

**NATURAL ENVIRONMENT BOARD**  
**Monday, 16 October 2023**

Minutes of the meeting of the Natural Environment Board held at Committee Room -  
2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 16 October 2023 at 10.00 am

**Present**

**Members:**

Caroline Haines (Chairman)  
Andrew McMurtrie (Deputy Chairman)  
Wendy Mead

**In Attendance:**

William Upton  
Benjamin Murphy  
James St John Davis

**Officers:**

Emily Brennan	- Environment Department
Anna Cowperthwaite	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's
Simon Glynn	- Environment Department
Clem Harcourt	- Chamberlain's Department
Elisabeth Hannah	- Environment Department
Joe Kingston	- Environment Department
William LoSasso	- Environment Department
Jack Joslin	- Bridge House Estates
Ian Hughes	- Environment Department
Amba Nkundo	- Environment Department
Julia Pridham	- Bridge House Estates
Blair Stringman	- Town Clerk's Department
Jake Tibbets	- Environment Department
Edward Wood	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received by Eamonn Mullally.

**2. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

There were no declarations.

**3. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** – That, the public and non-public summary of the minutes held on the 10 July 2023 be agreed as a correct record subject to urgency procedures.

**MATTERS ARISING**

The Chair provided a Vote of Thanks to Graham Doshi-Smith who had recently resigned from the Board.

I would like to extend, on behalf of Members our heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to Graeme, a dedicated and passionate member of the Natural Environment Board, for his outstanding contributions during his tenure. As we bid farewell to Graeme, we cannot help but reflect on his remarkable efforts and commitment to the cause.

Throughout his time on the board, Graeme has been a tireless advocate for the importance of open spaces in promoting public health. He has consistently highlighted the critical role that these spaces play in our physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Graeme's unwavering dedication to this cause has not only raised awareness but also inspired all of us to recognise the significance of these natural environments in our lives.

As we bid farewell to Graeme, we wish him the very best for his future endeavours. His commitment to the cause of open spaces and their impact on public health has left an indelible mark, and we are confident that he will continue to make a positive difference in other matters.

Graeme, your contributions have been invaluable, and we thank you for your service. We extend our warmest wishes for your future, with the hope that you continue to champion the cause you hold dear. Thank you and best of luck in the future.

4. **WELCOME TO NEW MEMBER - EAMONN MULLALLY**

The Chair formally welcomed the new Member, Eamonn Mullally to the Natural Environment Board.

5. **INTRODUCTION TO ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF OPEN SPACES**

The Chair introduced and welcomed the new Assistant Director of Open Spaces, North London, William LoSasso to the Natural Environment Board.

The Assistant Director, North London Open Spaces expressed enthusiasm about joining the Corporation, highlighting experience in South London and the New York City Parks Department.

6. **INTRODUCTION TO ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, COMMERCIAL AND CHARITY GOVERNANCE AND FUNDRAISING**

The Chair introduced and welcomed the Assistant Director, Commercial and Charity Fundraising.

The Board welcomed the Assistant Director, Commercial and Charity Fundraising. It was noted that the Assistant Director would officially begin her role in mid-November. Members were informed that the Assistant Director had over 30 years of experience in the environmental and charity sector, nothing their work at Epping Forest, handling strategy, compliance, income generation, and financial management. The Assistant Director expressed excitement about working with the Board and looked forward to collaborating on charity reviews and various other projects benefiting open spaces.

## **MATTERS ARISING**

The Chair introduced and welcomed the Head of Operations and Parks.

The Board noted the new Head of Operation and Parks began in early September and had over 20 years of experience in land management including at Richmond Park and the Woodland Trust.

### **7. RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE REPORT**

The Board considered a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment, concerning the Natural Environment Cross-Divisional Risk Register.

A Member raised a question on the corporate risk register. Officers noted that, many items were reflected in general language on the corporate risk register. However, there was an ongoing effort to ensure that direct risks to the Natural Environment Division were more explicit and clearly outlined when the register was brought back to the Board. Members acknowledged this and the plans to revisit the detailed risk register in the future to ensure alignment with ongoing developments.

A Member raised concerns that climate change only carried a risk score of 6, noting recent unusual weather patterns. Officers noted that the risk score reflected operational considerations and that the focus in future would be on identifying realistic measures to work towards reducing the associated risks rather than treating it as an unavoidable outcome.

**RESOLVED** – That,

- a) Natural Environment Division Risk Register: Members confirm, on behalf of the City Corporation as Trustee, that the Natural Environment Cross-Divisional Risk Register (Appendix 1) in the report, satisfactorily sets out the key top-level risks to the charities and that appropriate systems are in place to identify and mitigate risks across the charities.
- b) City Gardens Risk Register: Members note the content of this report, the City Gardens Risk Register (Appendix 2), and the action being taken to effectively manage these risks.
- c) Reporting format: Members agree to receive detailed risk registers every six months and summary risk registers in the two interim quarterly reports, with individual risks being reported in detail by exception.

### **8. \*OPERATIONAL FINANCE PROGRESS REPORT (PERIOD 3 APRIL – JUNE 2023) 2023/24 – NATURAL ENVIRONMENT DIVISION**

The Board received a report of the Chamberlain, concerning the operation finance progress as of 3 (April – June2023) 2023/24.

A Member raised concerns about the top-down approach in the deficit funding report, particularly in how increased income at Hampstead Heath is perceived as a general pool of money to offset losses elsewhere. The Member suggested that the report did not accurately represent the bottom-up approach and requested a clearer acknowledgment of how budgets work at the local level. Additionally, discussion was raised about how to handle increased local funds

and the need to consider retaining a substantial proportion of those funds locally rather than following a one-in-one-out model.

In response to a question raised by a Member, regarding the Monument, which currently sits within the Natural Environment Division the Member proposed a resolution to the Natural Environment Board, expressing concern about the Monument's placement and recommending that it be considered a legacy asset by the Finance Committee. Additionally, they suggested requesting the Chamberlain to consider a future business case and the Town Clerk to identify appropriate governance and oversight for the Monument. Members agreed to delegate the resolution to the Interim Executive Director of Environment, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Board, to confirm the final wording.

**RESOLVED** – That,

- a) The report be noted.
- b) Members agree for the Board to send a resolution to the Finance Committee and the Policy & Resources Committee regarding the decision to move The Monument into the Natural Environment Division and authorised the Interim Executive Director of Environment, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Board, to confirm the final wording.

9. **BARBERS SURGEONS HALL CONSULTATION**

The Board received a verbal update of the Interim Executive Director, Environment, concerning the Barbers Surgeons Hall Consultation.

Members noted that a six-week public consultation for Barber Surgeons had concluded. Officers noted that the executive report, received last week, would be distributed to board members. Of the 769 responses, people generally expressed satisfaction with the garden's current appearance. However, 17% of respondents did not use the garden, with 23% unsure how to access it and 21% unaware it was a public garden. Safety in the garden was generally perceived positively. Respondents favoured a new accessible entrance, with top priorities for additions being trees and planting (61%), more seating (53%), historic information (37%), better paths (36%), and improved access (34%). It was noted that the next steps involve the commissioner and architect using the survey information to develop a master plan, engaging key stakeholders, and presenting the final plan to the committee for approval.

**RESOLVED** – That, the verbal update be noted.

10. **FINSBURY CIRCUS**

The Board received a verbal update of the Interim Executive Director, Environment, concerning the Finsbury Circus Project.

Members were given an update on details on the Finsbury Circus project, with contractors expected to start on November 20th, pending final confirmation from TfL due to the underground running beneath the site. It was noted the

communication plan included engaging with stakeholders, refreshing the website, and providing visuals and progress updates through newsletters. Members were informed that the team was working with City Surveyors to ensure everything was in place and exploring additional elements within the scheme, such as wayfinding and educational elements. Officers noted the project aimed for joined-up thinking across various city areas.

**RESOLVED** – That, the verbal update be noted.

**11. COMMEMORATIVE BENCHES AND TREE POLICY**

The Board considered a verbal update of the Interim Executive Director, Environment, concerning an update on the position of the commemorative benches and tree policy.

**RESOLVED** – That, Members endorse the changes to the Commemorative Benches and Trees Policy as agreed at Streets and Walkways Sub-Committee subject to Town Clerk approval in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

**12. BUNHILL FIELDS COMBINED MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Board considered a report of the Interim Executive Director, Environment, concerning the Bunhill Fields Combined Management Plan.

During the meeting, there was a discussion about dog control problems, and the Board expressed the need for specific options to address the issue. It was suggested that at the next Board meeting, there should be a presentation of different options to explore and consider implications. Additionally, there was a request for information on the opening hours and gates of the affected areas, with a focus on enforcement notices issued by Park guards and the need for their presence during specific times when people walk their dogs.

**RESOLVED** – That, Members endorse the Bunhill Fields Burial Ground Conservation Management Plan as a resource to guide management, and to enable the development of a City Gardens operational plan, subject to Town Clerk approval in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

**13. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AWAYDAY UPDATE**

The Board received a verbal update of the Interim Executive Director, Environment, concerning the Natural Environment awayday.

During the meeting, it was discussed that workshops were conducted with Members and staff to develop a new vision and strategies for the division. Common themes included the importance of partnership, income generation, and the need to address conflicts between strategic priorities such as nature conservation and access for all. It was noted that the feedback from the workshops was being collected, and the next steps involve drafting mission and vision statements, as well as strategic priorities in the areas of nature conservation, community engagement, access and recreation, and culture, learning, and heritage. Members were informed that the draft strategies would be circulated for comments, with the goal of getting them approved for launch in

January. The timeline and next steps were outlined, and detailed comments are expected once the draft strategies are presented to the board.

**RESOLVED** – That, the verbal update be noted.

14. **LEARNING TEAM UPDATE**

The Board received a verbal update of the Interim Executive Director, Environment, concerning an update from the learning team.

Officers informed Members that looking ahead, key areas of focus include addressing the attainment gap, expanding initiatives around climate education, promoting well-being benefits of nature access, reaching out to more people, enhancing play centres, and supporting adult well-being through a volunteering program. Officers noted the importance of connecting with nature for pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours, and the need to provide opportunities for children to play freely outdoors. It was noted that the goal was also to raise awareness of career pathways through participation in careers fairs and weaving in more understanding of how learning relates to wider careers and the world.

**RESOLVED** – That, the verbal update be noted.

15. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no questions.

16. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED**

There was no urgent business.

17. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** – That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

18. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** – That, the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

19. **HERITAGE UPDATE**

The Board received a verbal update of the Interim Executive Director, Environment.

**RESOLVED** – That, the verbal update be noted.

20. **NATURAL ENVIRONMENT CHARITY REVIEW**

The Board received a verbal update of the Managing Director of Bridge House Estates.

**RESOLVED** – That, the verbal update be noted.

21. **NATURAL ENVIRONMENT BOARD DINNER**

The Board received a verbal update from the Chairman.

**RESOLVED** – That, the verbal update be noted.

22. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no questions.

23. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**

There was no urgent business.

24. **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** – That, the confidential minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

25. **TARGET OPERATING MODEL - PHASE TWO UPDATE**

The Board received a verbal update of the Interim Executive Director, Environment.

**RESOLVED** – That, the verbal update be noted.

**The meeting ended at 11.30am.**

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Chairman

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