

<b>Committee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Open Spaces & City Gardens	5 December 2016
<b>Subject:</b> Greater London National park City Initiative	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Open Spaces	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Esther Sumner, Open Spaces	

### Summary

There is a proposal to declare London the first “National Park City”. This report draws Members’ attention to this proposal and highlights the need for further information.

### Recommendation

Members are asked to note this report

### Main Report

#### Background

- Members may be aware of the campaign to declare London a “National Park City”. The proposal has been in the process of development and consultation since July 2015. The stated aim is “For Londoners to declare greater London the world’s first National Park City.” It is suggested that a National Park City will help:
  - Ensure 100% of Londoners have free and easy access to high-quality green space
  - Connect 100% of London’s children to nature
  - Make the majority of London physically green
  - Improve London’s air and water quality, year on year
  - Improve the richness, connectivity and biodiversity of London’s habitats
  - Inspire the building of affordable green homes
  - Inspire new business activities
  - Promote London as a Green World City
  - Nurture a shared National Park City identity for Londoners

#### Current Position

- Officers have met with organisers of the National Park City campaign and have also attended an event at the Southbank Centre. Although the proposal is mainly positioned in terms of aspiration and inspiration; some more practical matters have started to be solidified, including a draft charter, definition, formation &

structure, potential staffing and indicative costs. Full details are attached at appendix 1 and available at <http://www.nationalparkcity.london/> Officers note the estimate that the Greater London National Park City Partnership will eventually cost upwards of £4million to run, but in the early years approximately £2million.

3. The purpose of the Greater London National Park City Partnership is to:
  - Encourage residents and visitors to better enjoy, understand and care for our National Park City
  - Protect and enhance our urban natural and cultural heritage
  - Foster the wellbeing of our communities
  - Inspire individuals, groups and organisations to share and act towards these aims
4. It is important to note that although the proposal uses the language of “National Parks”, the proposal is outside of the national park legislation and no planning powers are sought. It is essentially a branding exercise seeking to apply ‘national park principles’ to a major city in order to raise awareness of London’s natural environment and promote its protection and use. Advancing this agenda in this way will raise awareness but does not set the proposal in the wider strategic context that is the responsibility of the Mayor of London. Therefore there may be merit in the Mayor considering this proposal as part of the forthcoming review of the London Plan in order that its strategic aims and implications can be assessed against the full range of competing strategic priorities for London.
5. Members may be interested to note that the proposal has been reported in the Green Infrastructure Task force outcome report, *Natural Capital investing in a Green Infrastructure for a fogue London*, who suggest that the Mayor explore how a Green Infrastructure Foundation could be created and operated.

### **The declaration**

6. In order to declare London a National Park City, the campaign is seeking to have at least two thirds of London’s 649 wards, the Mayor of London and the London Assembly make a supporting declaration.
7. The declaration is as follows:

“In recognition of London’s extraordinary, inspirational and distinctive living landscape; its ability to give, support, home and bring joy to life, and the will of Londoners to unlock its awesome natural potential, we declare that Greater London should become the world’s first National Park City.

World renowned for its cultural heritage and a centre of global commerce, it’s also a place where people and wildlife live together. National Park City status celebrates London’s significant natural heritage, recognises its value in supporting and improving the lives of residents and visitors, and affirms that a healthy environment is essential to the prosperity of any city.

The Greater London National Park City exists in recognition of all that has been done and will be done to conserve, enhance and benefit our natural,

cultural and built heritage, and to inspire us all to build a greener, healthier and fairer city.

This Declaration celebrates the extraordinary diversity and interdependence of London's people, communities, places, wildlife, habitats and ideas. It recognises that all residents and visitors have the potential to positively shape the Greater London National Park City, and that it exists to benefit and be enjoyed by all.

This Declaration calls for a Greater London National Park City Partnership to be established, and challenged to inspire and support individuals, groups and organisations to better enjoy, understand and care for our city; to protect and enhance our natural and cultural heritage, and foster the wellbeing of communities.

In recognition of all this, I give my support for Greater London to be declared a National Park City."

## **Proposal**

8. At this stage, Offices are not proposing that Members take a decision on whether to support the proposal. While the proposal is becoming more clearly defined, there remain a number of questions as to how it will be implemented and how it fits into the broader context. This broader context includes the current high level of strategic challenge facing green spaces, particularly: funding, development pressures and questions around green belt. The National Park City could be positive in terms of highlighting the importance and value of green spaces and access to them but how this will operate is not yet clear. Officers are particularly keen to understand how the proposal will contribute and interact with the already congested policy environment for green spaces and with existing strategic and local government structures in Greater London.
9. It is proposed that Members receive this report. Officers will continue to monitor developments and report as appropriate.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

10. The vision of the Open Spaces Department is to preserve and protect our world class green spaces for the benefit of our local communities and the environment. There is potential for the National Park City proposal to be mutually beneficial but further detail is needed.

## **Implications**

11. Further information is required to assess the implications of the proposal and its implementation.

## **Conclusion**

12. The National Park City proposal is articulated in terms of aspiration and inspiration. The Department will seek further information on how it is to be implemented and the broader implications before making recommendations.

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – National Park City Proposal

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