

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR DIRECTOR DECISION – DD1457

Title: London Tree and Woodland Community Grant Scheme – Capital funding allocation

Executive Summary:

This decision requests approval to spend £40,000 of funding from within the existing parks and trees capital budget to support the delivery of the London Tree and Woodland Community Grant Scheme ("the Scheme") for 2015-16.

This increases the grant pot for the scheme from £100,000 (previously agreed via MD1429) to a total of £140,000. The Scheme will deliver 24 community based tree and woodland projects by March 2016. These projects will include tree planting and woodland management projects, contributing to meeting the Mayor's target of increasing tree canopy cover by 5 per cent by 2025.

This £40,000 expenditure is within the overall capital budget for parks and trees which was authorised by MD294 and MD1056. The allocation of additional funds to the Scheme for 2015-16 is in response to high quality applications to the Scheme; the projects funded by the Scheme will all complete by March 2016.

Decision:

The Executive Director approves expenditure of up to £40,000 from the parks and trees capital budget to provide grant funding through the London Tree and Woodland Community Grant Scheme 2015-16.

AUTHORISING DIRECTOR

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: Fiona Fletcher-Smith

Position: Executive Director-Development,
Enterprise & Environment

Signature:



Date:

8.2.2016

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 The London Tree and Woodland Community Grant Scheme (“the Scheme”) supports projects that promote or protect trees and woodlands and engage local communities, by providing grants of between £2,000 and £10,000. The grants in 2015-16 will be the fourth round of the current scheme which has run annually since 2012-13.
- 1.2 MD1429 approved capital expenditure of £100,000 as grant funding for the Scheme in 2015-16. Subsequently ADD329 approved revenue expenditure of £13,700 to Groundwork London to administer the Scheme on behalf of the GLA.
- 1.3 MD294 and MD1056 authorised a £6million budget for parks and trees. A small amount remains unallocated in the capital budget in that parks and trees programme, due to savings and efficiencies made in previous years of the programme and due to some projects claiming less than funds than anticipated.
- 1.4 Applications to the grant scheme were assessed in October 2015. Many high quality applications were received and the grant panel recommended supporting 24 projects with a total expenditure of £140,000. This decision proposes allocating an additional £40,000 of capital funding available in the parks and trees capital budget, in addition to the £100,000 already agreed via MD1429, to fund projects through the Scheme.
- 1.5 The Scheme will support 24 community based tree and woodland projects by March 2016. These projects will include tree planting and woodland management projects, contributing to meeting the Mayor’s target of increasing tree canopy cover by 5 per cent by 2025. The 24 projects approved by the grant panel will result in the planting of over 4,000 trees and engage over 3,000 volunteers. The projects are spread across London.

Background

- 1.6 The Climate Change Adaptation Strategy includes an objective to increase tree canopy cover from 20% to 25% by 2025 (and a further 5% by 2050). This target is reflected in Policy 7.21 of the London Plan. The primary rationale for this increase relates to the potential for an increase in canopy cover to help off-set the predicted impacts of climate change; but it also recognises a number of other potential benefits including: enhancing biodiversity; improving air quality; enhancing local amenity and maintaining London’s reputation as one of the greenest big cities.
- 1.7 The GLA does not own or manage land on which it can plant trees to help meet the Mayor’s targets. Consequently, the GLA relies on a mix of policy development; supporting partnerships and grant-funding projects to support others to undertake tree-planting. This work to increase London’s canopy cover sits within a broader context of the Environment Team’s work on improving London’s green infrastructure; several other projects also contribute to tree planting and engaging Londoners, such as the Big Green Fund.
- 1.8 One way in which the Mayor contributes to meeting this target is through providing resources for tree-planting projects. The Mayor’s Street Tree Initiative and the London Tree and Woodland Grant scheme ran alongside each other from 2012-15. The Street Tree Initiative ended in March 2015 as

the Mayor's target to plant 20,000 street trees during his two terms of office had been achieved. However it has been agreed to continue the community element of the Scheme for an additional year.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1 The Scheme supports community groups and others to undertake tree-planting projects or projects which improve management of woodlands or public access to woodlands. The 24 projects approved by the grant panel will result in the planting of over 4,000 trees and engage over 3,000 volunteers. The projects are spread across London.
- 2.2 The Scheme aims to:
- Contribute towards increasing the tree canopy cover within London's built environment by five per cent by 2025
 - Engage communities in the management of green space, tree and woodland management
 - Ensure trees and woodlands contribute to a high quality environment
 - Help foster community and individual well-being and social inclusion through contact with trees and woodlands
 - Make sure the right tree is in the right place

Outcomes

- 2.3 The Scheme projects to result in tree planting, improved woodland management and community engagement in trees and woodlands. (Measurables: number of trees planted; area of land improved; number of volunteers participating).
- 2.4 As part of a range of GLA led initiatives around trees, parks and green spaces the Scheme contributes to increasing canopy cover in London, with the following outcomes:
- interventions that demonstrably contribute to the likelihood of increases in canopy cover in the longer term;
 - a 5% increase in London's tree-canopy cover by 2025 (from a 2008 baseline of 20%)
 - more Londoners understanding and appreciating the benefits of trees and an increase in canopy cover and willing to take action locally to protect, manage and plant trees and woodlands.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1 Applicants to the Scheme are required to outline how their projects will provide environmental and community benefit. This includes information on the intended beneficiaries of the Scheme projects (including relevant details such as ages, geographic area of residence, ethnicity).
- 3.2 Projects funded via the Scheme are requested to advertise their volunteering opportunities via Team London where appropriate.
- 3.3 Projects funded via the Scheme in 2015-16 include ones which will support a wide range of Londoners to engage with trees and woodlands including: young people; patients with mental ill health; residents of housing estates. Several projects also include elements of training, helping Londoners to gain skills.

4. Other considerations

4.1 a) High level risks

A key risk is that the projects funded via the Scheme are not complete by the end of March 2016. This is mitigated in a number of ways including having grant agreements in place with each grant recipient requiring the project to be complete by the end of February 2016, which provides some leeway for unanticipated delays to projects, and working closely with Groundwork London (the Scheme administrators) to regularly monitor the progress of projects.

b) Links to Mayoral Strategies

- 4.2 The Climate Change Adaptation Strategy includes an objective to increase tree canopy cover from 20% to 25% by 2025 (and a further 5% by 2050). This target is reflected in Policy 7.21 of the London Plan. The primary rationale for this increase relates to the potential for an increase in canopy cover to help off-set the predicted impacts of climate change; but it also recognises a number of other potential benefits including: enhancing biodiversity; improving air quality; enhancing local amenity and maintaining London's reputation as one of the greenest big cities.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1 Director's approval is sought to spend an additional £40,000 to provide grant funding through the London Tree and Woodland Community Grant Scheme 2015-16. This will bring the total spend on this project to £140,000 (£100,000 was approved under MD1429). This expenditure will be funded from the Environment team's 2015-16 capital budget for Parks and Trees (London Great Outdoors). All expenditure will occur within financial year 2015-16.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1 The report above indicates that:

- 6.1.1 the decisions requested of the director (in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code) fall within the GLA's statutory powers to do such things considered to further or which are facilitative of, conducive or incidental to the promotion of the improvement of the environment in Greater London; and
- 6.1.2 in formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought officers have complied with the Authority's related statutory duties to:
- pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people (further details on equalities are set out in section 3 above) and to the duty under section 149 of the 2010 Act to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation as well as to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not¹;
 - consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom; and

¹ 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.

- consult with appropriate bodies.

6.2 The report above indicates that the contributions to the projects will amount to the provision of grant funding and not payment for works or services. Officers must ensure that the funding is distributed fairly, transparently, in accordance with the GLA's equalities and in manner which affords value for money in accordance with the Contracts and Funding Code.

Officers must ensure that an appropriate funding agreement is put in place between and executed by the GLA and recipient before any commitment to fund is made.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

7.1 The work proposed above will be completed by March 2016.

7.2 A delivery plan has be agreed with Groundwork London, covering the publicity, application, assessment, monitoring and reporting, claim and evaluation stages of the project.

7.3 Grant funding will be claimed by participating community groups and charities at the end of the project upon the completion of projects in the Scheme and the provision of all required monitoring information and proof of expenditure.

Activity	Timeline
Delivery Start Date (of CGS projects)	November 2015
Final evaluation start and finish (external)	March 2016
Delivery End Date	February 2016
Project Closure	March 2016

Appendices and supporting papers: None.

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI Act) 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 either be published within one working day after approval or on the defer date.

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 Confidentiality: Only the facts or advice considered to be exempt from disclosure under the FOI Act should be 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:

Katrina Ramsey has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms that:

✓

Assistant Director/Head of Service:

Patrick Feehily has reviewed the documentation and is satisfied for it to be referred to the Sponsoring Director for approval.

✓

Financial and Legal advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal, and this decision reflects their comments.

✓

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

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

Signature

M. D. Olce

Date

3.2.16