

Committee(s): Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee	Dated: 06/10/2022
West Ham Park Committee	06/10/2022
Subject: Summary of Natural Environment Away Day	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: Juliemma McLoughlin - Executive Director, Environment	For Decision
Report author: Sally Agass - Interim Director of Natural Environment	

Summary

The purpose of this report is to present the second drafts of the five strategies agreed at the Open Spaces Away day on 20th June 2022.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

To consider the updated Natural Environment Division strategies, noting the addition of actions specific to each strategy.

- Charity Income Strategy
- Visitor Strategy
- Learning Strategy
- Community Strategy

To approve the development of a further strategy for Culture and Heritage.

Main Report

Background

Members will be aware that, arising from the Five Natural Environment Division Strategies developed by the Committee in July 2022, there was a recognised need to focus on actions that would achieve the outcomes and to place those actions in the short and longer term. This would enable progress reports to come back to this committee.

Note the Charity Income Strategy is relevant to all the strategies and numerous actions have been included for consideration. This strategy is also relevant to the Operations Finance Section of the Charity Review Paper included on this agenda.

The report is not presented as a detailed business case for each income generation project, but instead seeks to engage Members in the initial strategy discussions and to enable them to provide a steer to officers about the priorities that should move forward for further consideration, consultation and business case development.

The curator at Keats House, a major cultural asset has prepared a list of all cultural assets within scope of the Natural Environment division and based on this it is the intention to develop a cultural and heritage strategy

Current Position

The ideas presented in each strategy demonstrate that there are some clear opportunities for increased income which can support the overall Natural Environment outcomes, and, in turn, support the Corporation's broader strategic aims as set out in the Corporate Plan. The Income strategy sets out the idea/proposal, the rationale and key facts and lines of enquiry to pursue before a detailed business case is provided.

Further work will need to be undertaken to assess the social, financial and nature value of the each of the strategies and this work will be brought back to this committee.

Options

The options presented are at an early stage and will require further work to undertaken as to which strategies to pursue in the short term and which would be medium to longer term opportunities given the need to complete operational resourcing to have the resources to pursue a wider strategic approach.

Proposals

That the five strategies attached at Appendix 1 – 4 are considered, and a steer is provided as to areas for further work.

Key Data

N/A

Corporate & Strategic Implications

- These strategies set will support the delivery of the Natural Environment Strategies and the Corporation's Corporate Plan.
- Financial implications – None at this stage.
- Resource implications – None at this stage (operational resourcing is being dealt with under the charity review)
- Legal implications- None at this stage, though as ideas and proposals are selected for further development, there will need to be a detailed legal impact assessment.
- Risk implications – each proposal carries a level of risk, which will be further assessed at the business case stage.
- Equalities implications – There is nothing within the Five Natural Environment Strategies that work against the public Sector Equality Duty 2010 – and as they are developed it is

envisaged, they will have a positive impact on people protected by existing equality legislation.

- Equality Impact Assessment N/A (expected to be positive).
- Climate implications N/A (expected to be positive).
- Security implications N/A

Conclusion

The recommendations contained in this report are:

- To consider the updated Natural Environment Division strategies, noting the addition of actions specific to each 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 and Action List
- Appendix 2 Visitor Strategy and Action List
- Appendix 3 Learning Strategy and Action List
- Appendix 4 Community Strategy and Action List

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 are working with Chamberlains to progress the Operational Finance element of the charity review. However, we know that additional funding over and above the City Grant will be required if we are to deliver the current objects of our 10 charities. We will seek to raise 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 re venue 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 is critical if we are to deliver on all the other strategies and our intention to develop further strategies with Members approval, for example a Culture and Heritage Strategy. 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.

Charity Income Strategy

Action Plan 2022 -2025

Short-term ideas

Idea	Comments
Car park charges	Is there scope for Increasing car park charges? Can underused car parks (non-forest land) be disposed of to generate finance for investment? create more chargeable spaces Increase (and consider outsourcing) enforcement on car parks for all areas, consider charging for verge parking, deals for multiple spaces with hospitals etc. Applicable to Epping Forest and Commons
Film and media strategy Events	Create film and media strategy to promote Open Spaces and assets to film industry Applicable to all charities and Buffer lands
Dog walking licences	Extend the Hampstead scheme Applicable to all charities
Sponsorship of events or play areas or benches etc	Use our private sector connections to achieve sponsorship. Hold sponsorship events through livery companies. Applicable to all charities
Donations and legacies	Hold donor events and target high value giving from environmentally conscious donors Deal with a local solicitor to do a deal for free wills leaving percentage of estate to our charities Applicable to all NE Charities

Medium term ideas

Development of a digital strategy for open spaces	Use to build more and better quality data and enable a better understanding of the several million users who visit, whilst providing opportunity to cross sell/promote events/activities Applicable to all NE Charities
Underutilised buildings/asset strategy	Explore whether some assets can be sold to raise funds to invest in income generating ideas and assets (Invest to save) Applicable to all NE Charities, but focus on HH and Buffer lands
Optimise commercial income for cafés, etc	Review leases and licenses to optimise value of asset and increase income Applicable to all NE Charities
Create a walking programme based	Use QR codes around walks to enable a downloadable story about the feature, artefact and/or location (could also be

around heritage sites	done through a bespoke 'app' thereby enabling a database of users to be created) Including Keats House and key "blue plaque" properties closeby trail Applicable to all NE Charities and Buffer lands
Merchandising	Through enhanced visitor centres, but with a focus on selling quality craft products in order to leverage Brand Applicable to all NE Charities
Bird lookout huts	Charge for season tickets Applicable to all NE Charities
Rent a bike scheme	Outsource to one of the current providers taking a percentage profit; add bike repairs stations, introduce cycling highway code coaching for juniors; consider creating cycling downhill mountain bike chargeable tracks Applicable to all NE Charities and buffer lands
Give gardening courses	History of gardening Applicable to all NE Charities
Seek grants	Grants appropriate to the Objects of each charity eg Education and Learning Applicable to all NE Charities and Buffer lands

Longer term ideas

Idea	Comments
Biodiversity offset land	Involves the funding of conservation activities that are designed to give biodiversity benefits to compensate for losses – ensuring that when a development damages nature (and this damage cannot be avoided or mitigated) new nature sites will be created. Linked to CoLC planning activities Applicable to all NE Charities- but greater opportunity on Buffer lands
Development of Buffer lands for major visitor attraction	For example Go Ape, Crock Trail, PGL facility or creation of a leisure park Applicable to Buffer Lands in the main
Create a college for Green skills	Possibly using the Visitor centres or other underutilised buildings, which could link to existing horticultural/colleges Applicable to all NE Charities and Buffer lands, most appropriate for Epping Forest
Make the Monument viable through associated visitor centre	Work with developer to ensure space can accommodate chargeable features in a new visitor centre Applicable to Monument only
Make an industry out of bee keeping	Instruction in bee keeping, sale of equipment and clothing and sale of products relating to Forest Honey (candles, soap etc) Applicable to Epping Forest and Buffer lands – may also apply to Commons

Creating holiday lets and rental properties	<p>Rolling programme with City Surveyors to refurbish to letting standards, create separate trading company to do so.</p> <p>Increasingly highly profitable, especially if linked to key life events, weddings, etc.</p> <p>Predominantly applicable to Epping Forest and Buffer lands</p>
Create caravan, camping and glamping site	<p>72% of visits to The New Forest make use of caravan, camping and glamping sites. There is a high value premium on caravan sites and many more have appeared as part of a rural/farm diversification strategy both during and since the pandemic</p> <p>Predominantly applicable to Buffer lands</p>
Events and Festivals	<p>Arts and Poetry Festivals; Animal shows Dog show and Cat festival with stalls selling all things pussy cat, Travelling circus; themed to centenaries of famous residents from around our parks and forests downhill bike events, forest runs for charity, charity bike course for charity, music festivals, weddings (Event organiser across all charities) Promote weddings with accommodation (The Warren?) Can Buffer lands accommodate a major festival? Build a relationship with major events companies and create and engagement strategy to attract film and other event companies (concerts and shows) <i>This could be delivered in medium term, but needs to be appropriately resourced rather than as an add on to current activities</i> Applicable to all NE Charities</p>
Overnight camping for kids	<p>Supervised for kids to have a sleep over party, include breakfast- this could link to PGL facility, which would provide an American style Boot camp offer Applicable to Epping Forest and Buffer lands</p>
Solar Farm Supporting the delivery of renewable energy, decarbonisation	<p>Where there is sufficient buffer land, not being put to good use, consider creation of Solar farm. This can create a good rental income (currently averaging £1000 per acre) and can count positively towards biodiversity Applicable to Buffer lands only</p>
Tourism-type Business Improvement District (T-BID)	<p>Enables a special precept for businesses that benefit from the area to further support further investment in the Forest and surrounding areas Most likely to apply to Epping Forest and Buffer lands</p>
Enhance income generating assets such as Lido, with fitness facilities, spinning classes	<p>Utilise redundant space and optimise circulation space on poolside with classes such as spinning and exercise License personal trainers Applicable to Hampstead Heath</p>

Review Education and sports facilities	<p>Optimise the income for education provision through an appropriate charging policy Review some sports facilities to enhance income</p> <p>Applicable to all NE Charities</p>
Commercialise /licence and close off areas of significant architectural quality at certain times for events and photoshoots	<p>e.g Pergola at Golders Hill Park and Lodge at the Warren (latter needs significant investment)</p> <p>Applicable to all NE Charities but predominantly Hampstead Heath and Epping Forest</p>

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 change
- vi.

- vii. Accessibility and social benefits for deprived and vulnerable communities
- viii. 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 and interpretation 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 a number of 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/~/media/2021/07/2021-22-Open-Spaces-Business-Plan-2021-22.pdf)..

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

Visitor and Destination strategy

Action Plan 2022 -2025

General Short-term

Action	Comments
Commission a survey that can generate intelligence about users and audiences	This will identify users and audiences that can be developed and will also identify gaps with non-users and define the strategic approach in relation to visitors
Identify drivers and build audience development plans	This will identify similarities between charities and help with brand identification and synergies with charities' objects
Define visitor profiles and market segmentations to build effective marketing plans	This will identify common audiences between charities and help defining brands.
Define visitor spend in relation to different audiences and type of activities	This will give a clear indication on the popular activities and give ideas on development opportunities
Define blueprints for visitor opportunities including parks masterplans, sport facilities and development visions for the natural environment	The development plans will be based on current visitor use and develop further ideas to build new audiences and improve offer.

Medium to long-term

Action	Comments
Inform and educate current and future visitors	This will help to strike a balance between visitor pressures and site preservation through campaigns, engagement with schools, comms, etc
Identify development opportunity and invest in visitor infrastructure	This will continue to attract audiences and build new audiences. A targeted approach is needed to make sure investment is tailored to visitor needs.
Value the views of visitor through regular satisfaction surveys within	The surveys need to be repeated regularly to understand trends and key information to understand visitor preferences and inform development of infrastructure and activities.

charities and amongst facilities	
Work with partners and stakeholders to increase community value and generate opportunities to increase health and wellbeing of visitors in line with charitable objectives	Through a targeted approach, the visitor infrastructure can reach out all parts of the community, particularly those most in needs in line with the charitable objectives. Partnership work will include work with sport clubs, charities such Heath Hands, the learning team, Local authorities, non-Government bodies, etc
Create a golden thread with Destination City and other City's strategies, particularly the Natural environment strategic framework	Continue to review priorities in line with the strategic framework
Liaise with Visit London and other tourist frameworks to maximise opportunities	This will strengthen the marketing opportunities linking to local, regional and national advertising.
Manage information through a clear comms and marketing plan in relation to audiences	Implement social media strategies, web presence, advertising campaigns and marketing plans.
Continue to develop staff and invest in volunteers with training, apprenticeships and development opportunity as ambassadors of our open spaces and visitor opportunities	This will generate ownership so that frontline staff can be ambassadors, understand the need of visitors and remain knowledgeable about our open spaces

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.

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. Youth 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
- v. Pilot programmes for children with autism and other special educational needs and disabilities

The programme works with a variety of organisations including Culture Mile Learning, CoL Education Strategy Unit, Camden Council, University College London, Ambition Aspire Achieve, Chance UK, Queens Crescent Community Association, and the Refugee Council.

The current programme:

- i. Engages over 40,000 participants per year
- ii. Demonstrates an increase in participants' wellbeing, confidence, connection, understanding and involvement
- iii. Reaches audiences across London, including some of London's most deprived boroughs, including Newham, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Camden, Waltham Forest, Brent, Islington, Haringey and Brent.

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 enhance wellbeing, connect people to nature, develop pro-environmental values, and inspire learning.

The government has stated that the education sector must play a role in responding to climate change and inspiring action, with the Department for Education (DfE) setting key aims in its new policy paper, 'Sustainability and climate change: a strategy for the education and children's services systems' (2022). These aims include increasing opportunities for all children and young people to:

- i. spend time in nature and learn more about it
- ii. become actively involved in the improvement of their local environment.

The DfE paper notes the importance of connecting with nature in childhood and the beneficial impact time in nature has on children's mental health. It states that access to green space is not equal, and that we "must do more to ensure that all children have opportunities to benefit from access to green space and build connection with nature". The Natural Environment Learning Programme offers a powerful opportunity to realise these aims for many Londoners, providing the following:

- i. unique and inspiring green spaces which are accessible to people across London
- ii. staff expertise in learning and engagement and passion for nature
- iii. programme of activities which demonstrate increases in wellbeing, nature connection, confidence, understanding and involvement.

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 Education Strategy Unit and Culture Mile Learning. This will include:

- i. Working with the CoL Education Strategy Unit to ensure alignment with a new 2023 CoL Education Strategy, which should include an environmental element.
- ii. Working with Culture Mile Learning to provide work experience placements, careers guidance, bespoke programmes for school children at risk of exclusion, shared targeting of high pupil premium schools, and activities to support fusion skills.
- iii. Membership of the newly formed Sustainability and Climate Change Education Working Group to respond the DoE's Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy (2022) through developing best practice in teaching children and young people about sustainability and climate change, and to inspire and empower pro-environmental attitudes and actions (a UK wide working group led by Leeds Trinity University and the Teacher Development Trust).
- iv. Building on successful community engagement partnerships with Ambition Aspire Achieve, Chance UK, Queens Crescent Community Association, Camden Council, Young Carers, and the Refugee Council.

- v. Continuing to work with universities schools to provide volunteering and work experience to increase understanding and build skills for careers in the green sector
- vi. Continuing successful evaluation and student-placement programme with University College London.
- vii. Developing partnership with Campaign for Learning to develop further research projects and learning programme partnerships.

5. Aims

Learning programmes for school, play, youth, SEND, volunteers and communities will deliver the following aims:

i. **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 nature, to feel confident to explore and enjoy our spaces, and to get involved in maintaining our green spaces or supporting our learning activities. Supported challenges and risk -taking (e.g adventure play, fire lighting), team-work challenges (e.g. orienteering) and the use of 'growth-mindset' language are some of the successful confidence-building activities that we can include and develop within our programmes.

ii. **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.

There is growing concern that opportunities for children to play in nature are becoming very limited, impacting on child development and wellbeing. The learning programme has a key role in supporting more children to play and have fun in our green spaces.

iii. **Increase opportunities in education**

Following the pandemic and associated 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 building confidence, wellbeing and nature connection for all.

The programme will reach out young people who are struggling with education and/or employment to provide bespoke learning programmes.

iv. Build fusion skills and career aspirations

Research has shown that many young people 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. Volunteering opportunities for all young people and adults will provide opportunities to build skills and understanding of careers in the green sector. Bespoke programmes for young people who are struggling with education or employment will support skill development and raise awareness of career paths.

v. 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, with research including Derby University's 'Five Paths to Nature Connection' pointing to time to explore, look more closely and use the sense as a key first steps. 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 and create new opportunities for people to get involved and make a difference (e.g. planting or litter picking sessions).

Working with the Sustainability and Climate Change Education Working Group, the learning team will collaborate with educators and researchers to further develop best practice in building nature connection and pro-environmental behaviours, and work in partnership with schools to bring sustainability and climate change examples to life. The team will continue to draw on relevant research in nature connection and pro-environmental behaviour and apply this to their programmes.

vi. Define and increase our reach

We will focus our reach to engage children and young people in high pupil premium schools, children living in poverty, learners with special educational needs and disabilities, young people struggling to engage with education or employment, and communities (adults, children and families) who face barriers to visiting our green spaces.

The programme will reach across some of London's most deprived boroughs. Through targeted marketing and the use of the excellent transport links already in place, the learning programmes at Hampstead Heath and Epping Forest will engage audiences from a range of boroughs including Tower Hamlets, Hackney, Waltham Forest, Haringey, Islington, Brent and Camden. The

learning programme at West Ham Park will focus on Newham, one of London's most deprived and urban boroughs.

The development of the Learning Programme will include consideration of the benefits and costs of expanding the programme to The Commons.

vii. Increase income

The learning programme will develop its financial strength through the following potential income streams:

- i. Income from schools will continue, with schools participating in the Hampstead Heath and Epping Forest programmes paying for this service
- ii. New income streams will be investigated, and business plans developed for generating income through a social prescribing programme, adult learning including corporate outdoor team building events, and outdoor holiday clubs.

The team will investigate funding schemes and apply for funding to support additional posts within the team. These posts will enable us to increase our reach. Potential new posts are Learning Officer at The Commons; Learning Officer for autism (cross-sites: Hampstead Heath, Epping Forest, West Ham Park); Learning Officer at West Ham Park (in addition to existing post to increase the offer), Adult Learning Officer.

viii. Evaluate, reflect, and refine our learning programmes

The team have worked in collaboration with Derby University to create a bespoke evaluation toolkit to measure wellbeing, confidence, connection, understanding and involvement. They will continue to evaluate their programmes using this toolkit, as well as collaborating with researchers, evaluators, and learning audiences to better understand the impact of the programme. They will reflect on the evaluation to improve their programmes, taking a learner-centred approach, listening to audiences and learning specialists, and piloting new ideas.

6. What needs to change to achieve this strategy?

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.

7. How does this strategy balance against competing strategies?

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 for participants:

- i. Increase understanding of the value and importance of our green spaces
- ii. Increase sense of wellbeing

- iii. Increase nature connection
- iv. Increase confidence to use green spaces
- v. Increase involvement (taking positive action for or getting involved with our green spaces)

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

- i. We have sufficient resources to meet our new ambitions
- ii. Our audiences gain an increase in understanding, wellbeing, confidence, nature connection and/or involvement after participating in our activities
- iii. 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.
- iv. We engage children growing up in areas of income inequality and child poverty at our Play Centres, providing opportunities for outdoor play
- v. We engage volunteers who are able to both contribute and benefit
- vi. We use our evaluation and relevant research to adapt and improve our learning programme
- vii. We have effective communications - our learning activities are understood by its various audiences

- viii. We have a robust data set to inform consistent management decisions
- ix. We have access to the skills/expertise we need
- x. The learning strategy is in line with corporate objectives and the CoL Education Strategy.

11. Resource needs and other implications

In order to deliver the aims in this strategy document, the following posts are required and within budget (assuming 12% savings):

- Head of Learning
- Learning Manager
- Learning Officers for Schools and Community Groups X 3.8 fte
- Learning Officer for Youth and SEND groups
- Learning and Play Officer (Play Centres, NLOS budget)
- Play Assistant 0.4 fte(Play Centres, NLOS budget)
- Learning Assistant 0.5 fte

To expand the programme, grant funding will be sought to enable additional learning officer posts. These posts will enable increased capacity at West Ham Park (which is currently over-subscribed), increased capacity for a nature learning programme for children with autism, development of a new adult learning programme, and the development and delivery of new learning programme at The Commons.

Resources will be required for staff training and development, marketing and communications to engage our learning audiences.

LEARNING STRATEGY

Action Plan 2022 -2025

General Short-term actions

Action	Comments
Change short fixed-term contracts to permanent or longer term contracts	Learning staff on short term FTCs due to TOM
Recruit vacant posts	Learning Manager and Learning Assistant
Deliver school, play, community, youth and SEND programmes	Continue successful programmes
Develop staff roles and projects for potential new roles. Research potential funders	Autism programme, adult learning programme, expanding West Ham Park Programme, new learning programme for The Commons.
Develop business case for fundraising ideas	Collaborate with North London, The Commons and Epping Forest teams. Develop business plan for adult learning programme including corporate team days, outdoor holiday clubs, and social prescribing programme. Develop business plans for holiday club and social prescribing programme.
Engage more high pupil premium schools	Partnership with Culture Mile Learning to target and engage schools
Create funding bid for autism programme and post	To build on success of pilot programme (evaluation report available)
Recruit and develop new volunteers	To include young people struggling to begin their careers
Staff training to enhance wellbeing for participants	Training to better understand and support a range of learner needs Training to bring in more wellbeing techniques into our activities and to apply these to our programmes
Staff training to enhance confidence building	Training in 'growth mindset' language
Evaluate programme using performance	Using a variety of toolkits including bespoke evaluation toolkit from Derby University and UCL Wellbeing Evaluation Toolkit.

indicator framework	
Develop a programme for further engagement with Adults	Subject to fund raising

Medium to longer term

Action	Comments
Develop opportunities to further increase nature connection and pro-environmental actions	Collaborate with learning and research partners, including schools and the Sustainability and Climate Change Education Working Group, to generate, pilot and evaluate ideas. Introduce in opportunities to be involved in maintaining our spaces (e.g. gardening, litter picking). Develop ideas around 'Five Paths to Nature Connection' research from Derby University
Develop further confidence building activities within our programme	Building on the success of fire lighting for confidence building, look for more skills we could include e.g. rope walking, using tools. Build in activities which are both challenging and achievable, e.g. orienteering challenges. Apply 'growth mindset' language throughout programme.
Develop more opportunities to build fusion skills and raise career aspirations	Work experience programme, presence at careers fairs, building in opportunities to see relevance of skills beyond the classroom / in the workplace.
Create funding bids for new posts: adult learning programme, The Commons learning programme, West Ham Park programme expansion	
Develop understanding of barriers to family engagement and how learning programmes can improve family wellbeing	Research partnership – collaborators to include UCL, Brookfield Primary School, What Works Wellbeing and Campaign for Learning
Develop longer term intervention programme for young people at risk of disengaging from school	

Launch new fundraising initiatives	Corporate team days, holiday clubs, social prescribing
Launch learning programme for children with autism	Subject to successful funding bid and staff recruitment.

Appendix 4

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)

- i. Regular and positive ongoing dialogue with members and officers at all relevant local authorities and related charities
- ii. Increased engagement and visitation by all demographic groups in our local communities in a positive way
- iii. Increased volunteering across all demographic groups
- iv. Increased engagement with local schools

- v. Early engagement on development activities to identify mitigation measures that will help prevent significant harm
- vi. 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

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Action Plan 2022 -2025

Short Term (2022-23)

Idea	Comments
Secure dedicated staff through TOM Stage II for each property.	Secure funded posts providing dedicated Officers for Community Engagement and Volunteer Management at each property
Secure an SLT 'sponsor'	Many other strategies such as Charity Income have dedicated SLT membership and resources, NED needs to avoid a CES 'Cinderella' approach and ensure SLT has strong CES representation.
Develop the Charity's story or founding 'myth'	A strong online resource is needed to highlight the role played by communities in campaigning to save their local environment which ultimately attracted City Corporation support, highlighting early voluntary effort and public subscription schemes associated with acquisition and management.
Secure recognised engagement software in partnership with IS	Review MailChimp™, SurveyMonkey® CiviCRM© applications regarding applicability data security and City's licence use of Inovem© to secure the most appropriate software application
Seek Consultative Committee/Group validation of public engagement activity	Seek community 'sponsors' to help grow public engagement activity across the NED platform.
Develop Public Engagement Toolkit	Develop Toolkit and online training resource to support Toolkit rollout to facilitate improved use by staff.
Establish metrics for evaluation	Establish baseline metric and evaluation methodology, including user surveys.

Medium Term (2023–24)

Idea	Comments
Champion a culture of community engagement activity as BAU throughout the NED 'product'	A strong outreach campaign is needed to establish CES as the 'go to' method of community engagement using a variety of media and activities to 'mainstream' the concept.
Provide 'you said, we did' projects	Communities of use need to see the value of public engagement and therefore engagement activity needs to deliver visible change that reflects community aspirations

Develop volunteer programme for voluntary community engagement actors	Expand the capacity of the CES process and the degree of outreach utilising trained volunteers to carry the baton to engage more users
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Long Term (2024-25)

Idea	Comments
Expand CES to engage broader local community partners	Seeking to normalise CES by engaging potential partners for change such as promoting active travel and modal shift to key modal classes of visiting
Focus CES on hard to reach' groups such as sports participants; mountain bikers, PSE users etc.	Some groups are harder to engage than other, but those groups may have significant impacts on the quality and management of our properties. CES can help change behaviours by engaging certain communities of interest in wider discussion.
Developed themed partnerships with underrepresented groups whose feedback needs to be heard to target meaningful change.	Broadening the CES dialogue should help the properties to develop a wider appeal to a broader range of users who are often under-represented in existing consultation activities.
Blend community engagement with citizen science initiatives to pioneer research on habitat and visitor management	Not all our engagement can provide definitive answers to management challenges, CES offers the opportunity to engage participants in citizens science designed to identify