

## City of London Corporation Committee Report

<b>Committee(s):</b> Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee	<b>Dated:</b> 3 February 2026
<b>Subject:</b>  Fundraising overview for North London Open Spaces (Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park)	<b>Public report:</b>  For Information
<b>This proposal:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes</b></li> <li>• <b>provides statutory duties</b></li> <li>• <b>provides business enabling functions</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Diverse engaged communities</li> <li>-Leading sustainable environment</li> <li>-Vibrant thriving destination</li> <li>-Providing excellent services</li> <li>-Flourishing public spaces</li> </ul>
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	No. (Future fundraising initiatives will require funding.)
<b>If so, how much?</b>	£0
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	N/A
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	N/A
<b>Report of:</b>	Katie Stewart, Executive Director Environment
<b>Report author:</b>	Susannah Behr, Head of Development and Partnerships, North London Open Spaces.

### Summary

This report provides Members with an overview of the development of a fundraising and partnerships strategy for North London Open Spaces (NLOS). It outlines the current context, progress to date, and required workstreams to build the foundations of a sustainable and strategically aligned fundraising function for the three charities managed by the NLOS team (Hampstead Heath Charity, Highgate Wood & Queen's

Park Kilburn Charity, and West Ham Park Charity) over the next 12 months, whilst developing a longer term, multi-year strategy for income generation.

## **Recommendation(s)**

Members are asked to:

- Note the report

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. In 2022, the City of London Corporation (City Corporation) initiated the Natural Environment Charity Review (NECR), a pivotal transformation project seeking improvements to the governance and management of the eight Natural Environment (NE) charities. NECR is intended to ensure that the City Corporation (in its role as sole trustee for each NE charity) demonstrates compliance with its various legal obligations, and through the revised City Corporation Grant Funding Model (GFM), that the charities can operate in a more effective and financially sustainable way into the future.
2. In early 2025, as part of the NECR, a fundraising consultant (Transform Partnership) was commissioned to produce a fundraising feasibility report across all the eight Natural Environment charities. The workstreams identified in this paper have been informed by that report's key recommendations and going forward will support the NECR action plans.
3. As part of NECR, it had already been recognised that the open space charities need dedicated expertise and capacity to engage in professional fundraising. Therefore, a new Head of Development and Partnerships role has been in place at NLOS since September 2025 to oversee income generation (commercial and fundraising), events, filming, volunteering, and communications.
4. The Head of Development and Partnerships role seeks to, among other things, bring greater strategic alignment across NLOS's four spaces and three charities so that they can:
  - a. increase income generation for each charity to invest back into the associated open space and help ensure its sustainable future.

- b. forge strategic, mission-aligned partnerships across multiple sectors that further the protection, preservation and enjoyment of the open spaces.
  - c. build and deliver a resourced and skilled fundraising function to provide world class supporter stewardship for donors and other community stakeholders.
- 5. This report sets out the steps needed over the next 12 months to establish the early infrastructure and baseline data required to develop a professional and formalised fundraising function at NLOS. During this time, a comprehensive fundraising strategy for Hamstead Heath, Highgate Woods and Queen's Park will be developed and then delivered in the longer term.

## **Fundraising**

- 6. In the context of this paper, fundraising refers to voluntary income (also often referred to as philanthropic income), including charitable and statutory grants (excluding the City Corporation core grant under the forthcoming revised City Corporation GFM), donations, legacy giving, corporate partnerships, community fundraising and other voluntary income.
- 7. New fundraising efforts will aim to deliver increased income across all four of NLOS's spaces, in the best interests of each individual NE charity. It will take a place-based approach, responding to the unique local context, needs and opportunities of each site, as well as exploring the funding themes and opportunities that will benefit from a cross-NLOS, cross-divisional, or cross-organisational approach.
- 8. Commercial income – including café leases, and fees and charges (e.g. sports fees, car parking, events, filming) – is also a critical part of the open spaces' financial sustainability. It is, however, out of scope for this report.
- 9. Commercial income remains a significant revenue stream for the charities, particularly for Hampstead Heath representing 32% of current annual funding, but also 8.8% for Highgate Wood and Queen's Park. It remains an area where the open space charities will continue to pursue additional income as appropriate, in light of the objects of each of the charities and their governing documents. Commercial activity provides an important platform for how visitors and partners engage with the spaces and so should continue to be closely aligned with the mission of the organisation and its future fundraising work.

## **Current fundraising context**

10. There are c.171,000 charities registered in the UK, although over 80% have an income of less than £100k<sup>1</sup>. Charities are raising, spending and contributing more than ever before. In total, registered charities had an income of £69bn in 2023-24, as follows:

- a) 46%: Voluntary donations (all sources)
- b) 45%: Earned sources (including commercial income and government contracts)
- c) 9%: Investments<sup>2</sup>

11. However, the fundraising environment is challenging. Fewer people, of all ages, are donating<sup>3</sup>, and government funding is down in real terms, while rising costs have intensified competition for grants and funders are reporting up to 400% increase in applications<sup>4</sup>.

12. The report from Transform Partnership assessed that the external fundraising environment for the NE charities is “promising but [...] competitive and nuanced”. Their findings suggest significant opportunity for the open spaces charities as stated in the report, “The charities have powerful stories to tell, impactful and significant programmes, and influential networks.”

13. However, the report also concluded that the open space charities are currently “not fundraising ready” due to constraints in governance, identity, systems, and skills. To help ensure that the open space charities become fundraising ready, the central NECR team is creating and putting action plans in place to address some of these overarching constraints to support the fundraising efforts of the individual charities.

14. While this work proceeds, the immediate task at NLOS has been to establish a reliable baseline of information of recent fundraising across the four spaces by reviewing existing records, identifying what income has been secured and from whom, and reconciling gaps in reporting. Parallel to this, a pipeline of prospective funders and any immediate opportunities with grant makers, philanthropic partners, and aligned organisations is being developed.

15. Using this baseline and working through the plan laid out here, over the next 12 months we can start to understand what success would look like for the NE charities from 2027-29. A key part of this work will be to define KPIs and targets for a diverse voluntary income stream in relation to the overall budget of each of the charities and the projects identified at each space. In summary,

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<sup>1</sup> [Sector overview](#)

<sup>2</sup> [UK Civil Society Almanac 2024 | NCVO](#)

<sup>3</sup> [uk giving report 2025.pdf](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Foundations in Focus 2025.pdf](#)

we seek to establish Hamstead Heath, Highgate Woods and Queen's Park as an impact-led charity which takes a multi-sector approach to secure sustainable income to:

- a. Achieve the stated mission of the Natural Environment Department: "To protect and enhance our open spaces [...] working in partnership to ensure they remain accessible, sustainable and preserved for the benefit of the public." And;
- b. Further the charitable objects of the charities: "The preservation of Hampstead Heath in perpetuity by the Corporation of London as the Trustees of Hampstead Heath, as an open space for the recreation and enjoyment of the public." And;  
"The preservation in perpetuity by the Corporation of London of the open spaces known as Highgate Wood, Highgate and Queen's Park, Kilburn as public parks or open spaces, for the perpetual use thereof by the public for exercise and recreation."

## **Proposed approach**

16. It is important to note that this approach is a whole-organisation initiative, with fundraising acting as an enabler and amplifier of the work of NLOS, rather than a driver. Efforts will be guided by the mission and purposes of each charity, and the projects and programmes that deliver that mission. This approach should ensure that we can clearly articulate the need for and both measure and communicate the impact of fundraised income, both internally and externally.
17. Five priority and inter-dependent workstreams have been identified for the first three years of this effort to build and sustain voluntary income for each of the charities, as summarised below:

### **a) Fundraising Readiness**

This critical workstream will be delivered through and alongside the ongoing NECR.

Desired outcome: To establish clarity on the governance<sup>5</sup>, organisational structure and overarching brand strategy for the charities, as well as individual identities for Hampstead Heath, Queen's Park, and Highgate Wood. Implementing the required financial management, and reporting processes to be able to set and monitor KPIs for a 3-year fundraising strategy.

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<sup>5</sup> [In line with the Charity Governance Code](#)

Deliverables include but are not limited to: Clear operational and project budgets identifying opportunities and gaps for fundraising in each space, a fundraising policy<sup>6</sup>, a reserves policy, updated fundraising FAQs, and branding guidelines.

**b) Case for Support**

Desired outcome: Develop a robust, repeatable process that identifies, assesses and articulates a portfolio of fundable projects including, for example, the Hill Garden Pergola, the Splash Pad or further development of the visitor experience around the Roman Kiln. See Appendix 1 for a draft project funding template that will be used internally to do this.

Deliverables include: A document(s) that articulates why funding is needed, what it will achieve, and how investment will deliver measurable outcomes and meaningful impact.

**c) Supporter Mapping & Engagement**

Desired outcome: A full understanding of existing supporters and potential donors, consulting with them to inform the other workstreams. This includes key stakeholders such as volunteers, friends, societies and other community groups who can partner and champion the charities rather than, or as well as, giving directly.

Deliverables include: A qualified pipeline of relevant funding opportunities and contacts, which, in time, is stored on a customer relations management system (CRM), as noted below.

**d) Exceptional Stewardship**

Desired Outcome: Supporters can meaningfully engage with our work throughout the fundraising cycle. This will be enabled by developing systems, processes and platforms, as well as hosting events, meetings and site visits. We will ensure that staff have the capacity, skills and confidence to maintain strong relationships even when challenges arise.

Deliverables include: an updated giving platform (currently Just Giving), a GDPR-compliant CRM and tailored stewardship plans for each project and/or major donor.

**e) Measuring, Evaluating and Reporting**

Desired outcome: Through transparent and impactful reporting, the open space charities become trusted and valued custodians of the spaces.

Deliverables include: An outcome framework that sets out the various measures (ecological and social) being used across the spaces, projects and activities. An annual Impact Report reflecting shared identity, outcomes and progress against mission.

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<sup>6</sup> [Code of Fundraising Practice | Fundraising Regulator](#)

18. Beginning with financial year 2026-27 (1 April 2026 – 31 March 2027), all the open space charities will receive a fixed, multi-year core grant from the City Corporation. External income will need to play an important role alongside this, providing flexible, capital, and transformative investment, distinct but complementary to business-as-usual operational costs. In time, it should also be possible to build up regular and repeat income that can be invested with confidence into permanent roles and initiatives.

19. Funding will typically align with the following three categories of giving:

- a) Mission (Unrestricted): E.g. “I give £5 a month because I value having green space on my doorstep.”
- b) Projects (Restricted): E.g. A grant towards the Hill Garden Pergola’s restoration
- c) Themes (Designated): E.g. Unrestricted funds ringfenced by trustees for a particular purpose, e.g. the “ancient tree fund”.

20. It is important to recognise that external voluntary income can create additional operational or management demands. Effective fundraising, therefore, needs to be properly resourced both for its generation and the delivery of the work it funds, and must consider full cost recovery in bids and budgets. Also, some donors will require a percentage of matched funding when applications are submitted, either from other donations, earned income or the City Corporation core grant.

21. As we start to map out the timeframe for these workstreams, individual fundraising conversations and applications can and are already happening. For example, an application to a corporate fund for bandstand performances and volunteering sessions, a donation for new drinking fountains and a project related to green and blue space funding in London. As well as potentially bringing in income in the next 12 months, these early actions will be opportunities to test messaging, platforms and approaches which can then be incorporated into the longer-term strategy and documents.

22. Appendix 2 shows an indicative phased activity plan for NLOS Charities for the Financial Year 2026/27. Noting that NECR or other departmental workstreams may impact the timeframe for some of these activities.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

### **Strategic implications**

23. Development of a formal and professionalised fundraising approach will support Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park in delivering

upon its ambitious climate, environmental and public access objectives as outlined in the Management Strategies, Natural Environment Division strategies, Climate Action Strategy, and City Corporation's Corporate Plan.

### **Financial implications**

24. The proposed approach is expected to increase income for the charity, though the charity will need to invest financial resource into its fundraising efforts, thus achieving a return on investment. It should also be noted that voluntary income is subject to greater fluctuation. To illustrate, a time-limited programme (e.g. with a three-year funded project or partnership) could conclude without renewal thereby decreasing the overall funding stream for the charity.

### **Resource implications**

25. Income generation will create additional operational or management demands on Officers. Effective fundraising, therefore, needs to be properly resourced both for its generation and the implementation of funds, and must consider full cost recovery in bids and budgets.

### **Legal implications**

26. In its capacity as trustee of the NE charities, the City Corporation is subject to a range of legal and regulatory requirements, for example, to act solely in the best interests of each charity, to keep the charities' objects, administration and governance under review, and to take relevant steps to ensure that each charity is operating effectively to achieve its purposes. In addition, charity trustees have a duty to act reasonably and to safeguard and manage the resources/assets of their charity, and would be expected to act with reasonable care and skill in managing available resources as well as to maximise opportunities to generate income by seeking funding from a variety of appropriate sources where possible, within the parameters of their respective governing documents and broader requirements of charity law.

### **Risk implications**

27. An ethical fundraising policy will be implemented at a Natural Environment level to identify, assess and manage risks related to fundraising including reputational risk through brand partnerships and high-profile donors as well as laundered or illegally gained money.

### **Equalities implications**

28. Voluntary income will enhance equality across the open spaces through funded projects that improve outreach, engagement and access for diverse and under-represented communities, in alignment with the charities' stated objectives. Increased diversity of stakeholder engagement and project outcomes will be included within any 'Case for Support' and outcome framework agreed upon.

### **Climate implications**

29. Development of a formal and professional fundraising approach will support the open spaces in delivering upon its ambitious climate and environmental objectives as outlined in the Management Strategies, Natural Environment Division strategies, Climate Action Strategy, and City Corporation's Corporate Plan.

### **Security implications**

30. No implications.

### **Conclusion**

31. This report provides Members with an overview of the development of a fundraising and partnerships strategy for NLOS over the next 12 months, with a focus on how that will relate to Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park. We have a fantastic opportunity to use this time to take a long-term view of fundraising and voluntary income, and one which reflects the depth of history and future longevity of the natural environment and local communities using these parks and open spaces. Alongside contributing to and benefiting from impactful projects, supporters and other stakeholders should be engaged from the outset to help shape a shared vision and build a sense of legacy and belonging.

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1: NLOS: Internal Project Funding Plan Template
- Appendix 2: Indicative phased activity plan for NLOS Charities for the Financial Year 2026-27

### **Background Papers**

N/A

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