

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD3462

Title: Royal Docks Management Authority – Water Management Lease Changes

Programme: Building More Homes

Executive Summary:

The water of the Royal Docks is its defining feature, yet it is currently underutilised and could be enhanced to support new activity and amenities. GLA Land & Property Limited (GLAP) owns the freehold to the water of the Royal Docks, which is leased via the Water Management Lease (WML) to the Royal Docks Management Authority (RoDMA). GLAP is also a shareholder in RoDMA and appoints two Directors to the RoDMA Board.

This decision proposes changes to the way that the WML is managed and the waiving of certain terms in the WML. This will facilitate RoDMA taking a more active role in delivering new sustainable investment and growth across the area's water assets. It will be supported by new governance arrangements between RoDMA and GLAP, ensuring enhanced oversight and management of new delivery activities, and of RoDMA's existing obligations.

These proposed changes will enable RoDMA to deliver a broad range of environmental, recreational and community benefits, in alignment with the wider objectives of the surrounding Royal Docks regeneration context. RoDMA has developed a Long Term Business Plan (LTBP) and supporting vision focussed on Royal Victoria Dock West (RVDW) to guide the delivery approach. The vision's initial focus is against three priority projects (Floating Health and Leisure, Floating Residential, Floating Park).

In addition, this paper highlights the updating and restating of the existing Articles and Shareholders agreement required to bring these documents up-to-date with legislation and reflect the existing working practices of RoDMA, as detailed in Part 2 of this decision. As GLAP is a shareholder of RoDMA, it is required to pass a resolution confirming acceptance of the updated Shareholders Agreement and Articles, along with all other shareholders.

Decision:

That the Mayor:

1. approves GLAP as freeholder and Landlord of RoDMA under the WML to enter into an agreement with RoDMA to waive certain conditions and implement an updated governance regime to work alongside the WML, as materially set out in this decision
2. approves expenditure of £100k over the next 10 years to support delivering the objectives and outcomes as detailed in Part 1 and Part 2 of this decision
3. notes that GLAP (as Shareholder) intends to agree changes proposed to the RoDMA Shareholder Agreement and Articles as set out in Part 2 of this decision, under shareholder resolution.

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:

26/2/21

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE MAYOR

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. The character and function of the Royal Docks has always been defined by its large and unique water bodies – Royal Victoria Dock, Royal Albert Dock and King George V Dock (the Docks). From the Docks' creation until the early 1980's, the vast man-made water bodies of the Royal Docks were dominated by maritime trade and were at the heart of London's global trade network. The water was in constant and varied use, exclusively as a hub for commercial shipping and logistics supporting the surrounding heavy industrial land uses.
- 1.2. In the period after the Docks closed, the water became inactive and the community that surrounded it was left separated from the water by large ex-industrial sites and a desire to restrict access to deep and sometimes dangerous water.
- 1.3. Today, under stewardship of the Mayor, the Royal Docks is London's only Enterprise Zone (EZ), and part-way through a multibillion-pound transformation and regeneration partnership between the Mayor of London and the London Borough of Newham. The ambition is for the Royal Docks to become one of London's most diverse and vibrant waterfronts, attracting £5 billion of investment to deliver 36,000 new homes and 55,000 new jobs.
- 1.4. The Docks are the area's defining feature, yet, at present the water is underutilised and could be enhanced to support new activity and amenities. Therefore, central to the success of the regeneration of the Royal Docks is a recognition that the vast water bodies of the Docks are more than inactive assets to maintain. Instead, the water is important to the existing and future character and vibrancy of the area. The water bodies of the Docks offer unparalleled potential to contribute directly to an inclusive, active, accessible and biodiverse new quarter of London; facilitating active sport and recreation, improving access to swimming at all levels, improving biodiversity and access to nature, supporting a substantial programme of cultural and community activities, and providing new accessible linkages to support active transport.
- 1.5. The Royal Docks Team (a joint initiative between the Mayor of London and the Mayor of Newham) have been working closely with the Royal Docks Management Authority (RoDMA) to develop a strategy to animate and enhance the water of the Royal Docks in ways which contribute to its regeneration context. This has focussed on delivering a comprehensive and coordinated new approach to the water's future use and activity, with RoDMA taking a leading role.

RoDMA

- 1.6. The Royal Docks Management Authority (RoDMA) was established in 1990 to oversee the management of the water in the Royal Docks. It is a not-for-profit organisation. GLAP took ownership, via statutory transfer, of the freehold of land in the Royal Docks in addition to the body of water within the Docks from London Development Agency in 2012. RoDMA has a long lease (225 years from 1990 – the Water Management Lease) from GLA Land & Property Limited (GLAP) as freeholder and landlord of RoDMA.
- 1.7. GLAP is also a shareholder of RoDMA (as are surrounding landowners across the area) and currently holds a circa 34 per cent share. The RoDMA lease provides for a 'service charge area' (Appendix 1), which was originally owned entirely by London Dockland Development Corporation (LDDC). The lease provides that the freeholder is obliged to divest a share to each third party taking a land interest. The purchasers then became shareholders in RoDMA and become obliged to pay service charge to RoDMA. This is to cover the costs associated with undertaking the management and maintenance of the water and RoDMA's other obligations as contained in the Water Management Lease (WML).

- 1.8. The WML between GLAP and RoDMA obliges RoDMA to manage and maintain the water areas within the Docks and its operational infrastructure (such as small areas of the dock walls, the lock gates and water impounding station). However, it does not currently support them taking on an expanded role in delivering new water activation or developing said uses. The WML currently anticipates RoDMA carrying out limited water activation, principally by licencing or leasing areas of its demise to do so, but with only a limited five-year period allowable without the further consent of GLAP. The proposed changes set out in this paper would seek to support RoDMA to expand its activities in delivering longer-term water activation, maximising the water's opportunity as a key and unique asset across various multifunctional sports, leisure, cultural and economic uses.
- 1.9. To facilitate this, this decision proposes changes to the way that the WML is managed and operates, waiving certain terms in the WML, and enhancing existing governance arrangements between GLAP and RoDMA. As set out in Part 2, these changes include: supporting the diversification of RoDMA's commercial income; ensuring appropriate capital retention for RoDMA's existing obligations; applying new governance procedures and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to manage new activity and manage risk.
- 1.10. This will facilitate RoDMA to take a leading role in delivering against the objectives and outcomes set out below (section 2), supporting new and sustainable growth and investment across the areas water assets. Delivery will be in accordance with an approved Long Term Business Plan (LTBP) (and its subsequent updates), as well as a vision for Royal Victoria Dock West (RVDW) in particular. This vision is anticipated to launch on the 23 February 2026.
- 1.11. The proposed changes do not override RoDMA's existing obligations under the WML to manage and maintain the Docks. They are intended to enhance and expand RoDMA's functions in line with delivering against the objectives and outcomes below, but within the current lease provisions. These have been developed in consultation with RoDMA and are reflected in their LTBP and RVDW Vision as key documents in driving new water activation delivery activities (see section 2).
- 1.12. 'Royal Docks Waterways' will soon become the new trading name for RoDMA (as of 23 February 2026).

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. Once the beating heart of global trade, today the Royal Docks is re-emerging as one of the country's leading areas of opportunity, investment and innovation, bringing significant numbers of new jobs and homes to the area. The Royal Docks Delivery Plan 2024-2029 outlines the ambition for the Royal docks to become one of London's most diverse and vibrant waterfronts, through coordinated action to achieve three strategic outcomes:
 - **Prosperity, Growth & Investment:** The Royal Docks will become an established economic stronghold for London, home to a diverse mix of businesses and industries. The area's growing commercial offer and innovation ecosystem will attract new investment, enable entrepreneurial activity, and create local skilled jobs.
 - **Sustainability & Wellbeing:** Together with our partners we will lead the way in sustainable investment and development. Our green and social infrastructure and mixed neighbourhoods will provide resilient, happy, healthy places for nature and residents to flourish.
 - **Culture & Community:** Building on our existing communities and burgeoning cultural ecosystem, the Royal Docks will evolve as London's Cultural Engine. New public spaces, waterfront and cultural amenities, and affordable creative and production workspaces, will make the Royal Docks one of the most exciting and varied places in London to live, work and play.

- 2.2. In keeping with the strategic outcomes identified in the Royal Docks Delivery Plan 2024-2029, the core objectives for GLAP in the future use of the water in the Royal Docks are:
- To support the wider regeneration of the Royal Docks by making the water more useable and accessible. The current use of the water is limited and tends to be centred around leisure uses that appeal to active sportspeople (open water swimming, rowing, sailing), rather than a broader selection of the community.
 - To deliver the objectives of the London Plan to make London's water bodies more accessible to Londoners. The application of planning policy needs to be undertaken sensitively in the Royal Docks to ensure that the objective of the policy is applied and to enable more use of the water.
 - To ensure a coordinated approach to how new proposals for water use are considered and delivered. This will ensure a more comprehensive approach and avoid piecemeal and low-quality projects that could undermine the appeal and appearance of the Royal Docks.
 - To ensure that GLAP's liabilities as freeholder continue to be appropriately identified and managed, and that the long-term operational management of the water is ensured.
 - To support RoDMA diversifying appropriate income generation to deliver new water activation and to build a long-term sinking fund to meet future costs associated with replacing major infrastructure as it reaches the end of its operational life.
 - To work with developers and landowners to support and enable investment into high quality new uses for the water. These may contribute to the financial strength of RoDMA (and therefore the overall viable management of the Docks), as well as provide cross subsidy for other water activities and community initiatives.
 - To attract more people to visit and use the water in the Royal Docks through a range of accessible and dynamic uses. This could support investment in long-term uses, like floating hotels, moorings, leisure activities, public realm; but also to provide for temporary and revolving uses like public art, pop-up uses and events.
- 2.3. These objectives require a clear strategy to enable landowners, developers, GLAP, RoDMA and the London Borough of Newham to work together effectively. In response, RoDMA has produced a new Long Term Business Plan 2025-2055. The LTBP defines how RoDMA will deliver against the objectives above, and provides a framework for sustainable long-term financial planning, especially around infrastructure maintenance, replacement and investment.
- 2.4. The framework of the LTBP also enables GLAP and other Royal Docks stakeholders to understand and agree proposed new water uses, as well as understanding the role for RoDMA and partners in delivery, and how the organisation will respond to the changing nature of the Royal Docks over the next few decades.
- 2.5. Specific objectives of the LTBP are:
- to expand RoDMA's existing commercial activities and diversify income streams to raise additional revenue for investment and in meeting existing WML obligations
 - to invest in the activation of the Royal Docks vast water-spaces, supporting its broader regeneration context
 - to support World Class Events and partnership
 - to invest in and modernise RoDMA's assets to improve reliability as the Docks continue to grow
 - to determine a more sustainable pathway for the capital replacement of big-ticket infrastructure items (specifically those with values in excess of £5m)

- to provide a water facilities management system to identify and rectify issues across all landowners around the Royal Docks.

2.6. As well as the LTBP, RoDMA has produced a vision for RVDW. The Vision (Figure 1.1) sets out a series of priority interventions to make better and greater use of the water around City Hall. These include but are not limited to:

- **Floating Health and Leisure:** partnering with a private company (yet to be selected) to invest in a new floating lido, sauna and wellness space on the water. This aspiration, which has produced good market interest, is based on other successful examples elsewhere in Europe. It will be a key driver aligned with the Mayor of London’s emerging Clean & Healthy Waterways policy and its commitment to improving the environment of, and reconnecting Londoners to, the city’s waterways over the next decade.
- **Floating Residential:** there is a strong tradition on London’s waterways of residential moorings, and this could be appropriate for some parts of RVDW. In addition, RoDMA is interested in exploring floating homes. Whilst more unusual in a London context, these have also worked well elsewhere in Europe and should be explored.
- **Floating Park:** following on from the Royal Docks Team’s pilot floating garden, RoDMA is proposing (subject to funding) to increase the greenery on the water, improve local biodiversity and enhance opportunities for accessibility on and close to the water through new floating public space and boardwalks.



Figure 1.1 – Priority projects identified in RoDMA Vision for Royal Victoria Dock West (RVDW)

2.7. GLAP are supportive of the LTBP and RoDMA’s approach to the organisations shared ambitions to enhance and improve the Royal Docks through new water activation initiatives. Enabling an enhanced role for RoDMA to lead on new water activation uses, in partnership with GLAP, will support the following key outcomes.

- underwriting more sustainable arrangements for the maintenance of dock infrastructure by growing RoDMA’s commercial income streams

- incentivisation for RoDMA to support new and enhanced water activities
- formalising improved governance structures, which provide improved financial oversight of RoDMA, with accountability to the activities of the LTBP, RVDW vision and wider regeneration objectives of the Royal Docks Team.

Articles of Association and Shareholders Agreement

- 2.8. As part of the oversight of RoDMA's functions by GLAP Directors, a need was identified in 2020 to update RoDMA's Articles of Association and Shareholders Agreement to bring them in line with the Companies Act 2006 and to reflect current working practices.
- 2.9. The previous Shareholders' Agreement and Articles had been in force since September 1990 and has had several parties adhering to it. Since then, several provisions are now out of date and require changes in line with current practices and procedures.
- 2.10. Each shareholder (of which there are currently 49) is required under the existing Articles to approve any changes to these core governance agreements. It is therefore proposed that GLAP, as shareholder, considers for approval the changes proposed by the RoDMA board. It is anticipated that RoDMA will seek the resolution to approve the changes during the first quarter of 2026.
- 2.11. Further details on the changes proposed to the Shareholders Agreement and Articles of Association are set out in Part 2 of this decision.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the Equality Act), as a public authority, the GLA must have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. Protected characteristics under the Equality Act comprise age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and marriage or civil partnership status.
- 3.2. When considering the needs of the existing community and those that will be affected by the proposed scheme, any activity will look to minimise disadvantages to all protected characteristic groups within society.
- 3.3. The activities outlined in RoDMA's LTBP will make the water of the Royal Docks more accessible to a wider range of users and activities, including those with protected characteristics under the Equality Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and marriage or civil partnership status). The expanded diversity of activity in the water bodies of the Royal Docks will directly support GLAP's objectives for the wider regeneration of the Royal Docks, as well as the Mayor's objective of making London's water bodies more accessible to all Londoners. This decision is therefore expected to have positive impacts on persons with a protected characteristic under the Equality Act, through improving the accessibility of key recreational infrastructure to community and recreational users of all backgrounds and abilities.

4. Other considerations

- 4.1. The proposed changes to the terms of the WML have been developed to help deliver RoDMA's LTPB and the RVDW Vision. The proposed changes will facilitate sustainable investment in enhancing the water assets of the Royal Docks to provide environmental, recreational and community benefits in correlation with the objectives of the surrounding regeneration context in the Royal Docks.
- 4.2. As a GLAP-led activity, this forms part of the project to 'leverage GLA land holdings and joint venture interests to deliver high levels of affordable housing' within the Building More Homes

programme. Specifically, this uses GLAP land holdings (or the water in this case) to deliver additional affordable housing in support of the 'Royal Docks Delivery Plan (2024 – 2029)' and 'Royal Docks and Beckton Riverside Opportunity Area Planning Framework'. These strategies have been designed to deliver up to 36,000 new homes across a variety of tenures and housing typologies. This will support London Plan (2021) objectives to increase the provision of short-stay and long-term residential moorings, as well as an increase in the availability and variety of affordable housing products. The LTBP will promote sustainable investment and use of GLA assets to contribute meaningfully to increasing London's housing supply.

- 4.3. In addition to forming part of the Building More Homes programme, the proposals will indirectly support the Making Best Use of Land programme by ensuring new water activity promotes high quality design and placemaking, enhancing existing blue and green spaces and aligning with Mayoral objectives around Good Growth by Design. This will see new water uses support housing growth (including surrounding large scale residential-led development) by providing a variety of environmental, recreational and community uses that make for successful places. Similarly, the activities proposed will contribute to attracting and coordinating investment into tangible projects that deliver improved access to nature and provide direct environmental benefits, such as a floating park. This will support the Delivering a greener, more climate-resilient London programme and improve the GLA's strategic role in testing new ideas and setting policy to drive meaningful change.
- 4.4. GLAP and RoDMA have established a unifying vision (the RVDW Vision) to support the above programmes. Delivery will be enhanced through improved GLAP governance and oversight of LTBP delivery of activities. As such, GLAP will be better placed to ensure that quality design, place-making and appropriate on-water development is integrated into the wider placemaking objectives of the Royal Docks.
- 4.5. There are no conflicts of interest to declare for those involved in the drafting or clearance of this decision form.

Key risks

- 4.6. The key project risks are set out in Part 2 of this report.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. As well as enhancing the Royal Docks, the proposals set out in the report are intended to ensure that RoDMA has the financial capacity to meet its maintenance obligations in its lease for the physical assets including dock walls and locks for which it has maintenance responsibility. Further detail is provided in Part 2.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. Section 30 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (as amended) (GLA Act) gives the Mayor a general power to do anything that he considers will further one or more of the principal purposes of the GLA as set out in section 30(2), which are:
 - promoting economic development and wealth creation in Greater London
 - promoting social development in Greater London
 - promoting the improvement of the environment in Greater London.
- 6.2. In formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought, officers confirm they have complied 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 in Greater London; promote the reduction of health inequalities between persons living in Greater London; contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom; and contribute towards the mitigation of or adaptation to climate change in the United Kingdom
 - consult with appropriate bodies.
- 6.3. In exercising the power contained in section 30(1) of the GLA Act, the GLA must have regard to the matters set out in sections 30(3-5) and 33 of the GLA Act; and also the Public Sector Equality Duty in section 149 of the Equality Act as set out in section 3, above.
- 6.4. Sections 1-3 of this report indicate that the decision requested of the Mayor is within the GLA’s statutory powers.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

- 7.1. The following indicative next steps are anticipated.

Activity	Timeline
Changes to RoDMA WML	Q2 2026
RoDMA RVDW Vision launch	February 2026
RoDMA launch expressions of interest for first RVDW projects	February 2026
Procurement process for RVDW project delivery partners	March – October 2026
RVDW project delivery	November 2026 onwards

Appendices and supporting papers:

Appendix 1: RoDMA Service Charge area plan

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.

Strategic Programmes

Does this decision seek approval for activity falling within the remit of a programme delivery plan? YES

If YES, which programme/s does this fall within:

Building More Homes

Part 1 - Deferral

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

If YES, for what reason:

Until what date: (a date is required if deferring)

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 – YES

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to confirm the following (✓)

Drafting officer:

Ashley Russell has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Sponsoring Director:

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

✓

Mayoral Adviser:

Tom Copley 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 16 February 2026

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 February 2026

CHIEF OF STAFF:

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

Signature

D. Bellamy

Date

23 February 2026