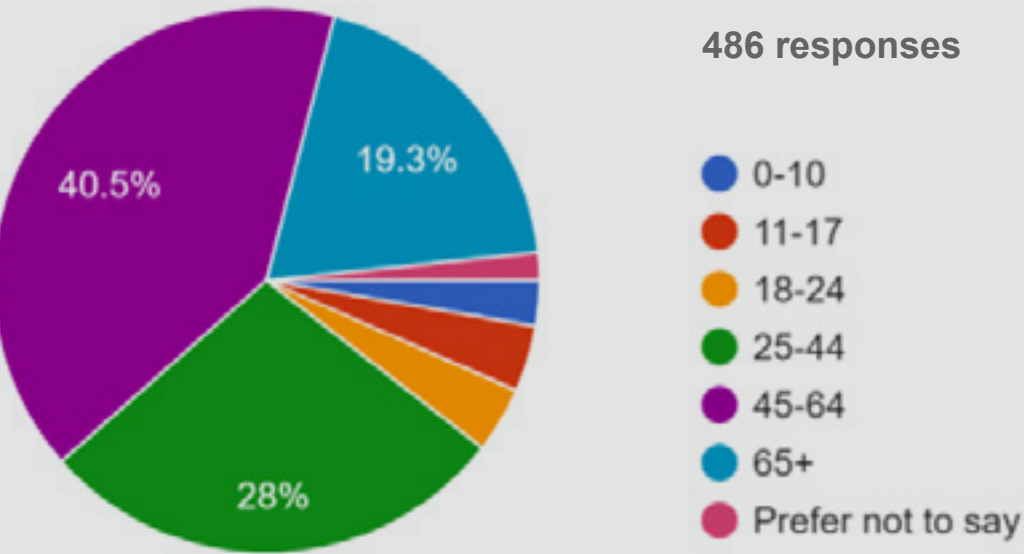






Question 6

What age bracket are you in?



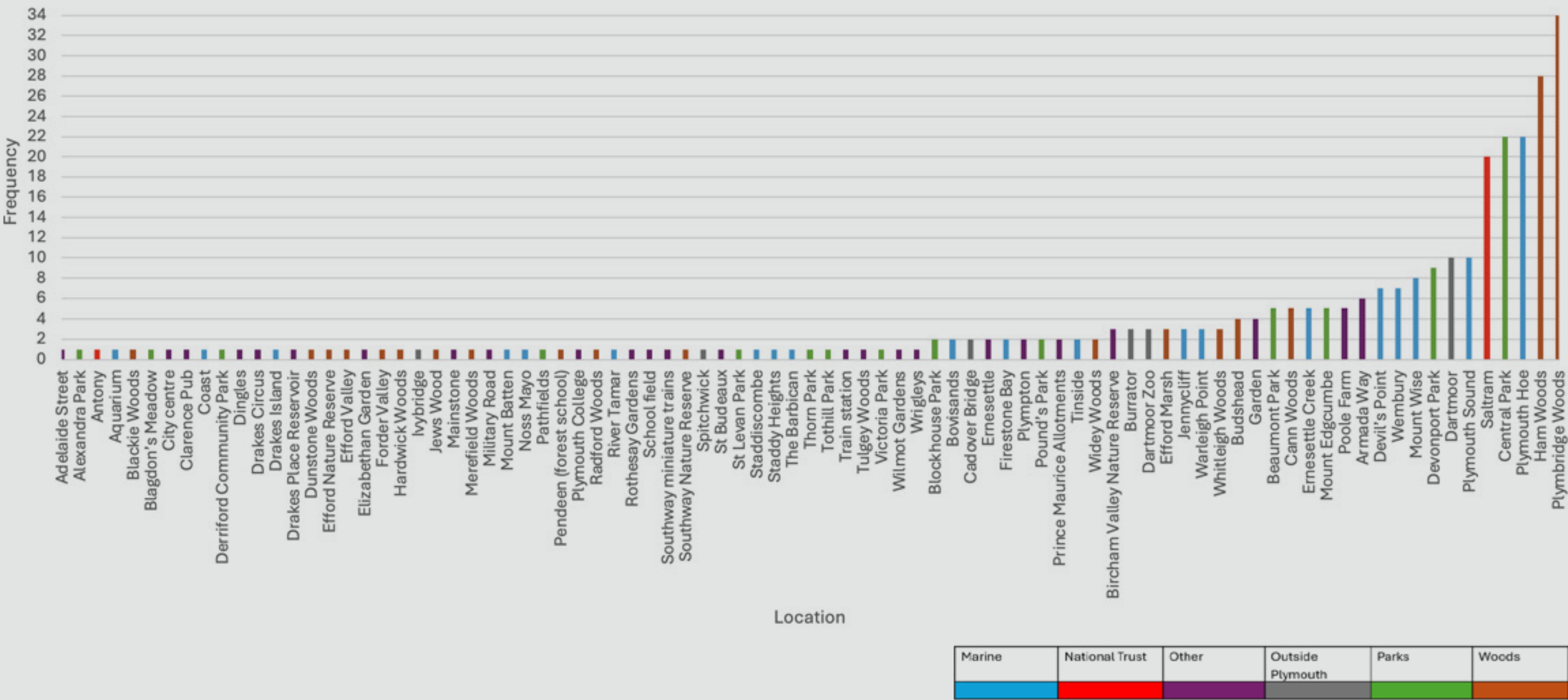
As you can see the 45-64 age range was very well represented (40.5% - 196 respondents) followed by the 25-44 (28% - 136 respondents) bracket and 65+ (19.3% - 94 respondents). Only 60 respondents fell in the 0-24, with a few preferring not to say.

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

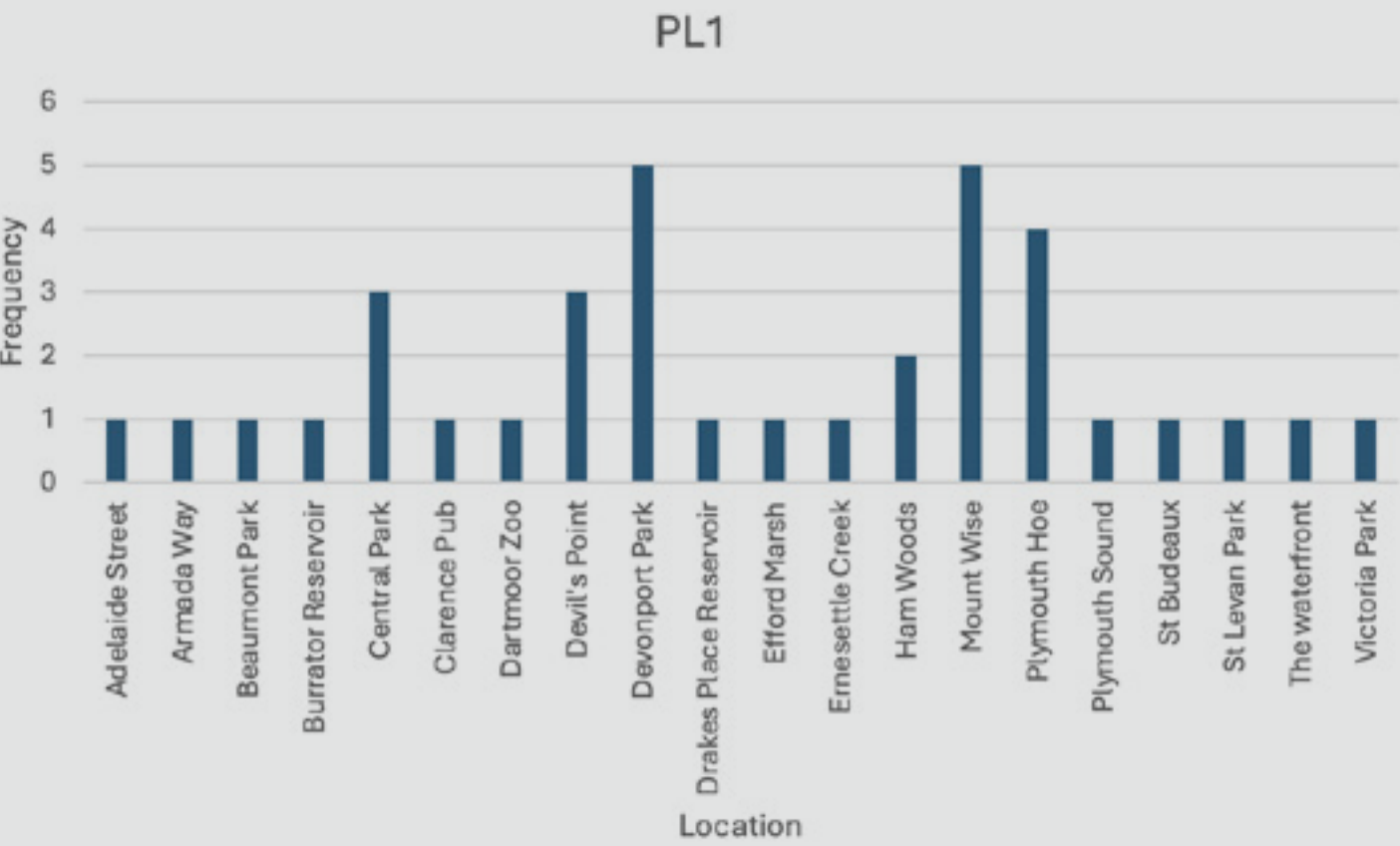
Postcode and favourite nature memories

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.

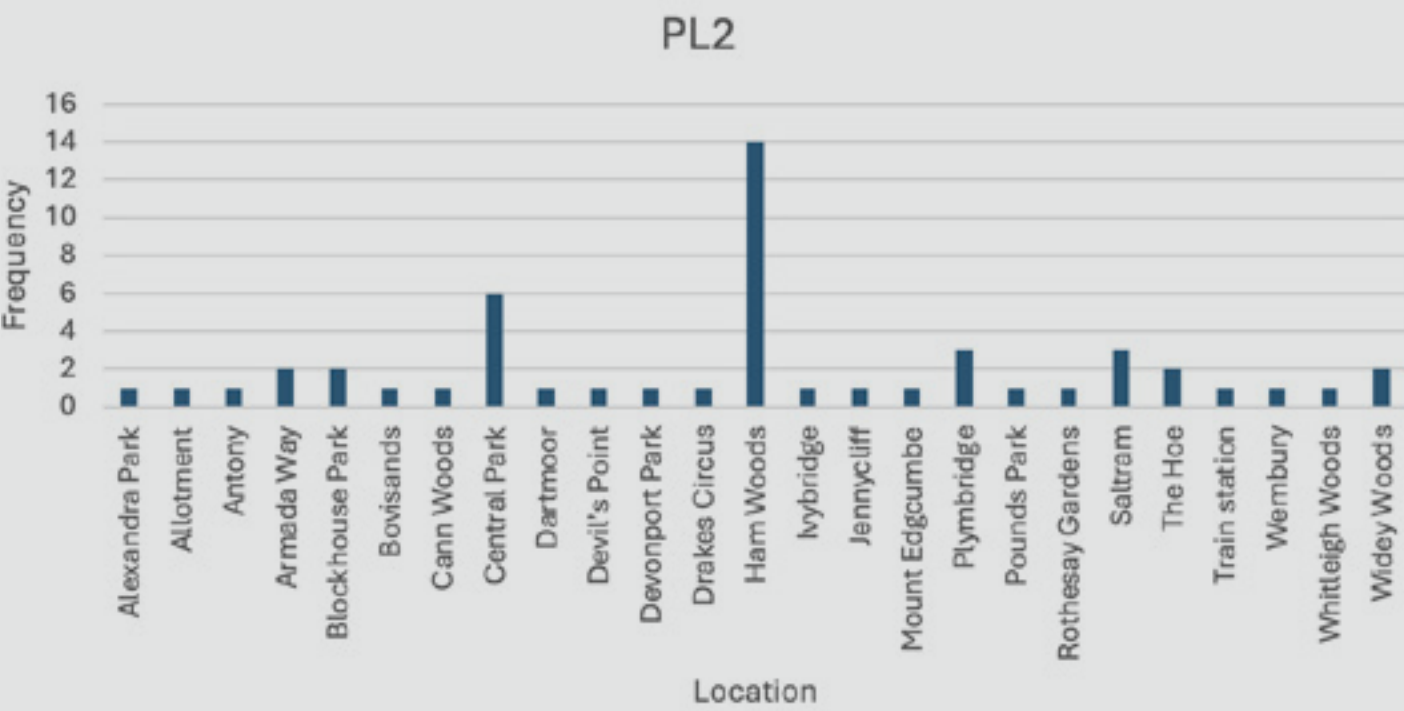
The two most popular locations were Devonport Park and Mount Wise.

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

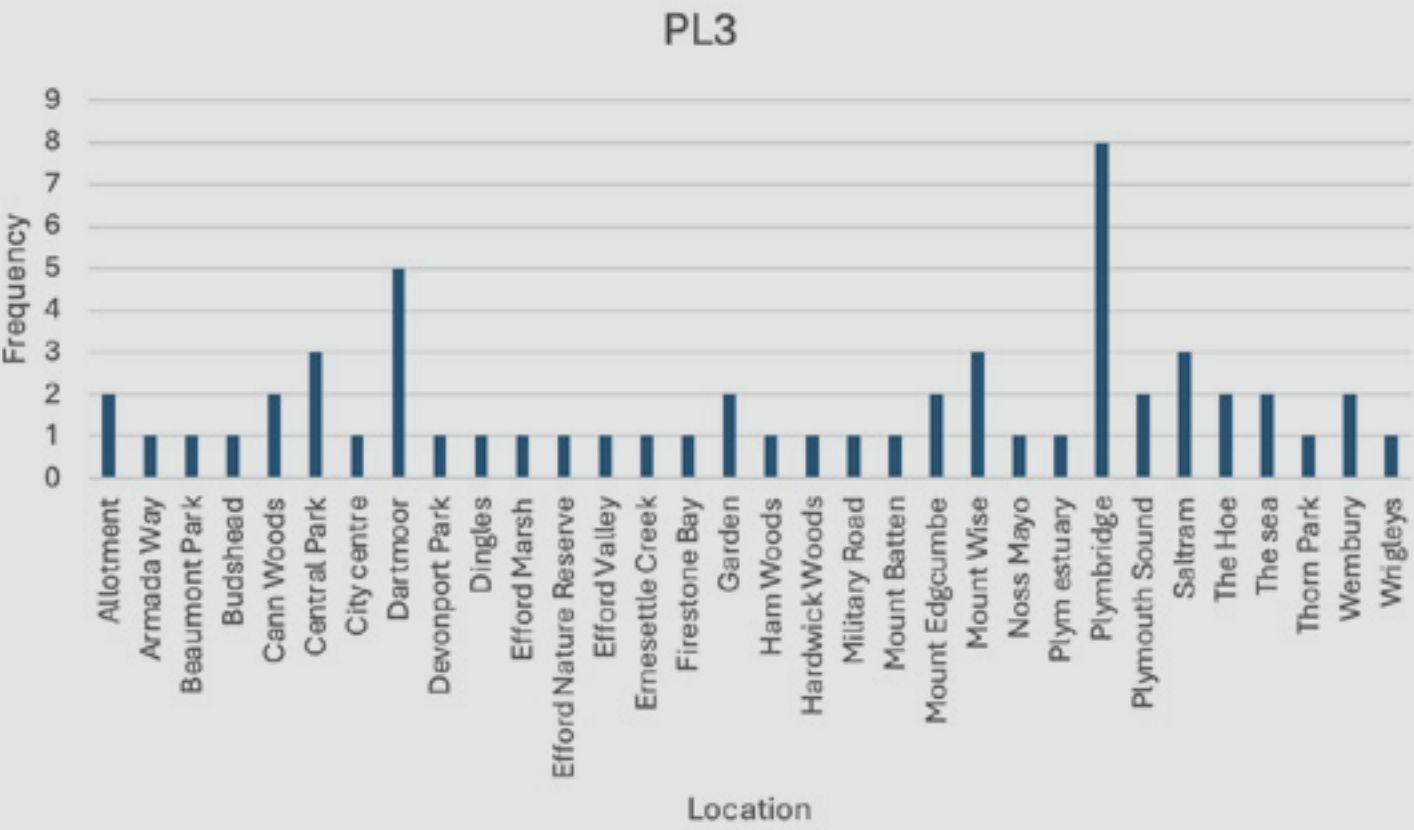
In the PL2 area, the overall number of locations has increased from 20 in PL1 to 25 in PL2. This could be due to easier access to the Torpoint Ferry as two of these locations are in south-east Cornwall (Antony and Mount Edgcumbe) and its surrounding area in Cornwall. Nine of the favourite nature memories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





PL3

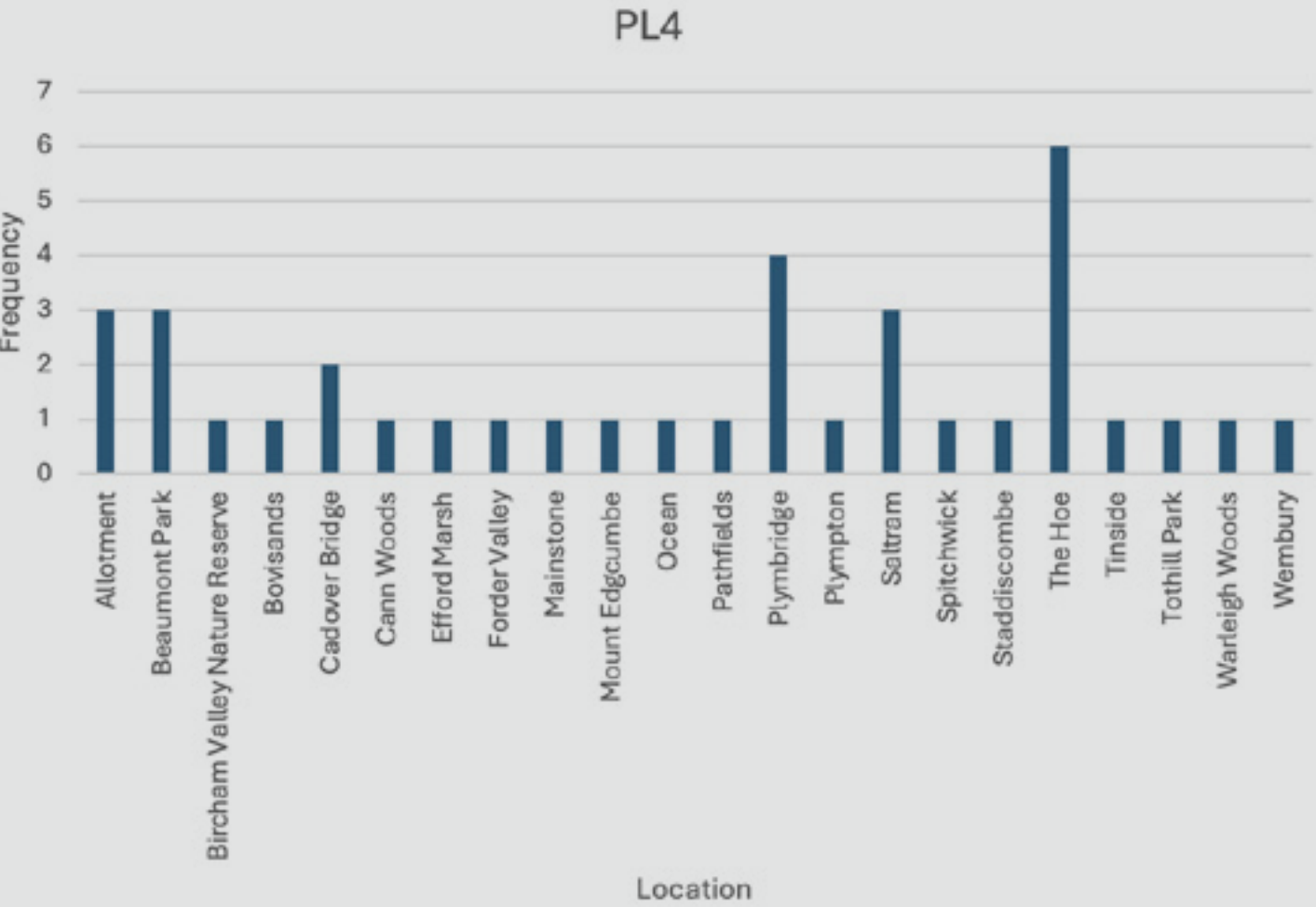
In the PL3 area, it is the first time that private land has been mentioned – gardens. These are nature spaces which are much less common in both PL1 and PL2 where public land was the focus. There are more greenspaces than blue ones interacted with in this area however overall, there is a wider distribution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



PL4

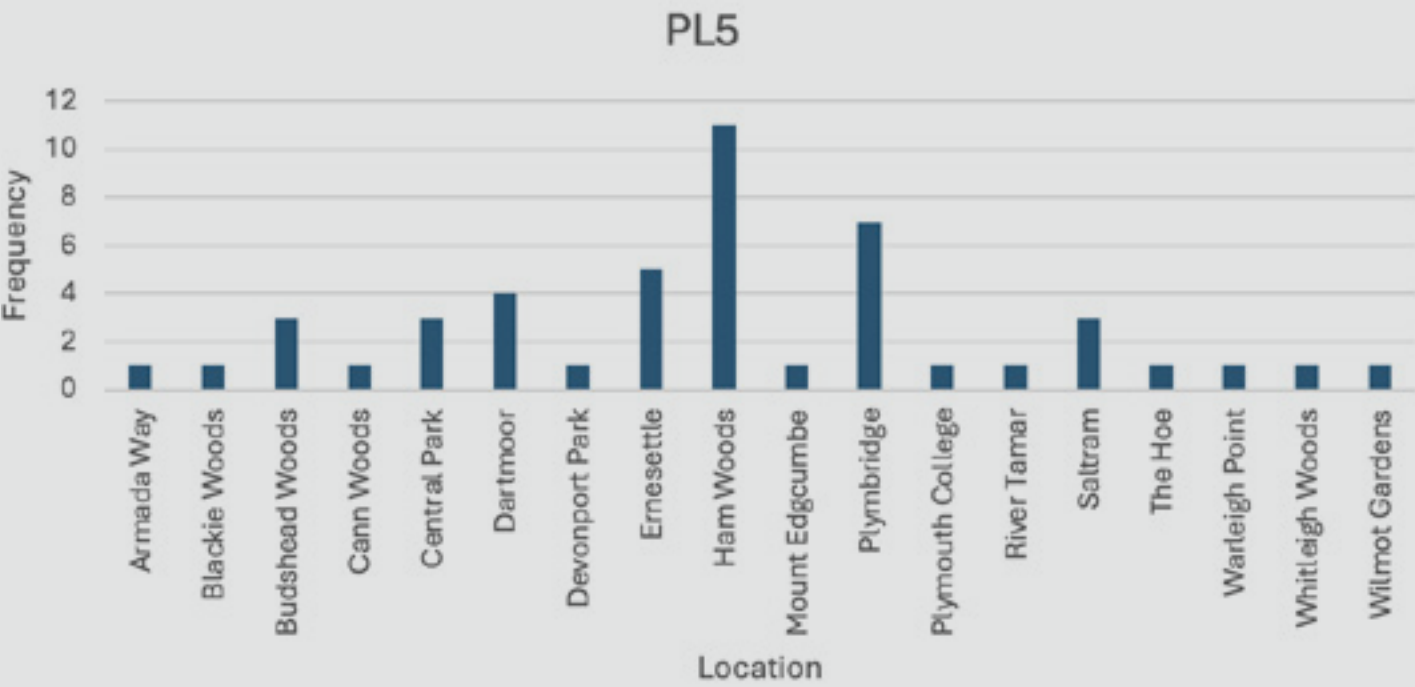
In PL4, there are many locations that feature once in people’s favourite nature memories with the exception of well-known nature spaces including Plymbridge Woods and The Hoe.

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.

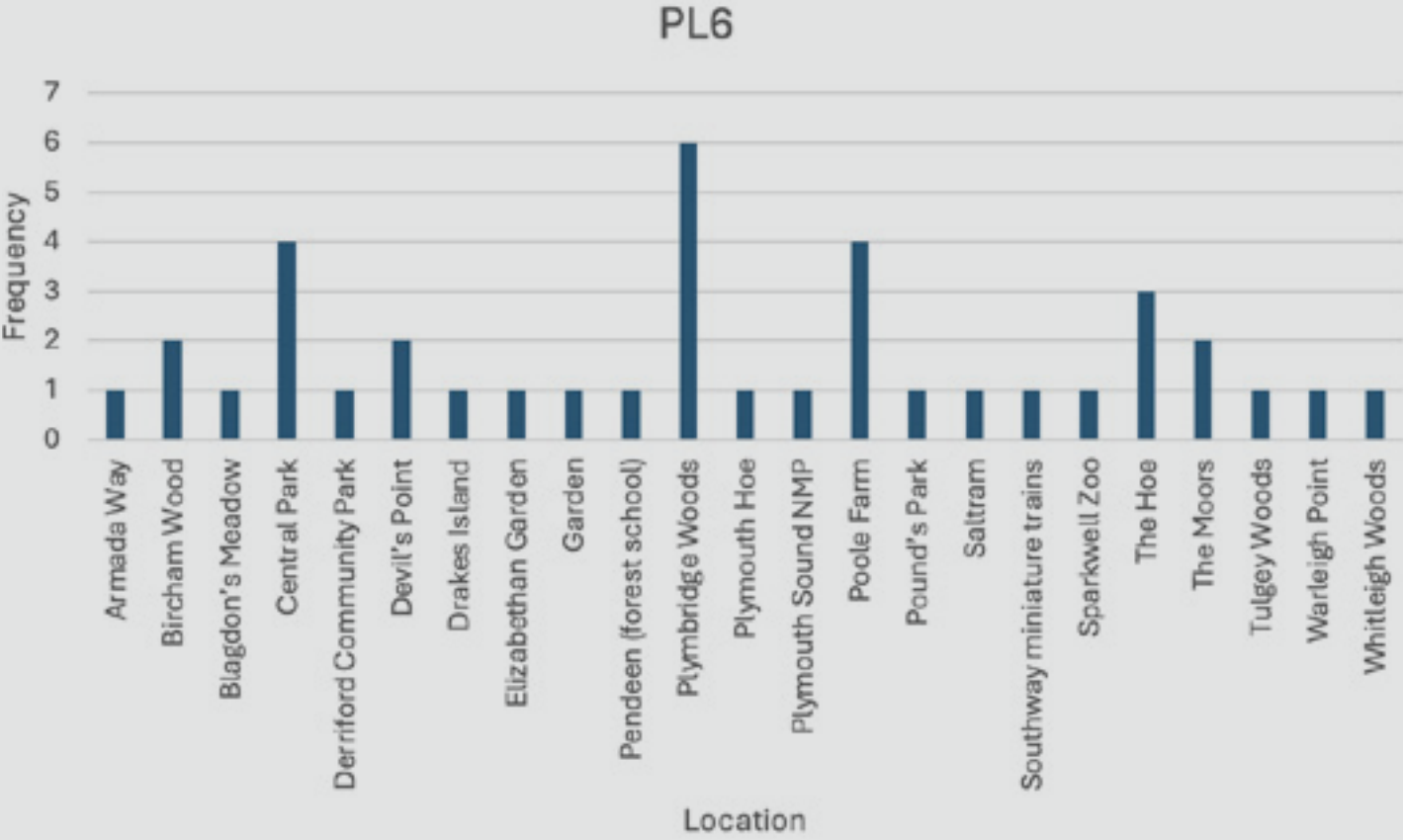




PL6

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.





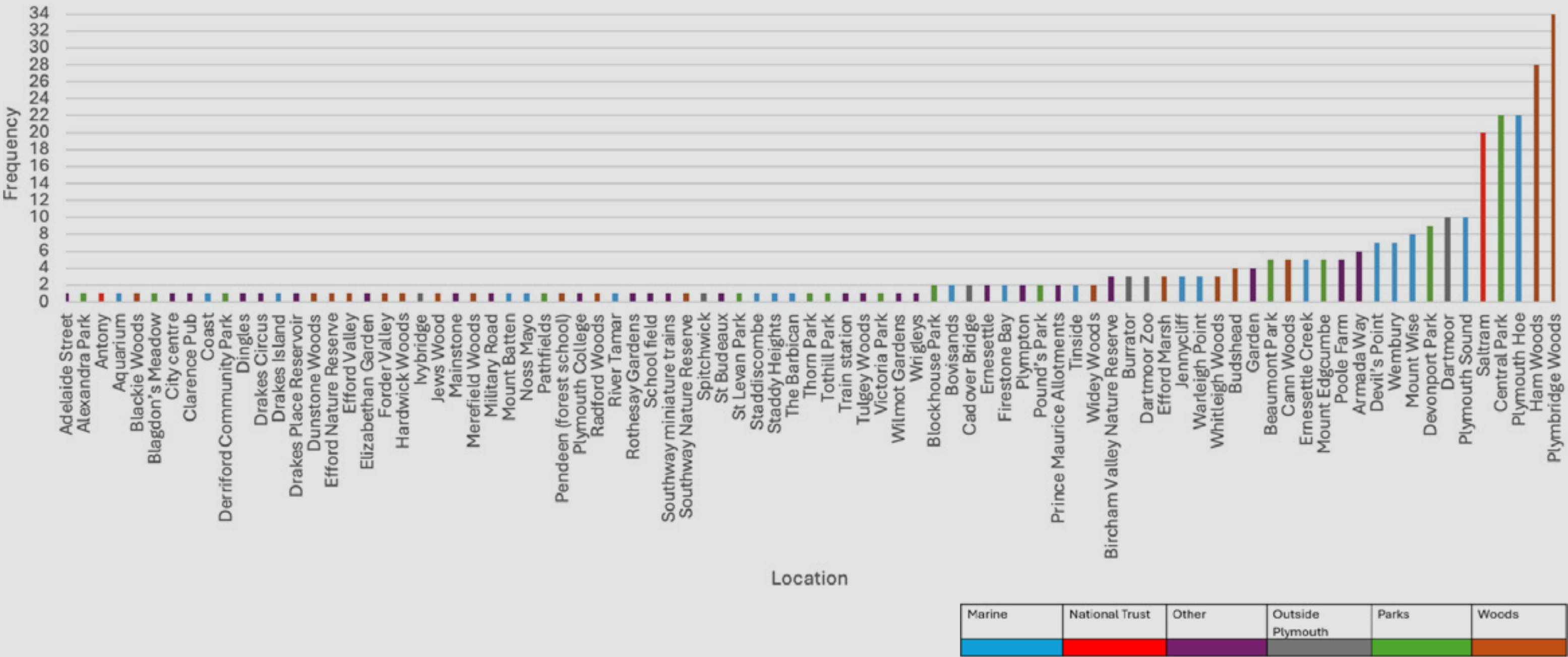
PL9

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.

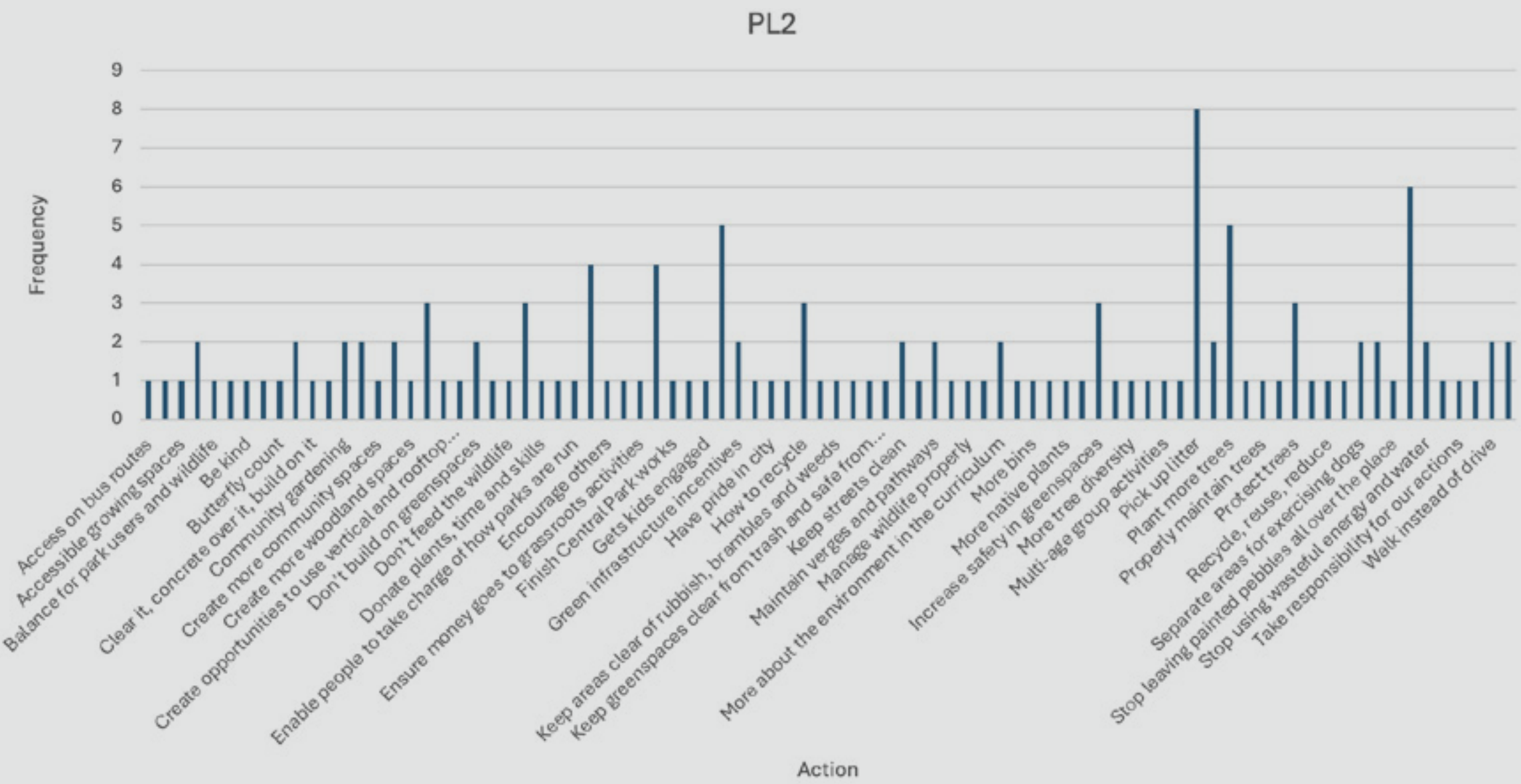
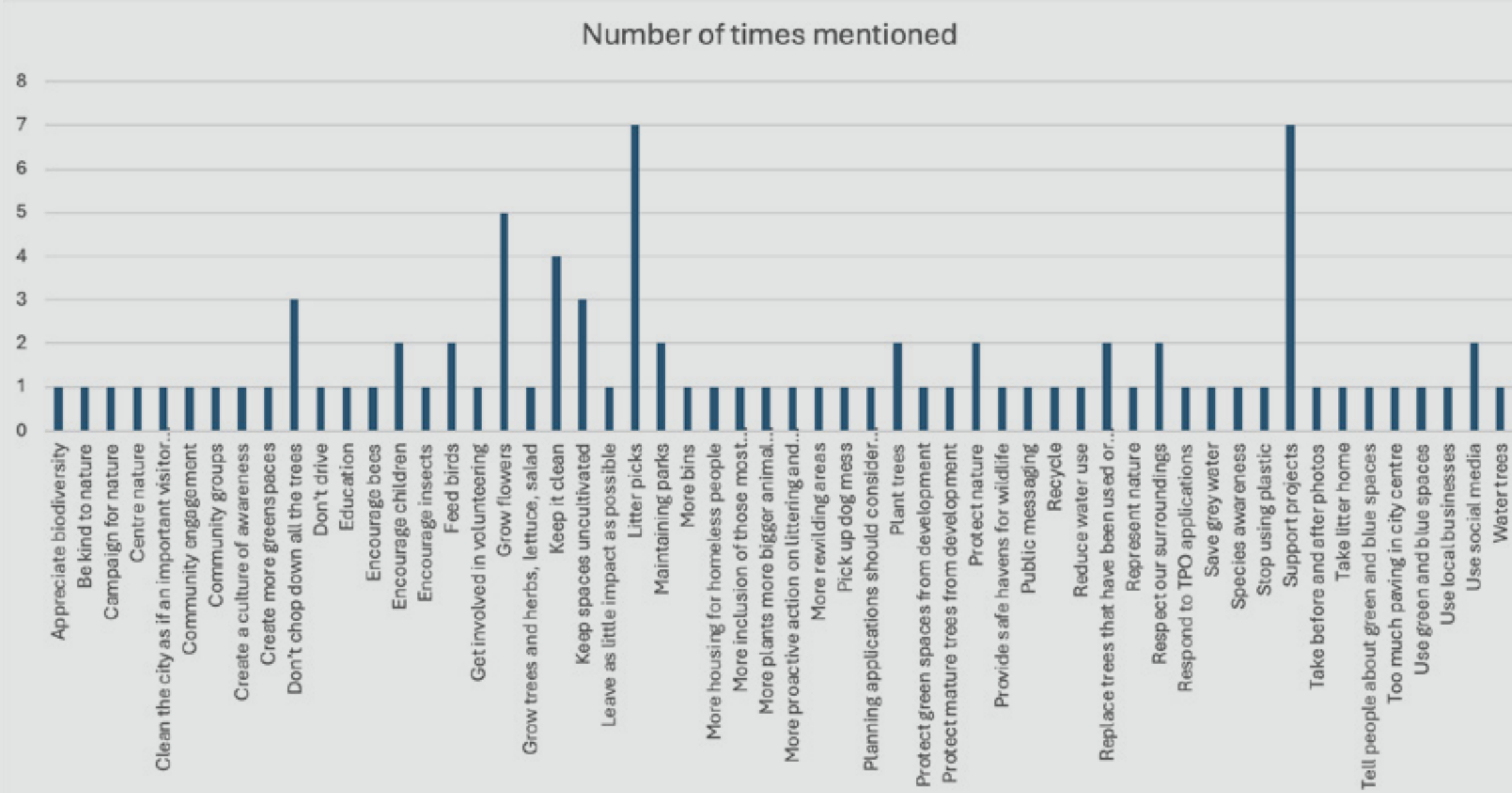


Frequency of locations in favourite nature memories

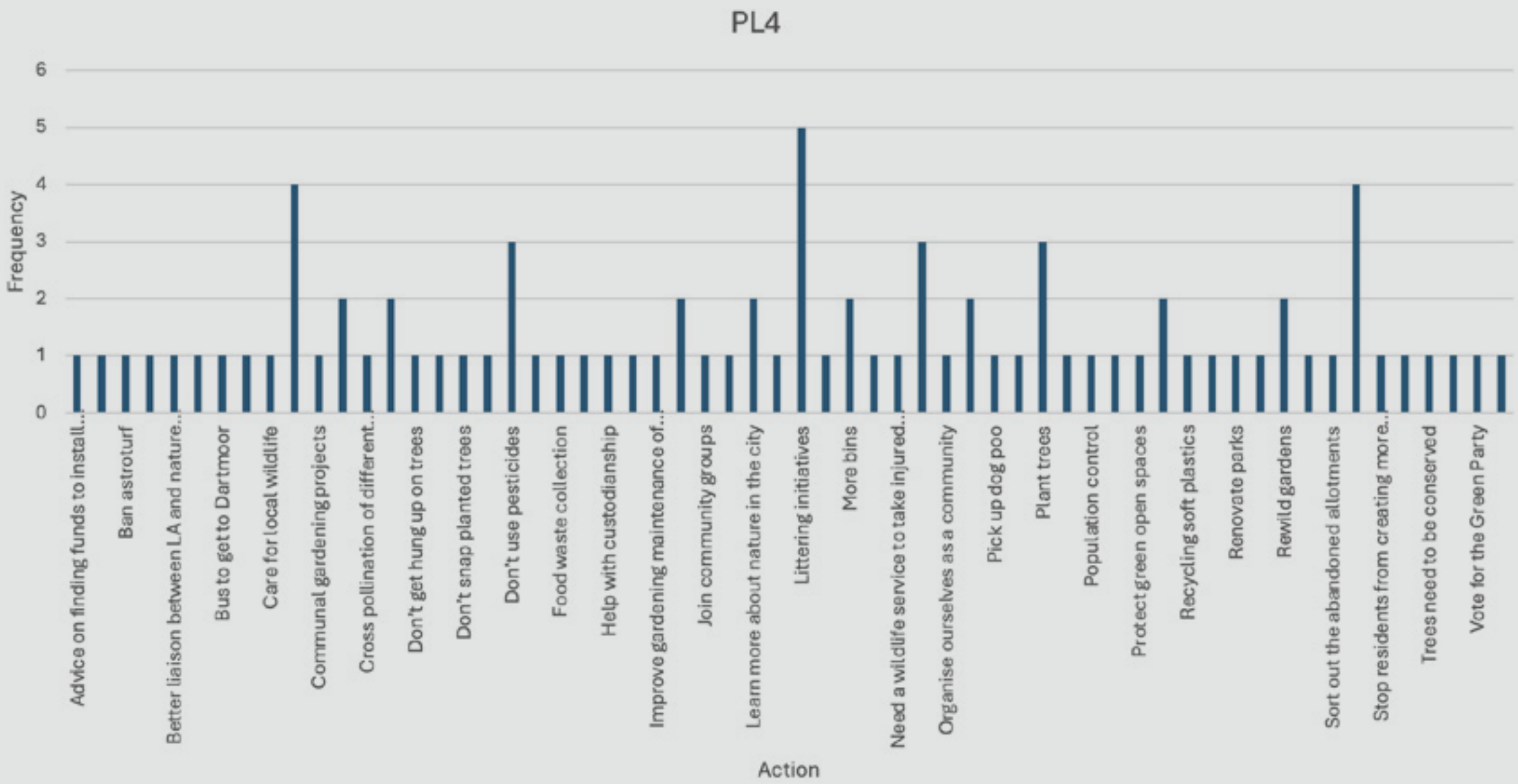
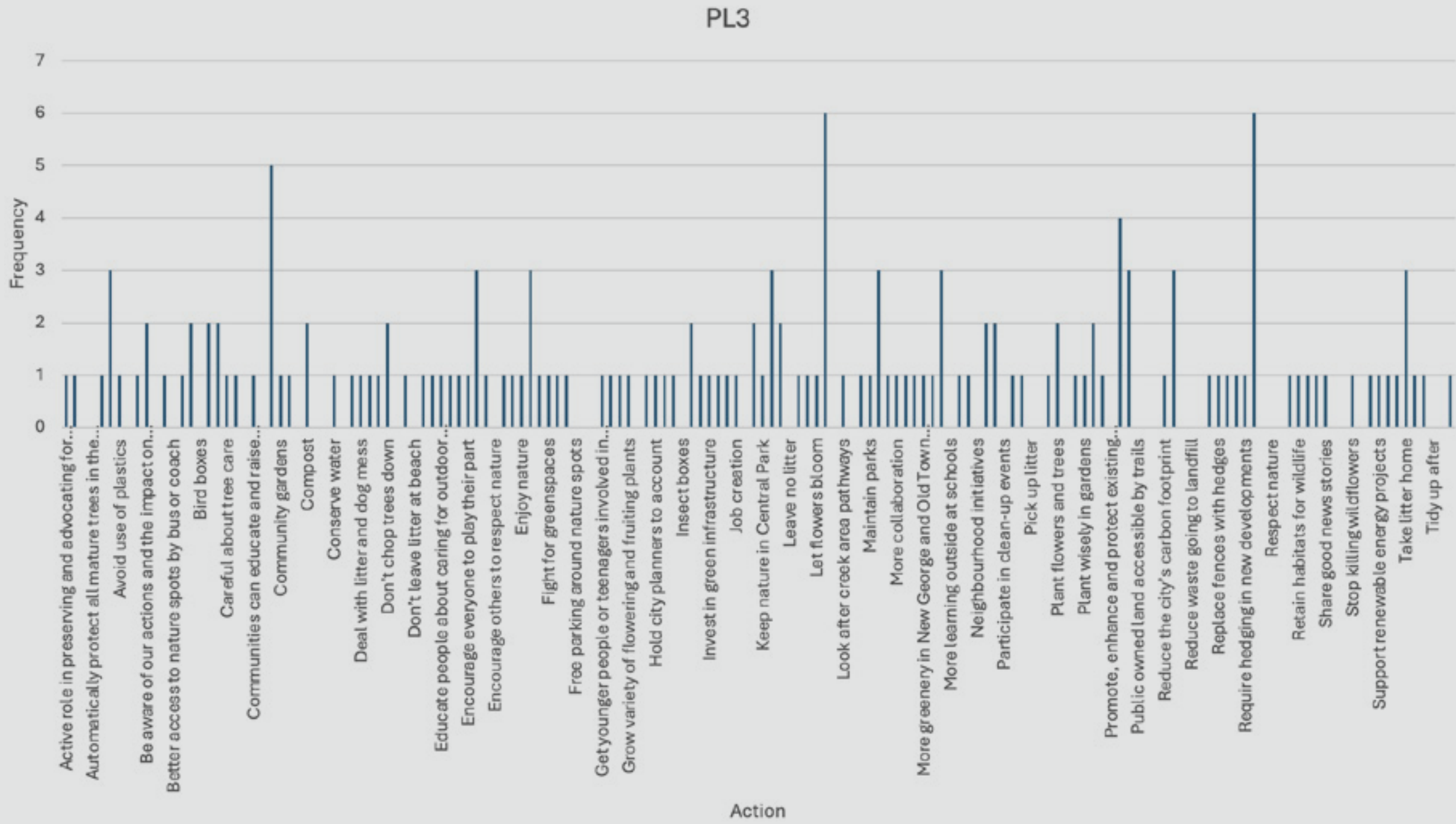




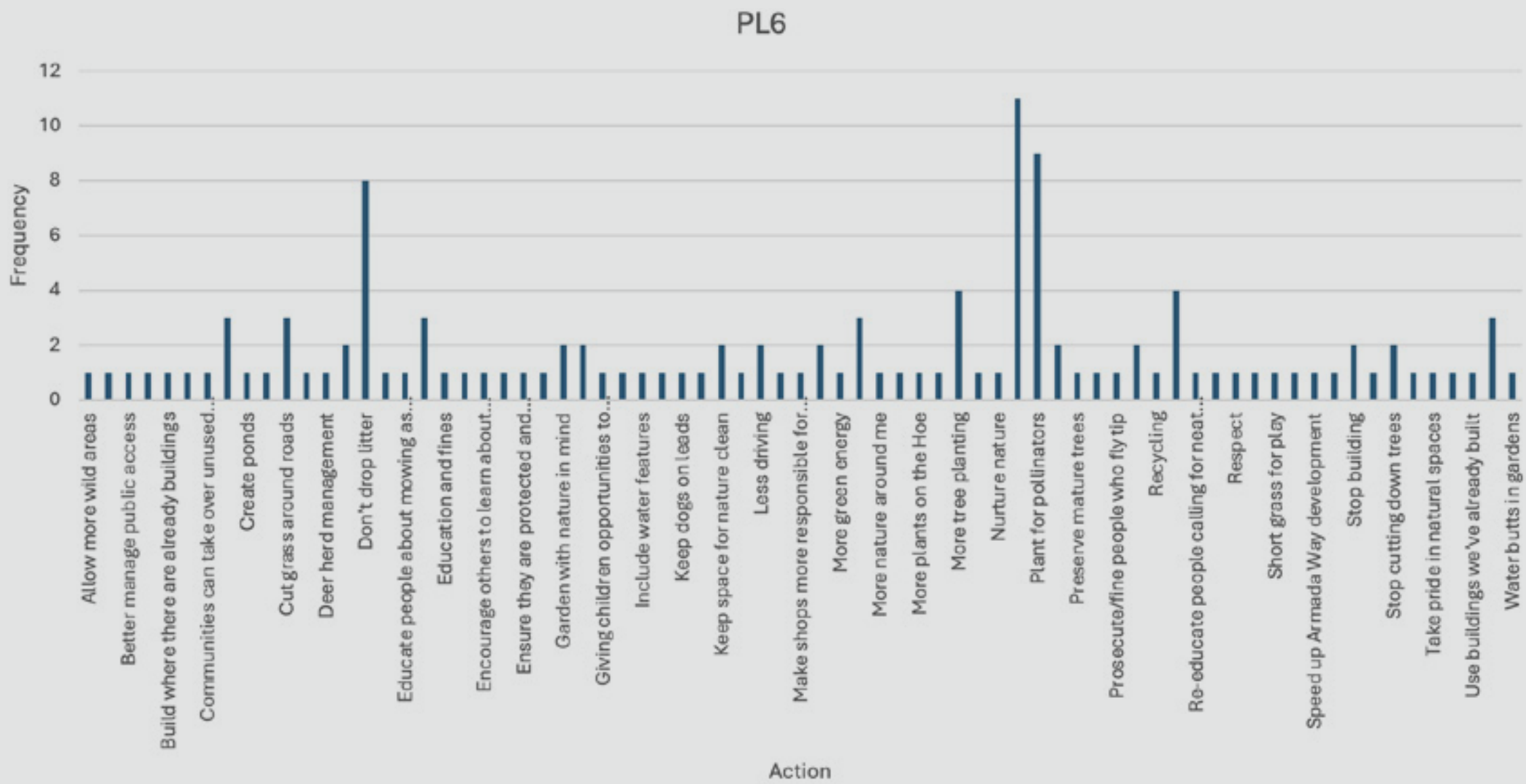
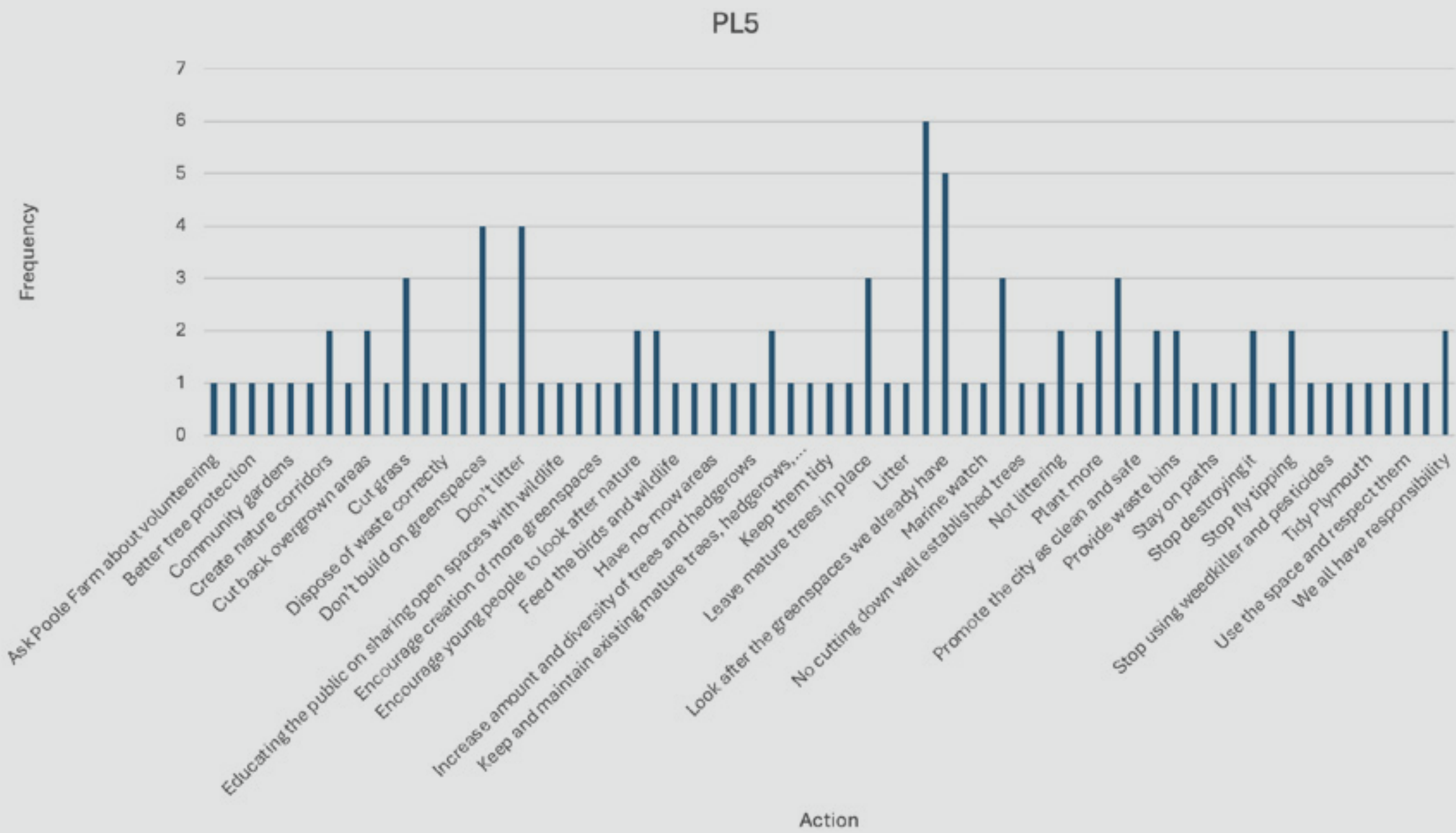
Postcode and Actions for Nature



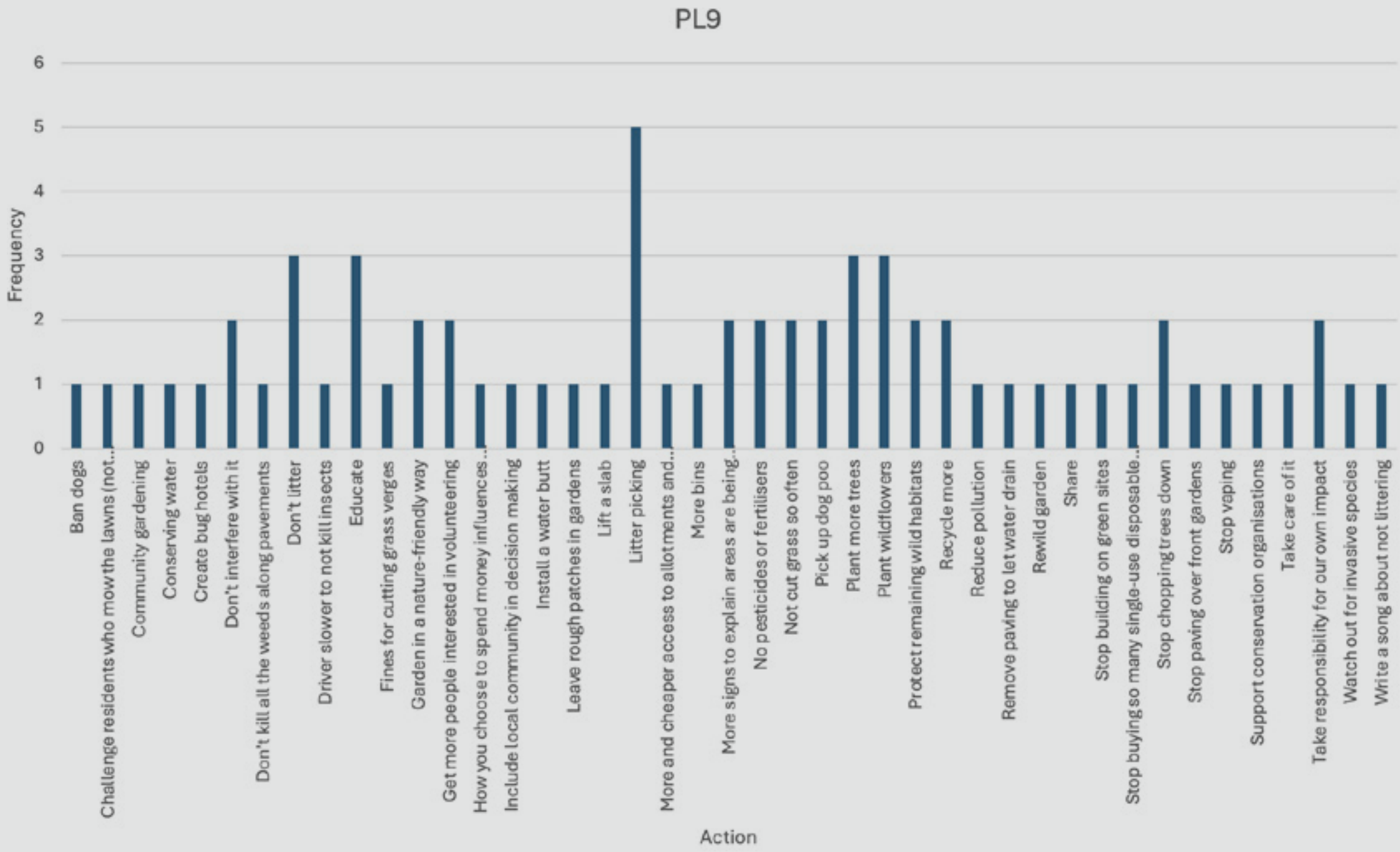
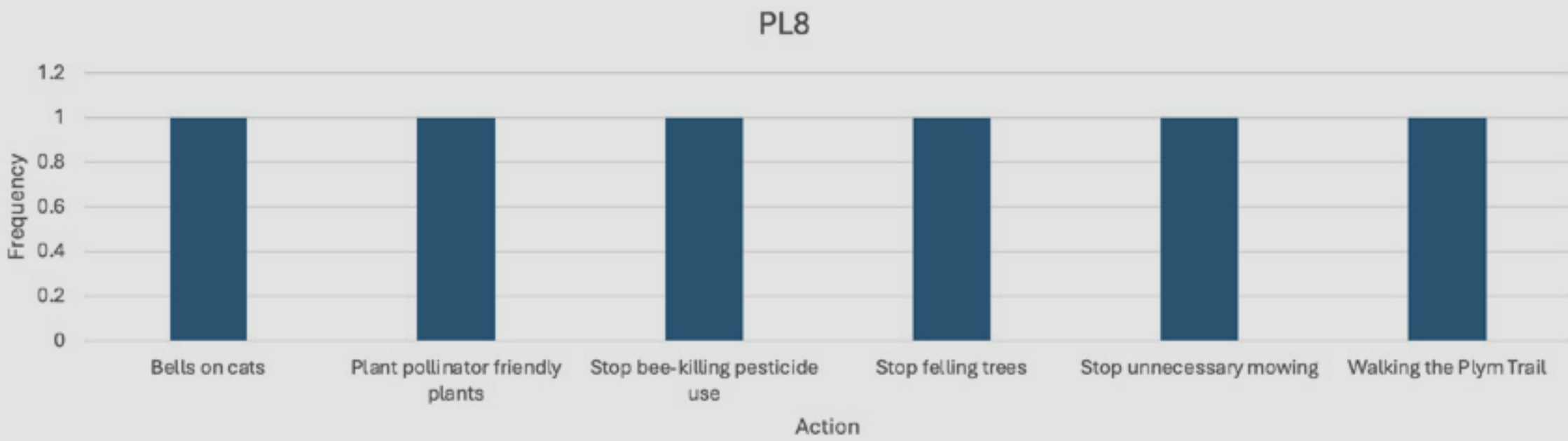
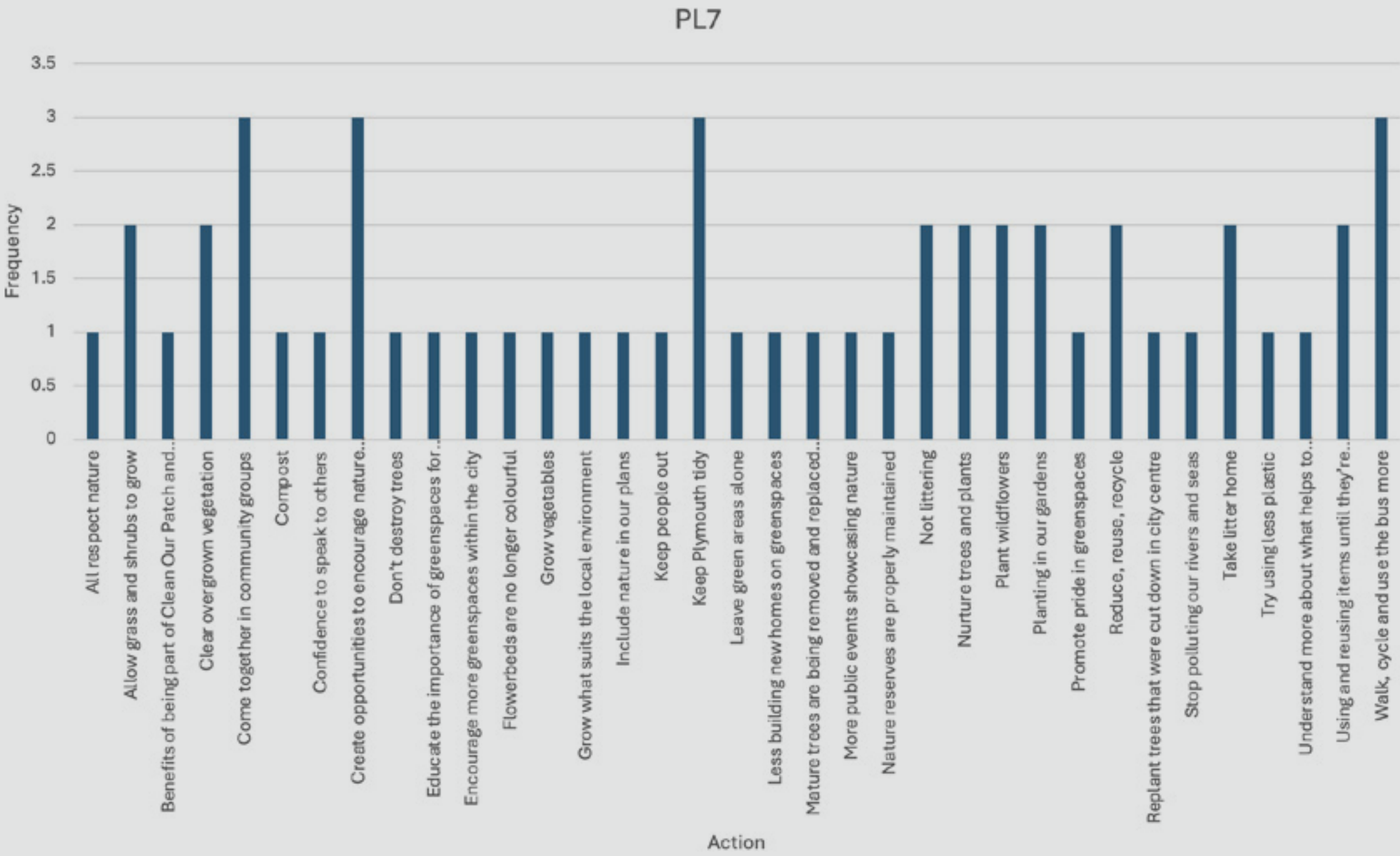












Priorities by age

Age	Priorities
0-10	Litter picking, Plant more trees
11-17	Litter picking, Natural resource management
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



# 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.

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### 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.

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### 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

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### 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.



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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.



# 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<sup>[1]</sup>.

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<sup>[2]</sup>.

‘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’<sup>[3]</sup>.

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.<sup>[4]</sup>

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.

<sup>[1]</sup> 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](https://jncc.gov.uk/our-role/the-uk/nature-recovery-joint-statement)

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

<sup>[3]</sup> 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

<sup>[4]</sup> 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.

