



Richard Berry
Greater London Authority
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
More London
London SE1 2AA

Cross River Partnership
Westminster Office
11th Floor
Westminster City Hall
64 Victoria Street
London SW1E 6QP

Tel: + 44 (0) 7985 283245

ojones@lambeth.gov.uk
www.crossriverpartnership.org

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Dear Richard,

Environment Committee & Economy Committee - Facing the challenge of severe weather and climate change

Cross River Partnership is pleased to be invited to contribute to the London Assembly's enquiry into severe weather and climate change.

Cross River Partnership coordinates the Greening the BIDs Steering Group on behalf of the GLA. Now in its fourth year, the Steering Group has brought together over 20 Business Improvement Districts to improve London's green cover – this work contributes to Area 12 of the All London Green Grid (central sub-region). In this time £360k of public sector support from Natural England, the Mayor and the Drain London Fund has levered £440k of private sector investment to increase London's bio-diversity and enhance its environmental resilience.

The financial support provided by public sector partners, has enabled CRP to work with its BID partners to deliver 15 Green Infrastructure Audits and catalyse the installation of 17 green infrastructure assets in central London, including bird boxes, planters, green walls, hanging gardens, green roofs and rain gardens. Each project is majority match funded by the private sector. A further 5 installations are due for completion in 2014, including a green roof on the southern terrace of level 5 at Tate Modern and a Rain Garden at St Mary's hospital in Paddington.

GI installations deliver multi-functional benefits including, habitat to sustain bio-diversity, mitigation of localised surface water flooding, tempering the urban heat island effect and providing air pollution capture, as well making places more attractive in which to work, visit, shop and dwell. To date installations have provided 60 additional trees planted, 2463m² of green coverage and attenuated 3500m³ of surface water through Sustainable Urban Drainage. Interventions are small scale, but strategically targeted as part of an incremental, cumulative approach.

The GLA collaborates with CRP to identify and match fund BIDs to undertake green infrastructure Audits. The Fitzrovia Partnership is the most recent BID to receive support. They are augmenting this with private sector match funding and surveying their members for ideas, exemplifying the business engagement that GI audits enable. Victoria Business Improvement District, working with Arup, and supported by Natural England, the GLA and CRP, brought best practice in undertaking GI audits together in 2013 providing a step-by-step approach to classifying existing assets and identifying opportunities for future installations. The guide has been extremely well received. In a little over 9 months the publication has been downloaded 137 times with 200 hard copies distributed. The GTB Steering Group seeks to ensure that audits are converted into installations. Interest amongst emergent and new BIDs in undertaking GI audits remains strong.

The GTB Steering Group BID members have also contributed significantly to creating greater awareness about the multi-functional benefits of green infrastructure. BID 'greening' project managers regularly host walkabouts, speak at events, convene workshops and produce 'how to' guides and other outputs. During this year's 'Green Sky Thinking' week' (28th April – 2nd May) three of the GTB Steering Group members hosted GI promotional workshops and talks. CRP is currently collating all of this 'additional' activity delivered by BID partners to assist the GLA in considering funding that will support future installations – this can be made available to the Committee upon completion in mid September.

Natural England, the GLA and BID partners are also committed to supporting CRP in producing a compendium of case studies and promotional video. These outputs will highlight the challenges project managers have faced, the lessons learned and the successes achieved – both will be available in the autumn. The compendium and the video will be used to service a series of awareness raising events targeted at local authority officers, elected members, academics, developers, land owners and others. The Mayor's focus on green infrastructure as a key asset for the city in his recently published consultation on London Infrastructure Investment to 2050 is very welcome. However, the benefits of GI are still not well understood by key decision makers and stakeholder groups. We aim to address this gap through the compendium and video.

Outside of the funding provided by Natural England, the GLA and the Drain London Fund, BID partners have delivered many of their own installations, demonstrating a growing business commitment to urban realm improvement that is sustainable and that contributes positively to London's environmental resilience – the Diamond Jubilee Garden adjacent to the Queen's Gallery realised through a partnership

between Victoria BID and Buckingham Palace is a prime example. The designer, Nigel Dunnett, noted that:

The combination of no irrigation, reduced energy requirements, high wildlife and biodiversity value, and its role in urban water management means that [the garden] is a very sustainable garden, and one that is 'future-proofed' in terms of our changing and unpredictable climate. It is a model of how we can adapt our urban areas, and our gardens and parks, to face the challenges of the future.

CRP is currently seeking to capture information on the non-publicly funded installations delivered within the central London sub-region by GTB BID partners. This will augment the information identified above and feed into the GLA's consideration of future funding opportunities. This information may also be made available to the Committee when completed.

Elsewhere, the 'Missing Link' competition run by the Royal Institute of British Architects and Vauxhall ONE has realised a vision for Vauxhall that will link three of the area's existing parks to the South Bank and its rail arches to the river through a 'Promenade of Curiosities'. The promenade will capitalise on the area's history as well as to its current industries and attractions. One of the key features of the design will be rain gardens along the promenade separating the new cycle and pedestrian pathways. These will reduce surface water run-off and will be planted to reflect the changing seasons – with flowers in spring and summer and a focus on foliage and architectural forms in autumn and winter. The project is being supported financially by TfL and Vauxhall businesses.

The Mayor has pledged nearly £1bn investment in cycling in London over the next 10 years. This is extremely welcome and will contribute to sustaining and encouraging modal shift with positive benefits for London's congestion, air quality and the health of Londoners. To date, however, there is neither a plan nor a budget to ensure that the extension of the cycle super-highway network, roll out of the central grid, and delivery of Quietways and mini Holland's is achieved in a way that integrates green infrastructure – the GTB Steering Group considers this a missed opportunity; one that will likely be addressed retrospectively in an *ad hoc* fashion in the years ahead at greater cost. The Mayor's investment in cycling provides an ideal opportunity to integrate sustainable urban drainage and GI that contributes to surface water management and air quality improvement in a seamless way. We encourage the Mayor and TfL to actively consider how to exploit this opportunity now.

The LIFE+ programme funded through the European Union provides €3.4bn for the next funding period, 2014 – 2020. The programme focuses on the environment and climate change, including environmental and resource efficiency and nature and biodiversity; and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Thematic priorities include water, floods and drought; waste legislation; resource efficiency; air quality; and green infrastructure. The deadline for submitting project proposals in round one is 16th October 2014.

Preparation of bids to the LIFE+ programme are detailed and lengthy often proving too resource intensive for smaller partnerships, charities and other bodies. The programme provides an excellent opportunity, however, to support a number of both the Mayor's and the Committee's environmental and climate change adaptation priorities. The GTB Steering Group invites the Mayor in his role as strategic lead for the capital to consider how the GLA working with Defra, the Environment Agency, TfL, borough, BID and other partners like CRP can develop project proposals that will secure funding from LIFE+ that will enable London to deliver against its environmental priorities – greening London's cycle grid would be one area in which a proposal should be developed and submitted.

This year the GTB Steering Group has widened its agenda beyond its traditional focus to coordinate and stimulate interest in other related areas. Many of the Steering Group members submitted expressions of interest to TfL's Road's Task Force Future Streets Incubator Fund. Team London Bridge BID were one of these. Their initial proposal for the trialling of a series of 'mobile parklets' along the south bank, developed in partnership with King's College, London Wildlife Trust, Treebox and CJS Plants, was welcomed by TfL. The 'parklets' will both provide and test the efficacy of GI as an air pollutant capture device and manage water whilst improving the look and feel of the south bank area. Initial feedback from BID partners on the selection of round one projects is that the sift criteria did not appear to have been applied universally, that feedback on proposals was too generic, and that only 'eye-catching' projects seem to be being supported. Partners appreciate this is a new fund and as such will take time to bed in, however.

The enthusiasm that exists within the business community, amply demonstrated by the work of the members of the GTB network, to contribute to improving London's environmental resilience should be recognised and supported by continued financial backing from the Mayor, whether through the Drain London Fund or other funding streams. The GTB Steering Group is consistently very well attended, including by valuable collaborators like Arup and King's College, and acts as a valuable forum for promoting and maintaining action around the sustainability agenda amongst the business community in London. A view endorsed by the Public Realm and Development Director at Vauxhall ONE BID, who described the GTB Steering Group as 'one of the best little groups working in this area [environmental sustainability] in London'. Members of the group are grateful for the support received and very much hope that their own considerable efforts will continue to be valued and supported by the Mayor.

Owain Jones

Place Making Project Manager
Cross River Partnership: 'Delivering Regeneration Together'