

# Report – Natural Environment Board

## Natural Environment Board - Revised Terms of Reference

*To be presented on Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024*

*To the Right Honourable The Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Commons  
of the City of London in Common Council assembled.*

### **SUMMARY**

Following changes arising from the Target Operating Model (TOM) and in the context of the City Corporation's ongoing Charities Review, your Natural Environment Board (NEB) is seeking to ensure that it is appropriately constituted, with clear strategic responsibilities that do not encroach on the individual responsibilities of the various Natural Environment Management Committees (Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queens Park; West Ham Park; Epping Forest & Commons Committee).

Your Board has, therefore, considered it necessary to review its Terms of Reference and, following consultation with and approval by your Policy & Resources Committee, recommends changes to facilitate a clarification of its responsibilities, in addition to a revision of its composition to bolster its membership with external representatives, which will enable the City Corporation to bring in more specialised skill sets and experience.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Members approve the revised Natural Environment Board Terms of Reference (Appendix A).

### **MAIN REPORT**

#### **Background**

1. The Corporation's commitment to nature resilience, biodiversity, and carbon reduction is demonstrated through ownership of notable parks. With over 14 times more green and blue infrastructure than its urban area in the Square Mile, the Corporation's leadership in natural environment investment necessitates a coordinated approach, underlined by the ongoing work on a Natural Capital Account and the developing Natural Environment Strategy.
2. The Board's role, overseeing 11,000 acres of green spaces, is highlighted for its significance in the Corporation's Climate Action Strategy and environmental leadership.

3. At the Court of Common Council Meeting on April 27, 2023, the Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee was renamed the Natural Environment Board. This change aligned with a pivotal phase for the Natural Environment Division, undergoing the Target Operating Model process and Corporate Charities Review, whilst developing a new Natural Environment Strategy.
4. The Natural Environment Board was urged to strengthen its role, overseeing activities, contributing to policy development, and aligning strategies with overarching goals. This clarification of responsibilities presents opportunities for new initiatives such as education impact, carbon sequestration, and nature resilience, respecting charity objectives.

### **Terms of Reference and Composition**

5. The proposed revisions to the Natural Environment Board's Terms of Reference (ToRs) are therefore crucial in responding to these changes and will support a considered, performance-focused, and coordinated approach during its five-year strategy.
6. There are four changes proposed and these are represented in Appendix A, with additions underlined, and with deletions struck-through. The named membership was correct as of April 2023 and does not capture subsequent changes. This does not bear any relevance to the proposals, which would not impact the current membership.
7. The first ambition driving the ToR changes is to clarify the role of the Natural Environment Board and the distinction between the various Management Committees. These changes are represented in Appendix A, paragraphs (a) to (c) and aim to ensure that the Board retained a strategic focus.
8. In addition to this, the second proposal which features throughout the document, replaces references to 'open' spaces to 'green' spaces.
9. Thirdly, the responsibilities with respect to City Gardens only, have been carved out more explicitly.
10. And finally, to ensure the Board has access to necessary expertise to promote its success, it is recommended that the composition be revised to include up to four external representatives with specific focus areas (including biodiversity & nature resilience, community engagement, access & recreation, culture, heritage & learning and income generation). It also proposes the formalisation of observing Members from the Management Committees. These changes are visible in Appendix A within the 'Composition' section.
11. Should the proposal for external representatives be approved, there will be an open and transparent approach to the recruitment of external representatives, which will follow a similar approach to the recruitment of external representatives on other City of London Committees, including advertising on the Corporation website and use of LinkedIn and other mechanisms to generate

interest. All adverts will include a role profile which highlights the skills, expertise and unique perspectives the Natural Environment Board is seeking to achieve with these key external appointments.

12. It is worth noting that there are several charities associated with the City Corporation's Natural Environment Committees and, in this vein, the proposals look to ensure appropriate distinction of functions in anticipation of the Charities Review outcomes.
13. Except where specific matters are referred to it, the Board will not take over the role of these Committees, or indeed other City Corporation Committees. The Natural Environment Board will be a vehicle for taking a strategic approach, ensuring effective oversight and scrutiny and ensuring the Natural Environment Strategy complements and underpins the new Corporate Strategy.

### **Natural Environment Board support**

14. There will be no material change to the existing level of officer support for the Board, however careful consideration will need to be given to the agenda and associated agenda planning to ensure the Board focuses on its strategy and oversight role in addition to its operational role on City Gardens. There will be a nominal resource requirement for the recruitment, induction and training of external appointments.
15. The proposed changes should reduce any perceived duplication in reporting and silo working. It will enable a clearer focus on developing strategy and in reviewing performance in the delivery of the new Natural Environment Strategy.

### **Conclusion**

16. Your Board, supported by your Policy & Resources Committee under Delegated Authority arrangements, has proposed these several revisions to its Terms of Reference. They are recommended to strengthen the Board's role, ensuring the City of London Corporation's strategic and coordinated approach to the successful management of its green spaces.

### **Appendices**

- Appendix A - Revised Natural Environment Board Terms of Reference.

DATED this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of January 2024.

SIGNED on behalf of the Board.

**Caroline Wilma Haines**  
Chair, Natural Environment Board