

Appendix 3

City of London Corporation: Central Grants Programme Analysis of Enjoying Green Spaces and the Natural Environment Fund grants awarded 2020/22 to 2024/25

Key Findings

This paper provides the first comprehensive analysis of the grants awarded by the Enjoying Green Spaces & the Natural Environment Fund (EGS) over the last five years illustrating the EGS's contribution to delivering both the Natural Environment Division's key strategies and the City of London's Corporate Plan strategic outcomes. Notable findings of the grant analysis include:

- Over the last five years, 2020/21 to 2024/25 inclusive, the EGS has distributed £384,444 in 35 grants to 24 unique organisations.
- The average value of EGS grant awarded over the last five years was £10,984 - substantially less than the maximum value of grant available which was reduced to £15,000 in May 2024.
- Similarly, although grants can be awarded for up to 3 years, 69% of EGS grants awarded over the last 5 years have been for only one-year, reflecting the demand on EGS for low value short-term grant funding.
- Application rates to EGS are low and steady with c.13 applications each year.
- CFCMT pre-application advice take up for EGS is low compared to other funding programmes. However, this may relate to potential applicants approaching Natural Environment Officers, with whom they have an established relationship, rather than CFCMT Officers for advice on application development.
- Approval rate for the EGS over the last five years has been an average of 53% which is substantially higher than the 'Stronger Communities Fund' and 'Inspiring London Through Culture Fund'.
- 7 organisations received two or more grants each representing 53% of the total EGS funding available over the last five years. This issue was addressed in 2024 through the introduction of a 12 month fallow period for organisations who had receive three years of funding for the same project.
- Over the last 5 years 37% of all EGS grants awarded (13 grants) were for projects located in Eppling Forest (£137,191 investment) whereas Queens Park and West Wickham Commons received no EGS investment over the same period.
- Over the last five years 83% of EGS grants awarded were to small organisations with an annual turnover of less than £500k with almost two thirds (63%) of all grants awarded to 'very small' organisations with an annual turnover of less than £100k.
- 12% of EGS grants awarded over the last five years have been to organisations/ groups that were user-led.
- 80% of EGS funded activities over the last 5 years were for general beneficiaries, 26% benefitted families, 23% benefitted children under the age of 11, and 23% benefitted young people aged 11-25 years.
- The EGS fund delivers against priorities within four Natural Environment Division key strategies: Access Recreation Strategy; Community Engagement Strategy; Nature Conservation Resilience Strategy; Culture, Heritage, Learning Strategy.
- The EGS also delivers against four of the six CoL Corporate Plan strategic outcomes significantly contributing to 'Leading Sustainable Environment' with 51% of all grants increasing biodiversity and 40% of all grants delivering climate mitigation.

City of London Corporation: Central Grants Programme

Analysis of Enjoying Green Spaces and the Natural Environment Fund grants awarded 2020/22 to 2024/25

Background

1. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the grants awarded by the 'Central Grants Programme: Enjoying Green Spaces & the Natural Environment Fund' over the last five years of awards 2020/21 to 2024/25 inclusive to illustrate the impact of the fund and its contribution to delivering both the Natural Environment Division's key strategies and the City of London's Corporate Plan strategic outcomes.
2. The paper analyses the impact and learning from 35 Enjoying Green Spaces & the Natural Environment Fund' (EGS) grants awarded over 60 months (April 2020 to March 2025 inclusive) by addressing the key learning questions identified for the programme (see **Appendix A**).
3. The EGS is one of a portfolio of four open grant funding programmes that form the City of London Corporation's Central Grants Programme. The EGS has been operating since 2016.
4. EGS is an annual funding programme which opens for applications once each year in the late summer/autumn with grants awarded in time for activities to start by March.
5. The EGS funding programme was reviewed in 2024 leading to some minor alterations to the fund's policy and criteria. In May 2024 the Natural Environment Committee approved updates to the fund criteria and reduced the maximum grant from £20,000 to £15,000. The number of sub-themes/criteria for EGS was increased from four to five providing some greater specificity under the '*Connecting communities with their green spaces*' sub-theme/criteria and adding a new sub-theme/criteria '*Providing opportunities for children and young people to learn and have fun*'. These policy updates better align the fund against the Natural Environment Division's four key strategies: Access Recreation Strategy; Community Engagement Strategy; Nature Conservation Resilience Strategy; Culture, Heritage, Learning Strategy.
6. All EGS funded projects must either improve the conservation value of the chosen green spaces and/or improve our knowledge of the biodiversity of the green spaces. In addition funded projects must also meet at least one of the other three sub-themes/criteria: Connecting communities with their green spaces; Providing opportunities for children and young people to learn and have fun; Improving wellbeing through the use of green spaces. (For full details of the sub-themes see **Appendix B**).
7. The EGS funds projects where the majority of impact will be on the City of London Corporation's managed open spaces (Ashted Common, Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common, Epping Forest, Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, Queen's Park, The Coulsdon Commons, The West Wickham Commons, West Ham Park) and Bunhill Fields Burial Ground.
8. These open spaces, spread across London and the Home Counties, provide rare and ancient habitats for a range of endangered plants and animals and capture 16,400 thousand tonnes of carbon a year. They attract 25m visitors annually – almost double

the number of visitors to Premiership football matches and five times the number of visitors to the Grand Canyon.

9. The minimum grant that an organisation can apply for is £2,000 and the maximum grant is £15,000. To avoid creating long term reliance on the EGS grants are awarded over a maximum of 3 years and organisations receiving grants for the same project for three years are required to have a fallow period of 12 months before reapplying to continue that work. The refurbishment of buildings/capitals works was excluded from funding from 2024/25 onwards.
10. Funding for EGS comes from the City's Estate with a budget agreed each year c.£73,333.
11. The City of London managed open spaces are governed by nine charities for which the City of London Corporation is the sole trustee. A review of the National Environment Charities long-term sustainability began in 2022 to give these charities greater flexibility to operate, generate income, build reserves where possible, invest in conservation, and enhance services. The review will assess appropriate new and enhanced ways for the natural environment charities to generate their own revenue, including fundraising from external sources.
12. In line with embedding EEDI within funding best practice, the CFCMT offers pre-application advice to all EGS potential applicants helping to support organisations develop their applications and make contact with relevant CoL Natural Environment Officers prior to application. The programme's management is reviewed against IVAR's Open and Trusting Grant-Making for Public Agencies with light touch grant reporting in line with Open and Trusting grant-making principles.

Value and distribution of grants over time

13. Over the last five years 2020/21 to 2024/25 inclusive the EGS has distributed £384,444 in 35 grants. Grants awarded have ranged from £2,500 to £14,988. (See **Table 1**).
14. The average value of grant awarded over the last five years was £10,984. The annual value of the fund has remained more or less static over the last five years with an average of 7 funded projects each year.

Table 1			
Financial Year	Number of grants awarded	Value of grants awarded in year	Average value of grant awarded
2020/21	7	£83,568	£11,938
2021/22	8	£76,300	£9,538
2022/23	7	£77,401	£11,057
2023/24	6	£73,635	£12,273
2024/25	7	£73,540	£10,506
Total	35	£384,444	Av £10,984

15. EGS grant funding has primary been awarded for the delivery of projects (84% of total spend) rather than capital projects (16% of total spend) over the last five years. (See **Table 2**).
16. Over the last five years the value of grant funding towards capital expenditure has steadily decreased, and from 2024/25 onwards '*Refurbishment of buildings/capital works*' has not been eligible for EGS funding. (See **Table 2**).

Table 2		
Financial Year	Value of capital grant expenditure	Value of revenue grant expenditure
2020/21	£32,153	£51,415
2021/22	£22,324	£53,976
2022/23	£5,000	£72,401
2003/24	£914	£72,721
2024/25	£0	£73,540
Total	£60,391	£324,053

17. Although the EGS can award grants lasting for up to three years, over the last five years over two-thirds of EGS grants awarded (69%) have been for a single year. (See **Table 3**).
18. 2024/25 was the first year that the number of multi-year grants exceeded the number of single year grants awarded and may reflect organisations' needs to plan further in advance. (See **Table 3**).
19. Of the eleven 2/2+year grants, three grants were awarded for 3 years, one grant was awarded for 2.5 years and 7 grants were awarded for 2 years (20% of all grants awarded over the 5 years).

Table 3				
Financial Year	Number of 1 year grants	% 1 year grants	Number of 2 year or longer grants	% 2 year or longer grants
2020/21	6	86%	1	14%
2021/22	5	63%	3	37%
2022/23	5	71%	2	29%
2003/24	5	83%	1	17%
2024/25	3	43%	4	57%
Total	24		11	

Demand for Enjoying Green Spaces & the Natural Environment funding

20. Over the last 5 years there have been a total of 66 applications to the EGS of which on average 35% were rejected, 12% were withdrawn, and 53% were approved. (See **Table 4**).
21. Over the last 5 years (2001/21 to 2024/25) application rate to the EGS has hovered with an average of c.13 applications per year. Given that EGS funds available have remained more or less constant in the years that there are more applications the approval rate drops.

Table 4					
Financial Year	Number of apps submitted	Number of Grants awarded/ funded	Number of apps rejected	Number of apps withdrawn	Approval rate
2020/21	12	7	3	2	58%
2021/22	17	8	9	0	47%
2022/23	9	7	2	0	78%

2023/24	16	6	6	4	38%
2024/25	12	7	3	2	58%
Total	66	53%	35%	12%	Av. 53%

22. In line with high quality funding practice CFCMT offers 1:1 tailored pre-application advice calls to all potential applicants. This practice ensures that potential applicants are provided with information, advice and introductions to Natural Environment Officers to help develop their projects prior to submission. It allows the CFCMT to ensure that those who are furthest from accessing funding are given the support they individually need by removing structural barriers within the funding process. Pre-application calls also enable the team to establish relational grant-making practice from the initial contact with a potential applicant and identify and mitigate common issues experienced by applicants. Most importantly, pre-application advice provides early identification of ineligible applicants and projects, thereby preventing organisations wasting precious time on working up full applications and allowing CFCMT Officers to spend more time on assessing potentially successful applications.
23. Monitoring of pre-application advice began in late 2023. In 2024/25 only 4 organisations requested EGS pre-application advice one of whom then submitted an application (the applicant was successful). Applicants to EGS are well known to the Natural Environment Division, often having worked closely with Officers responsible for specific open spaces over a number of years. Applicants therefore tend to develop their projects and ask for advice directly from these Officers rather than the CFCMT.

Continuation/Repeat Funding

24. Over the five year period (2020/21 to 2024/25 inclusive) 24 unique organisations were supported through the award of EGS grant funding of which 71% of successful applicants were awarded one grant each. (See **Table 5**).

Table 5	
Number of grants awarded over 5 years	Number of organisations
1	17
2	4
3	2
4	1
Total	24

25. 7 organisations had two or more grants each. The maximum aggregate value of grant from the EGS over the last five years to any single organisation was £47,968 equivalent to 12% of the total grant spend over the last 5 years and the largest number of continuation/repeat grants awarded to the same applicant was 4. (See **Table 6**).
26. Organisations receiving one or more grants were awarded 53% of the total funding available over the last five years. With three organisations (Tindersticks, Epping Forest Heritage Trust, Capital Kids Cricket) between them awarded almost a third (31%) of the total funds available for distribution over the last five years.

Table 6			
Organisation	Number of grants awarded over 5 years	Value of grants awarded over 5 years	% of total grant spend over 5 years
Tindersticks CIC	4	£47,968	12%
Epping Forest Heritage Trust	3	£39,253	10%
Capital Kids Cricket	3	£33,879	9%
Downlands Trust	2	£27,396	7%
Lower Mole Countryside Trust	2	£24,955	6%
Friends of City Gardens	2	£24,920	6%
Highams Park Community CIC	2	£12,500	3%
			53%

27. To ensure the wider distribution of funds, in May 2024 the Natural Environment Board agreed to limit the length of continuous funding to three years after which applicants seeking funding for the same work would require a fallow period of 12 months before they can reapply.

Locations specifically benefiting from EGS grant funding

28. Over the last 5 years 37% of all EGS grants awarded (13 grants) were for projects located in Epping Forest (£137,191). (See **Table 7**). The disparity in investment across the City of London Corporation's Open Spaces through the EGS may relate to the nature of the sites, recreational value, usage and/or association with a volunteer or area specific group wishing to lead projects.
29. Two natural environment locations received no investment over the last 5 years through the EGS – Queens Park and West Wickham Commons – with Highgate Wood benefiting from a multi-site project.
30. In line with the EGS review recommendations, from May 2024 onwards City Gardens with the exception of Bunhill Fields Burial Ground are no longer eligible for EGS funding with relevant proposals directed to the Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund for support.

Table 7				
Location	Number of grants awarded over 5 years	% of grants awarded	Value of grants awarded over 5 years	% value of grants awarded over 5 years
Epping Forest	13	37%	£137,191	36%
Mixed combination	5	14%	£62,244	16%
Hampstead Heath	5	14%	£56,211	15%
Ashted Common	3	9%	£39,935	10%
West Ham Park	4	11%	£34,091	9%
CoL Gardens/ Bunhill Fields Burial Ground	2	6%	£24,920	6%
The Coulsdon Commons	2	6%	£20,152	5%
Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common	1	3%	£9,700	3%
Highgate Wood	0	0%	£0	0%
Queen's Park	0	0%	£0	0%
The West Wickham Commons	0	0%	£0	0%
Total	35		£384,444	

Enjoying Green Spaces & the Natural Environment Fund grantee organisation by type – turnover, user-led, sector

31. Over the last five years 83% of EGS grants awarded were to small organisations with an annual turnover of less than £500k. Almost two thirds (63%) of all EGS grants awarded over the last five years were to ‘very small’ organisations with an annual turnover of less than £100k. (See **Tables 8 & 9**).

Table 8		
Annual Turnover of grantee	Number of grants	% of grants
£5m+	3	8%
£1m to £4,999,999	2	6%
£500K to £999,999	1	3%
£100K to £499,999	7	20%
< £100K	22	63%
Total	35	

32. Over the last five years the EGS has consistently directed approximately three-quarters of its grants to small organisations with a turnover of less than £500k. (See **Table 9**).

Table 9			
Financial Year	Number of grants awarded to small orgs turnover less than £500k	% grants awarded in the year to small orgs turnover less than £500k	Total number of grants awarded
2020/21	6	86%	7
2021/22	6	75%	8
2022/23	7	100%	7
2023/24	5	83%	6
2024/25	5	71%	7
Total	29	Av 83%	35

33. Over the last 5 years over two-thirds of EGS grants (69%) were awarded to applicants that were either Constituted Voluntary Organisations (20%) or UK registered charities (49%). (See **Table 10**).

Table 10							
Organisation Type	Number of grants	% of grants	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
UK Registered Charity	17	49%	4	4	3	3	3
Constituted voluntary organisation	7	20%	2	3	1	1	0
CIC	6	17%	0	1	2	1	2
Charitable Company	5	14%	1	0	1	1	2
Total	35	100%	7	8	7	6	7

34. 12% of grants awarded over the last five years from EGS have been to organisations/ groups that were user-led representing a £37,600 investment (10% of total investment). (See **Table 11**).

Table 11					
Type of user led organisation	Number of grants	% of grants	Total value of grants awarded	% of total EGS spend	Average value of grant
BAME user led	1	3%	£14,500	4%	£14,500
Other user led	3	9%	£23,100	6%	£3,850
Not user led	31	88%	£346,844	90%	£5,594
	35		£384,444		

35. As would be expected from the EGS grant criteria, 66% of grants awarded over the last 5 years were to organisations from the Environment sector (£255,019 of total investment), with a further 11% of grants awarded to organisations in the Voluntary & Community Sector and 8% of grants awarded to organisations in the sports sector. (See **Table 12**).

Table 12				
Grantee Organisation Sector	No of grants	% of grants	Value of grants awarded	% value of grants awarded
Environment	23	66%	£255,019	66%
Voluntary & Community	4	11%	£34,166	9%
Sports	3	8%	£33,879	8%
Youth Provision	1	3%	£14,980	4%
Health	1	3%	£14,500	4%
Heritage	1	3%	£14,000	4%
Culture Arts	1	3%	£9,900	3%
Other	1	3%	£8,000	2%
Total	35		£384,444	

Meeting EGS Sub-themes/criteria

36. The EGS has five sub-themes which operate as the criteria for the fund. To be eligible for funding each application must meet at least one of sub-themes A or B plus at least one of sub-themes C, D or E:
- Sub-theme A - Improving the conservation value of the green spaces
 - Sub-theme B - Improving our knowledge of the biodiversity of the green spaces
 - Sub-theme C - Connecting communities with their green spaces
 - Sub-theme D - Providing opportunities for children and young people to learn and have fun
 - Sub-theme E - Improving wellbeing through the use of green spaces
37. Over the last five years 86% of funded projects met the criteria 'connecting communities with their green spaces', 60% of funded projects met the criteria 'improving the conservation value of the green spaces', and 46% of funded projects met the criteria of 'improving wellbeing through the use of green spaces'. (See **Table 13**).
38. The Natural Environment Division's four key strategies were each met by at least a third of the funded projects. (See **Table 13**).

Table 13				
EGS Sub-theme & strategies met over the last 5 years	Total Number of grants	% of total grants awarded	Number of 2024/25 grants	% of 2024/25 grants
Connecting communities with their green spaces – Community Engagement Strategy	30	86%	6	86%
Improving the conservation value of the green spaces – Nature Conservation Resilience Strategy	21	60%	7	100%
Improving wellbeing through the use of green spaces – Culture Heritage Learning Strategy & Community Engagement Strategy	16	46%	4	57%
Improving our knowledge of the biodiversity of the green spaces – Nature Conservation Resilience Strategy	12	34%	2	29%
Providing opportunities for children and young people to learn and have fun – Access recreation Strategy	12	34%	2	29%

Delivering against City of London Corporate Plan Strategic Outcomes

39. The EGS delivers against four of the six CoL's Corporate Plan strategic outcomes, significantly contributing to 'Leading Sustainable Environment' with 51% of all grants increasing biodiversity and 40% of all grants delivering climate mitigation. (See **Table 14**).
40. As expected given the focused sub-themes, EGS also strongly contributes to the CoL's Corporate Plan strategic outcome of creating 'Diverse engaged communities' with 66% of all grants awarded delivering increased community cohesion and 20% of all grants reducing social isolation.
41. EGS also strongly contributes to the CoL's Corporate Plan strategic outcome 'Providing excellent services' with 46% of all grants contributing to improving mental or physical health.

Table 14		
Main grant purpose (outcomes)/ Corporate Plan Strategic Outcome	Number of grants	% of grants
Increased Community Cohesion - ' Diverse engaged communities '	23	66%
Increased Biodiversity - ' Leading Sustainable Environment '	18	51%
Improved mental or physical health - ' Providing excellent services '	16	46%
Climate mitigation - ' Leading Sustainable Environment '	14	40%
Reduced Social Isolation - ' Diverse engaged communities '	7	20%
Improved Public Realm – ' Flourishing Public Spaces '	4	11%

Grant beneficiaries

42. The EGS grant programme mainly delivers activities and services for general beneficiaries (80% of all grants) with approximately a quarter of all grants benefitting families (26%), or children (23%), or young people (23%). Many projects target more than one main beneficiary group. (See **Table 15**).

Table 15		
Main grant beneficiary group/s	Number of grants	% of grants
General beneficiaries/ no specific target groups	28	80%
Families	9	26%
Children < 11yr	8	23%
Young People/Youth 11-25yr	8	23%
People with learning disabilities	3	9%
People from minoritised ethnic groups	3	9%
People living in poverty	2	6%
Older people	1	3%
People with physical disabilities	1	3%
LGBTQ+	1	3%
Refugees and Asylum seekers	1	3%

Recommendations

43. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the grants awarded by the 'Central Grants Programme: Enjoying Green Spaces & the Natural Environment Fund' over the last five years of awards 2020/21 to 2024/25 inclusive and evidences the EGS fund's contribution to delivering both the Natural Environment Division's four key strategies and the City of London's Corporate Plan strategic outcomes.
44. To further strengthen the EGS and its impact it is recommended that:
- Analysis of the fund is undertaken annually to track trends in funding.
 - Statistics from the EGS analysis are incorporated into assessment report recommendations to provide context and arguments for future investment in specific open spaces where there has been historically low EGS investment, for example Queens Park and West Wickham Commons.
 - Officers across the Natural Environment Division support in the identification of potential applicant organisations and the development of potential projects for funding drawing on their expert local and environmental knowledge.

Appendix A

Enjoying Green Spaces & the Natural Environment Funding Programme

Key information and learning questions
What is the total EGS grant allocation/year? Total invested over last 5 years?
How many EGS grants have been awarded/year? Total number of grants awarded?
What is the spread of grants in terms of value & number? How has this changed over time?
What is the demand for EGS funding (total number of applications) and how has this changed over time?
What is the approval rate for EGS grants and how has this changed over time?
What is the percentage of continuation grants/repeat funding?
Which open spaces are receiving EGS investment?
Are there any investment cold spots?
How are EGS grants spread across turnover (size) of grantee?
How are the EGS grants spread across organisation type (constitution)?
To what extent is EGS supporting user-led organisations?
What sectors are EGS grantees working in?
To what extent have different EGS sub-themes been met through EGS funding?
What are the main outcomes of EGS funded projects? Which CoL Corporate Plan strategic outcomes does EGS contribute to delivering?
Which Natural Environment Division Key Strategies does EGS contribute to delivering?
Which groups of people benefit from EGS funding?

Appendix B

Enjoying Green Spaces & the Natural Environment : Sub-themes

The Enjoying Green Spaces and Natural Environment (EGS) funding programme has been separated into five sub-themes. Proposals must meet at least one of the first two sub-themes (A and/or B), and at least one of the remaining three sub-themes (C, D and/or E) as outlined below. All proposals must either improve the conservation value of the chosen green spaces and/or improve our knowledge of the biodiversity of the green spaces:

Improving the conservation value of the green spaces - Sub-theme A

The City of London Corporation is committed to supporting the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and to climate change mitigation and adaptation. The activities supported through this sub-theme should aim to improve the conservation of the City Corporation's green spaces and should be able to demonstrate positive actions and outcomes. This could be via practical work on the ground, production of plans or a combination of both.

Improving our knowledge of the biodiversity of the green spaces - Sub-theme B

The activities supported through this sub-theme should help improve our knowledge of the biodiversity of the City Corporation's green spaces. This could include survey or inventory projects or small-scale research projects on species habitats found in green spaces. They could include comparative studies using other locations/sites, but the majority of the project should be carried out on a City Corporation green space. Projects should be able to demonstrate positive actions and outcomes. In addition all proposals must also connect communities with their green spaces and/or provide opportunities for children and young people to learn and have fun and/or improve wellbeing through the use of green spaces:

Connecting communities with their green spaces - Sub-theme C

The activities supported through this sub-theme should help local communities connect with the City Corporation's green spaces and encourage respectful behaviour on those spaces. Projects should facilitate a deep sense of pride, encouraging communities to participate in and advocate for our natural assets. We particularly encourage applications for bespoke proposals from organisations with expertise and experience working with people from disadvantaged communities. The projects should demonstrate positive outcomes for these newly connected communities and should demonstrate how they will support the groups to continue to visit the green spaces.

Providing opportunities for children and young people to learn and have fun - Sub-theme D

There is growing concern that opportunities for children to learn in nature are becoming limited, impacting on child development. The projects supported through this sub-theme should help address this. They should provide opportunities for children and young people to build confidence and gain understanding while feeling safe and having fun on the Corporation's green spaces and heritage assets. We particularly encourage applications for bespoke proposals from organisations with expertise and experience working with young people struggling with education and/or employment. The proposals should demonstrate positive outcomes for these communities and should demonstrate how they will support the groups to continue to visit the green spaces.

Improving wellbeing through the use of green spaces - Sub-theme E

Good mental health lies at the heart of wellbeing and quality of life, and of effective functioning for both individuals and communities. The projects supported through this sub-theme should encourage contact with the City Corporation's green spaces as an addition to treatment options within mental health.