

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DECISION – ADD2829

Engaging young Londoners in activating London's waterways

Programme: Delivering a Greener, More Climate-Resilient London

Executive summary:

This decision seeks approval for £50,000 of GLA expenditure on an engagement activity related to the Mayor's Clean and Healthy Waterways Plan.

This project will work with schools to run a competition amongst young Londoners to design picnic tables for riverside sites in their communities. Eight picnic tables including the winning designs will then be installed for Londoners to use at four waterways sites. This will improve access to green and blue spaces, as well as driving engagement with the Mayor's work to clean up London's waterways.

Decision:

This decision form requests that (under the delegated authority granted in Mayoral Decision 3384) the Assistant Director of Environment and Energy approves expenditure of up to £50,000 to deliver a competition in schools for the design of picnic tables, with the winning designs then installed across four waterways sites.

AUTHORISING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/HEAD OF UNIT

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: Megan Life

Position: Assistant Director, Transport & Environment

Signature:



Date: 5 May 2026

PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background¹

- 1.1. The Mayor’s Clean and Healthy Waterways Plan will set out a 10-year framework for improving London’s waterways – many of which remain polluted and disconnected from communities. This impacts nature, and limits people’s ability to engage with them.
- 1.2. The plan has been co-created by, and will be co-delivered with, over 50 organisations across the water, environment, access, health and voluntary sectors. The plan focuses on four key themes: water quality, nature, access, and inclusion and engagement.
- 1.3. Access to green and blue spaces is not equitable for all Londoners. Many communities are missing out on the health, wellbeing and community connection provided by London’s parks, riversides, and the nature surrounding our waterways. All Londoners should be able to enjoy the capital’s rivers and blue spaces. Designed by young Londoners, for Londoners, these picnic tables will provide communities with new places to rest, relax and connect with nature.
- 1.4. Working with the boroughs in four of the strategic locations in the plan (these are East Reservoir in Hackney, Chandos and Watling Park in Barnet, King George’s Park in Wandsworth and Northolt Green Ring in Ealing) we will run a competition with local schools to enable young Londoners to submit their designs for the tops of the tables. These designs will show us what London’s waterways mean to them. This is a way to engage young Londoners and communities in our work to clean up the city’s waterways. The competition will be held with schools in the four boroughs as well as pan London; the prize will be given to up to eight young Londoners across the city, with the winning designs featured on the tabletops of newly installed picnic tables. Each borough will have one borough winner and one pan London winner, which will enable us to run this as a pan London competition.
- 1.5. Contracts for coordination and painting will be awarded to delivery partners following a tender process. They will manage the design competition then paint and install the new picnic areas.
- 1.6. This decision uses underspend from the Delivering a Greener, More Climate-Resilient London programme budget in 2025-26.
- 1.7. This decision supports the Delivering a Greener, More Climate-Resilient London programme approved under Mayoral Decision (MD) 3384. This aims to improve access to nature; and drive climate adaptation equitably across London. It also complements waterways investments to be made under two further MDs: MD3374 (Green Roots) and MD3413 (Investing in Strategic Projects).
- 1.8. Under the Delivering a Greener, More Climate-Resilient London delivery plan, this proposal sits within the Accelerating Delivery strand, specifically Project 1.1: Delivering clean and healthy waterways. This focuses on achieving measurable improvements in water quality, biodiversity, access and inclusion; and identifies up to 10 priority sites for targeted interventions.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. This activity supports the following London-level outcomes, as set out in the Delivering a Greener, More Climate-Resilient London delivery plan:
 - Londoners can enjoy green and wild spaces across the capital
 - Londoners live in neighbourhoods that are well planned and designed
 - Londoners live in a city that supports their mental and physical health.

2.2. Objectives are as follows:

- To engage young Londoners in the Mayor’s work to improve London’s waterways, including those in four key boroughs across the city: Hackney, Barnet, Wandsworth and Ealing
- To provide new seating to help improve access to, and enjoyment of, waterside locations across four key boroughs

3. Equality comments

3.1. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Mayor and GLA must comply with the public sector equality duty (PSED) and must have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not

3.2. The ‘protected characteristics’ are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership (but only in respect of the requirements to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination), race (ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality), religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex, and sexual orientation.

3.3. Consideration of the PSED is not a one-off task. The duty must be complied with before taking a decision, at the time of taking a decision, and after the decision has been taken, to ensure that equalities impacts are kept under ongoing review.

3.4. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Londoners, and lower-income Londoners, are more likely to live in areas without decent access to green and blue spaces, or where the quality of these spaces is poor.

3.5. The Delivering a Greener, More Climate-Resilient London delivery plan specifically responds to, and aims to tackle, these disparities. By targeting communities in polluted catchments, supporting inclusive engagement and improving access, the Clean and Healthy Waterways Plan specifically aims to advance equality of opportunity – so that every Londoner, regardless of where they live, or their background, can benefit from the city’s waterways.

3.6. The sites for these picnic tables have been identified within the 10 priority sites within the waterways plan. The sites include locations in north, south, east and west London – enabling schools in all regions of the city to take part.

4. Other considerations

4.1. The following risks and mitigations have been considered:

Risk	Likelihood: 1 (low) to 5 (high)	Impact: 1 (low) to 5 (high)	Mitigation
One of the boroughs withdraws from the project.	1	3	The team has already discussed this work with boroughs. This is to ensure buy-in; and

			agree the location and need for their community. We have contacts at further locations if one location becomes unavailable.
Fewer schools participate and engage than anticipated.	1	4	Continuous engagement will take place, to maintain momentum and ensure strong participation. This includes sharing clear information on the brief and expectations; and using our borough and school networks to promote the opportunity.
Delivery partner does not deliver on agreed expectations, particularly around table production element	2	5	We ensure we set clear expectations around the quality of delivery, we will set up regular weekly check ins with the partner to monitor progress and mitigate against issues as they arise
The tables may not be maintained properly after installation, leading to damage, safety issues and poor maintenance overall.	4	4	We are going to use a resin to help protect the tables. However, because wood is porous, over time we may see some wear and tear (due to usage and weathering). We will work with boroughs to agree clear maintenance responsibilities (including checks) and agree on an approach to maintenance – e.g., how long we will maintain the table tops.

4.2. This work links to the following projects in the Delivering a Greener, More Climate-Resilient London programme:

- Clean and Healthy Waterways
- delivering the Green Roots programme
- investing in strategic projects focused on climate adaptation and greening.

4.3. There are no conflicts of interest with regards to this pilot project – including from any of those involved in the drafting or clearance of this decision form.

4.4. Contracts with chosen suppliers will be done with supporting evidence, and in accordance with the obligations set out in the Contracts and Funding Code; and the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014.

5. Financial comments

5.1. Approval is requested to spend £50,000 from 2025-26 underspend, to deliver a targeted waterways community engagement commission in 2026-27. This work will underpin a package of delivery, engagement and communications activity, to enable delivery of commitments in the Mayor’s Clean and Healthy Waterways Plan.

5.2. This will be funded from the Delivering a Greener, More Climate-Resilient London programme (MD3384). It will use underspend from the Convening Partnership Action on Climate Resilience budget in 2025-26; and transferring it to the Delivering Clean and Healthy Waterways budget for 2026-27. This is part of the 2025-26 carry forward requests.

5.3. Future years' budgets will still be subject to the annual budget-setting process. Any contracts that cover future years will need to have break clauses. Any changes in the anticipated spend profile across the years will be reflected as updates during the budget-setting process.

6. Planned delivery approach and next steps

6.1. This work will be delivered according to the following timetable:

Activity	Timeline
Launch design opportunity with schools, ahead of the Clean and Healthy Waterways Plan	May 2026
Close design phase, and shortlist submitted designs	June 2026
Announce winners aligned to the launch of the Clean and Healthy Waterways Plan	July 2026
Install tables	August 2026
Final picnic tables ready for public use	September 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 be published either within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

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: Delivering a greener, more climate resilient London.

Part 1 – Deferral

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

Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under the 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:

Heather Hodgins has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Mayoral Delivery Board

A summary of this decision was reviewed by the Mayoral Delivery Board on 5 May 2026.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, FINANCIAL SERVICES:

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

Date 5 May 2026

Signature

