

CEO DECISION – CD 176

Title: Canal Volunteering Programme

Executive summary

This form requests a decision to grant fund a two-year extension to the Canal Volunteering Programme, which began in 2021 (DD135). This will build on the momentum created by the programme, securing the long-term stewardship by the community and local businesses of the area along the Grand Union Canal in Old Oak and Park Royal.

The Canal & River Trust (CRT) has agreed to jointly fund the programme.

Decision

That the Chief Executive Officer approves expenditure of £50,000 over financial years 2022/23 and 23/24, consisting of:

- i. Grant expenditure of up to £40,000 to the CRT to continue its Canal Volunteering Programme, noting that:
 - £30,000 to fund half the cost of a community organiser role embedded within the CRT
 - up to £10,000 to match-fund the delivery of biodiversity improvements along the canal.
- i. Up to £10,000 for OPDC to conduct additional benchmarking, evaluation and legacy planning

Together with expenditure for the first year for the programme approved by DD135, this will take total expenditure across the three years to £100,000.

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: 2 March 2022

PART 1: NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

1. Background and context

- 1.1 In 2021 OPDC grant-funded the Canal & River Trust (CRT) £50,000 to develop and manage a volunteer programme for the Grand Union Canal in the OPDC area. The grant was funded by OPDC's Great Place Scheme (£35,000) and OPDC's Good Growth Fund (£15,000). A further £12,000 was committed to the programme by the CRT in staff time, technical support, and plants.
- 1.2 The programme helped deliver OPDC's ambitions for the Grand Union Canal as set out in the Canal Placemaking Study (2018) and the Canal Water Quality Study (2021). It did this by giving, through volunteering, local communities and businesses a stewardship role in respect of the canal - and also by delivering biodiversity improvements alongside the Grand Union Canal.
- 1.3 The grant funding allowed the CRT to recruit a dedicated local community organiser who has worked with local stakeholders to run twice-weekly volunteer events. Within the first nine months, the programme supported 1,791 volunteer hours; resulted in 831 bags of waste being removed; improved 365m² of green space; helped improve drainage of the polluted Willen Field Swale; saw 140 new trees planted; and engaged with 46 businesses.
- 1.4 The programme is fully integrated within engagement and volunteering activities in the wider area, in particular with the time-banking platform Echo, which allows volunteers to earn Echos for their time contributed to the project, which they can go on to spend on services provided through the time-banking platform.
- 1.5 Due to the success of the programme, CRT will, subject to receipt of grant from OPDC, fund 50 per cent of the local community organiser's role for a further two years (financial years 2022-23 and 2023-24).
- 1.6 As well as match-funding this role, OPDC's grant would support the delivery of biodiversity improvements over the two-year period in question.

2. The proposal and how it will be delivered

- 2.1 This decision form is asking for grant funding to extend the Canal Volunteering Programme for a period of two years ,building on the success and lessons-learned from the one-year. This will support the long-term placemaking and regeneration of the canal.
- 2.2 Some £40,000 will be grant-funded to the CRT. As the legal operator of the Grand Union Canal and adjacent towpath, the CRT is uniquely placed to support OPDC's priorities for the Grand Union Canal and towpath, and so the grant is not subject to a competitive exercise.
- 2.3 In terms of funding sources:
 - £30,000 of revenue grant funding will come from OPDC's Economic Development budget and will pay for half the costs of a community organiser role, within the CRT.

- £10,000 in capital grant funding will come from OPDC's GGF round 2 funding and will match-fund biodiversity improvements, including the delivery of canal-side planting and floating reed beds. The full list of capital works will be agreed between OPDC and CRT at the beginning of each financial year.
- £10,000 in revenue funding will come from OPDC's Economic Development budget and will pay for additional benchmarking, evaluation and legacy planning.

2.4 CRT will, as part of the grant agreement, will commit to resourcing the programme at a level equivalent to £10,000 per year for: staffing and logistics to help run volunteering activities, project management, and delivery of additional biodiversity and ecology improvements.

2.5 Additional tasks to be delivered by the CRT as part of the grant include:

- Managing and delivering a programme of volunteering activities with a focus on litter picking, vegetation maintenance and biodiversity improvements.
- Securing capital funding to support the delivery of biodiversity and ecology improvements.
- Work with OPDC's Engagement team to contact and involve the community, prioritising underrepresented groups, in line with OPDC's community engagement strategy.
- Building partnerships with local businesses for a long-term engagement and investment in the canal.
- Drafting evaluation and legacy reports to support the continued volunteering work.

3. Objectives and expected outcomes

3.1 The overarching objective is to provide OPDC with more leverage over the biodiversity and public realm quality of the Grand Union Canal, and to deliver on its ambitions to facilitate community and business stewardship, and improve the canal's .

3.2 The specific objectives and expected outcomes of this project are:

Objective	Outcomes
A. To enhance management and maintenance of the Grand Union Canal in the OPDC area.	• Regular presence through 2-weekly litter picks, towpath and green space maintenance activities for volunteers; • Improve people's impression of the canal as a clean and well kept public space; • Establishment of the Grand Union Canal as a high quality and well-kept public space for the wider OPDC area.

B. To deliver improvements to the canal space in partnership with local communities and businesses.	• Deliver a continuous green edge on the off-side of the canal in partnership with public and private land owners; • Increase biodiversity and nesting opportunities in and alongside the canal; • Tackle immediate issues of pollution with nature-based solutions; • Raise people's and businesses' awareness about pollution and littering along the canal; • Broaden ways to involve locals and increase in-person engagement.
C. To build community capacity to support the long-term regeneration of the canal and its surroundings.	• Coordinate and communicate volunteering opportunities along the canal between stakeholders; • Activate local businesses in looking after the canal towpath and canalside green areas; • Increase the number of towpath adoptions in Old Oak and Park Royal. • Form lasting positive relationships with local businesses and other communities
D. Develop a lasting legacy for community stewardship and volunteering along the canal	• Build momentum for the establishment of a community-led organisation capable of taking the lead on volunteer-led maintenance work along the canal; • Develop a legacy plan to support future volunteering activities and long-term stewardship of the canal and its public spaces.

4. Strategic fit

- 4.1 This project aligns with the ambitions of OPDC's In the Making programme aiming at delivering improvements and initiatives within locations where it is possible to accelerate delivery, and to provide confidence that OPDC are bringing forward the regeneration of Old Oak and Park Royal, by
- Creating immediate benefits for local communities from the public investment and regeneration in old Oak and Park Royal by improving physical links, open spaces and community infrastructure.
 - Establishing a strong identity and profile for Old Oak and Park Royal further afield to attract high calibre investors and organisations who will deliver the visions; and

- Piloting activities and local initiatives that could grow with the regeneration of the area and potentially occupy space in new developments.
- 4.2 The project will help deliver objectives set out in OPDC's Canal Placemaking Study (2018), in particular:
- Working with local community to foster a sense of custodianship and a 'canal community' that achieves ongoing and long-term stewardship and management (CPS recommendation EH2.3).
 - Demonstrate tangible, on-the-ground interventions and a readiness to work with the wider community and business community (CPS recommendation CL6.2); and
 - Provide a continuous green edge throughout Old Oak and Park Royal, simultaneously considering the creation and protection of habitat, ensuring effective species movement and enabling access to nature (CPS recommendation EH1).
- 4.3 The project addresses a number of objectives set out in OPDC's Engagement Strategy (2021): Involve, Collaborate, and Empower. It does so by delivering placemaking priorities set out in the document, in particular:
- Coordinating engagement with partners and stakeholders, by bringing the three Boroughs and the CRT on board of a coordinated volunteering programme.
 - Celebrating and caring for the local area, by giving local people an active role in planning, designing and managing improvements along the canal and in open green spaces in the area.
 - Broadening the ways to be involved, by creating a varied programme of volunteering opportunities catering to people with varying interests and levels of commitment.
- 4.4 The project builds on the in-depth engagement with local community, groups and businesses undertaken as part of OPDC's Great Place Scheme (2017-2021).

5. Project governance and assurance

- 5.1 The project will be managed by OPDC's Principal Urban Designer, assisted by an Engagement Officer. They will manage the Grant Agreement with the CRT and have regular project review meetings.
- 5.2 A steering group has been established with officers from OPDC and CRT, and meets monthly to discuss the progress of the implementation of the programme.
- 5.3 The progress of the project and delivery of KPI's will be captured in quarterly reports to be submitted to OPDC by the delivery partners. Any payments made to the delivery partners will be based on the delivery of KPI's evidenced in the reports.

Risks and issues

Risk description	Inherent Score	Mitigations	Target Score
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Financial mismanagement of any funding granted to a delivery partner such as the CRT or other.	Likelihood: [2] Impact: [5] Total: [10]	Payments to delivery partners will be made against delivery of KPI's set out in the contracts.	Likelihood: [1] Impact: [5] Total: [5]
Ongoing Covid-19 restrictions may delay or prevent the delivery of volunteering activities.	Likelihood: [4] Impact: [5] Total: [20]	The number of volunteers can be limited if needed, and activities benefit from a large number of larger outdoor spaces	Likelihood: [3] Impact: [1] Total: [3]
Volunteers may be subject to health and safety risks working with sharp tools and alongside water.	Likelihood: [4] Impact: [4] Total: [16]	Delivery partners will be required to have all required insurances and liabilities covered.	Likelihood: [4] Impact: [2] Total: [8]
Delivery partners may be unable to deliver the outputs due to internal restructuring or pressures due to Covid-19 (i.e. furlough of staff etc.)	Likelihood: [2] Impact: [4] Total: [8]	The budget is intended for each delivery partner to fund a dedicated resource to deliver the project.	Likelihood: [1] Impact: [4] Total: [4]
Delivery partners may not be able to attract or engage with the desired community groups and other stakeholders.	Likelihood: [2] Impact: [4] Total: [8]	OPDC will organise regular co-ordination meetings with delivery partners, stakeholders, and OPDC's internal engagement team to ensure local knowledge is shared throughout all stages of the delivery of the project.	Likelihood: [1] Impact: [4] Total: [4]

6. Equality comments

- 6.1 OPDC must have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation as well as to the need to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.¹ No adverse impacts on people with protected characteristics are expected.

The protected characteristics and groups are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation and marriage/ civil partnership status. Fulfilling this duty involves having due regard to: the need to remove or minimise any disadvantage suffered by those who share a protected characteristic or one that is connected to that 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. Compliance with the Equality Act may involve treating people with a protected characteristic more favourably than those without the characteristic. The

- 6.2 Both initiatives we will consider how to best involve local young people, older people, as well as the local disabled community and other underrepresented groups, cultural communities and faith groups. OPDC will see to it that the CRT provides evidence of meeting the standards set out in the Equality Act.
- 6.3 Any contracts and agreements between OPDC and CRT delivery partners will explicitly refer to the diversity of the wider OPDC area and require the grantee to explain how they intend to be inclusive in their approach to developing and delivering the project and meet OPDC's obligations under the Equality Act 2010. This will help OPDC and the Mayor to deliver equality and inclusion policies to promote an accessible and inclusive environment and meet the Equalities Duty by identifying opportunities for existing and newly arriving communities to benefit from development in the OPDC area.
- 6.4 OPDC will monitor the application of the terms of the grant agreement throughout each stage of the grant, through the quarterly monitoring and reporting process.

7. Other considerations

Communications and engagement

- 7.1 OPDC's Communications Team will provide support to ensure volunteering opportunities are widely advertised within the wider OPDC area and reaches hard-to-reach members of the community by making use of targeted social media campaigns and other bespoke outreach opportunities.

Safeguarding

- 7.2 Any grantee appointed to deliver parts of this project will need to demonstrate they have appropriate safeguarding policies and insurances in place in accordance with OPDC and GLA requirements.

Sustainability

- 7.3 The initiative is an opportunity to demonstrate OPDC's commitment to environmental sustainability and promote environmentally sound and innovative green space management and maintenance approaches. OPDC will ensure that any grant agreements include clear references to OPDC's sustainability and environmental policies and standards and set clear targets in close consultation with OPDC's sustainability officer.

Data protection

- 7.4 Any grantee appointed to deliver this project will need to demonstrate they are capable of managing personal data of the people they engage with in compliance with GDPR policies.

8. Conflicts of interest

duty must be exercised with an open mind and at the time a Decision is taken in the exercise of the OPDC's functions.

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

9. Financial comments

- 9.1 Cumulative expenditure on the programme, inclusive of DD135, is up to £100,000.
- 9.2 The expenditure requested through this decision is £50,000 over two financial years (2022/23 and 2023/24) broken down as follows:

FY	Expenditure	Description
2022 - 2023	£15,000	Joint role embedded within the Canal & River Trust to manage a dedicated volunteering programme for the Grand Union Canal in Old Oak and Park Royal. Funded by the Economic Development budget.
	£10,000	Delivery of biodiversity improvements. Funded by the Good Growth Fund.
2023 - 2024	£15,000	Joint role embedded within the Canal & River Trust to run manage a dedicated volunteering programme for the Grand Union Canal in Old Oak and Park Royal. Funded by the Economic Development budget.
	£10,000	Benchmarking, evaluation and legacy planning. Funded by the Economic Development budget.

- 9.3 Expenditure funded from the Good Growth Fund will be recognised as Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute (REFCUS) as there will be no end asset owned by the Corporation.
- 9.4 The associated grant agreement will need to clearly state i) when the Corporation becomes liable to pay the grant and ii) the milestones/performance conditions which if not met will require all or part of the funding to be repaid, as the grant is being paid in advance.

10. Legal comments

- 10.1 The report above indicates that the decision requested of the Director falls within the OPDC's object of securing the regeneration of the Old Oak and Park Royal area and its powers to do anything it considers appropriate for the purpose of its objects or purposes incidental to those purposes, as set out in the Localism Act 2011.
- 10.2 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 (race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment)

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 6 (above) of this report.

- 10.3 The report indicates that the contribution of £40,000 to the CRT amounts to the provision of grant funding and not payments for works, supplies or services. Officers must ensure that all funding is distributed fairly, transparently, and in a manner which affords value for money in accordance with the OPDC's Contracts and Funding Code.
- 10.4 Officers must ensure that an appropriate funding agreement is put in place between and executed by the OPDC and recipient before any commitment to fund is made.

11. Summary timeline

Activity	Date
Grant Agreement with CRT signed	March 2022
Inception meeting & programme setting yearApril 2022Delivery of volunteering activities year 1	April 2022 – January 2023
Interim report & programme update	April 2023
Delivery of volunteering activities year 12	April 2023 – January 2024
Delivery end date & final report	March 2024

Appendices

- None

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: Jan Ackenhausen has drafted this Form in accordance with OPDC procedures, including for handling conflicts of interests, and confirm that:



Advice: The 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

SMT review: This Decision was circulated to the **Senior Management Team** for review on Friday 25 February 2022.

Chief Finance Officer

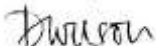
Financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this Form.

Signature: 

Date: 02 March 2022

Director of Projects

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: 02.03.2022

