

Committee:	Date:
Open Spaces Committee - For decision	13 th October 2014
Education Board - For information	4 th December 2014
Subject: Open Spaces Education Strategy	Public
Report of: Director of Open Spaces	For Decision

Summary

The City of London Open Spaces Department has delivered education services over a number of years. Although these services are not a statutory element of provision, prescribed in the Open Spaces Acts, they have been viewed as playing an important role in encouraging visitors to sites and increasing understanding of the ecology and heritage of the sites. In recent years grant funding from the City Bridge Trust and the Heritage Lottery Fund, as well as work with partners, has led to the expansion and development of provision. This report outlines current services provided and the associated costs. It also outlines the medium term impact of the service-based review exercise on funding for education provision. The report proposes the development of a single learning programme across sites. It proposes priorities for such a programme which will constitute an education strategy for the department.

Recommendation(s)

Members of the Education Board and Open Spaces committee are asked to:

- Note the report

Members of the Open Spaces committee are asked to:

- Agree the proposed strategy for development of a departmental education strategy
- Delegate authority to the Director of Open Spaces, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, responsibility for development of an education, outreach and volunteering programme

Main Report

Background

1. The City of London Open Spaces provides education services ranging from formal classroom-based sessions, to apprenticeships and guided walks.
2. In recent years provision has been improved and expanded through grant funding from a variety of sources, including the Heritage Lottery Fund project Branching Out at Epping Forest and the City Bridge Trust project Inspiring Londoners at Epping Forest, Hampstead Heath, West Ham Park, Queen's Park and Highgate Wood.
3. Education services are non-statutory and charges are made for some activities, although there is no uniformity of charging across sites.
4. The outcome of the Service Based Review, agreed by Policy and Resources Committee on the 4th September, identified some savings to be delivered through the reduction education provision at Hampstead Heath, City Gardens and West Ham Park. The report instead suggested that education in the Open Spaces could be appropriately funded through a long term grant from the charitable funds of the Bridge House Estates. Such funding would be subject to the development of a successful application for funding to the City Bridge Trust.

Current Position

City of London Education Policy

5. In October 2013 the City of London Education Strategy Working Group approved a report entitled *Education Policy 2013-16*. This policy drew together the varied contributions to education of the City of London. It described a clear vision for educational provision. The policy outlined a policy of expanding the scope and reach of educational activities, stating:

As the City achieves its ambition of providing excellent education throughout its current provision, opportunities will arise to expand its scope, whether by growing current provision or increasing its area of operation. The City will look positively on such opportunities

6. The policy also outlined a target audience for education programmes, stating:

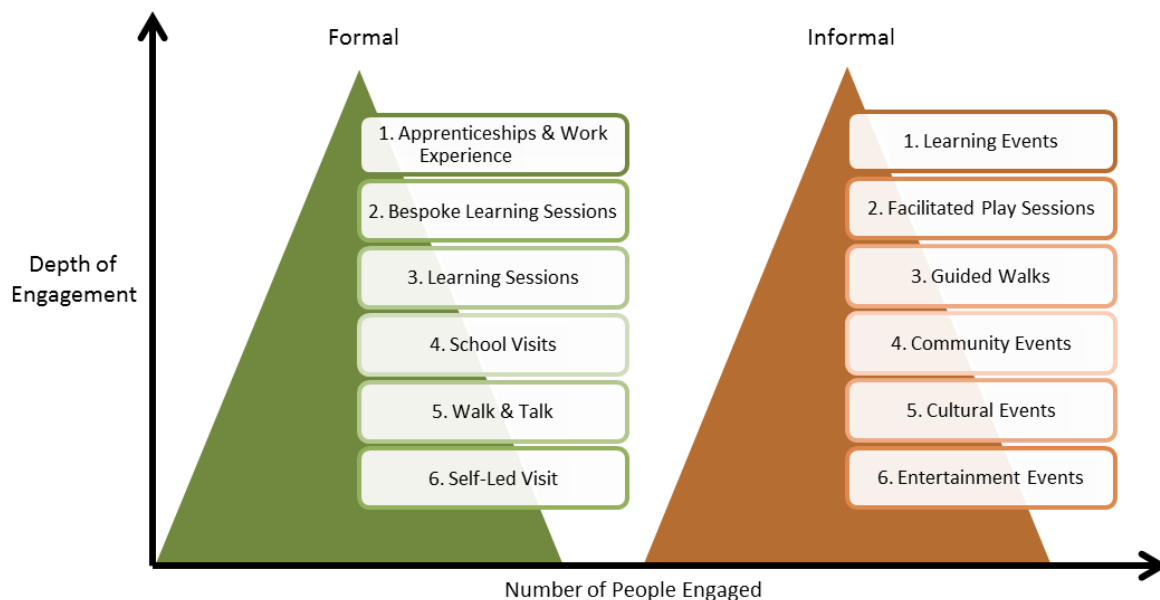
The City's cultural institutions and open spaces should specifically target the City's family of schools and those schools attended by a high proportion of children resident in the Square Mile.

7. The policy also obliged Open Spaces to coordinate with other areas of the City of London Corporation providing education outreach. An Open Spaces Education Officers currently attends the corporate education working group.

- The role of the City of London in promoting education, skills and employability is also emphasised in the City of London Corporation's Community Strategy, where one of the eight themes is encouraging diverse skills development and learning for all.

Open Spaces learning provision

- Education provision is a non-statutory service. While activities which might be classed as learning take place at all sites, formal education programmes can be found at Hampstead Heath and Epping Forest, with smaller programmes for local schools operating at West Ham and City Gardens. At other sites, events may be held on an ad hoc basis, but sessions are not actively marketed to schools and these activities form only a small part of officers' duties.
- The review of education in the department in 2012/13 entitled *Learning and Engagement in the Open Spaces Department* and included as Appendix 1 proposed a classification for learning events, which is shown in the figure below.



- In 2012/13 130,000 people across the Open Spaces participated in informal learning events and activities. 13,000 school children from seventeen local authorities attended formal learning activities. Evaluation of formal school sessions took place, with a 90% average satisfaction rating recorded.

Partnership work

12. At both Hampstead Heath and Epping Forest delivery of education takes place in partnership with other organisations. At Epping Forest the Epping Forest Field Centre (EFFC), the Suntrap Forest Education Centre (Suntrap) and the Epping Forest Centenary Trust (EFCT) all deliver education services within the Forest. While the EFFC received a grant of around £50,000 per annum from the City of London, the other providers are financially independent. As part of the Heritage Lottery Funded Branching Out project a successful partnership was run by all the providers in the Forest called Discovering Epping Forest (DEF).
13. The Wild About Hampstead Heath project started in 2012, arising from a partnership with the RSPB established in 2006. The project aimed to test and pilot new ways of working in areas such as volunteering, interpretation and 'narrow and deep' education. 'Narrow and deep' was defined as targeting engagement with a small number of schools, and engaging them on a range of subject areas and over several years. The volunteering programme sought to develop a diverse, self-motivated and self-led group of volunteers from the local community. The interpretation programme developed a new style of interpretation termed 'guerilla interpretation', with mobile 'Wild Heath Bikes' which take interpretation to visitors rather than expecting them to visit particular facilities. The Heath Friendly schools programme engaged four local schools and embedded outdoor learning into their curriculum across all subjects, from music, design and technology to maths, literacy and art. The project is roughly half way complete, and a full evaluation of impact will be carried out at project close.
14. City Bridge Trust has provided funding for education in the department from 2011 until the end of March 2015. This funding has led to the development of new sessions, a significant increase in attendance at events and the development of new facilities and resources.

Current costs

15. Currently a majority of costs associated with learning within Open Spaces are staffing costs. These costs include full salary costs and part salary costs for permanent members of staff involved in delivering education sessions. It also includes budgets held by Hampstead Heath and Epping Forest for casual staff to deliver education sessions. These staff costs amount to around £215,000 per annum and represent the base cost of the service. With additional costs associated with materials and management of education provision the entire cost of education provision in the department is £250,000 per annum.
16. Since 2011 the City Bridge Trust has funded staffing costs associated with formal learning provision and additional funding to develop the programme, including some capital expenditure. The proportion of this grant ascribed to educational activities amounted to £550,000 per annum from 2011-2013 and around £215,000 for the year 2014/15. The grant for education from 2011-2013 covered both education officers staff costs and the costs of other officers involved in outreach work, as well as funding for materials and development of facilities.

Measuring and evaluating provision

17. Currently formal education sessions are subject to teacher evaluation. Data is also collected relating to the children attending sessions. The need to introduce standardised data collection was noted in the *Review of Learning Provision in Epping Forest*. The review also highlighted the problems of collecting demographic data.
18. At Hampstead Heath there has been useful work done using demographic data for the ward in which the attending school is located. This overcomes the reticence of some teachers in providing such data, as it is freely available from the Office of National Statistics. This work has allowed the Hampstead Heath education team to target schools in particular wards to reach under-represented groups.
19. Little evaluation is carried out relating to informal learning sessions. In some cases satisfaction data is compiled, but this is not done in a standardised way, and only for a small number of events.

Proposals

20. The potential to secure a further City Bridge Trust grant provides an opportunity to set the strategic direction for education services in the Open Spaces Department, in particular aligning the focus of provision with the City of London Education Policy.
21. It is proposed that an education programme is developed as the basis for an application for funding to the City Bridge Trust. This programme would:
 - Focus on formal education sessions
 - Deliver sessions to primary and secondary age pupils across a broad range of curriculum areas
 - Target children at CoL sponsored and managed schools, and those located in the City Fringe
 - Also target children from deprived areas close to sites
 - Include informal and adult learning activities where they are targeted at a defined, under-represented user groups and clear outcomes of activities can be defined
 - Include other events if they can be run on the basis of full cost recovery
 - Be actively marketed to target schools
 - Be managed as a single programme across sites
22. In addition a funding strategy should be developed, which seeks to develop a sustainable funding strategy, in particular diversifying the sources of grant funding received for educational activities. In future there will be a presumption that educational activities should be funded not through deficit funding of the Open Space Charitable Trust, but through other charitable grants and income from activities. This is to reflect the fact that the Open Spaces Acts do not make reference to educational work.

Focusing provision

23. There is a need to focus provision; in particular clarifying the priority activities the City of London wishes to deliver directly and those which might be delivered by partners. Currently education provision spans a large number of activities. While formal educational activities are evaluated and impact on target groups measured, doing so has been difficult to achieve for informal learning events. There has also been some concern that attendance at informal events is dominated by regular visitors to sites and does not effectively reach unrepresented groups.
24. The requirement to develop and deliver a wide range of activities has also been identified by Epping Forest Education Review and the Learning and Engagement in the Open Spaces Department report as requiring significant staff input, which restricts time available to work on marketing and development of the programme.
25. Informal sessions have been identified in the Service Based Review as an area where savings could be made, either through ceasing provision or introducing charges.
26. It is proposed that the education programme focuses on schools sessions, in line with the City of London education policy. Sessions should be targeted at primary and secondary age pupils and should be offered, as at present, for a wide range of curriculum areas.
27. Informal learning events, as defined in the Learning and Engagement In the Open Spaces Department Review, would be reduced. Where it was felt demand was high for events, event could be continued with charges made so that the cost of an event is fully recovered. Volunteer led events could also be encouraged.
28. Provision would also be focused on specific groups which are identified as not being proportionately represented among visitors to Open Spaces. The opportunity to target provision at specific user groups has been highlighted as an area for development. Several City of London partners at Epping Forest identified disabled visitors as a group they wished to engage further during the Epping Forest Education Review.
29. These activities would aim to involve underrepresented groups through targeted programmes with specific outcomes. Models for such programmes would be the Happy Loppers project run by the Epping Forest Centenary Trust, or the City Bridge Trust funded conservation skills project at Hampstead Heath targeted at members of the Chagossian community in London. The focus on targeting provision, involving underrepresented groups and delivering specific outcomes would be more attractive to potential funders.

Developing a single education programme

30. A single education programme should be developed, which draws together the work at all sites. Currently development of sessions and materials, marketing and relationship development is duplicated across sites. Additionally different charges are made at sites and educational activities offered at other sites are not marketed to those attending events.
31. It is proposed that a single education programme covering the whole Open Spaces Department is developed. While sessions and materials would be unique to each site, sharing marketing administration and development resources would offer an opportunity to increase the resource available to develop the programme.
32. A single funding strategy should also be developed as well as a single schedule of charges.

Developing the audience and marketing

33. The education programme should be actively promoted to City of London managed and sponsored schools and to those on the City Fringe. Relationships should also be developed with relevant officers in the Children's Services departments of relevant London boroughs to increase awareness of the Open Spaces education programme.
34. Schools located in the most deprived wards of City Fringe and London borough neighbouring Open Spaces should also be targeted in marketing efforts. The targeting of the programme on particular schools would continue the 'focused and deep' model established at the Wild about Hampstead Heath Project.

Developing partnerships

35. The development of partnerships for delivery of education work has proved successful at several sites, leading to innovative and effective developments in provision. The education programme should look to develop partnerships and possibly form a consortium of education providers. Work should seek to build on the successful existing partnerships such as those with the RSPB at Hampstead Heath and the Epping Forest Centenary Trust. Links with other organisations with similar aims should also be explored.
36. The Epping Forest Field Studies Centre (EFFSC) currently receives a grant of around £50,000 per annum for delivery of education services.
37. It is proposed that the EFFSC should be invited to partner with City of London in developing its application for City Bridge Trust funds, and the EFFSC should report progress and outcomes of its education work to the City Bridge Trust, if the grant application were to be successful.

Evaluation

38. A future education programme would need to develop robust and searching evaluation techniques. Currently data on who the programme is reaching is limited. Data collected about participants should be standardised across sites, and where possible with partners. Standard evaluation techniques should be adopted and results used to develop the programme. Additional evaluation of the longer-term impacts of the programme must be developed. The sustainability of outcomes of our education provision is as yet un-evaluated.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

39. The proposed strategic direction for the Open Spaces Education Programme would align departmental activity with the City of London Education Policy.

Implications

40. The proposal sets a direction for the development of an education programme in the department. As such there are no financial, risk, legal or property implication arising from the report itself. However, the development of the programme may have implications in these areas, which will be considered as part of the programme development.

Conclusion

41. If agreed, the development of an education programme, based on the principles in this report, will be delegated to the Director of Open Space, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the committee.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - *Learning and Engagement in the Open Spaces Department*

Background Papers:

Jennifer Allott

Departmental Business Manager

T: 0207 3323517

E: jennifer.allott@cityoflondon.gov.uk