

REQUEST FOR DIRECTOR DECISION – DD2723

Title: 'Green Roots' Community Microgrant Pilot

Executive Summary:

A core aim of the Mayor's new Green Roots programme is to empower Londoners to make their neighbourhoods more nature-rich, healthy and climate-resilient.

The Mayor will provide the money and tools to achieve this, with part of the new Green Roots Programme seeking to make GLA funding directly available at a 'micro' scale (£200-£1000) to communities that typically wouldn't receive it.

As a strategic authority, the GLA does not have capacity or mechanisms to deliver at this scale, so collaboration is necessary. The GLA needs to test approaches to making this type of funding available in a way that both achieves outcomes and represents best value.

London National Park City Foundation (LNPC) is developing a microgrant scheme linked to their Ranger programme to deliver community funding at the scale sought for Green Roots, alongside a high-quality community activation and engagement programme. A pilot project is therefore proposed to accelerate expansion of LNPC's scheme and use it to inform the GLA's longer-term approach to small-scale community grant giving in London.

Decision:

That the Executive Director of Good Growth approves:

- Expenditure of up to £110,000 as a contribution to London National Park City Foundation's costs for delivery of its community microgrant pilot scheme and associated community activation and empowerment work, to inform longer-term design of the 'Green Roots' programme.

AUTHORISING DIRECTOR

I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

Name: Philip Graham

Position: Executive Director, Good Growth

Signature:



Date:

03/12/2024

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. This decision request concerns delivery of the Mayor's commitment to establish a new Green Roots programme.
- 1.2. Green Roots will take a multi-pronged approach to addressing social justice in nature, empowering Londoners to make their neighbourhoods more nature-rich, healthy and climate-resilient.
- 1.3. The programme will build capacity and capability at different scales to enable delivery for partners, boroughs and local communities. A core aim is to make funding and tools rapidly and directly available to communities at a 'micro' scale.
- 1.4. Research, testing and development is needed to inform an approach to community grant giving that is supportive, accessible and impactful at a neighbourhood level, whilst also representing best value for the GLA's public funds.
- 1.5. Community funding levels are anticipated to be very low (£200-£1000). As a strategic authority, the GLA does not have capacity or mechanisms to effectively deliver direct funding at this scale, nor the significant community support needed to ensure its success, so it is necessary to collaborate to achieve this.
- 1.6. This Director Decision request seeks approval to award up to £110,000 to London National Park City Foundation as a contribution toward its costs to pilot delivery of a community microgrant scheme, and accompanying community empowerment and activation activity, to inform the design of the Green Roots programme.

London National Park City

- 1.7. London became the world's first National Park City in July 2019, launched by the National Park City Foundation in collaboration with the Mayor of London and 260 partners and organisations.
- 1.8. London National Park City (LNPC) is a grassroots movement that aims to reconnect every citizen with urban nature and equip communities with the ability to make their neighbourhoods greener, healthier and wilder.
- 1.9. A core part of LNPC's work is its volunteer Ranger Programme. 130 accredited LNPC Rangers are currently active across London. Rangers are drawn from and directly connected to London's communities, encouraging and delivering local action in a way that aligns closely with the Mayor's priorities.
- 1.10. The LNPC Ranger programme is designed to be accessible and inclusive, and any Londoner can apply. LNPC are working actively to ensure that the Ranger community represents the diverse communities of London, with current information showing that:
 - 8.2 per cent identify as having a disability
 - 18.6 per cent identify as LGBTIQ+
 - 17 per cent come from a lower socio-economic background
 - 29.6 per cent identify as Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic
 - 25 ethnic communities are represented
 - 12 religion/faith groups are represented.

- 1.11. The Ranger programme will be developed further in the coming year with an enhanced Ranger training offer and expanded recruitment, especially in London's most deprived boroughs.
- 1.12. Working closely with community groups, Rangers are currently invited to apply for 'microgrants' on a regular basis to enable delivery of projects at a neighbourhood level. With grants usually made of £200 - £1,000, funding goes towards equipment and materials to support practical gardening, construction, planting, and other hands-on outdoor activities.
- 1.13. Project delivery is supported by accredited LNPC Rangers, bringing quality assurance and closely supporting community groups to access funds they typically would not be able to.
- 1.14. Core delivery funding for LNPC is currently provided via grants from the National Lottery Community Fund and City Bridge Foundation. Funding for Ranger microgrants has historically come from a combination of public crowdfunding, individual and corporate donations, and has been short-term and changeable.

Proposal

- 1.15. LNPC's focus on diversity and inclusion and meaningful community empowerment aligns well with the aims of the Green Roots programme. Their existing small scale microgrant scheme delivers community funding and activation at the scale and depth sought for this element of the Green Roots programme, and is ready for expansion. They are well-placed to rapidly test broader delivery in a way that meets the Mayor's aims.
- 1.16. The award of GLA grant funding as a contribution to the costs of a pilot project will accelerate expansion of LNPC's Ranger programme and community microgrant scheme, and inform the future design of the GLA's Green Roots programme.
- 1.17. The project will be match funded by others, with a total project value of £185,000; GLA funding will play an important role in leveraging these additional funds. LNPC is committed to directing the majority of funds to microgrants (68 per cent), alongside a smaller portion for community empowerment and engagement activity and grant administration (32 per cent).
- 1.18. Consulting with communities and working with others as necessary, LNPC will establish sustainable and appropriate structures, systems and mechanisms for simple, efficient, accessible and inclusive microgrant giving. This will include setting up formal microgrant giving infrastructure comprising fair and accessible application, selection and award processes; monitoring and support services; reporting processes; and communications and promotion. This work will test and refine approaches and provide a firm foundation for scaling up their programme if the pilot proves successful.
- 1.19. Working with accredited Rangers and community groups, LNPC will test on-the-ground delivery of a community microgrant pilot programme, initially in (but not limited to) LNPC's priority boroughs of Islington, Barking & Dagenham and Hounslow.
- 1.20. Projects will have a particular focus on work that makes London's neighbourhoods more nature-rich, healthy and climate-resilient.
- 1.21. Details of the metrics to be used to evaluate the outcome of the pilot will be agreed at project launch to ensure outputs inform whether and how Green Roots can support microgrant provision in future. These will include (but are not limited to) the collection of data to enable analysis of engagement levels, recipient demographics, green infrastructure outcome delivery and the administrative burden on LNPC and grant recipients.
- 1.22. This DD seeks the Executive Director's approval of expenditure up to £110,000 for this project from the Urban Greening budget across two financial years (2024-25 and 2025-26), subject to future budget confirmation.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. The proposal set out in this DD 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 Green Roots programme will also make a substantive contribution to the following wider London-level outcomes:
 - Londoners live in neighbourhoods that are well-planned and designed
 - All Londoners live in a city that supports their mental and physical health.
- 2.3. The proposal will enable progress against the ambitions of the London Environment Strategy to:
 - protect, enhance and increase green areas in the city, to provide green infrastructure services and benefits that London needs now and in the future
 - back greater community involvement in the improvement and management of London's green spaces and natural environment
 - reduce the impacts of climate change and help store carbon
 - improve air and water quality, and reduce flood risk
 - promote healthier lives, reduce car dependency and encourage more walking and cycling
 - improve biodiversity and ecological resilience
 - increase tree canopy cover by 10 per cent, and ensure that over half of London is green by 2050.

Project objectives

- 2.4. The project will help to achieve the following objectives:
 - accelerate the evolution and growth of LNPC's Ranger programme, enhancing support for individuals and communities to actively influence their local area.
 - accelerate and expand enhancement and development of community grant giving for London through a higher volume of microgrant projects.
 - establish principles and mechanisms for continued delivery of a community microgrant scheme that can be supported by a broader mix of funders.
 - analyse performance and share learning to inform the long-term design of the GLA's Green Roots programme and community grant giving practices.

Expected project outcomes:

- 2.5. Through the Green Roots programme, and particularly its community microgrants element, the GLA aims to empower Londoners to make their neighbourhoods more nature-rich, healthy and climate-resilient.
- 2.6. LNPC and GLA will be provided with information and capability to establish a long-term, sustainable, investable community microgrant model to benefit communities into the future.
- 2.7. In support of that, the expected outputs from the pilot include:
 - delivery of circa 95 microgrant funded projects (most to be completed within six months of award)

- a report analysing the success of the pilot programme against agreed reporting metrics to inform the design of the Green Roots programme.

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 characteristic¹ 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 DD 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.² 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.³ 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.⁴
- 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. The proposed project outlined in this DD responds to and aims to tackle these disparities. With a core focus on diversity and inclusion, the project will seek to find genuinely accessible ways for Londoners to improve their neighbourhoods. LNPC Rangers will work actively with community groups and residents’ groups, empowering them to get involved in neighbourhood greening activity.
- 3.7. Work will focus initially in LNPC’s current priority boroughs of Islington, Barking & Dagenham and Hounslow, selected through a detailed analysis against a variety of indicators. Future rounds of Ranger recruitment will seek to increase the number of Rangers from London’s most deprived local authorities by 25 per cent (including Brent, Haringey, Enfield, Newham, Barking & Dagenham – based on ONS Census data 2021) meaning that communities in these boroughs will directly benefit from this work.

¹ The “protected” characteristics and groups are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, sex, religion or belief, sexual orientation, and marriage/civil partnership status. Compliance with the Equality Act may involve treating people with a protected characteristic more favourably than those without the characteristic. The duty must be exercised with an open mind and at the time a decision is taken. Conscientious regard must be had that is appropriate in all of the circumstances.

² GLA, [London Environment Strategy: Integrated Impact Assessment: Equality Impact Assessment Report](#), October 2017

³ GLA polling undertaken September 2017 to inform London Environment Strategy

⁴ ONS, [One in eight British households has no garden](#), May 2020

3.8. LNPC will continue to analyse Ranger diversity data alongside London census data to highlight areas where representation could be improved. Broader project equalities implications will be kept under ongoing review as individual project applications are assessed and projects are delivered.

Climate and Equalities impact assessment

3.9. A climate and equalities impact assessment has been completed as part of this project:

Performance of this project against Climate and Equalities themes	Score	
Resilience, Ecology & Adaptation: how does this project positively influence social, economic and ecological resilience and capacity to adapt to climate change?	This project aims to physically improve local places and positively engage Londoners in work to improve their neighbourhoods. It offers considerable opportunity for engagement and information sharing through LNPC ranger activity.	Green
Buildings, Infrastructure & Energy: how can we minimise the impacts of our buildings and energy infrastructure on the climate?	This project involves micro scale neighbourhood greening work (e.g., gardening / planting) – buildings are not expected to be involved, but green infrastructure and the public realm will be improved.	Green
Transport & Connectivity: how can we make it easier to move around London with minimal impact on the climate?	Projects delivered through this scheme will seek to improve local environments and encourage community activism. Active travel routes could be improved through greening; this would be at a street / neighbourhood scale.	Green
Waste & Materials: how can we encourage the use of ecologically safe materials and reduce waste?	Tools and materials for any work undertaken will be sustainably sourced (e.g., peat free compost / recycled equipment etc) throughout.	Green
People & Economy: how can we support local climate initiatives, engage citizens, and build green skills?	This is a dedicated community engagement and empowerment scheme that will make funding and tools rapidly and directly available to communities so that they can make positive environmental change.	Green
Equalities Impact Assessment	The project has a core focus on diversity and inclusion, responding to and seeking to tackle the disparities identified in the Equalities Assessment Report for the London Environment Strategy and working with a community-based partner to find genuinely accessible ways for Londoners to improve their neighbourhoods.	Green

Table 2: Assessment Results

4. Other considerations

4.1. The key risks and issues for this project are:

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Proposed mitigation	RAG
Uptake of grant funding is low	Low	Medium	<p>LNPC Rangers will work directly with communities to encourage and support applications and project delivery.</p> <p>LNPC Communications Officers (supported by GLA) will deliver external communication of the microgrants programme, preparing case studies, blogs, social media and other communications to encourage participation.</p> <p>Testing appetite and community capacity for micro-scale funding is the purpose of the pilot; findings will directly inform future work planning.</p>	Green
Microgrant funded projects are of poor quality or are poorly maintained	Low	Medium	<p>Administration of and support for grant projects will be carried out by LNPC, who have experience in project management of this nature.</p> <p>Working with LNPC provides quality assurance and continuity of contact with communities.</p> <p>Ongoing and enhanced LNPC Ranger training will support good quality project development and delivery.</p> <p>LNPC Rangers are drawn from and represent their communities, bringing a sense of ownership and responsibility for projects.</p> <p>Structures, systems and mechanisms will be established to assess quality, monitor delivery and ensure ongoing maintenance.</p>	Green
Microgrant funding is not accessible to all Londoners	Medium	Medium	<p>LNPC Rangers will work directly with communities across London to make funding available.</p> <p>Ranger programme development will broaden the reach of LNPC Rangers, with the aim of establishing ranger operations in every London Borough in the coming years.</p> <p>Grant making structures, systems and mechanisms will be established to ensure applications and processes are simple, efficient and accessible.</p> <p>Participation will be encouraged through dedicated communications activity.</p>	Amber
Inconclusive / untimely	Low	Medium	Clear project governance and communication processes will be established to monitor progress and findings.	Green

outcomes from the pilot				
Pilot demonstrates community microgrant funding is not viable	Low	Low	This pilot provides an opportunity to test this. A finding of this nature would be welcome and positive, as it would help to risk manage the Green Roots programme in the future.	Green

Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

4.2. This project will contribute towards:

- Environment Strategy Policy 5.1.1: protect, enhance and increase green areas in the city, to provide green infrastructure services and benefits that London needs now and in the future
- London Environment Strategy Policy 8.2.1: reduce the risk and manage the impacts of surface water, sewer, fluvial, reservoir and groundwater flooding in London
- London Environment Strategy Policy 8.2.3: increase the amount of sustainable drainage, prioritising greener systems across London in new development, and also retrofit solutions
- London Environment Strategy Proposal 5.1.1.f: back greater community involvement in the improvement and management of London's green spaces and natural environment
- London Environment Strategy Objective 5.1: increase tree canopy cover by 10 per cent, and ensure that over half of London is green by 2050
- Inclusive London Strategic Objective 12: work with partners to help ensure our approach to improving green spaces is inclusive
- London Health Inequalities Strategy Objective 3.3: a greener city where all Londoner have access to good-quality green spaces

Considerations for the provision of grant funding and subsidy control

4.3. The proposed award for grant funding to LNPC does not constitute a subsidy for the purpose of the Subsidy Control Act 2022. This is because the proposed recipient is not engaging in economic activity, i.e. they are not operating on a market in which there is competition.

Conflicts of interest

4.4. 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

- 5.1. Approval is requested for expenditure of up to £110,000 as a contribution to London National Park City Foundation's costs for delivery of its Community Microgrant pilot scheme to inform design of the 'Green Roots' programme, and associated community activation and empowerment activity.
- 5.2. The expenditure will be funded from the Urban Greening budget within the Environment Unit.
- 5.3. The planned spend profile is shown below:

Budget Line	2024-25	2025-26	Total
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Urban Greening	£43,850	£57,800	£101,650
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5.4. The expenditure for 2024-25 will be funded from within the Environment Unit's approved budget for 2024-25 financial year. The budget for 2025-26 has been included within the budget plan but requires formal approval as part of the mayor's budget setting process and so the grant agreement will need to use the usual break clauses that can be exercised if required if alternative funds cannot be found within the Unit's budget.

6. Legal comments

6.1. The foregoing sections of this report indicate that the decisions requested of the Director 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; and in formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought officers have complied with the Authority'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 the decisions requested, the Director 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 (age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation) and persons who do not share it (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Director should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.

6.3. The Subsidy Control Act 2022 requires that applicable grant funding comply with its subsidy control principles or otherwise fall within the scope of an exemption under the Subsidy Control Act 2022. Officers have set out at paragraph 4.3, above, how the proposed grant comply with the Subsidy Control Act 2022

6.4. If the Director makes the decisions sought, officers must ensure that the award of grant funding, it is distributed fairly, transparently, in manner that affords value for money and a grant-funding agreement is put in place between, and executed by the GLA and LNPC before any commitment to fund is made.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Grant agreement completed and signed	December 2024
Announcement:	December 2024 / January 2025
Delivery Start Date:	December 2024
Round 1 Grant Delivery commences:	December 2024
Round 2 Grant Delivery commences:	February 2025
Round 3 Grant Delivery commences:	May 2025

Interim Report Delivered:	June 2025
Round 4 Grant Delivery commences:	August 2025
Final Report Delivered:	January 2026
Project Closure:	By 1 March 2026

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 should be delayed in order to align with a broader announcement for Green Roots (anticipated December 2024).

Until what date: 15 January 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: ✓

Assistant Director/Head of Service:

Catherine Barber has reviewed the documentation and is satisfied for it to be referred to the Sponsoring Director for approval. ✓

Financial and Legal advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal, and this decision reflects their comments. ✓

Mayoral Delivery Board

A summary of this decision was reviewed by the Mayoral Delivery Board on 2 December 2024. ✓

CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:

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

Signature:



Date:

03/12/2024