

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DECISION – ADD2813

Clean and Healthy Waterways Plan Delivery 2025-26 – 2026-27

Programme: Delivering a Greener, More Climate-Resilient London

Executive summary:

This decision seeks approval for GLA expenditure to deliver actions within the Mayor's Clean and Healthy Waterways Plan. This additional expenditure complements the core delivery mechanisms for the Mayor's ambitions on waterways: the Green Roots Fund and 'Investing in strategic projects'.

Approval is sought for:

- expenditure of £165,000 in 2025-26 to deliver a targeted misconnections programme in the London Borough of Brent, directly addressing sewage pollution in a priority location experiencing severe problems with misconnections
- expenditure of £200,000 in 2026-27 to support a package of delivery, engagement and communications activity, which will accelerate delivery of Plan commitments, directly engage Londoners in the Mayor's work on waterways, and widen participation with a particular focus on swimming.

Decision:

This decision form requests that, under the delegated authority granted within MD3384, the Assistant Director of Environment and Energy approves:

- expenditure of up to £165,000 in 2025-26 to support a targeted water quality improvement programme in London Borough of Brent by funding increased enforcement against misconnections
- expenditure of up to £200,000 in 2026-27 to support delivery of a package of delivery, engagement and communications activity, which will accelerate delivery of Plan commitments with a particular focus on swimming.

AUTHORISING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/HEAD OF UNIT

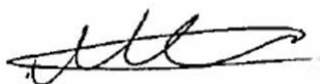
I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

Name: Megan Life

Position: Assistant Director of Environment and Energy

Signature:



Date: 9 February 2026

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. Decades of underinvestment, pollution, water company and regulatory failings and development pressure mean that – despite recent improvements – many of London’s waterways remain polluted and disconnected from communities, impacting nature and limiting people’s ability to engage with them.
- 1.2. The Mayor’s Clean and Healthy Waterways Plan aims to address these issues, setting out a ten-year framework for improvement.
- 1.3. The plan has been co-created and will be co-delivered with over 50 organisations across the water, environment, access, health and voluntary sectors.
- 1.4. The plan focuses on four key themes:
 - *Water Quality* – improving the health of London’s waterways by reducing pollution, strengthening monitoring, and increasing accountability across the water sector and its regulator
 - *Nature* – creating and restoring waterways, reconnecting fragmented habitats and enabling the return of lost species across the city
 - *Access* – improving the physical infrastructure needed to encourage greater access to, and safe use of, London’s waterways for healthy recreation
 - *Inclusion and Engagement* – increasing engagement with London’s waterways, strengthening community connections and widening participation, especially among underrepresented groups
- 1.5. Alongside significant partner funding contributions and delivery, the majority of GLA investment in plan delivery will come through the allocation of more than one third of the Green Roots Fund and Strategic Projects funding. Additional, targeted GLA investment – covered by this decision – is needed to enable long-term delivery against activity that is not eligible for these other forms of GLA funding, or where acceleration is needed to ensure timely delivery.
- 1.6. This decision phases investment so that 2025-26 targets a discrete, high-impact pollution source (misconnections) where action is otherwise constrained by capacity and fragmented responsibilities, and 2026-27 supports a broader package of delivery, engagement and communications activity to accelerate early implementation across the plan’s themes.
- 1.7. Where required, funding will be awarded to identified delivery partners in the form of grants. This would 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.
- 1.8. Action on misconnections targets one of the most significant sources of sewage pollution in London’s rivers. Addressing misconnections is essential if any level of improvement in the health of London’s rivers is to be achieved. This investment is currently the only direct GLA action on misconnections.
- 1.9. Alongside direct GLA investment, each deliverable will be supported and monitored as appropriate through GLA officer support.
- 1.10. This decision supports the Delivering a Greener, More Climate-Resilient London programme approved under MD3384, which aims to improve access to nature and drive climate adaptation equitably across London. It also complements waterways investments to be made under MD3374 (Green Roots) and MD3413 (Investing in Strategic Projects).
- 1.11. Under the MD3384 delivery plan, this proposal sits within the Accelerating delivery strand, specifically Project 1.1: Delivering clean and healthy waterways, which focuses on achieving measurable

improvements in water quality, biodiversity, access and inclusion and identifies up to ten priority sites for targeted interventions.

Misconnections (2025-26)

- 1.12. One of the most significant and difficult-to-address sources of pollution in London is plumbing misconnections, where wastewater from homes and businesses is incorrectly connected to surface water drains and discharged directly into waterways. These plumbing misconnections result in the equivalent of approximately 1.8 Olympic-sized swimming pools of sewage-polluted water entering London's rivers every day, contributing to elevated E.coli levels and wider ecological harm.
- 1.13. Misconnections are challenging to resolve due to high costs, fragmented responsibilities, limited local authority capacity and the absence of funding mechanisms suited to investigative and remediation work. A key action in the plan sets out that targeted GLA intervention is required to unlock progress on misconnections, which would not otherwise be addressed at scale.
- 1.14. The Brent catchment has the highest concentration of known misconnections in London and has been identified through the development of the plan as a priority location for the Mayor and our partners' investments. Funding will directly support LB Brent to:
 - deliver focused investigation and remediation activity
 - develop new approaches to resolving misconnections
 - deliver public awareness activity and
 - share best practice across Greater London.
- 1.15. The work will result in a measurably reduced volume of sewage pollution entering waterways in this priority catchment, and accelerated, better quality misconnection resolution across London.

A package of delivery, engagement and communications activity (2026-27)

- 1.16. GLA investment at this stage will secure early delivery, raise awareness through engagement and communications, and lay the groundwork for effective delivery in the years ahead. Proposed funding will:
 - scope catchment-wide opportunities to daylight London's lost rivers
 - design and deliver a dynamic engagement programme to empower Londoners to actively participate in water-based activities like swimming, paddling, kayaking and boating, to include:
 - inclusive and accessible waterway-focused events, including recreational and sporting opportunities such as swimming and water confidence sessions
 - a waterways education programme for schools to reach a more diverse audience and improve engagement and water confidence
 - communication and engagement activities, including commissioning local artists to create murals and a bench design competition all of which will include visible Mayoral branding, in strategic waterway locations.
 - curate and promote best practice models for waterway access in new developments and public realm schemes across London to enable better delivery
 - increase quality and coverage of river health monitoring information

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

2.1. Objectives are as follows:

- to reduce sewage-related pollution entering London's waterways by addressing priority misconnections
- to engage Londoners in the Mayor's action to improve waterways
- to widen participation in waterways and swimming
- to support early delivery of Clean & Healthy Waterways Plan actions where GLA funding can unlock progress
- to build delivery capacity, coordination and shared learning with partners and landowners
- to support cleaner, healthier and more accessible waterways, particularly in areas experiencing the greatest environmental pressures.

2.2. Expected outcomes are as follows:

- reduced sewage pollution entering rivers in priority catchments and ultimately the Thames
- more awareness of the Mayor's work on waterways amongst Londoners
- inclusion of a wider diversity of Londoners in waterways enjoyment and activity
- early delivery of actions in the Mayor's Clean and Healthy Waterways Plan
- evidence and learning to inform future investment and scale-up across London.

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
- 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 re-assignment, 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 of deficiency of access to green and blue spaces, or in areas 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 investment 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. For misconnections funding, the Brent catchment has been identified through recent misconnection investigations as a priority area, with a high concentration of confirmed cases and a pipeline of more complex issues still to resolve. While straightforward fixes have progressed, remaining cases are typically harder to attribute and/or more costly to rectify (including cases involving council housing stock and HMOs), and resolution rates can slow once issues transfer to local authority-led routes. Targeted support in 2025–26 will help unblock this pinch-point and accelerate rectification.

4. Other considerations

- 4.1. This proposal directly supports the Mayor's priorities set out in the Delivering a Greener, More Climate-Resilient London mandate, including convening partner action to clean up London's waterways so they are swimmable and more accessible within 10 years, and improving access to green and blue spaces for all Londoners. It also contributes to the programme's cross-cutting priorities, in particular A resilient city, Health in all policies, and Addressing structural inequalities, by targeting action in polluted catchments and accelerating measures that improve environmental quality and access for communities most affected by environmental pressures.
- 4.2. There are no conflicts of interest arising from those involved in the drafting and clearance of this decision form.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. Approval is requested for the expenditure of £165,000 in 2025-26 to deliver a targeted misconnections programme in the Brent catchment and £200,000 in 2026-27 to support a package of delivery, engagement and communications activity which will accelerate delivery of commitments in the Mayor's Clean and Healthy Waterways Plan.
- 5.2. The expenditure will be funded from the Delivering a Greener, More Climate Resilient London programme (MD3384), using budget line GE.0330.028.01 Clean and healthy waterways.
- 5.3. The planned spend profile is shown below:

Budget Line	2025-26	2026-27	Total
GE.0330.028.01 Clean and healthy waterways	£165,000	£200,000	£365,000

- 5.4. Future year's 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 profile of spend across the years will be reflected as updates during the budget setting process.
- 5.5. All appropriate budget adjustments will be made.

6. Planned delivery approach

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

Activity	Timeline
Misconnections delivery	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 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: *providing delivery partners with the tools and information to take effective action, within the Delivering a Greener, More Climate-Resilient London delivery plan.*

Part 1 - Deferral

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? YES – publication of this will need to be deferred until the publication of the Clean and Healthy Waterways Plan, anticipated to be early March 2026

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:

Tia Harrop 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 9 February 2026.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, FINANCIAL SERVICES:

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

Date: 9 February 2026

Signature:

