

Committee(s): West Ham Park Committee	Dated: 07/07/2022
Subject: Natural Environment Strategies	For information Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1.2.4.9.10.11.12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	£
What is the source of Funding?	
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Executive Director, Environment	For information
Report author: Interim Director of Natural Environment	

Summary

The purpose of this report is to share with Members the draft strategies from the Natural Environment Division as follows: Charity Income Strategy, Visitor Strategy, Learning Strategy, Conservation and Nature Resilience Strategy and Community Strategy.

This is a report for information but Members are encouraged to send comments to the Director of Natural Environment

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note this report and the five draft strategies

Main Report

Background

Court of Common Council, 03 December 2020 approved the creation of a new Environment Department under a new Executive Director. Within this restructure the new Natural Environment Division was created as part of the Environment Department which was operational on 01 April 2022.

A new division generated the need for a Charity Review as part of the Corporate Charity Review and which will include the following key areas:

- Governance
- Strategic
- Operational – Resourcing
- Operational Finance

This report concerns itself with the strategic approach acknowledging that each element is not entirely separate but there is much overlap between the key areas under investigation. We are just at the start of the overall Charity Review but it was felt important that Natural Environment should have a key strategic way forward that would then inform the changes to be proposed to the Natural Environment Board (subject to name change agreement) to have a focus on a strategic focus, noting that in order to deliver the strategic vision the necessary resources will be needed which is the operation resourcing element of the Charity Review and the operational financing section as well.

The first Natural Environment Away Day

This first Awayday was held on the 20th June 2022 at the Museum of London with an agenda in the morning session focused on the strategic direction of the new division.

The summary session recorded the three key points of the discussion for each strategy as follows:

- a) Charity Income
 - The profile of Natural Environment and the story of why increased investment was needed was an important starting point
 - The generation of more sources of income for example surrounding local authorities, legacies and endowments was critical to suppress the dependency on just City Cash
 - More data needed including the social value contribution
- b) Visitor
 - Recognises the value of our spaces as destinations and highlights the importance of having an in-depth knowledge of our visitors and the drivers that brings them to our sites
 - Strengthen the links to the City and establishes a golden thread between corporate, dept, and divisional strategies, particularly recognising the need to balance visitor needs and the natural environment and its preservation for future generations.

- Focus on accessibility and participation, particularly looking at developing audiences from most deprived communities, increasing the social value of our sites

c) Education and Learning

- Align learning strategy with renewal of CoL Education Strategy (2023) and link to fusion skills.
- Consider balances between:
 - Shorter term engagement reaching more Londoners who wouldn't otherwise visit our site, and longer-term engagement with fewer people.
 - Continuing school programme at current or increased capacity (a highly effective way to reach children who wouldn't otherwise visit our spaces) and options for increasing opportunities for adult learners (also need to show how current strategy includes a range of adults, e.g., via play programme and youth engagement which includes young adults).
 - Reach across London (including its most deprived boroughs) and focus on boroughs adjacent to our sites
- Show how the learning strategy helps learners to link their learning to the wider world and careers, e.g., through careers festivals and citizen science.

d) Community

- Public aspiration
 - Members recognised the challenges of a work programme dominated by health and safety, occupier's liability, maintenance, and habitat plan responsibilities which at times might not reflect community aspirations for further improvements reflected through public engagement. It was felt that improved dialogue was needed to better communicate the trustee's management obligations, while identifying opportunities for new community-led investment in sites.
- Public Participation
 - Referencing Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Public Engagement, Members were keen to see greater public participation in meaningful decision making, if participation recognised the very real restrictions City Cash funding position.
- Identity
 - Members felt strongly that the City Corporation's identity sometimes overshadowed the individual charity objectives

and that a more nuanced identity was needed to both acknowledge the City's primary funding role, while celebrating the ambition and appeal of the charitable trust, hopefully providing more common ground for local authority support for investment in the charities.

e) Conservation

- There is a real need to ensure that each strategy balances with the others. Some members stated that all strategies should be centred around Nature Recovery
- We need to develop a code of ethics to help us determine which sources of money we will accept to support the charities. (I think this is a good general point that could be applied to most other of our draft strategies)
- The City should aspire to be a national player
- We should not be frightened of acquiring more land if partnership working won't get the job done

Current Position

The current position is that the Natural Environment Division is composed of 10 Charities all of which have operated with their own strategic boundaries. With the creation of the new division, it is not intended to create a one size strategy and governance that fits all, instead it is intended to offer the strategic framework in which the individual Charities. The Trustee and the Members of the Committee can operate, taking account of local circumstances.

This approach acknowledges that there are some common areas, for example our response to climate change, our need to raise additional income sources that has led to the five draft strategies appendixes to this report. One important strategic approach is to ensure that all our open spaces have complimentary masterplans that reflect the key individual strategies, some are already in place and need reviewing and other need to put a masterplan in place. Further reports will be brought back to Committee on this matter.

Options

The options under consideration were which strategies to pursue in the short term and which would be medium to longer term opportunities given the need to complete operational resourcing in order to have the resources to pursue a wider strategic approach. Future strategies could include Communication and Branding, Residential Accommodation, Investment strategy for example.

Proposals

The recommendations will support the delivery of the Natural Environment Charity Review, in particular the Strategic Section

Key Data

N/A

Corporate & Strategic Implications

None

Conclusion

The recommendations contained in this report are:

Note the report and the five key strategies Charity Income Strategy

Further work on the strategies will contribute to the overall schedule of work to deliver the Natural Environment Charity Review and will set the Charities future direction and development.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Charity Income Strategy
- Appendix 2 Visitor Strategy
- Appendix 3 Learning Strategy
- Appendix 4 Conservation and Nature Resilience Strategy
- Appendix 5 Community Strategy

Background Papers

None

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Appendix 1

Natural Environment

Charity Income Strategy – 2022 – 2032

Executive Summary

1. Vision/Commitment

In order to maximise our ability to preserve and protect our open spaces in an era of reducing funding, we will build on the City funding available and generate more resources in order to increase benefits for our visitors. We will deliver this income in a sensitive way and without causing damage or harm to the spaces.

2. Who we are?

We (the Natural Environment Division) form part of the City of London Corporation's Environment Department. Comprising 3 core open spaces (Sections) covering around 11,000 acres. Each is of immense (and growing) local, regional, and national importance for biodiversity.

3. Why us?

Like all charities, funding has become constrained over recent years, and it is anticipated that City's Cash will be further reduced over coming years. To maintain and preserve the activities that we have undertaken in our spaces over the past decades, we must become more self-sufficient and identify opportunities to benefit monetarily from our spaces.

4. Who we will work with (and how we will complement others' efforts)?

We will work with residents, visitors, local authorities, special interest groups, community groups, national representative organisation and others who are to work with us to sensitively develop the spaces. to ensure that our proposed revenue generating activities are well accepted in advance of their delivery. We will also seek to work with these groups to increase fundraising and legacy gifts. We will seek grants from all relevant grand providers.

For specialist activities, we will procure specialist resources (e.g., wedding/event planning, merchandising, etc.) and/or hire specialist staff to deliver high quality outcomes.

5. Aims (of the strategy)

General

- i. To create a brand and a story that encourages donations and investment and encourages visibility within our spaces
- ii. Maximise the income that we can whilst aligning with other Open Space strategies and without causing harm or damage to our spaces. Utilising matched funding principles for example with local authorities
- iii. To raise the profile regionally and nationally of the achievements and work of the Open Spaces in order to attract potential national sponsors
- iv. To understand our 'offer' and the associated benefits to funders
- v. Further develop our marketing and promotion and investigate opportunities for merchandising etc

6. Revenue generation

- i. Develop wide array of opportunities to generate revenue that enhances the experience of our visitors and/or increases the number of diverse visitors to our spaces.
- ii. Research potential invest to save projects.
- iii. Utilise buffer land to increase overall revenue to the charities
- iv. Ensure that sales are maximised

7. Fundraising

- i. Increase the amounts raised through fundraising activities
- ii. Identify projects that can be delivered through specific fundraising campaigns
- iii. Determine if membership of the charities is a viable means of fundraising
- iv. Increase the number of legacy gifts provided to the charities through targeted campaigns

8. Grants

- i. Identify projects that can be delivered through specific grants.
- ii. Increase numbers of conservation grants

9. Capital

- i. Benefits accruing directly to the Charities from Capital Receipts on sale

10. What needs to change to achieve this strategy?

- i. Our ambition, confidence, and influence.
- ii. Work with Chamberlains to ensure retention of revenue income and capital receipts as ear marked reserves.
- iii. Buffer lands need to be governed by the same regime as the charities, including with regard to funding sources within the City of London.

- iv. Seeking every opportunity to promote the work of Open Spaces and to raise the profile nationally and regionally. Including practical measures like branding our offer and developing our website and literature.
- v. Ensure our Charitable Objects give sufficient licence to widen our accessibility to funding.
- vi. Ensure that revenue generating opportunities align with our strategies.
- vii. Consider efficiencies that will create revenue savings for reinvestment.
- viii. Greater engagement with stakeholders eg Local Authorities.
- ix. Creation of KPI's to effectively monitor and evaluate success.
- x. Research and Analysis of our customers and clients to understand what our customers would like to see and the customer journey.
- xi. Data base of opportunities.
- xii. Having clear objectives and measurable outcomes backed with evidence and data.
- xiii. Better use of technology to reduce our expenditure as part of savings plan.

- xiv. Greatly improved messaging and visibility that encourages individuals. Local authorities and companies to see the benefits of being associated with the open spaces and feel a sense of responsibility for the future of the spaces.
- xv. A complete social value audit and quantification to take place, including value of volunteer's contribution.

11. How does this strategy balance against competing strategies?

This strategy will need to be balanced against our conservation strategy and aligned with our visitor and community engagement strategies. It is critical that no revenue generation opportunities should be pursued at the expense of our conservation objectives. We should be aligning our community engagement activities to understand better the interests of our local communities and through data our visitor demand and therefore our income generating opportunities.

This strategic approach must take account of the Charity Act 2011 and the objects of each Charity.

12. Outcomes (of the strategy showing the intended impact we want to make)

- i. Year-on-year increases to income.
- ii. Number of investment opportunities and save to invest schemes pursued.
- iii. Increased or new facilities resulting from the increased revenue and capital awards.
- iv. User enjoyment of our spaces, as evidenced through surveys and data.

13. Corporate Plan links

This strategy supports the following Corporate Aim:

‘Shaping Outstanding Environments’

*‘We have clean air, land and water and a thriving natural environment
Our spaces are secure, resilient, and well maintained’*

14. What success looks like

- i. Increased ability to undertake conservation activities through in the increase in income
- ii. Improved or new facilities for residents and visitors
- iii. Appropriate use of our assets for visitor-centric revenue generating activities
- iv. We have fit for purpose interactive website and active social media, reaching out a variety of audiences, resulting in easy to generate income
- v. Achieving measurable and appropriated KPI’s (to be determined).

15. Resource needs and other implications

- i. People.
- ii. Dedicated and specialist resources for commercial opportunities, fundraising, and grant writing.
- iii. Ability to outsource as appropriate.
- iv. Training programmes for existing staff to participate.
- v. Policies and procedures to support operations.
- vi. Implementation Plan for approval that is consistent across the Charities particularly for setting fees and costs.
- vii. Invest in change management and developing performance management and employee capabilities.
- viii. Need to be creative and imaginative with opportunities.

Appendix 2

Natural Environment

Visitor and Destination strategy 2022 - 2023

Executive Summary

1. Vision

The vision of the strategy is to align the Charities objects with customer's needs so that our open spaces can be seen as important destination for London and beyond with a well-defined branding and a wide range of activities and facilities that can attract a wide range of visitors.

The primary aim of this visitor strategy is to focus and align our activities and people to agreed objectives that are ultimately identified by the drivers. The major benefit of the strategic approach is that that investment is aligned with needs to capture the local importance of our spaces as regional and national destinations but also to harness the balance between visitor needs and the preservation of these sites for future generation and biodiversity.

2. Who we are?

The City of London's Natural environments enrich people's lives by enhancing and providing access to 4,500 hectares of diverse open space across London and beyond, including outstanding heritage assets. Every year millions of people visit our open spaces within London and outside London. Our award-winning open spaces range from the National Nature Reserve of Burnham Beeches in Buckinghamshire to Epping Forest – London's largest open space and Hampstead Heath with its amazing views, rolling woodlands and meadows.

3. Why us?

The charitable objects and legislative objectives for each open space are to preserve the open spaces for the recreational benefit of their users. The charities' strategic frameworks have wider objectives, but the visitor focus is undefined and a visitor strategy is needed as the recreational benefits required by the legislation remains important charitable objects.

4. Who we will work with?

The organisations, groups, and people we will be working with will include all the stakeholders linked to our visitors. The definition of visitors is intended to include all current users and potential users. This will include user of the sites for activities including walking, leisure, and recreational activities, play and health facilities, wellbeing activities such as sport, leisure and relaxation, local, regional or national events staged in the open spaces.

Drivers for visitors are explored in relation to:

- i. Leisure, Health and well being
- ii. Heritage and cultural importance
- iii. Education and schools
- iv. Biodiversity and natural environment
- v. Engagement, volunteering, and behaviour changes
- vi. Accessibility and social benefits for deprived and vulnerable communities
- vii. Inclusivity for all parts of the community

There will be a range of stakeholders linked to these drivers that will need to be engaged in the process that includes COL Members, Local Authorities officers and Members, local communities, key stakeholders, volunteers, schools, consultative committees, London and Partners, the business community, non-Government bodies, sport clubs, the heritage and culture sector, etc.

5. Aims

The aims are as follows:

- i. To create a golden thread with the current corporate and Natural Environment strategies and Destination City
- ii. To shape plans/priority projects that can be incorporated into a strategic framework to enable more successful business development.
- iii. Maintain a balance between visitor economy and the protection of our sites for biodiversity and nature conservation

The primary objectives of COL open spaces' visitor strategy are:

- i. To develop a brand for the Natural Environment recognising and promoting the individual nature and purpose of each charity.
- ii. Consolidate' core business activities for our visitors, including our sport and leisure provision, such that it delivers an appealing and distinctive service with the aim of being more self-sustainable.
- iii. To expand on longer term the business into new markets and audiences to attract new visitors within the constraints of the sites, particularly those from under-represented groups
- iv. To improve accessibility and inclusivity mindful of the delicate balance that needs to be achieved to preserve our natural spaces.

6. What needs to change to achieve this strategy?

- i. Our ambition, confidence, and influence
- ii. A better way to collect data and customer insight
- iii. Development of a website and a comms strategy that can be a suitable platform to develop audiences
- iv. A clear branding and offer from our facilities

- v. Ensure that the visitor strategy aligns with the developing sport and leisure strategy, other corporate strategies, and the Natural environment strategies
- vi. An understanding that a balance between nature conservation and visitor development is possible

7. How does this strategy balance against competing strategies?

The Natural Environment Division is developing a series of separate strategies to lead its main service delivery activities. These will sometimes complement each other but there will be occasions when they compete. Each strategy needs to acknowledge the existence of and link to, the others and seek balanced solutions to potential conflicting needs

8. Outcomes

There are several workstreams that are necessary to prioritise in order to achieve the above objectives so that the following outcomes can be achieved:

- i. A qualitative and quantitative research that can fully understand current audiences and develop strategic approaches
- ii. A review of the Charities' vision/values/brand to meet the need of current audiences and develop new audiences.
- iii. Well defined product/services to meet visitor groups/needs in relation to the different sites and how they are used
- iv. Defined basic customer/ 'brand' proposition for each site and the adoption of an effective comms strategy
- v. Opportunities/start-point initiatives, develop high-level long-term opportunities and initiatives, and prioritise these plans to develop our business
- vi. Creation of a framework visitor strategy for each charity and route-map that can be supported by stakeholders and will develop the offer for each charity
- vii. Start-point unique high level selling propositions/positionings/messages including the development of the right mediums i.e., social media, web presence etc.
- viii. Through engagement and compliance, there will be the right balance that can continue to welcome visitors, develop audiences, and preserve the sites for future generations

An important starting point is having enough data on current visitors and a visitor survey can be a very important initial step to inform the above workstreams.

9. Corporate plans link

The strategic framework for the City's open spaces is highlighted in the Open Spaces business plan 2021-22. [PowerPoint Presentation \(cityoflondon.gov.uk\)](https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk)..

10. What success looks like

- i. Sites understand their visitors and their drivers and key plans are developed that cover our aims for volunteers, sport and leisure for example.
- ii. There is an understanding and knowledge of current audiences and opportunities to create new ones or develop existing ones, particularly focusing on deprived communities and inclusivity
- iii. Our visitor strategy is in line with corporate objectives and the objectives of the charities
- iv. Developed strong partnerships with organisations and frameworks that can amplify messages and strengthen the strategy such as London and Partners
- v. Effective communications and branding - our sites and management activities are understood by various audiences
- vi. We have a robust data set to inform consistent management decisions
- vii. We have access to the skills/expertise we need
- viii. We have sufficient resources to meet our new ambitions
- ix. Additional income generation directly funds those ambitions

11. Resource needs and implications

a. Funding for:

- i. Acquire professional expertise to develop baselines and plans
- ii. Research and data gathering to identify audiences
- iii. Resourcing audience development plans, including marketing, branding, and comms
- iv. Develop partnerships with businesses creating packages to enhance visitor experience
- v. Funding improvements identified in audience development plans
- vi. Capital funding to improve infrastructure and facilities to enhance visitor experience
- vii. New skills/expertise within teams (or access to external expertise)
- viii. IT development to enhance visitor experience

b. People

- i. Strengthened expertise through training and development

c. Communications

- i. Improved marketing and comms according to audience development plans
- ii. Clear links to competing strategies and key messages on balancing competing priorities.

Appendix 3

Natural Environment

Learning Strategy 2022 - 32

Executive Summary

1. Vision/Commitment

To facilitate learning through active engagement with our green spaces, reduce inequalities in education and wellbeing, and develop nature connection as a foundation for pro-environmental behaviours.

2. Who we are

The City of London's natural environments enrich people's lives by enhancing and providing access to 4,500 hectares of diverse open space across London and beyond, including outstanding heritage assets. Every year millions of people visit our open spaces within London and outside London. Our award-winning open spaces range from the National Nature Reserve of Burnham Beeches in Buckinghamshire to Epping Forest – London's largest open space and Hampstead Heath with its amazing views, rolling woodlands and meadows.

The current learning programme engages schools and communities in three sites: Hampstead Heath, Epping Forest (including Wanstead Flats) and West Ham Park. The programme consists of the following workstreams:

- I. Schools service at Hampstead Heath, Epping Forest, West Ham Park
- II. Green Talent programme working with 13 – 25-year-olds struggling in education and/or furthest from the job market
- III. Play activities at Hampstead Heath (two play centres) engaging children, parents, and carers
- IV. Volunteer development and community outreach work engaging families, children, and adults

The programme works with a variety of organisations including Culture Mile Learning, Camden Council, University College London, and the Refugee Council. For more information on the current programme, contact abigail.tinkler@cityoflondon.gov.uk

3. Why us?

At a time of increasing disconnection from nature, a need to act over the climate crisis, and a drive to tackle inequalities and enrich people's lives, our green spaces provide a unique opportunity to connect people to nature, develop pro-environmental values, inspire learning, and enhance wellbeing.

4. **Who we will work with?**

We recognise the importance of working with a wide range of partners to maximise efforts to engage learners with our green spaces, build nature connection, and reduce inequalities in access to nature, wellbeing and educational attainment. Key groups will include schools, community groups, local authorities, volunteers, research partners, CoL strategy team and Culture Mile Learning. This will include working closely with the CoL education strategy team to ensure alignment with a new 2023 CoL Education Strategy, which should include an environmental element.

5. **Aims**

- i. **Build nature connection and pro-environmental behaviours:** Research has shown that the first step in building pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours is to develop nature connection. This connection is developed through participation in memorable experiences outdoors. The development of a new strategy will enable us to expand our 'nature connection' activities and reach at a time of increasing concern over climate change and biodiversity loss.
- ii. **Enhance access to London's nature: building confidence, understanding and involvement:** Contact with nature is becoming less frequent, and for many Londoners our city is the main place they can experience being in nature. Through engaging people in meaningful learning activities, we can help participants to understand the value of urban nature, to feel confident to explore and enjoy our spaces, and to get involved in maintaining open spaces.
- iii. **Increase opportunities to improve wellbeing:** Spending time in nature is beneficial to health and wellbeing, however, there are many concerns over health and wellbeing inequalities as people in deprived areas of London face more barriers than most to accessing nature. The learning programme can reach out and engage groups with our green spaces, contributing to the health and wellbeing of residents of some of London's most vulnerable communities through participation in volunteering, bespoke community and youth programmes, school programmes and play programmes. For young children, natural play outdoors is excellent for their wellbeing and development. There is growing concern that opportunities for children to play in nature are becoming very limited, and the learning programme has a key role in supporting more children to play in our outdoor spaces.

- iv. **Increase opportunities in education:** Following the pandemic and association school closures, there is heightened concern over the attainment gap between disadvantaged school students and their peers. Groups who have been adversely affected include children living in poverty, children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), young carers and young refugees. The learning programme can work with these groups, including targeting high pupil premium schools to reach children who are living in poverty, and providing bespoke sessions for children with SEND, and groups such as young carers and young refugees. Sessions will support understanding of National Curriculum topics for school audiences, including literacy and numeracy, as well as enhancing confidence, wellbeing and nature connection for all.

- v. **Build fusion skills:** Research has shown that many students struggle to understand how their learning relates to future career paths, and that career aspirations are often formed at a young age. The programme will support learners to develop fusion skills - a combination of skills such as creativity, problem solving and communication, and raise awareness of career pathways through participation in career festivals and providing programmes which show how these skills are relevant beyond the classroom.

- vi. **Define and increase our reach:** We will focus our reach to engage children growing up in poverty, children with special educational needs and disabilities, young people struggling to engage with education/employment, and communities who border our green spaces but face barriers to visiting (all ages). This will include targeting more high pupil premium schools in London, particularly in London's most deprived boroughs. The development of the new Learning Strategy will include consideration of the benefits and costs of expanding the programme to more sites, including The Commons (the programme has been focused on Hampstead Heath, Epping Forest, West Ham Park and London audiences).

6. What needs to change to achieve this strategy?

- a. Our ambition, confidence, and influence
- b. Funding and resources - to refocus or increase capacity
- c. Reduce introspection/silo working
- d. Increase collaboration with other organisations

7. How does this strategy balance against competing strategies?

The Natural Environment Division is developing a series of separate strategies to lead its main service delivery activities. These will sometimes complement each other but there will be occasions when they compete. Each strategy needs to acknowledge the existence of and link to the others, align efforts where appropriate, and seek balanced solutions to potential conflicting needs.

8. Outcomes

We will deliver projects and services that deliver impact in our local communities, connecting them more powerfully to our green spaces. Our programmes will deliver the following outcomes increases for participants:

- i. Increase understanding of the value and importance of our green spaces
- ii. Increase confidence to use green spaces, as part of our activities or independently
- iii. Increase involvement in taking positive action for or getting involved with our green spaces
- iv. Increase sense of wellbeing
- v. Increase nature connection

9. Corporate Plan links

This strategy supports the following corporate aims:

Contribute to a flourishing society:

- *People are safe and feel safe.*
- *People enjoy good health and wellbeing.*
- *People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential.*
- *Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need.*

Support a thriving economy:

- *We have access to the skills and talent we need.*

Shape outstanding environments:

- *We inspire enterprise, excellence, creativity, and collaboration.*

10. What success looks like

- a. We have sufficient resources to meet our new ambitions.
- b. Our audiences gain an increase in understanding, wellbeing, confidence, nature connection and/or involvement after participating in our activities.
- c. We engage high pupil premium schools (pupil premium is an indicator of disadvantage as it is allocated to children who have been in receipt of free school meals, looked after or adopted from

- care), young people who are struggling with education/employment and community groups.
- d. We engage children growing up in areas of income inequality and child poverty at our Play Centres, providing opportunities for outdoor play.
 - e. We use our evaluation and relevant research to adapt and improve our learning programme.
 - f. We have effective communications - our learning activities are understood by its various audiences.
 - g. We have a robust data set to inform consistent management decisions.
 - h. We have access to the skills/expertise we need.
 - i. The learning strategy is in line with corporate objectives and the CoL Education Strategy.

11.Resource needs and other implications

- a. Funding for:**
 - i. Resourcing learning audience development plans, including staffing and marketing
- b. People**
 - i. Strengthened expertise through training and development
- c. Communications**
 - i. Improved marketing and comms to reach and engage our learning audiences
 - ii. Clear links to competing strategies and key messages on balancing competing priorities

Appendix 4

Natural Environment

Nature Recovery and Climate Resilience Strategy. 2022 – 2032

Executive Summary

1. Background and Strategic context.

The Open Spaces Department ‘shapes outstanding environments’ by long-term, expert custodianship of its open spaces and their particular biodiversity, across 4,500 hectares of open space within London and beyond. Every year millions of people visit our award-winning open spaces including the National Nature Reserves of Burnham Beeches in Buckinghamshire, Ashted Common and the South London Downs in Surrey, Epping Forest in Essex and Hampstead Heath. Two of these sites, Burnham Beeches and Epping Forest carry Special Area of Conservation status (SAC) recognising their international importance for rare and specific habitat types. All share common charitable and legislative objectives: *to preserve the open spaces for the recreational benefit of their users.*

In a country that has, over recent decades, recorded a devastating decline in once common species of flora and fauna, opportunities to experience the full spectrum of biodiversity once found in the English landscape, are rapidly diminishing. In that same time frame our appreciation and understanding has grown of the ‘hidden services’ the natural landscape provides such as clean air, water, carbon sequestration and storage, upon which all existence is based. There is a pressing need to better understand, value and protect these natural services to reflect their intrinsic worth.

Our open spaces have become sanctuaries for some of the UK’s rarest and most threatened species, which in itself is a lamentable reflection of the wider state of our environment. More positively each site can and must, play an important role in reversing the current ‘biodiversity loss crisis’, a challenge set out by the Environment Act, 2022. This can only be achieved by agreement of a clear and determined strategic approach thereby ensuring that future generations of all species, including our own, can thrive.

The strategic framework for the City’s open spaces is highlighted in the Open Spaces business plan 2021-22. [PowerPoint Presentation \(cityoflondon.gov.uk\)](#). The strategy has wider objectives but lacks the

detailed strategic approach identified above. The strategic approach should drive existing and future site-specific management plans.

The City Corporation has recently set out its commitment to net zero carbon emission by 2027 for its operations, net zero by 2040 across the City Corporation's 'full value chain', net zero by 2040 in the Square Mile and climate resilience in our buildings, public spaces and infrastructure. The City Corporation has publicly committed to do this through major investment in energy efficiency at our investment and corporate properties, aligning its investment portfolio with the Paris Agreement, enhancing carbon removal in our open spaces, protecting our shared natural resources, driving net zero through our supply chain and integrating climate considerations into all our decision. [Climate Action Strategy 2020-2027 \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Whist the City has produced a Biodiversity Action Plan for those Parks and Gardens within its local authority function a truly open spaces wide strategic approach to nature recovery and climate resilience is needed to provide a golden thread with other Corporate and Natural Environment strategies.

2. Vision/Commitment.

We will Protect and-conserve, thriving rural and urban green spaces at the heart of wider, interconnected natural landscapes, maximising their potential to enhance permanently their biodiversity value, ecosystem services, sequestration and storage of carbon and climate change resilience and remove/sequester carbon.

3. Who we are?

The Natural Environment Division forms part of the City of London Corporation's Environment Department. Comprising 3 core open spaces (sub- Divisions) covering around 4,500 hectares. Each is of immense and growing local, regional, and national importance for biodiversity.

4. Why us.

We are required to protect the green spaces through a variety of Acts and regional/national designations such as Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Area of Conservation (Conservation of Habitats and Species Regs, 2017), Metropolitan Open Land & Greenbelt, Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 as well as our own founding Open Spaces Acts. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, places upon the City (as a local authority) the duty to have regard for conserving biodiversity. The Environment Act 2021 seeks to halt the decline of species by 2030 and will set clear targets for land managers to achieve this.

Our geographic spread around London and the Home Counties and diverse range of natural assets, affords a wide sphere of influence with those who manage land around us. Our ability to sequester and store carbon places us at the heart of City's Climate Action Strategy.

Our lands, purchased under various Acts of Parliament, are protected in perpetuity and play key roles as nuclei of biodiversity and potential inoculum of wider landscapes. Buffer lands whilst not protected in the same manner, have scope to generate additional income to support our vision and will play an essential, long-term role in our future carbon reduction and nature recovery activities.

5. **Who we will work with** (and how we will complement other efforts)?
We recognise the importance of working with common aims across the portfolio of open spaces and with a wide range of national, regional and local partners to maximise (our) efforts to address the regional, national and global biodiversity and climate crises.

6. Aims

Spaces under the Act

- a. Protect and enhance existing biodiversity within our current ownership boundaries, in perpetuity
- b. Look beyond existing ownership boundaries and:
 - i. Forge clear links between the CoL Climate Action Strategy and 'wider' Nature Recovery and Climate Action Plans.
 - ii. To the greatest extent possible, seek partnerships with external bodies to support their strategies, policies and plans 'for local nature recovery' and the restoration of wider, wilder landscapes
 - iii. Seek additional funding to achieve the above e.g. ELMS, S106 etc.
- c. Balance biodiversity net gain against competing green space strategies such as visitor access, commercial activity, health and wellbeing, heritage, learning and information.
- d. Use (where possible) minimum intervention techniques, including extensive grazing, to enhance biodiversity, reduce our carbon footprint and use of resources.

Buffer lands

Use existing/acquire additional buffer lands to:

- i. Protect existing ('designated'?) sites and provide opportunities for habitats and species to expand via permeable boundaries into the wider landscape
- ii. Provide visitor gateways to our protected landscapes thereby reducing pressures on biodiversity

- iii. Sequester carbon balanced with opportunities for biodiversity enhancement
- iv. Provide additional support to the City's Climate Action strategy and associated targets
- v. Generate additional income through potential change in use to mitigate the ownership costs of buffer lands and our wider nature recovery and climate action ambitions

All Land

- i. Strengthen the strategic approach strategy to nature recovery within the Corporate Plan and Environment Dept – a golden thread to Corporate and Natural Environment strategies
- ii. Work with Local Planning Authorities, Natural England and other external bodies to mitigate the impact of urban development on the biodiversity of the green spaces.
- iii. Use outcomes of planned development to financially support the wider ambitions of this strategy

7. What needs to change to achieve this strategy?

- i. Our ambition, confidence and influence
- ii. Corporate plan – to fully reflect biodiversity and climate crises
- iii. Funding and resources - to refocus or increase capacity
- iv. Reduce introspection/silo working
- v. Increase outreach to other organisations (with similar ambitions?)
- vi. Public understanding of the Biodiversity and Climate Change crises and the changing/conflicting purposes of the open spaces
- vii. An effective, 'softer' communications strategy that reflects the aims of each charity and their roles to combat climate change and biodiversity loss

8. How does this strategy balance against competing strategies?

The Natural Environment Division is developing a series of separate strategies to lead its main service delivery activities. These will sometimes complement each other but there will be occasions when they compete. Each strategy needs to acknowledge the existence of and link to, the others and seek balanced solutions to potential conflicting needs.

9. Outcomes (of the strategy showing the intended impact we want to make)

- v. Permanently conserved and protected green spaces.
- vi. Improved links with other organisations (etc)
- vii. Monitoring programmes including carrying capacity studies, visitor numbers, biodiversity data, soil, ecosystem services etc

- viii. Permeable, linked landscapes beyond our boundaries with shared management principles enabling species migration across ownership frontiers
- ix. Richer, resilient more biodiverse open spaces
- x. Enhanced carbon sequestration and storage
- xi. Stabilised and improving ecosystem services whose value is understood financially
- xii. Creation/acceptance of minimal intervention landscapes were deemed appropriate i.e. reliant on natural processes to deliver biodiversity, ecosystem and carbon management services
- xiii. An expanded land ownership portfolio where necessary
- xiv. Guiding policies and a portfolio of 'local' projects to attract funding such as BNG, S106, CIL, ELMS, Voluntary Giving etc.
- xv. A code of ethics

10. Corporate Plan links

This strategy supports the following Corporate Aim:

'Shaping Outstanding Environments'

We have clean air, land and water and a thriving natural environment.

Our spaces are secure, resilient, and well maintained.

11. What success looks like

- a. This strategy links clearly to wider Corporate and Natural Environment strategies so that the organisation understands the long-term value/benefits of supporting this strategy Nature Recovery and Climate Resilience activities.
- b. All designated sites are protected by an active land acquisition policy providing buffers and where necessary, visitor gateways
- c. Each open space contributes to the strategy in a manner that reflects their different opportunities, challenges, and potential
- d. We have effective communications - our sites and management activities are understood by its various audiences.
- e. We have a robust data set to inform consistent management decisions
- f. We have clear hierarchy of strategic need
- g. We have access to the skills/expertise we need and the resources to support them
- h. We have sufficient resources to meet our new ambitions.
- i. Additional income generation directly funds those ambitions
- j. Detailed aims, targets, outcomes, and measures within local management plans
- k. Biodiversity is flourishing across ownership boundaries and able to adapt to climate change

- I. Members have access to strategic information in a form that ensures progress can be reviewed easily and effectively

12. Resource needs and other implications

a. Funding for:

- i. Acceleration of existing biodiversity enhancement work programmes
- ii. Land acquisitions
- iii. Partnership work 'contributions'
- iv. New skills/expertise within teams (or access to external expertise)
- v. Establishment of improved baseline data
- vi. Extensive data gathering and long-term monitoring programmes

b. People:

- i. Strengthened ecological expertise – currently very thinly spread
- ii. Strengthened planning/development expertise
- iii. Strengthened climate change knowledge
- iv. Strengthened income generation expertise

c. Communications:

- i. Improved, charity focussed, marketing and comms to enhance funding and mitigate public issues/concern e.g. due to competing strategies
- ii. Clear links to competing strategies and hierarchy of need
- iii. A fit for purpose web site and social media freedoms.

Appendix 5

Natural Environment

Community Engagement Strategy – 2022 – 2032

Executive Summary

1. Vision/Commitment

Relevant and well-loved rural and urban green spaces across Greater London that attract visitors and supporters from their local communities across all demographic groups who use and protect these spaces. As well as regional assets, develop spaces as green infrastructure, aligning objectives for the spaces with the local authorities and local communities that ensure the long-term preservation and importance of these spaces.

2. Who we are.

We (the Natural Environment Division) form part of the City of London Corporation's Environment Department. Comprising 3 core open spaces (Sections) covering around 11,000 acres. Each is of immense (and growing) local, regional and national importance for biodiversity.

3. Why us

Our geographic spread around London and the Home Counties and diverse range of conservation assets affords a wide sphere of influence with those who live, work and play in the areas around these spaces. Aligning our objectives with our local communities will ensure continued relevance of our space, as well as providing additional protection for them.

4. Who we will work with (and how we will complement others' efforts)?

We will work with local authorities, special interest groups (including those currently participating in consultative committees and those not), schools, community groups, and residents who are not typically represented by those special interest groups that have historically been involved in the consultative committees. By reaching out to the wider communities, we will seek to ensure our long-term relevance for those who live and work around our green spaces.

5. Aims (of the strategy)

General

- a. Enhance our ability to protect and preserve our spaces in perpetuity by increasing the local 'ownership' of the spaces and therefore individuals' willingness to take proactive measures to ensure their continued protection
- b. Ensure that our spaces and our visitor activities are relevant to local communities – particularly those typically underrepresented communities -- and where appropriate, are able to generate income that can be utilised for protection of the spaces

Local authorities

- c. To the greatest extent possible, align objectives with local authorities with regard to planning and development for mutual long-term benefit of the spaces and the communities around the spaces, including using outcomes from planned developments to financially support our wider strategies
- d. Identify opportunities for funding from local authorities that can enhance the delivery of our strategies

Related charities

- v. Identify opportunities to have wider influence or to deliver greater benefit by combining efforts with related charities (e.g. National Trust, Royal Parks, etc.)

Volunteers

- vi. Increase numbers of volunteers from 'non-traditional' groups, including teenagers and young adult and diverse communities in order to achieve greater local 'ownership' of the open spaces
- vii. Identify unique aspects of each of the spaces that may attract different volunteers (e.g. heritage aspects)

6. What needs to change to achieve this strategy?

- a. Our ambition, confidence and influence
- b. Outreach to other organisations and people – local authorities and wider communities who do not currently engage with us through regular dialogue, surveys, increased social media use, etc.
- c. Divisional plans are driven by data reflecting community needs and representation
- d. Communities beyond our special interest groups are afforded the opportunity to be involved and co-design
- e. Public understanding of the Biodiversity and Climate Change crises and the changing/conflicting purposes of the open spaces

7. How does this strategy balance against competing strategies?

This strategy should be a facilitator of the delivery of the other strategies: engaging with our local authorities and local communities should ensure that our objectives are clear to our local communities and that we understand the drivers within the local communities that could have a positive and negative impact on our own strategies. Wider community engagement should result in greater success of the other strategies.

8. Outcomes (of the strategy showing the intended impact we want to make)

- xvi. Regular and positive ongoing dialogue with members and officers at all relevant local authorities and related charities
- xvii. Increased engagement and visitation by all demographic groups in our local communities in a positive way
- xviii. Increased volunteering across all demographic groups
- xix. Increased engagement with local schools
- xx. Early engagement on development activities to identify mitigation measures or to agree that certain developments will cause significant harm
- xxi. Staff is supported with community engagement toolkit to be able to deliver inclusive and effective activities

9. Corporate Plan links

This strategy supports the following Corporate Aim:

'Shaping Outstanding Environments'

11. We have clean air, land and water and a thriving natural environment

Our spaces are secure, resilient and well maintained

10. What success looks like

- a. We have close working relationships with the relevant local authorities and a wide array of local communities, particularly those communities who do not traditionally engage with us
- b. We have effective communications - our sites and management activities are understood by its various audiences.
- c. We have fit for purpose interactive website and active social media, reaching out a variety of audiences
- d. Meaningful surveys and polls and engagement tools that influence the shaping of our plans
- e. Volunteer numbers increase, particularly from non-traditional communities
- f. Consultative committees no longer required as engagement undertaken more widely across communities (including with those previously on consultative committees)
- g. Contributions from local authorities increase to meet shared objectives
- h. Detailed aims, targets, outcomes and measures within local management plans

11. Resource needs and other implications

a. People

- i. Dedicated resources in each area for community engagement activities

b. Communications

- i. Clear strategy on socials, supported by community engagement resource 'on the ground' rather than central comms