

Buzzing in the East End (B.E.E) development phase Impact Report 2024

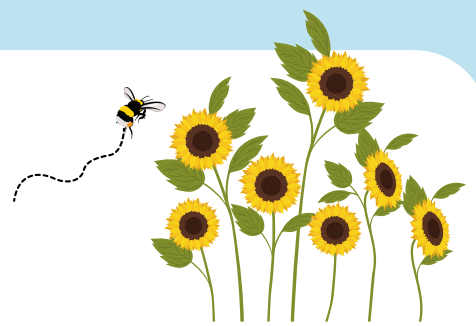


*“Community-driven
bumblebee conservation
and climate action in east
and southeast London.”*



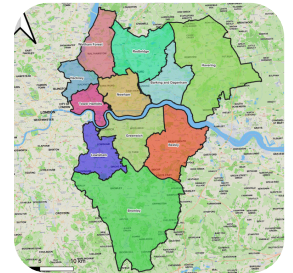
Buzzing in the East End (B.E.E)

Development phase: 15 January 2024 – 31 March 2025



Executive summary

Buzzing in the East End (B.E.E) was a one-year development project designed to combine bumblebee conservation with climate action across 11 boroughs in east and southeast London. The project aimed to survey rare bumblebee populations, engage diverse communities, provide habitat management advice, and lay the foundation for a long-term conservation project.



Over the past year, B.E.E significantly exceeded its engagement and conservation targets:

- **16 new BeeWalks** were established, tripling our target and bringing the total to 23 active transects in the project area.
- **15 bumblebee blitzes** were conducted across the 11 boroughs recording 12 species, including three rare - the **Shrill carder bumblebee** (*Bombus sylvarum*), **Brown-banded carder bumblebee** (*Bombus humilis*), and **Ruderal bumblebee** (*Bombus ruderatus*). The project generated the first-ever record of the Brown-banded carder bumblebee in Lewisham, and a new record of Ruderal bumblebee in Rainham.
- Community outreach efforts included **26 bumblebee identification workshops attended by 380 participants**, and the **recruitment of 10 new volunteers**.
- **20 community events engaged a further 760 people from diverse backgrounds**, and educational materials were distributed to local community hubs.
- **New educational resources** - including *Bumblebees in a changing climate* leaflet, *Bumblebees of the world* display, and *Introducing BeeWalk* animation - were created to enhance awareness.
- The project also expanded its digital reach, attracting **over 170 subscribers to the B.E.E monthly newsletter** and maintaining the @buzzingsoutheast social media presence.
- Project staff raised £500 through independent fundraising efforts.
- **Bespoke habitat advice** given to **24 landowners to improve over 75 hectares**, resulting in 10 reports, three case studies, and two habitat creation days.
- **Community consultation** played a crucial role in shaping the future of B.E.E, ensuring the project reflects the needs of London's communities. Relationships were built **with over 60 stakeholders** - including local councils, community gardens, mental health groups, faith groups, and environmental NGOs - while identifying key collaborators. Additionally, **150 residents** were surveyed to co-design the next phase of the project.
- Most notably, the project **successfully secured funding** from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, enabling a four-year expansion into southeast London.

Better understanding of urban bumblebees

We are delighted to report significant progress in improving our understanding of urban bumblebees over the past year. We conducted 15 bumblebee blitz surveys across 11 boroughs, prioritising areas with historical records of rare bumblebees. These blitzes allowed local people to improve their bumblebee identification while contributing valuable data.

- A highlight was the first-ever record of the rare Brown-banded carder bumblebee in the borough of Lewisham.
- Our surveys also evidenced conservation success with Brown-banded carders recorded at two key sites: The Ridgeway and Beckton Meadows, where the Trust had previously given habitat advice.
- Additionally, we recorded rare bumblebee species in areas threatened by development that may support efforts to protect these habitats.
- We generated additional records of the UK's rarest bumblebee, the Shrill carder, strengthening efforts to understand and protect this species.
- Excitingly, the rare Ruderal bumblebee was also recorded in east London.
- We supported the establishment of 16 new BeeWalk transects, tripling our original target of five.

**The rare species
that call east and
southeast
London home:**



Many of the East London habitats suitable for the rarer bumblebees are under threat from development, mismanagement or neglect, often because their importance for wildlife is unknown or unrecorded. Buzzing in the East End is an important step forward, engaging community scientists in the search for pockets of habitat where the bumblebees forage and nest. Evidence from this data will allow strategies to be developed that preserve, or even expand, populations of rarer bees. I have been impressed by the enthusiasm and work ethic of the team delivering training for future community scientists recording the distribution of key bumblebee species.

— Tony Madgwick, LNHS



Engaging diverse communities with climate action

Through B.E.E, we delivered 46 events, quadrupling our original target of 10, and engaged 1,140 people from diverse backgrounds. These events included 26 identification workshops attended by 380 participants, two school visits reaching 180 pupils, and various community activities, such as bumblebee safaris, pollinator picnics, and talks to promote the project.



Recognising London as the UK's most religiously and ethnically diverse region, we partnered with Sustainably Muslim, a CIC dedicated to empowering muslims to take climate action. Together, we co-hosted a faith-focused event connecting bumblebee conservation to Islamic teachings.

Our flagship event, *Bumblebee Extravaganza: A South Asian Celebration* celebrating the birthplace of bumblebees, featured bumblebee-pollinated curries, rangoli art, guided meditation, nature-inspired poetry, traditional dancing, and our *Bumblebees of the world* display - combining culture and conservation.



Understanding that conservation can feel secondary to concerns like food security or health, we supported community growing gardens and we collaborated with SLAM NHS Mental Health Recovery to deliver “well bee-ing” events that integrated nature-based therapy to support mental wellbeing.

During the development phase, we also recruited 10 volunteers to support surveys and community events across east and southeast London, with one volunteer using their skill set to create an animation *Introducing BeeWalk*.



Thanks again for the fantastic bee workshop—it was sensational... I learnt so much, and our students were captivated from beginning to end.

— Ursula, SLAM Recovery College

I enjoyed learning about the bumblebees of the world, their amazing lifecycles, and how important they are.

— Attendee of Extravaganza

Best event I have ever attended with my two boys.

— Attendee of Bumblebee Safari

It reminded me of the joy of discovery of being a child.

— Attendee of Well bee-ing event

Green spaces for climate change mitigation

Throughout the year, we visited sites and provided bespoke habitat advice to 24 landowners, including councils, churches, community gardens, parks, and public green spaces.

We advised on habitat improvements on over 75 hectares (exceeding 50 hectares target), produced 10-year habitat management plans, and undertook bulb planting at Bethlem Royal Hospital and yellow rattle sowing on the Ridgeway. When advising on meadow creation, we recommend natural regeneration first and, where necessary, introducing native wildflower seeds or plants of local provenance. Our guidance also emphasises planting drought-tolerant, deep-rooted species, and pollinator-friendly plants near water sources to ensure these habitats remain sustainable under shifting climate conditions.

Creating flower-rich habitats for bumblebees can also mitigate the effects of climate change and provide significant ecological benefits. By enhancing the abundance and diversity of flowers, we can strengthen ecosystem resilience, promote biodiversity recovery, mitigate flooding by absorbing rainwater run-off, enhance air quality, create green corridors and store carbon in the soil. To promote people taking individual action, we are creating the *Bumblebees in a changing climate* leaflet.

Achievements and successes:

This year's greatest achievement has been co-designing an impactful four-year project, B.E.E - southeast London, utilising extensive community consultation and collaboration. The project aims to improve understanding of bumblebee distribution and abundance, enhance habitat quality and connectivity, and inspire diverse communities to take action. By addressing local needs, this collaborative effort will create lasting benefits for both pollinators and people.



The impact of B.E.E has been truly inspiring. Thanks to generous funding from Kusuma Trust UK, we've worked closely with communities to discover populations of rare bumblebees, enhance vital habitats for these precious pollinators, and empower people to take meaningful action for nature.

— **Scarlett Weston, B.E.E Project Development Officer**

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