

# GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

## REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD3374

### Green Roots

#### Executive Summary:

The Mayor's new Green Roots programme aims to empower Londoners to shape the future of their neighbourhoods by creating greener, healthier and more climate-resilient spaces.

A core delivery mechanism for the Mayor's new plan for Delivering a Greener, More Climate-Resilient London, and incorporating his Clean and Healthy Waterways work, Green Roots will provide grants to support projects in areas where the need for green and blue infrastructure is highest, ensuring all Londoners can benefit from nature-rich environments.

This Mayoral Decision seeks approval for expenditure of up to £13.6 million for delivery of the programme.

#### Decision:

That the Mayor:

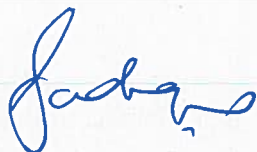
- approves expenditure of up to £13.6 million flexibly across three financial years (2025-26; 2026-27; 2027-28) to deliver the Green Roots programme; this will be taken from the Green Infrastructure budget
- delegates authority to the Assistant Director, Environment and Energy to approve Green Roots funding allocations following an assessment process using agreed criteria
- delegates authority to the Assistant Director, Environment and Energy to approve the receipt and expenditure of any additional funding from central government or other sources to enhance the Green Roots programme, where the parameters remain the same or similar, and after consulting with legal advisors and the GLA's Chief Finance Officer and subsequently having secured agreement from the Mayoral Delivery Board.

#### Mayor of London

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Date:

2/6/25

## **PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE MAYOR**

### **Decision required – supporting report**

#### **1. Introduction and background**

- 1.1. The Mayor's ambitious new delivery plan for Delivering a Greener, More Climate-Resilient London aims to empower Londoners to shape the future of their neighbourhoods. It seeks to address inequalities in access to green and blue spaces and create opportunities for communities to actively engage in transforming their local environments. These efforts will enable nature to thrive across our city and urban landscape, improving biodiversity, protecting against climate change, and enhancing quality of life for all.
- 1.2. A key intervention within the delivery plan is a new and transformative Green Roots programme, which aims to empower Londoners to shape the future of their neighbourhoods by creating greener, healthier and more climate-resilient places. Through grants and strategic support, it will drive bold, community-led action to enhance biodiversity, improve public health, and strengthen the city's resilience to climate change.
- 1.3. With a strong focus on equity, Green Roots will prioritise investment in areas where need for the benefits of green and blue space is highest, ensuring all Londoners – regardless of postcode – can benefit from nature-rich environments. Leveraging cutting-edge spatial evidence from the London Green Infrastructure Framework and Local Nature Recovery Strategy, it will direct resources to the urban spaces that need them most.
- 1.4. This Mayoral Decision concerns delivery of the Green Roots programme and seeks approval for expenditure of up to £13.6 million for the components of project detailed in section 2 below.

#### **2. Objectives and expected outcomes**

- 2.1. The proposal set out in this MD will contribute to meeting key London-level outcomes:
  - Londoners can enjoy green and wild spaces across the capital
  - London is resilient to extreme weather and the impacts of climate change.
- 2.2. The overall objective of Green Roots is to ensure that all Londoners, regardless of income or background, can access and benefit from green, blue and wild places. The intervention aims to empower Londoners to transform their neighbourhoods into more nature-rich, healthy and resilient places.

- 2.3. Two core principles will underpin the delivery of this objective:

##### *Evidence-driven decisions*

- This means using robust evidence to demonstrate need and prioritise projects, ensuring public investment is spent on projects that collectively deliver high impact for Londoners.

##### *Collaborative stewardship*

- This means sharing learning and working together with communities and others to maximise impact and ensure appropriate measures are in place to sustain impact in the longer term.

- 2.4. Evidence-based priority themes and locations will be selected for the Fund throughout its lifetime to reflect the most up to date Mayoral priorities and drive impact against priority needs. This will include setting a priority theme of 'clean and healthy waterways' to ensure that at least one third of the

available funding goes toward delivering projects relevant to the forthcoming Clean and Healthy Waterways Plan.

- 2.5. The central element of the Green Roots programme will be a new grant fund (the Green Roots Fund). Alongside the Fund, there will be an empowerment and engagement strand of work that aims to widen the reach of the programme to enable more diverse participation and access to grants.
- 2.6. A grant pot of at least £12.41 million will enable grant giving over three financial years (April 2025 - March 2027). The remaining project budget (circa £1.15 million) will cover grant support services, alongside community engagement and empowerment activity (see paragraph 2.14 onwards below).

#### The Green Roots Fund

- 2.7. The new Green Roots Fund will replace all previous GLA grant schemes for green infrastructure, providing streamlined grant funding to transform London's neighbourhoods for the benefit of all Londoners and nature itself.
- 2.8. The fund will be flexible and accessible, open to all projects involving green and blue infrastructure and delivering public benefit. Project activity is likely to be varied, with two broad project categories anticipated (and the strongest applications likely to involve activities from both):
  - preparatory / enabling work (such as community science; community activation and outreach; community micro-grant schemes; feasibility studies; baseline surveys; design work, etc.)
  - implementation work (such as creation/improvement/restoration of green space, waterways, wetlands or other habitat; rewilding; tree planting; species reintroduction; climate adaptation measures such as flood prevention and urban cooling).
- 2.9. The Fund will award grants ranging from £10,000 to £500,000 so that a broad range of project types and organisations can be supported.
- 2.10. Funding will be available to local authorities and not-for-profit organisations and partnerships led by them. Applications must be from formally constituted organisations that have an organisational bank account and are able to enter into legal contracts; private individuals will not be able to apply.
- 2.11. Supported projects will have a duration of up to two years and a single application will be required. To boost accessibility for organisations of all sizes and abilities, the fund will be open to applications at all times, with five funding decision points between 2025–2027.
- 2.12. To enable the efficient allocation of funding, this MD requests that delegated authority is granted to the Assistant Director, Environment and Energy to approve Green Roots funding allocations. The Assistant Director, Environment and Energy, will ensure compliance with the obligations set out in The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 which describe when written records of decisions and their content need to be published. Director Decisions and Assistant Director Decisions will be required, where appropriate, to meet these transparency requirements, including in instances where GLA funds are paid to external organisations.
- 2.13. To enable the fund to function effectively across financial years, and in line with organisational approaches to delivery plan budget management, programme expenditure will be managed flexibly across three financial years.
- 2.14. It is hoped that the programme will serve as a catalyst for wider change, unlocking additional funding from public and private partners. Wherever possible therefore, GLA officers will seek to leverage additional funding from other public and private organisations to increase the size of the fund (noting that some support costs such as grant administration fees may also need to increase proportionally). No sponsorship or additional income is yet confirmed, and any income would be subject to the GLA's usual due diligence checks. This MD therefore seeks a delegation of authority to the Assistant Director, Environment and Energy to approve the receipt and expenditure of any additional funding from central government or other sources to enhance the Green Roots programme, where the

parameters remain the same or similar, and after consulting with legal advisors and the GLA's Chief Finance Officer and subsequently having secured agreement from the Mayoral Delivery Board.

### Empowerment and engagement

- 2.15. Up to £0.4 million over three years will fund a number of engagement and empowerment activities to accompany the Green Roots Fund. Work will focus on providing support services to enable more diverse and inclusive participants in project activities and applying for funding.
- 2.16. Planning for this element has been informed by recent engagement and review work such as youth engagement events, polling, Talk London engagement, a literature review examining barriers to accessing nature and green space, as well as research gathered by the Grants Transformation team about barriers to accessing GLA grants. This work has improved our understanding of current levels of involvement with and access to green and blue infrastructure and the benefits derived from it and has helped to identify target audiences.
- 2.17. Working in consultation with the GLA's Community Engagement team, a community-based outreach and empowerment programme will seek to activate communities who have not previously had a role in green and blue infrastructure.
- 2.18. Technical experts and community specialists will work with potential fund recipients through workshops, webinars and one-to-one sessions to support project development and enable high quality applications and projects from a diverse range of communities. It is anticipated that this work will predominantly support community-led organisations, and especially where a funding application or project idea requires some adjustment and strengthening before it can be approved for funding.
- 2.19. Further engagement and communications activity such as communications campaigns, signage and audience research will promote the Fund and engage more Londoners in this opportunity.

### Running costs

- 2.20. Up to £0.75 million over three years will fund the running costs for Green Roots, comprising grant administration and technical support services.
- 2.21. In a change to previous GLA Green Infrastructure grant schemes (which have generally used external administrators) and as part of the GLA's Grants Transformation work, grant administration for the Green Roots Fund will be delivered internally by the GLA's Economic Development and Programmes Unit (EDPU) under a Service Level Agreement and with an agreed internal administration fee.
- 2.22. A comprehensive new grant management system (procured under DD2747 by the GLA Grants Transformation team) will be used.

## **3. Equality comments**

- 3.1. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as a public authority, the Mayor of London and the GLA must have 'due regard' of the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; as well as to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3.2. This involves having due regard to the need to remove or minimise any disadvantage suffered by those who share or are connected to a relevant protected characteristic; taking steps to meet the different needs of such people; and encouraging them to participate in public life or in any other activity where their participation is disproportionately low. This can involve treating people with a protected characteristic more favourably than those without one.
- 3.3. The project outlined in this MD will assist delivery of the policies and proposals in the London Environment Strategy, which has been informed by a full integrated impact assessment, including consideration of equalities. The Equalities Assessment Report for the London Environment Strategy

noted that exposure to poor environmental conditions is much higher among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Londoners.

- 3.4. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Londoners, and lower-income Londoners, are more likely to live in areas of deficiency of access to green space, or in areas where greenspace quality is poor. GLA research has found that women, adult Londoners aged 25 and under, lower-income Londoners and social renters visit parks less often. National research has found that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people are least likely to visit green spaces. Similarly, 21 per cent of households in London lack access to a private or shared garden; across England, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people are less likely to have access to a garden than White people.
- 3.5. Climate impacts are felt unequally across London, with poorer, disadvantaged communities often living in conditions that magnify the impact of climate change. Climate impacts can also be felt disproportionately amongst people with protected characteristics, and there is a high level of intersection across impacts.
- 3.6. A climate and equalities impact assessment has been completed specifically for Green Roots and results will inform programme delivery.
- 3.7. The proposed project outlined in this MD specifically responds to and aims to tackle these disparities. Some elements of the programme will focus on inclusion and involvement, implementing particular green and blue infrastructure interventions to improve access to and the benefits from it, particularly for groups currently underrepresented. Where inclusion and involvement is not the main focus of an intervention, it remains one of the principles of implementation.

#### 4. Other considerations

- 4.1. The key risks for this project are:

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Proposed mitigation	RAG
Level of applications for grant funding is very high, exceeding capacity to assess and respond in allocated timeframe	Medium	Medium	Provide clear guidance, assessment criteria and likely levels of competition to potential applicants. Give careful consideration to publication of application dates and priority themes, remaining agile and responsive throughout the programme, amending systems, procedures and resourcing as necessary.	Amber



New internal delivery systems not established in time, or fail to deliver high quality grantee experience	Medium	Medium	Close working with experienced and capable internal teams to set clear expectations and monitor system set up. Remain agile and responsive throughout the programme, amending systems, procedures and resourcing as necessary. Identify and plan back-up systems if needed to replace or supplement the new system.	Amber
Funded projects are delayed due to external circumstances	High	Medium	Robust requirements at applications stage such as appropriate permissions and clear, realistic project plans.  Learning from previous grant programmes will be applied.	Amber

#### Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

- 4.2. Green Roots is a key project within the Delivering a Greener, More Climate-Resilient London mandate and delivery plan.
- 4.3. This project will contribute towards policies 5.1.1, 8.2.1 and 8.2.3, and objectives 5.1 and 12 of the London Environment Strategy. It will also operate in line with other strategies, plans and report recommendations, such as the London Climate Resilience Review, London Urban Forest Plan and the London Rewilding Taskforce Recommendations, as well as the forthcoming London Surface Water Strategy, London Green Infrastructure Framework, Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Clean and Healthy Waterways Plan.
- 4.4. It will also contribute towards a number of other policies focused on improving London's environment and access to and engagement with green space, including chapters 1, 3, 5, 8, 9 and 10 of the London Plan, objective 3.3 of the London Health Inequalities Strategy, Inclusive London Strategic Objective 12, London Transport Strategy policies 2, 8 and 10 and the aims and outcomes of the New Deal for Young People.
- 4.5. It will also contribute to other London-level outcomes, including Londoners live in neighbourhoods that are well-planned and designed; London is a world-leading global city; and Londoners live in a city

that supports their mental and physical health. And it contributes to the cross-cutting priorities of a resilient city, health in all policies, addressing structural inequalities and net zero.

#### Considerations for the provision of grant funding and subsidy control

- 4.6. The proposed grant funding within this project does not constitute a subsidy for the purpose of the Subsidy Control Act 2022. This is because the proposed recipients are not engaging in economic activity, i.e., they will not be operating in a market in which there is competition.

#### General Data Protection Regulation

- 4.7. All records, particularly those relating to grant applicants and recipients, will be held in line with the GLA's requirements under GDPR.

#### Conflicts of interest

- 4.8. No conflicts of interest have been identified for any officers involved in the development of this proposal or drafting or clearance of this decision form.

## **5. Financial comments**

### Proposed budget

- 5.1. The table below details the proposed budget profile.

Budget element	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Total
Green Roots Fund (grant pot)	£2,606,100	£5,336,300	£4,467,600	<b>£12,410,000</b>
Empowerment and Engagement Activity	£84,000	£172,000	£144,000	<b>£400,000</b>
Running costs	£217,967	£272,967	£255,467	<b>£746,400</b>
<b>Annual total</b>	<b>£2,908,067</b>	<b>£5,781,267</b>	<b>£4,867,067</b>	
<b>Overall total:</b>				<b>£13,556,400</b>

- 5.2. This activity is included in the 2025-26 budget and is linked to the Greener and More Climate Resilient programme. Approval for future years will be subject to the GLA's budget setting process. Any changes in the anticipated profile of spend across the years will be reflected as updates during the budget management and setting process.
- 5.3. The Green Roots grant budget includes allocation from the Greener and More Climate Resilient London programme (including both Green Infrastructure and Adaptation budgets), alongside an estimated £0.255m of recouped funds from previous GLA grant programmes under multiple decisions (MD2141, MD2285 [Greener City Fund]; MD2665, MD2827 [Grow Back Greener Fund]; MD3032 [Tree planting]; DD2583 [Climate Adapt]; MD2860, MD3020, MD3158 [Rewild London Fund]). This sum is made up of aggregated small-scale underspends due to project changes and is to be recouped from their grant administrator, Groundwork London.

## **6. Legal comments**

- 6.1 The foregoing sections of this report indicate that the decisions sought concern the exercise of the GLA's general powers, falling within the GLA's statutory powers to do such things considered to further, or that are facilitative of, or conducive or incidental to, the promotion of the improvement of the environment in Greater London. In formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought, officers must comply with the GLA's related statutory duties to:

- pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people
- consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom
- consult with appropriate bodies.

- 6.2 In taking any decisions sought, the Mayor must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty – namely the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010; and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (race, disability, sex, age, sexual orientation, religion, gender reassignment) and persons who do not (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Mayor should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.
- 6.3 The Mayor may delegate authority to the Executive Director of Good Growth (in consultation with the Deputy Mayor for Environment & Energy) pursuant to section 38 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999.
- 6.4 If the Mayor makes the decisions sought, officers must ensure that:
- no reliance is placed, nor commitments made which rely upon the availability of: additional funding/sponsorship until binding legal commitments are secured from funders/sponsors; and/or future years' GLA budgets until they have been approved definitively
  - sponsorship is sought in accordance with the GLA's sponsorship policy and also recognising that such sums may be sought under s.93 of the Local Government Act 2003 but cannot exceed the costs of providing the associated benefits to each sponsor
  - any award of grant funding is made fairly, transparently, in accordance with the GLA's equalities requirements and with the requirements of GLA's Contracts and Funding Code and funding agreements are put in place between and executed by the GLA and recipients before any commitment to fund is made
  - all services, supplies or works required are procured in liaison with TfL Procurement and in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code and contracts are put in place between and executed by the GLA and contractors before commencement of such services
  - to the extent applicable, the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act 2023 are fulfilled.

## 7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Development of systems and processes to support grant programme	February - June 2025
Procurement of contracts for project support elements	May - September 2025
Open for first applications	June 2025
Round 1 application deadline (indicative)	August 2025
Round 1 recipients announced (indicative)	October 2025
Round 2 application deadline (indicative)	January 2026
Round 2 recipients announced (indicative)	March 2026
Round 3 application deadline (indicative)	May 2026
Round 3 recipients announced (indicative)	August 2026
Round 4 application deadline (indicative)	January 2027
Round 4 recipients announced (indicative)	March 2027



Round 5 application deadline (indicative)	June 2027
Round 5 recipients announced (indicative)	September 2027
Delivery End Date for project interventions	Autumn 2029
Project Closure	Autumn 2029

**Appendices and supporting papers:**

None.

**Public access to information**

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

**Part 1 – Deferral****Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? YES**

If YES, for what reason: Publication needs to be deferred until the public announcement of the opening of the grant fund, which is expected to be the last week of June 2025.

Until what date: 1 July 2025

**Part 2 – Sensitive information**

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

**Is there a part 2 form – NO****ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:**

Drafting officer to  
confirm the  
following (✓)

**Drafting officer:**

Eleanor Potter has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

**Sponsoring Director:**

Philip Graham has reviewed the request and is satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

✓

**Mayoral Adviser:**

Mete Coban has been consulted about the proposal and agrees the recommendations.

✓

**Advice:**

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

✓

**Mayoral Delivery Board**

This decision was agreed by the Mayoral Delivery Board on the 12 May 2025.

✓

**CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:**

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

**Signature:**

*Fay Hannan*

**Date:**

23/05/2025

**CHIEF OF STAFF:**

I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Mayor

**Signature:**

*D. Bellamy*

**Date:**

27/05/2025