OPDC
OLD OAK AND PARK ROYAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

CD DECISION – 21

Title: Unlocking Access along the Grand Union Canal

Executive Summary

This decision seeks approval to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with the GLA to receive £500,000 of investment approved under MD3413. The funding will support the delivery of the "Unlocking Access along the Grand Union Canal" project, as referenced in the Mayor's Clean Rivers and Waterways Plan.

The project will deliver strategic improvements to the canal towpath within the OPDC area, including accessibility enhancements, resurfacing and targeted widening works. These interventions will improve the safety, quality, and usability of the towpath, supporting active travel, and enhanced access to green and blue infrastructure.

Decision

That the Chief Executive Officer approves:

- Entering into a Grant Funding Agreement with the GLA for the receipt of £500,000 grant funding to deliver the "Unlocking Access along the Grand Union Canal" project.
- Delegating authority to the Executive Director of Delivery to approve any further decisions required to implement the project and manage the expenditure of the grant funding in accordance with the funding agreement.

Chief Executive Officer

I do not have any disclosable interest in the proposed Decision. It is consistent with OPDC's priorities and has my approval.

Signature: 

Date: 26/10/26

PART 1: NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

1 Background and context

1.1 The GLA has awarded OPDC £500,000 of grant funding through its Strategic Greening and Climate Adaptation Programme to deliver improvements to the Grand Union Canal towpath as part of the "Unlocking Access along the Grand Union Canal" project.

1.2 The funding will support upgrades that improve accessibility, safety and usability along sections of the Grand Union Canal towpath within the OPDC area and contribute to the Mayor's recently announced Clean Rivers and Waterways Plan, a 10-year strategy to improve access to, and the environmental quality of, London's waterways.

1.3 The proposed improvements support the delivery of a continuous active travel and green infrastructure corridor between Paddington and West Drayton. The funding will enable design development, community engagement and the delivery of capital improvements to the Grand Union Canal towpath within the current Mayoral term.

Decision History

1.4 MD3384 (approved): Adopted the Delivery Plan for Delivering a Greener, More Climate-Resilient London, including a commitment to strategic investment in greening and climate adaptation.

1.5 MD3413 (approved): Approved the detailed scope and delivery of the strategic greening and adaptation investment programme.

1.6 CD14 (approved): Old Oak and Park Royal Inclusive Growth and Regeneration Projects Programme 2026-2027 approved spend on early-stage feasibility for public realm and greenspace improvement projects on the OPDC pipeline.

2 The proposal and how it will be delivered

2.1 The proposal is to utilise the £500,000 GLA funding to develop and deliver improvements to substandard sections of the Grand Union Canal towpath within the OPDC area. The project is expected to include resurfacing, targeted widening and public realm improvements to enhance accessibility, inclusivity, safety and biodiversity along the canal corridor.

2.2 OPDC has committed £25,000 from the Regeneration Public Realm budget for FY26/27 as approved in CD14, to undertake an initial scoping study. The study is expected to conclude in December 2026 and will identify the package of interventions that can be delivered within the available £500,000 GLA funding and programme, providing the evidence base for defining the preferred project scope, budget and delivery programme.

2.3 OPDC intends to enter into the GFA ahead of completion of the initial scoping study. However, no substantive GLA-funded delivery expenditure will be committed until the scoping study has been completed and a deliverable project scope, budget and programme have been established through the December 2026 scoping gateway. Following completion of the study, further OPDC governance approval will be required before progressing to the next phase of the project. This is expected to include approval for the preferred project scope, budget and delivery approach. Any further approvals required by the GLA under the Grant Funding Agreement will also be secured before progressing, as appropriate. OPDC will enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with the GLA and act as the accountable body for the project with delivery undertaken in partnership with the Canal & River Trust (CRT), as the landowner and manager of the canal corridor.

2.4 The GLA Grant Funding Agreement acknowledges that OPDC will enter into a back-to-back agreement with CRT and that CRT, as landowner and manager of the canal corridor, will be responsible for the ongoing management, maintenance and operation of the completed works. OPDC will therefore enter into the back-to-back agreement with CRT before commencing the GLA-funded project or committing substantive GLA-funded delivery expenditure. The agreement will pass onto CRT, the relevant requirements and obligations of the GLA Grant Funding Agreement, including those relating to eligible expenditure, delivery, monitoring, reporting, insurance and clawback.

2.5 If the back-to-back agreement cannot be concluded on terms acceptable to OPDC, the project will not proceed. In those circumstances, any GLA grant funding received but not properly incurred would be returned to the GLA in accordance with the Grant Funding Agreement, and OPDC would not take on ongoing project delivery, management, maintenance or operational obligations.

2.6 Following completion of the works and handover to CRT, CRT will retain responsibility for the ongoing management, maintenance and operation of the improved towpath and associated assets. Subject to the terms of the final Grant Funding Agreement and back-to-back agreement, OPDC will have no residual management, maintenance or operational obligations or liabilities in respect of the completed works.

2.7 Separately, a Collaboration Agreement between OPDC and CRT is under development to establish a framework for collaborative working between the parties. Any specialist support will be procured in accordance with OPDC's Contracts and Funding Code.

2.8 The funding is expected to support:

- Funding strategy and business case development
- Design development and technical input
- Capital delivery of improvements
- Community engagement and activation

3 Objectives and expected outcomes

3.1 The objectives and expected outcomes set out below will guide project development. As the final scope will be informed by the initial scoping study, these may be refined as the project progresses.

3.2 Key project objectives include:

- Improve safe and equitable access to green and blue space.
- Improve accessibility along the Grand Union Canal corridor
- Support active travel and access to waterways.
- Enhance biodiversity and ecological resilience along the canal corridor.
- Support community participation and long-term stewardship

3.3 Key outcomes include:

- Increased use of the canal corridor for walking, cycling and wheeling.
- Improved quality and accessibility of the towpath.
- Increased volunteering and community involvement.
- Improved environmental quality and biodiversity.

3.4 Indicative indicators (subject to feasibility and funding):

- Area of towpath improvements delivered (m2).
- Number of access points and connections to the canal improved
- Increased community participation, including:
- Number of volunteers engaged.
- Number of volunteer hours contributed.
- Number of placemaking and wayfinding interventions along priority sections delivered.
- Additional funding leveraged (£) to support further phases of delivery.

3.5 Final outputs and targets will be refined following completion of the scoping study and agreed with the GLA.

Oversight and management

3.6 OPDC will act as accountable body and oversee project delivery, expenditure, risk management and stakeholder engagement. Governance arrangements are summarised in Section 4.

Monitoring and Reporting

3.7 Progress will be monitored through regular project reviews and reporting to the GLA against agreed outputs, programme milestones, expenditure and risks. Performance indicators will be confirmed during project development and incorporated into ongoing monitoring arrangements.

Longer-term impact and legacy

3.8 The project represents one phase of a wider ambition to create a high-quality canal corridor within west London. It will establish a foundation for future investment, improve access to nature and support long-term community stewardship of the canal environment.

4 Strategic fit

Background

4.1 The project builds on OPDC's wider programme of work along the Grand Union Canal, including the Canal Placemaking Study developed with the Canal & River Trust (CRT), whose findings provide the strategic direction for the project's development. It also complements the Canal Greenspace Volunteering Programme by providing additional capital investment to support long-term stewardship, community participation and care of the canal corridor.

Corporate Strategy

4.2 This project supports OPDC's objectives to care for and protect the local area, support net zero and nature positive regeneration, and deliver positive changes and local enhancements now. Improving access to the canal corridor supports wider regeneration aims across the Old Oak and Park Royal Opportunity Area.

OPDC Values and Pillars

4.3 The project aligns with OPDC's values by delivering improvements to canal infrastructure, enhancing accessibility, supporting environmental stewardship, and working collaboratively with partners to deliver long-term benefits for local communities.

4.4 The project also supports the following OPDC pillars:

- Delivery – improving access and connectivity along the canal.
- Community – creating a more inclusive and welcoming public space.
- Innovation – promoting sustainable and resilient infrastructure improvements.
- Core Functions – ensuring effective governance and management of project funding.

4.5 The project directly supports:

- OPDC’s Local Plan – which identifies the Grand Union Canal as a key asset and prioritises improving access, connectivity and environmental quality.
- Old Oak Masterplan Framework – which recognises the canal as a central green and blue corridor within the regeneration area.
- OPDC’s Public Realm and Green Infrastructure SPD – by enhancing green infrastructure and supporting inclusive, safe and accessible movement.
- OPDC’s Sustainability Charter – by enhancing equal access to green and blue infrastructure and pollution-free public realm and eliminating barriers to active travel.

Mayoral strategies

4.6 The project supports the implementation of key Mayoral strategies, including:

- Delivering a Greener, More Climate-Resilient London (MD3384) – by improving equitable access to green and blue space and supporting climate adaptation
- London Green Infrastructure Framework – by addressing identified deficiencies in access to green infrastructure
- Clean Rivers and Waterways Plan – by improving access to waterways, enhancing towpath quality, and supporting community engagement
- The London Plan (current version) – by delivering high-quality green infrastructure, supporting active travel, and promoting inclusive growth.

Oversight and governance

4.7 OPDC will act as the lead delivery partner and accountable body, with overall responsibility for ensuring the project is delivered in line with the agreed scope, budget, programme and strategic objectives.

4.8 Governance will comprise fortnightly project progress meetings, fortnightly design team meetings and monthly stakeholder meetings involving OPDC/CRT, the GLA and relevant boroughs as required. Progress will also be reported through the GLA's quarterly monitoring arrangements and OPDC's internal programme governance process.

4.9 OPDC will retain control over key decisions relating to scope prioritisation, procurement, delivery sequencing and allocation of resources, informed by technical advice and partner input. This ensures OPDC can actively influence outcomes and intervene where required to maintain delivery confidence.

Contract/grant management

4.10 OPDC will be responsible for the management and assurance of all grant-funded expenditure, including procurement, contract management and compliance with GLA funding conditions.

4.11 OPDC will:

- Enter into a formal grant agreement with the GLA, setting out conditions, outputs, reporting requirements and assurance arrangements
- Procure consultants and contractors in line with OPDC's financial regulations, procurement code and public sector best practice
- Manage consultant and contractor performance through clearly defined briefs, milestones, and deliverables

Roles and Responsibilities

- Assistant Director – Executive oversight, stakeholder management and strategic decision-making.
- Head of Design – Design leadership, stakeholder management and financial oversight.
- Senior Urban Design Officer – Scheme development, design coordination and consultant management.
- Senior Infrastructure Project Officer – Project management, governance, programme management, risk management and reporting.

- Project Support Officer –Project support, programme monitoring, governance coordination, reporting support and financial administration.

5 Risk, Issues and Opportunities

5.1 The overall level of risk attached to this proposal is assessed as medium. The project is strategically aligned, builds on previous successful investment, and has strong delivery partners. However, there are material risks associated with feasibility constraints, multiparty coordination, and funding dependency which require active management.

Risk description	Inherent score	Mitigations	Target score
The programme's accelerated timeline and compressed deadlines may limit the scope of potential improvements and the feasibility of delivering within the GLA's target of the current Mayoral term.	Likelihood: [3] Impact: [3] Total: [9]	Initial Scoping Study to identify deliverable scope within this Mayoral term, alongside GLA technical and PM support once agreement is signed.	Likelihood: [2] Impact: [3] Total: [6]
Insufficient funding to deliver comprehensive upgrades to achieve strategic objectives.	Likelihood: [4] Impact: [4] Total: [16]	Initial Scoping Study to identify deliverable project scope and overall vision, and early engagement with CRT to ensure careful management of spend and agree outcomes deliverable within the funding envelope. Additional funding opportunities to be explored.	Likelihood: [2] Impact: [4] Total: [8]
Significant delay due to TfL Procurement resource issues resulting in missed milestones and failure to complete capital	Likelihood: [4] Impact: [4] Total: [16]	Alternative procurement routes explored, including OPDC led under £25k tender for initial scoping study to	Likelihood: [4] Impact: [2] Total: [8]

improvements within Mayoral term.		commence initial work whilst working through TfL Procurement pipeline.	
Failure to comply with grant funding conditions, reporting requirements or agreed outputs resulting in grant claw back or reputational impact.	Likelihood: [2] Impact: [4] Total: [8]	OPDC will act as the accountable body with dedicated project management, governance and financial monitoring arrangements. Flexible outputs, targets and KPIs have been agreed with the GLA to support project development.	Likelihood: [1] Impact: [3] Total: [3]
Initial scoping study fails to identify a deliverable project scope capable of achieving programme objectives within available funding and timescales.	Likelihood: [2] Impact: [4] Total: [8]	The initial scoping study will be funded separately by OPDC, limiting exposure of GLA grant funding during the feasibility stage. Substantive GLA-funded delivery expenditure will only be committed once the scoping study has demonstrated a deliverable scope, budget and programme and the necessary OPDC and GLA approvals has been secured. If	Likelihood: [1] Impact: [3] Total: [3]

		a deliverable project cannot be identified the project will not progress to delivery and any grant funding due to be returned will be managed in accordance with the Grant Funding Agreement.	
OPDC and CRT are unable to conclude the required back-to-back agreement, preventing the project from proceeding and potentially requiring grant funding received by OPDC to be returned to the GLA.	Likelihood: [2] Impact: [4] Total: [8]	The back-to-back agreement will be a condition precedent to commencement of the GLA-funded project and commitment of substantive delivery expenditure. OPDC will work with CRT to agree the required terms before project commencement. If the agreement cannot be concluded on terms acceptable to OPDC, the project will not proceed and any unspent or otherwise repayable GLA funding will be returned in accordance with	Likelihood: [1] Impact: [3] Total: [3]

		the Grant Funding Agreement.	
Following delivery and handover, CRT fails to meet obligations relevant to the GLA Grant Funding Agreement, including ongoing management, maintenance, operational or other requirements, resulting in OPDC being in breach of its obligations to the GLA and potentially exposed to grant clawback.	Likelihood: [2] Impact: [4] Total: [8]	The back-to-back agreement will pass through the relevant obligations of the GLA Grant Funding Agreement to CRT and will include appropriate provisions relating to compliance, ongoing management and maintenance, insurance, monitoring and grant clawback. This will provide OPDC with a contractual mechanism to recover sums from CRT where CRT's failure to comply with its obligations results in a financial liability or clawback arising for OPDC.	Likelihood: [1] Impact: [3] Total: [3]

Risk management approach

5.2 Project risks will be monitored through a live risk register and reviewed regularly through project governance arrangements.

6 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Comments

6.1 In developing this proposal, OPDC has had due regard to its duties under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not.

6.2 The project aligns with the Mayor's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and OPDC's Equality Duty by improving equitable access to green and blue spaces, particularly in an area where deficiencies in access have been identified. Evidence shows that access to high-quality green space is not evenly distributed across London, with barriers often experienced by groups including disabled people, older people, lower income communities, and some ethnic minority groups.

6.3 Expected benefits include improved accessibility for disabled people, older people, children and young people, and communities experiencing limited access to quality green space. Improvements to surfacing, access and wayfinding will support a wider range of users.

6.4 To address potential barriers and maximise inclusive outcomes, OPDC will:

- Embed inclusive design principles (e.g. accessible gradients, surfacing and clear wayfinding) within all feasibility and design stages
- Undertake targeted and inclusive engagement, working with community organisations to reach underrepresented groups
- Align with the existing volunteering programmes to encourage participation from groups who may face barriers to engagement
- Ensure safety and accessibility considerations are integrated into all interventions

7 Social Value and Environment

7.1 The project will deliver social and environmental benefits through:

- Improved green and blue infrastructure.
- Enhanced biodiversity and climate resilience.
- Increased opportunities for active travel.
- Greater community involvement through volunteering and engagement activities.
- Delivery of high-quality and inclusive public realm improvements
- Where external consultants are commissioned, social value requirements will be incorporated into procurement processes in line with OPDC policy.

8. Other considerations

8.1 There are no other considerations that need to be considered in the taking of this decision.

9. Conflicts of interest

9.1 No one involved in the preparation or clearance of this Form, or its substantive proposal has any conflict of interest.

10. Financial comments

10.1 OPDC in kind contribution of project management and officer resource over two Financial Years will be provided by existing team members and is a noncash contribution. The £25,000 for the initial scoping study is funded by the Public Realm budget approved under CD14.

10.2 Grant funding received from GLA will be released in 4 instalments across financial years 2026-27 and 2027-28, totalling £250,000 each year, paid in advance. Capital works are currently programmed for completion by March 2028.

10.3 Grant funding may be carried forward between financial years 2026 - 27 and 2027-28 where required to support the agreed project programme, with the grant funding to be expended and the project completed by 31 March 2028 in accordance with the Grant Funding Agreement. The finance team will work with the Design Team to monitor expenditure against the grant agreement and allocation of the funding.

11 Legal comments

11.1 The foregoing sections of this form indicate that the decisions sought concern the OPDC's general powers under Section 201 of the Localism Act 2011, falling within the OPDC's statutory powers to do such things which it considers appropriate for the purposes of its object to secure the regeneration or development of its area or for purposes incidental to those purposes.

11.2 If the Chief Executive Officer makes the decisions sought in this form, officers must ensure that a funding agreement between the GLA and OPDC is executed before any commitments are made in respect of the grant funding and that any contracts or on-grants made to deliver the objectives of the grant funding are made in accordance with OPDC's Contracts and Funding Code.

An appropriate back-to-back agreement with CRT will be executed before commencement of the GLA-funded project or commitment of substantive GLA-funded delivery expenditure. The agreement will reflect the relevant obligations contained in the GLA Grant Funding Agreement, including delivery, monitoring, reporting, ongoing management and maintenance requirements and appropriate grant clawback provisions.

OPDC currently holds public liability insurance of up to £15 million and employers' liability insurance covering activities undertaken within its statutory remit. On the current understanding, these arrangements would cover OPDC should it be required to deliver the works directly, subject to confirmation once the final delivery route and scope are agreed. Where CRT undertakes delivery and assumes ongoing management, maintenance and operational responsibilities, the back-to-back agreement will set out the respective insurance responsibilities of OPDC and CRT and ensure that relevant insurance requirements under the GLA Grant Funding Agreement are appropriately addressed.

12 Summary timeline

Activity	Date
Concept Paper approved	14 April 2026
Milestone 1: Grant award	Autumn 2026
Milestone 2: Completion of Initial Scoping Study and confirmation of preferred project scope, budget and delivery approach.	December 2026
Milestone 3: RIBA 2 Concept Design approved	March 2027
Milestone 4: RIBA 4 Tender completed and contractor appointed	September 2027
Milestone 5: Completion of capital works	March 2028
Evaluation period	post-March 2028

13 Appendices

- None

14 Other supporting papers

- None

PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Information in this Form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA). OPDC aims to publish the Form within three working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the Decision (for example, impacting a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date (when it will be published). Deferral periods are kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.

Part 1 – Deferral

Publication of this Part 1 is to be deferred: **No**

The deferral is until: N/A

This is because: N/A

Part 2 – Confidential information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA should be included in or attached to any separate Part 2 Form, together with the rationale for withholding the information at this time.

There is a separate and confidential Part 2 Form: No

DECLARATIONS

Drafting officer
Stachana Rodney has drafted this Form in accordance with OPDC procedures, including for handling conflicts of interests, and confirm that:

Advice: The Governance, Finance and Legal teams have commented on the proposal. ☑

CONFIRMATIONS

Section 106 funding
This use of S106 to fund the expenditure proposal was approved via a Section 106 spend proposal form on N/A

Review
This Decision was circulated for Senior Review on 21/08/26.

Chief Finance Officer: Gurdip Juty
Financial implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this form. ☑

Signature: 

Date:

Head of Governance: Martin Harrison
Governance implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this form. ☑

Signature: 

Date: 16/09/2026

Executive Director: Gareth Blacker

I do not have any disclosable interest in the proposed Decision. It is consistent with OPDC's priorities and can be referred to the CEO for final approval.

Signature: 

Date: 12/10/2026