

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD2665

Title: Community Greening Grants 2020-21

Executive Summary:

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the value of London's green space. It has also highlighted the inequalities of access to the health and wellbeing benefits green infrastructure provides to Londoners. As part of the Mayoral commitment to a green recovery as well as tackling the climate and ecological emergency, this MD seeks approval of expenditure of £692,000 to fund community greening projects via a grant scheme.

These will:

- create opportunities for all Londoners, especially those with limited access to green space, lower income and BAME communities and over 65s, who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, to get outdoors and develop new skills;
- enhance London's vital green spaces and green the built environment, helping our city adapt and respond to the climate and ecological emergency; and
- support London's diversity of environmental organisations and grassroots groups to recover post pandemic, as part of a green recovery.

Decision:

That the Mayor approves:

Expenditure of £692,000 in 2020-21 to fund community greening projects, comprising:

- £662,000 expenditure to fund circa 30 grants to civil society organisations and local authorities; and
- £30,000 expenditure on external services to administer the grants.

Mayor of London

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

Date: 07 08 2020

Signature:



PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE MAYOR

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical importance of green infrastructure for Londoners. There is extensive evidence for the benefits of green space to wellbeing, both physical and mental; London's green spaces are worth £950 million per year in avoided health costs¹. But not all Londoners have felt these benefits. As the city begins its recovery there is a need not only to enhance the city's vital green spaces in response to the climate and ecological emergency but also to focus on engaging and supporting those communities and organisations who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.
- 1.2. Recovery must not mean simply returning to business as usual, but creating a fairer, more equal, more resilient and greener London, with a better quality of life for all Londoners. The expenditure for which approval is sought specifically aims to address economic and social recovery challenges around the unequal impact of Covid-19, supporting the London Recovery Programme outcomes of delivering a "cleaner, greener London" and "narrowing social, economic and health inequalities". Already, we have seen positive changes, as the [Mayor's Streetspace Plan](#) has transformed our public realm to make walking and cycling safer and easier.
- 1.3. Now there is an opportunity to continue to support Londoners to engage with and enhance local spaces, including streets where practical, to make them greener and better adapted to a changing climate, as well as gain new skills. The Covid-19 pandemic has underlined the need to redress inequalities in access to green space, by creating new pocket parks and community gardens in areas that are deficient in open space and improving the quality of existing parks; and to embed green infrastructure in the wider public realm by permanently greening streets and public spaces, which could include building on changes seen through the Streetspace programme.
- 1.4. This MD seeks the Mayor's approval of a Community Greening Fund, that will make grants available in 20/21 for local projects that support communities to improve and create green spaces, especially in areas that lack access to green space.
- 1.5. This fund will build on the Mayor's ongoing programme to improve London's green infrastructure to benefit all Londoners and all parts of London and on London's status as a National Park City. In the London Environment Strategy, the Mayor established targets to increase tree canopy cover by 10 per cent, and to ensure that over half of London is green cover by 2050. Since 2016, the Mayor's programmes have improved or created over 400 hectares of green space and planted 280,000 trees. Over 270 community projects have been supported through the Greener City Fund, involving over 35,000 Londoners. The programme will also support objectives within the Health Inequalities Strategy and Inclusive London to ensure that all Londoners have better access to good quality green spaces.
- 1.6. It will also help to retain jobs within environmental NGOs (eNGOs) operating in London, who carry out essential work that supports the delivery of mayoral objectives to manage and improve green spaces and helping Londoners to access them. These organisations have been severely impacted by the pandemic, which poses an existential threat to their future survival. A GLA survey found that over a third of eNGOs expect to lose over 50% of their income in 2020/21, with the majority expecting the worst financial impacts to be felt in the second half of 2020. Similarly, the many local volunteer-led community and park friends' groups who help to maintain and improve London's green spaces have been forced to suspend their operations due to the pandemic.
- 1.7. This funding will help eNGOs and environmental community groups operating in London to recover from the operational and financial impacts of Covid-19 at a crucial time. Our survey of eNGOs

¹ https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/11015viv_natural_capital_account_for_london_v7_full_vis.pdf

identified their desire for access to grant support during recovery as the best way that the GLA could support these organisations during the next six months, beyond the need for emergency funding to enable their immediate survival.

1.8. This MD form seeks the Mayor's approval to allocate the following budget to the Community Greening Fund:

- £500,000 approved in the 2020-21 budget for National Park City (under cover of MD2619 in March 2020), and repurposed under cover of MD2666;
- £125,000 from the £250,000 approved in the 2020-21 budget for climate change adaptation delivery (also under cover of MD2619); and
- £67,000 unallocated funding approved as part of the Greener City Fund for the period 2017-18 to 2020-21 (under cover of MD2141 (July 2017) and MD2285 (May 2018)). The rest of the Greener City Fund has been awarded and final projects are in the process of completing.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

Objectives

2.1. The Community Greening grants programme will:

- create opportunities for all Londoners, especially those with limited access to green space, to get outdoors, including by volunteering and developing new skills;
- enhance London's vital green spaces and green the built environment, including increasing tree canopy cover and helping our city adapt and respond to the climate and ecological emergency;
- help to address the inequality in access to open space highlighted during the Covid-19 pandemic by prioritising projects in locations that have poor access to green space and high levels of deprivation; and
- support London's diversity of environmental organisations and grassroots groups to recover from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, as part of a green recovery.

Outcomes

2.2. The grants programme will support the high-level outcome of the London Recovery Programme to deliver a cleaner, greener London.

2.3. Projects funded through the programme will enhance London's green infrastructure to provide environment, social and economic benefits including:

- improved access to green space supporting mental and physical wellbeing, especially amongst Londoners currently lacking access to open space;
- increased resilience to the impact of climate change, including through providing shade, reducing urban heat island effect, and reduced surface water flood risk;
- opportunities for Londoners to develop green skills and build community cohesion;
- retention of jobs within environmental NGOs that have a crucial role to play in a green recovery;
- improved air quality and water quality, and reduced exposure of people to air pollution;
- enhanced biodiversity and ecological resilience; and
- greener streets encouraging walking and cycling.

Outputs

- 2.4. The grants will support a wide range of activities to help make London greener, healthier and more resilient to the impacts of climate change. These projects will take place in and enhance publicly accessible spaces including parks, community gardens, housing estates, streets, waterways and nature reserves. They will be focused on making physical improvements to the space. Priority will be given to those projects which:
 - work with, or are preferably led by, Londoners who are less likely to access green space. This includes BAME and lower income Londoners and over 65s;
 - are in areas of the city that have poorer access to green space and nature; and
 - include opportunities for training or developing skills.
- 2.5. These projects could include a range of different interventions, including, but not exclusive to:
 - enhancing publicly accessible green spaces for people and wildlife;
 - community gardening and food growing;
 - greening streets and public spaces, including by depaving to turn grey into green or by building on changes seen through the Streetspace plan to create green transport corridors;
 - installing sustainable drainage features to reduce local flood risk and store water for reuse;
 - cleaning up parks, nature reserves or waterways;
 - planting and maintaining trees, including to provide shade;
 - management activities to improve habitats, including woodland;
 - supporting Londoners, especially underrepresented groups, to access green space and engage with nature; and
 - creating opportunities for children to access nature, and outdoor play and learning.
- 2.6. The programme will offer grants of between £5,000 and £50,000. Applications will be open to civil society organisations and local authorities (working in partnership with civil society).
- 2.7. The exact number and type of projects supported by the Community Greening Grants will depend on the number and quality of applications received; however it is estimated at this stage that 25 - 30 projects will be funded with up to 3,000 participants (social distancing measures may reduce the number of active participants).
- 2.8. Grants will be awarded through an open, transparent call for applications. Submissions will be assessed through a two-stage process managed by Groundwork London and the GLA, which will include a grants panel with independent environmental experts and representatives from London Councils or LEDNET. Final funding decisions will be made based on how well applications meet the criteria of the fund, and will also consider the location and type of projects to support a balanced programme across London. Given the impact of the pandemic on many organisations 50% of the grant will be paid upfront with a further 25% on receipt of a mid-term review and the remainder on completion (subject to due diligence).
- 2.9. Groundwork London will be contracted to provide grant management support, and specialised community engagement advice, through the existing GLA Framework agreement (ICT12805-A). Groundwork London have significant experience managing GLA grant programmes including the Greener City Fund Community Green Space and Community Tree Planting Grants. Groundwork London will manage individual funding agreements and grant payments with funded projects.

2.10. **Table 1 – Proposed budget for the Community Greening Grants 2020-21 / 2021-22**

	Explanation	2020-21 (£)	2021-22 (£)
Community Greening Grant funding	A one-off grant programme for 2020-21 to respond to need for green space projects. £567,000 comes from the National Park City budget and £125,000 from the Climate Team budget for nature-based adaptation measures.	496,500 (75%)	165,500 (25%)
Community Greening Grants – Groundwork London grants management contract	Provide specialised community engagement advice and administrative grant management and support, via existing GLA grant management framework agreement, enabling grants to be administered quickly this year.	30,000	
Total (£)	526,500	165,500	

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as a public authority, the Mayor of London must have 'due regard' of the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation as well as to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3.2. The Community Greening Grants programme outlined in this MD forms part of the policies and proposals in the London Environment Strategy which has been informed by a full Integrated Impact Assessment, including consideration of equalities.² The Equalities Assessment Report for the London Environment Strategy noted that exposure to poor environmental conditions is much higher among the BAME population.
- 3.3. BAME and lower income Londoners are more likely to live in areas of deficiency of access to green space, or in areas where green space quality is poor. GLA research has found that women, under 25s, lower income Londoners and social renters visit parks less often. National research has found that BAME people are least likely to visit green spaces. Similarly, 21 per cent of households in London lack access to a private or shared garden, and across England BAME people are less likely to have access to a garden than white people³.
- 3.4. This grant programme will prioritise projects that aim to tackle these disparities and will improve access to green space amongst Londoners who currently benefit less from the capital's green infrastructure. The final locations for grant funded projects will depend on the applications received, but it is proposed that where possible funding will target areas of low green cover and high social deprivation. Increased greening and tree planting provide a number of benefits (outlined in section 2 above).

² See all the Integrated Impact Assessment documents: www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/london-environment-strategy

³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/articles/oneineightbritishhouseholdshasnogarden/2020-05-14>

4. Other considerations

4.1. The key risks and issues are set out in the table below.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation	RAG rating
Over-subscription	High	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects will be scored on how they meet the priorities set Schools and borough-only projects will be restricted to those proposed in partnership with a community or civic society organisation to reduce the number of applications 	A
Second Covid-19 lockdown restrictions	Medium	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good communication will be developed to ensure frank discussions can take place around organisational capacity and delivery Guidance on social distancing and other public health measures will be promoted to grantees In the event of a second lockdown project delivery reviews will agree new parameters with grantees Follow principles of Covid-19 funders statement to support grantees during exceptional circumstances (endorsed by the GLA) – adapting activities, discussing dates, financial flexibility, listening 	R
Lack of capacity for charities to apply or complete projects	Medium	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants management contractor (Groundwork London) to advise on designing appropriate payment schedules for community groups and civil society organisations, including upfront payments Proportion of the grant can be used towards overheads where necessary for project delivery 	A
Projects delivered are of a poor quality or are poorly maintained	Low	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding or grant agreements will include clear milestones for payment Project applications will be required to set out how schemes will be maintained Project monitoring will include site visits to a proportion of projects to check on delivery 	A

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation	RAG rating
Funding awarded to fraudulent grant applications	Low	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due diligence checks carried out before any funding award Contract experienced grant management organisation with appropriate skills and expertise to identify fraud (Groundwork) Appropriate framework put in place to monitor project delivery Mid-term and final grant payments conditional on evidence of delivery and expenditure 	A

Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

4.2. The Community Greening Grants will contribute towards:

- meeting the London Environment Strategy proposal for greater community involvement in the improvement and management of London's green spaces and natural environment (Proposal 5.1.1.f);
- London Environment Strategy targets to increase tree canopy cover by 10 per cent, and to ensure that over half of London is green cover by 2050 (Objective 5.1);
- the Inclusive London objective to work with partners to help ensure our approach improving green spaces is inclusive (Strategic objective 12);
- London Health Inequalities Strategy objective for a greener city where all Londoner have access to good quality green spaces (Objective 3.3); and
- London Recovery Board high-level outcome to deliver a cleaner, greener London.

Conflicts of interest

4.3. GLA officers are not aware that anyone involved in the drafting or clearance of this form has any conflicts of interest with the proposed grant scheme.

4.4. If any conflicts of interest arise during the grant assessment process (i.e. a GLA officer has links with an organisation which applies for a grant) they will declare that interest and not take any part in assessing that grant application or awarding funding to that organisation.

5. Financial comments

5.1. Approval is being sought for the expenditure of up to £692,000 on the creation of a Community Greening Fund.

5.2. £662,000 of this fund will be available via the submission of applications from London communities wanting to open-up and enhance green spaces in the city and local environmental organisations who need support recovering from the economic pressures caused by COVID-19.

5.3. Due to anticipated volume of grant pay-outs over a limited period it is proposed Groundwork London will distribute the funds to successful applicants, undertake appropriate due diligence and verify eligible expenditure. Therefore, the remaining £30,000 will be paid to Groundwork London as a fee for providing this service. It is important to note the Authority will be in contract with Groundwork London and not the applicants, and so suitable monitoring will take place throughout this period.

- 5.4. The profile of the requested £692,000 is indicated above in section 2.9 (table 1).
- 5.5. The budget approved under MD2619 has been subject to a repurposing exercise and so the funding sources highlighted in section 1.8 are scheduled to be confirmed in MD2666. No contracts will be entered into nor grants issued until this has been finalised.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. The foregoing sections of this report indicate that:
 - 6.1.1. the decisions requested of the Mayor concern the exercise of the GLA's general powers, falling within the statutory powers of the GLA to do such things as may be considered to be facilitative of or conducive or incidental to the promotion of the improvement of the environment and social development in Greater London; and
 - 6.1.2. in formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought officers have complied with the GLA's related statutory duties to:
 - (a) pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people;
 - (b) 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
 - (c) consult with appropriate bodies.
- 6.2. In taking the decisions requested, the Mayor 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 (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Mayor should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.
- 6.3. Should the Mayor be minded to make the decisions sought officers must ensure that:
 - 6.3.1. services required for delivery of the proposals are procured by Transport for London Procurement who will determine the detail of the procurement strategy to be adopted in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code and appropriate contract documentation is put in place and executed by the successful bidder(s) and the GLA before the commencement of the supplies and services; and
 - 6.3.2. the grant funding proposed is distributed fairly, transparently, in accordance with the GLA's equalities policies and in manner which affords value for money in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code and appropriate funding agreements are put in place between and executed by the GLA and the recipients before any commitment to fund is made.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Applications open	Late July 2020
Applications close	Mid-September 2020
Grant assessment	Late September 2020
Grants awarded	Early October 2020
Projects start (once funding agreements signed). Initial grant payments.	October 2020
Mid-project monitoring. Mid-point grant payment.	February 2021
Projects complete and final grant claims and payments made	June 2021

Appendices and supporting papers:

Appendix 1 - Community Greening Fund Grants Guide (draft)

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 either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 - Deferral

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? YES

If YES, for what reason: Until the grant programme is announced and open for applications.

Until what date: 31 July 2020

Part 2 – Sensitive information

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

Andrew Jones has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Sponsoring Director:

Phil Graham has reviewed the request and is satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

✓

Mayoral Adviser:

Shirley Rodrigues has been consulted about the proposal and agrees the recommendations.

✓

Advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

✓

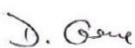
Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 20 July 2020.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

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

Signature



Date

7 August 2020

CHIEF OF STAFF:

I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Mayor

Signature



Date

5 August 2020