

Committee(s): Natural Environment Board – For Information	Dated: 11 July 2024
Subject: NE Director's Update	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	2, 3, 4, 10, 11, 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	£
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	Y/N N/A
Report of: Bob Roberts, Interim Executive Director Environment	For Information
Report author: Emily Brennan, Natural Environment Director	

Summary

The purpose of this report is to highlight progress made since the Natural Environment Director's appointment in June 2023 and to update Members on key pan-Division issues and initiatives including the appointment of a new Executive Director Environment.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

Main Report

Background

The permanent Natural Environment Director, Emily Brennan, came into post on 5th June 2023 following a period of significant change. The Natural Environment Division was established in 2022 from the previous Open Spaces Department with the aim of being more strategic, joined-up and outward-looking. Prior to Emily's appointment there were two interim Natural Environment Directors in post and the previous Executive Director Environment, Juliemma McLoughlin, was replaced in July 2023 by Bob Roberts as Interim Executive Director Environment.

Current Position

1. **Executive Director Environment**
 - 1.1 A permanent new Executive Director for the Environment Department, Katie Stewart, will join the Corporation on 22 July 2024, replacing the Interim

Executive Director, Bob Roberts, who departs on 28 June. Katie will have induction meetings with Bob before he departs to support a smooth transition. Katie joins the Corporation from Surrey County Council where she is currently Executive Director of Environment, Infrastructure and Planning ([19](#)) "[katie stewart](#)" | [Search](#) | [LinkedIn](#)

2. Natural Environment Director Key Achievements June 2023-June 2024

Emily Brennan, the Natural Environment Director, has now been in post for a year. Key achievements include:

2.1 Strategies and governance

- 2.1.1 Building positive working relationships with Natural Environment Board Chair, Deputy Chair and other Committee Members.
- 2.1.2 Leading the development of a shared vision, mission and strategies for the Natural Environment Division.
- 2.1.3 Ensuring incorporation of Natural Environment priorities into the new Corporate Plan and good NE officer representation in the consultation process.
- 2.1.4 Supporting the appointment and induction of External Advisors to the Natural Environment Board.
- 2.1.5 Supporting the annual NEB dinner.
- 2.1.6 Supporting the review and updating of NEB Terms of Reference.

2.2 Leadership and management

- 2.2.1 Implementing TOM2 across the Natural Environment Division including redeploying all 43 staff at risk of redundancy.
- 2.2.2 Establishing strong leadership for the NE Division through site visits, engagement and relationship-building, listening to and supporting staff, tackling operational gaps and issues, establishing good internal communications, and involving staff in strategic planning.
- 2.2.3 Recruiting strong leaders and managers to the NE Division including Superintendents for NLOS and Epping Forest and the Assistant Director Charity Development.
- 2.2.4 Improving culture and performance including tackling poor performance and behaviours, working with the Business Support team and HR on recruitment, induction, training, development and workforce planning.
- 2.2.5 Building a reputation across the Corporation as an effective leader for the Natural Environment Division, including with City Surveyors, Chamberlains, Town Clerks, Remembrances and City Bridge Foundation.
- 2.2.6 Leading the implementation of a skills audit for the Division to identify and better utilise expertise and knowledge.
- 2.2.7 Leading the development of 5-year business plans for the NE Division, piloting a new, adaptable business plan template to meet the needs of the teams, the Division, and the NE charities.

2.3 Projects and programmes

- 2.3.1 Driving forward the Natural Environment Charities Review, enabling improved governance and more opportunities for income generation.
- 2.3.2 Improving NE involvement in the Operational Property Review and buildings maintenance backlog work (the 'Bow Wave').

- 2.3.3 Commissioning a Natural Capital Audit for CoL's open spaces.
- 2.3.4 Leading rescoping of the Carbon Removals Project for the open spaces (part of the Climate Action Strategy).
- 2.3.5 Tackling challenging issues e.g. deer management at Epping Forest to enable the development and implementation of effective governance and implementation.

2.4 Financial and risk management

- 2.4.1 Improving financial planning and management across the Division, delivering balanced budgets.
- 2.4.2 Ensuring risk management and reporting are done consistently across the Division, including elevating specific risks such as dangerous trees and buildings maintenance backlog to the departmental / corporate level.

2.5 Communication and engagement

- 2.5.1 Championing the work of the Division internally and externally e.g. through proactive and reactive media coverage and attendance at high profile events e.g. Night of the 10,000 Personal Bests at Hampstead Heath and the West Ham Park 150th anniversary celebrations.
- 2.5.2 Launch of the Natural Capital Audit and the Natural Environment vision, mission and strategies at the NEB Dinner in January 2024, maximising impact and profile for the Division.
- 2.5.3 Continue to drive forward major projects and programmes e.g. the Carbon Removals Project and the new Parliament Hill Athletics Track.

3. Natural Environment Board Away Day 2024

- 3.1 The NEB Away Day will be held on Thursday 3 October, 8.45am -12.30 at the Guildhall followed by lunch in one of the Members' Dining Rooms.
- 3.2 The agenda will include sessions on volunteering, NE business planning and prioritisation, income generation, and the Youth Natural Environment Board.

Financial implications - None

Resource implications - None

Legal implications - None

Risk implications - None

Equalities implications – The work of the NE Director and the NE Division supports the Corporation's equality, diversity and inclusion work and all officers have an EDI objective in their start of year appraisal.

Climate implications – The work of the NE Director and NE Division supports implementation of the Corporation's Climate Action Strategy, particularly through delivery of the Carbon Removals Project.

Security implications - None

Conclusion

Excellent progress has been made in strategical and operational matters across the Natural Environment Division over the past year. The NE Director has stabilised and

grown the staff team, is leading positive culture change within the Division and is facilitating cross-team and cross-departmental working. The Interim Executive Director has provided essential guidance and support on governance processes and on communications, and is working on a smooth handover to the permanent Executive Director Environment.

A number of key strategic, pan-Division initiatives have been successfully delivered including the development of a vision, mission and strategies for the Natural Environment and the production of a Natural Capital Audit for the Corporation's open spaces.

Appendices- None

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