

<b>Committee(s):</b> Epping Forest & Commons Committee	<b>Dated:</b> 19/09/2024
<b>Subject:</b> Project Prioritisation Process (EF&C)	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diverse engaged communities</li> <li>• Dynamic economic growth</li> <li>• Vibrant thriving destination</li> <li>• Flourishing public spaces</li> <li>• Providing excellent services</li> <li>• Leading sustainable environment</li> </ul>
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>£ N/A</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Katie Stewart, Executive Director of Environment	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report authors:</b> Emily Brennan, Natural Environment Director	

### Summary

The purpose of the report is to propose a project prioritisation process for Epping Forest and Commons Committee which will inform the development and implementation of the five-year business plan. The approach and process proposed will enable the production of a prioritised project list by applying a set of agreed prioritisation criteria. This approach is needed as the Corporation's natural environment charities have limited resources, in both funding and staffing, and do not have sufficient capacity to deliver all Committee priorities; however, the process proposed will help the Committee to ensure that resources are being used in delivering the highest priorities.

### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Approve the proposed project prioritisation criteria and process for Epping Forest and Commons Committee.

## Main Report

### Current Position

1. One of the key priorities for the Epping Forest and Commons Charities and for the wider Natural Environment Division is to develop and implement a more strategic and joined-up approach to business planning and project prioritisation. This is needed to ensure that charity objectives are being delivered and that charity resources are being used effectively and efficiently. It is also necessary to align with the Corporation's strategic priorities, business planning and project management processes.
2. The Corporation currently operates on annual Departmental business plans which, for the Natural Environment charities, typically combine 'business as usual' (BAU) activities with projects. Projects with a value of greater than £50,000 must follow the Corporation's Project Gateway Process (Appendix 1); however, this process does not apply to BAU activities or to projects with a value of less than £50,000. There is currently no central process for prioritising projects; therefore, business plans are typically a combination of essential BAU plus a 'wish list' of projects, which can result in unrealistic expectations and/or inability to deliver some activities.
3. Some projects are essential for the services to be delivered safely and in a way that is compliant with legislation – for example those which relate to regulatory compliance, and health and safety – whilst others are not, but are seen as important to furthering the charity's aims. Capacity to deliver BAU and projects is limited, but there is currently no clear way of assessing and deciding which activities can be delivered within existing capacity and budget, and which activities will require additional capacity and/or budget. The Corporation is seeking to address this by including an estimation of the resources required to deliver each high-level activity in its new five-year Departmental Business Plans.
4. The proposed project prioritisation process for the Epping Forest and Commons Charities complements this approach by providing a prioritisation framework, against which activities and projects can be assessed, which in turn will enable the production of a prioritised list of activities. This prioritised list can then be assessed against available staff and monetary resources to decide which activities will be included in the business plan for each charity.
5. If agreed by the Committee, this process will feed into the Corporation's comprehensive refresh of its project procedures which is due to begin in September 2024. By cutting down on bureaucracy, the Corporation aims to accelerate the pace of project delivery, whilst upholding its commitment to transparency and sound management. This streamlined approach will not only support the more effective deliver of service improvement and projects on the ground, but also set a new standard for project management within the organisation.

## Proposed Prioritisation Criteria and Weighting

6. Each activity will be scored against the criteria listed below. Scores have been weighted according to the relative importance of the criteria. Those shown in bold font have been allocated greater weight.
7. Where a project is necessary to comply with statutory requirements or health and safety, the project will be identified as a priority, without needing further assessment. Where this is not the case, the criteria place greatest weight on whether a project is essential, as well as project's contribution to strategic objectives for the Charity and Corporation. However, the criteria also assess a set of measures as to the sustainability and deliverability of the project, as well as its relationship to service performance.

Criteria description	Scoring options
<b>Is the project essential for operations (as opposed to desirable)?</b>	Yes=4 / No=0
<b>Will the project support one or more of the Corporate Plan Outcomes?</b> (Diverse, engaged communities; Leading Sustainable Environment; Providing Excellent Services; Dynamic Economic Growth; Vibrant, Thriving Destination; Flourishing Public Spaces)	None =0, 1 outcome=1, 2 outcomes=2 etc (max=6)
<b>Will the project support delivery of one or more of the Natural Environment Strategies:</b> (Nature Conservation and Resilience; Community and Engagement; Access and Recreation; Culture, Heritage and Learning)	None=0, 1 strategy=1 etc (max=4)
<b>Will the project support Epping Forest &amp; The Commons charity objects?</b> (Education/training, Arts/culture/heritage/science, Amateur Sport, Environment/conservation/heritage, Recreation)	None=0, 1 object=1 etc (max=5)
<b>Will the project generate income (over and above the cost of delivery)?</b>	Yes=4 / No=0
<b>Has funding been secured?</b>	Above 75% =4 51-75% =3 26-50% =2 Up to 25% =1 No=0
Will the project's deliverables be sustainable in the longer-term?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financially sustainable</li> </ul>	Yes=1 / No=0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operationally sustainable</li> </ul>	Yes=1 / No=0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmentally sustainable</li> </ul>	Yes=1 / No=0
Will the project deliver service improvement?	Yes=2 Partial=1 No=0
Will the project address a risk on the charity's risk register?	Red risk=4 Amber risk=2 Green or No=0
What is the level of risk associated with the project? <i>Consider failure to deliver the project's outcomes, reputational risk etc</i>	Low=2 Medium=1 High=0

Will delivery of the project result in positive publicity and/or reputational benefit?	Yes=2 Possibly=1 No=0
Can the project be delivered within existing 'business as usual' capacity?	Yes=2 / No=0
Is the project to be delivered in partnership with another organisation/group?	Yes=2 / No=0
	<b>MAXIMUM = 44</b>

## Conclusion

8. A project prioritisation process is needed to inform the development, approval and implementation of effective and affordable five-year business plans for Epping Forest and Commons Charities. The proposed process outlined in this paper identifies criteria which include delivery against Charity objectives. It is recommended that the process and criteria are approved by Epping Forest and Commons Committee, after which this process will be applied to proposed project activities to enable production of a prioritised list which will feed into the business plan for each charity. The five-year business plan for each charity will be brought to the Committee for approval and will be reviewed quarterly.

## Appendices

Appendix 1: CoL Project Gateway Process

Appendix 2: Epping Forest and Commons Project Prioritisation Spreadsheet

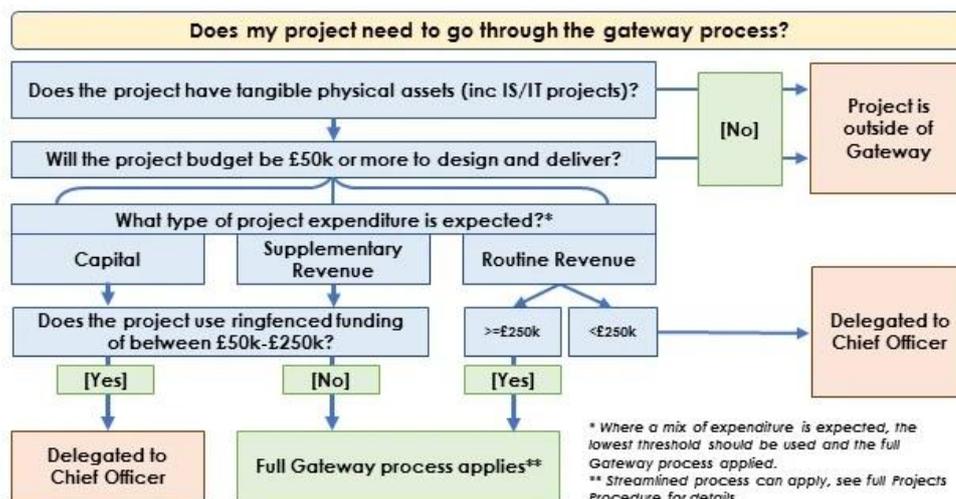
## Contact

Emily Brennan  
Natural Environment Director, Environment Department.  
T: 07599 200587  
E: [emily.brennan@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:emily.brennan@cityoflondon.gov.uk)

## Appendix 1: Project Gateway Process

### Entering the Gateway Process

The Projects Procedure and Gateway Process applies to projects that result in tangible, physical deliverables or assets, including Information Systems / Technology projects where the assets are 'digital' in nature.



The difference between Capital, Supplementary Revenue and Routine Revenue is an accounting distinction and can be guided by Chamberlain's.

**Capital:** Major schemes (>£50,000) relating to the acquisition, creation or enhancement of an asset which yields benefits to the authority and the services it provides for a period of more than one year. Basic definition taken from the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting, which has the force of law. Further conditions e.g. in relation to enhancements. Excludes regular or cyclical repairs, but includes cyclical replacement of major components, e.g. new windows etc.

**Supplementary Revenue:** (>£50,000) Project expenditure of a substantial or major nature which was previously classified as capital but is now revenue so as to conform to current accounting regulations, such as a major repair.

**Routine Revenue:** Traditional revenue project expenditure which is met from local risk budgets. e.g. cyclical painting and repairs.

**Ringfenced funds:** Designated Sales Pools, Cyclical Works Programme, Housing Revenue Account, Section 278, Section 106, and Area Strategies. Ringfenced funds also includes activities where the external funder (i.e. TFL) is providing funding for a restricted purpose.

### Gateway Routes

Risk, Complexity and Uniqueness

	Low	Medium	High
Estimated Cost (£50k<£250k)	Light	Light	Regular
Estimated Cost (£250k~£5m)	Regular	Regular	Complex
Estimated Cost (£5m+)	Regular	Complex	Complex